

Raise a Glass

Napa’s Most Iconic Winery Is Born Anew—but Still Considers Its Midcentury Roots

Fan of Fumé Blanc? Thank Robert Mondavi—the pioneering vintner who, in the ’60s, coined the name for the variety of dry, light, white wine produced at To Kalon, one of his vineyards in Napa, California. Clifford May, the acclaimed architect known as “father of the California ranch house,” was the original brain behind Mondavi winery’s structures, which include a swooping arch and tower that remain its most defining attributes. Over the years, however, a series of ad hoc additions had accrued around the main building, creating an aesthetically incoherent patchwork, while the tower and arch themselves had fallen into disrepair. Three firms were brought in to set things right: Aidlin Darling Design, BAMO, and Surfacedesign, tasked with restoring and expanding the vineyard’s architecture, furnishings, and landscaping, respectively.

“It’s hard to overstate the impact of Robert Mondavi’s partnership with May,” says David Darling, founding partner of Aidlin Darling Design. Our work seeks to carry that same spirit of timelessness...to propel the winery and its influence into the future.”



A newly installed water feature at the Robert Mondavi Winery in Napa, California Photo: Adam Rouse

To that end, Aidlin Darling stripped away the more recent additions and reimagined a few integral elements of the 1966 design. A new inverted gable canopy echoes May’s original welcome arch, and incorporates a series of tasting terraces, culinary gardens, and reception studios throughout the hospitality wing, all making use of water conservation methods and reclaimed materials. Hand-painted ceramic tiles depicting colorful produce—the work of Margrit Mondavi—lend the kitchen a Californian midcentury vibe. And on the landscape front, Surfacedesign contributed the To Kalon Bowl amphitheater, which invites visitors to pause and reflect on the volcanic, preagricultural land beneath the vines.—*Maya Ibbitson*