

Fine wine and the Wild West

Kamloops newest winery design inspired by the past

By Tammy Schuster



The wine shop interior featuring 'lasso and spurs' chandelier.

There's a new sheriff in town. High up on a hill overlooking the Thompson River and visible from Highway 1, a working ranch and winery is the newest addition to the Kamloops wine scene.

Monte Creek Ranch Winery, the fourth winery in Kamloops, has swung its doors open to the public. The 1200-acre ranch and winery have more than 40 acres of vines, a hay field, cattle, horses, honeybees, and haskap berries.

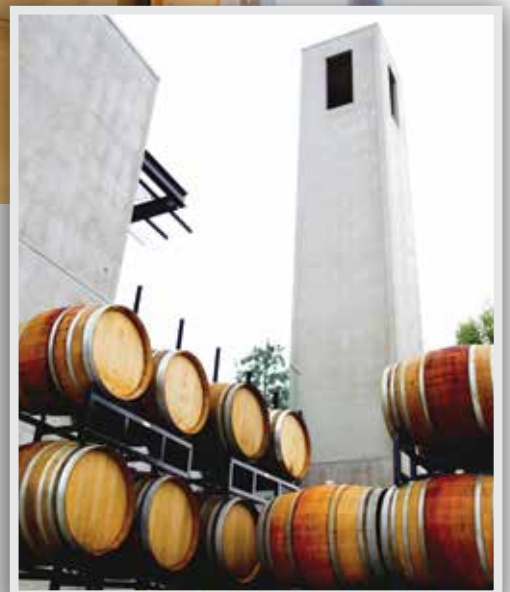
The main building has a tasting room and production facility, and – constructed using concrete, Squamish birch, galvanized metal, and glass – looks like a futuristic throwback to the frontier-type of building style.

"We really wanted to reflect the architecture in this region from an era gone by," says Erik Fisher, general manager at Monte Creek Ranch Winery. "At that point in time, there were a lot of buildings with steep pitch roofs that were indicative of a church, school, or barn."

The bell tower, located across a small platform from the main building, stands 54 feet high and is called a historic beacon for gatherings. "It's old meets new," says Fisher.

"The bell tower was part of the traditional look and feel. It's an architectural feature, and a significant part of the building," says Ted Murray of Ted Murray Architect Inc.

Referring to it as a mission-style struc-



The bell tower – the "historic beacon of gathering".

ture, Murray says it is a modern interpretation of the buildings found in the area at the turn of the century. "It could have been a wood frame building but this is much more substantial and interesting."



Welcome to Monte Creek Ranch Winery.

Perched on the edge of a bank that slopes down toward the highway and the river, Murray says they wanted it built as far out on the bank as possible to be visible to the highway and to take advantage of the view.

"This is a project that is pretty special in both its setting and structure," says Jeff Arnold, president of A&T Project Developments Inc. and the project manager for this build. "The owner did a top-notch job with his vision. He had confidence in what he was doing."

The interior follows the old-meets-new theme with metal barn doors, polished concrete, and aluminum sheeting, which brings industrial elements to the open space. A large chandelier in the main tasting room depicts a series of aluminum lassos swirling around spurs marrying the modern cowboy theme together.

Old nostalgic photos of the railway, ranching that took place on the property, and the first house built in Kamloops hang in the tasting room.

"We have a 150-square-foot mural with about 20 images we sourced from the archives department at the Kamloops Museum & Archives that reflect this region," says Fisher.

Maintaining a rugged landscape outside was also part of the vision. "We wanted to maintain the natural beauty on the property," says Fisher. Going with the less-is-more look by transplanting mature trees and situating them around the building to give it a well-ridden look.

Construction crews broke ground in August 2014 and, 10 months later, the winery opened to the public in June this year. Fisher says about 50 per cent of the winery visitors are locals, but the winery adds another attraction for tourists. "It's another fun thing to do in the area if you aren't skiing or on the golf course."

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The winery building has a production facility on the ground floor, and a wine shop, tasting room, and picnic area on the second level, and overlooks the Thompson River.

In the beginning of December, the winery held its first Christmas open house where more than 1,000 people dropped by over the course of the afternoon.

Fisher is now working on zoning to add an amphitheatre to the property. He says it would be a great addition to the region

to hold theatre, music, and other events, and would like to have it built and holding events by the summer. He also says they plan on increasing the production facility.

Whatever nostalgia it conjures up, the winery's distinctive building celebrates

yesteryear while forging into the future and helping to shape it at the same time.

"It's good for the Kamloops area to have someone make that kind of investment in a reasonably new market," says Arnold. "It was an interesting build, and one of those projects you are proud to put your name on." ♦



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