

20 Yerba Buena Lane

AMERICAN HARDWOODS

WALNUT And Wine Pairing at Press Club San Francisco



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American walnut was a key ingredient in adding the flair of Napa Valley to Press Club San Francisco. Located in the Four Seasons Hotel, just minutes from Union Square, the 9,000-square-foot venue was conceived as an urban retreat for six of California’s most celebrated premium-quality, small-production wineries and vineyards.

Architect Chris von Eckartsberg, of Baldauf Catton von Eckartsberg Architects, was charged with creating an innovative and modern identity for this cosmopolitan wine tasting concept. “We designed Press Club,” noted von Eckartsberg, “with cues from Napa Valley’s unique blend of industry and natural beauty.” As a result, Press Club’s unique mix of industrial and organic is expressed by a simple pattern play between cement and American black walnut, creating a transcendent connection between two dissimilar materials.

Modern yet wonderfully luxurious, Press Club’s retail shop and concierge occupy the ground level, while a grand staircase entices visitors to the tasting lounge below. Organized around a central spine, the tasting lounge is complete with eight winery stations, the tapas bar, and a private dining room.

Exposed concrete floors and ceilings create a cool palette warmed by von Eckartsberg’s choice of walnut’s dark brown heartwood and nearly white sapwood. “We selected walnut for its rich tones and organic character,” he said. “The contrast between its heartwood and sapwood provides character and a soothing contrast in the venue’s woodwork.” And with an eye towards sustainability, “It was harvested by responsible forest managers using sustainable techniques.”



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Beyond the wall surfaces, walnut was crafted into shelving, cabinetry, doors, and trim, as well as tasting tables and the wine stations' bar tops. "We used about 7,000 board feet of solid walnut, and approximately 3,500 square feet of veneer," noted von Eckartsberg. "The walnut has been a striking aspect of Press Club and has received great recognition."

Among other awards, Press Club was the winner of the 2010 WoodWorks California Wood Design Awards in the Interior Beauty of Wood Design category. Press Club also received the coveted 2010 American Institute of Architects San Francisco Chapter's Honor Award for Interior Architecture.

"Our work is marked by a consistent use of natural, quality materials and frequently incorporates hardwoods," noted von Eckartsberg. "Press Club is a prime example of a project where we designed an elegant environment that allowed the beauty of the wood to express itself without ornament or extraneous detailing. The warmth and natural character of hardwood brings beauty and richness to the environment."

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