

WINTER 2008
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ARCHITECTURE **DC**

Outstanding: The 2008 Awards Issue



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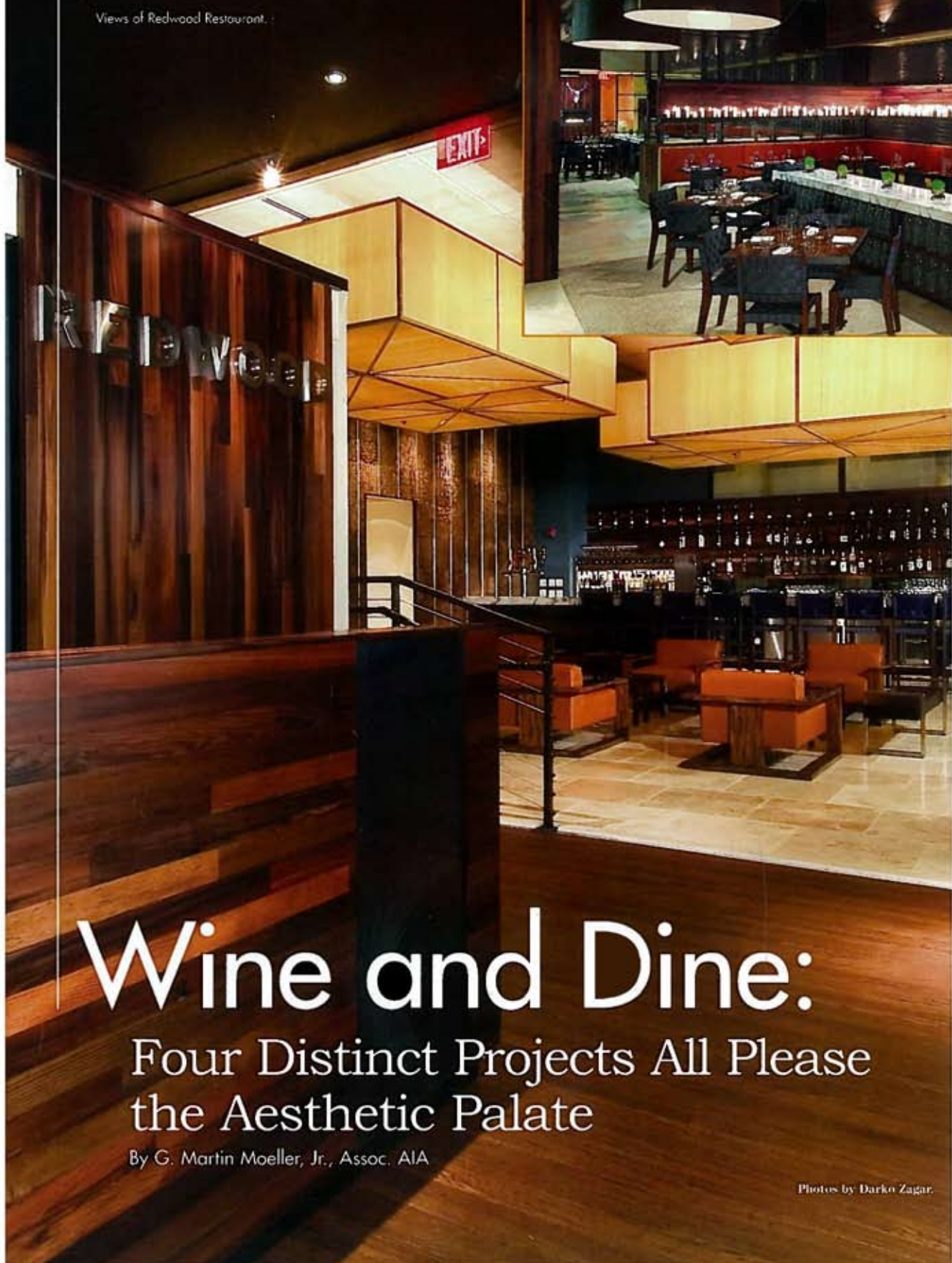
Redwood

Bethesda, Maryland

GrizForm Design Architects

Contractor: Herman/Stewart Construction

Views of Redwood Restaurant.



Wine and Dine:

Four Distinct Projects All Please the Aesthetic Palate

By G. Martin Moeller, Jr., Assoc. AIA

Photos by Darko Zagar.

Award for Excellence in Interior Architecture

Tangysweet Yogurt Lounge

Washington, DC

KUBE Architecture

Lighting Design: George Sexton Associates

Contractor: Construction Commercial Inc.

The harbinger of Washington's food and beverage renaissance, Red Sage, recently closed after a long and successful run. But the revolution it started—a surge of restaurants in which the design of the space is as creative and skillfully executed as the food—has continued, resulting in a new generation of beautiful eating and drinking establishments throughout the metropolitan area. This year's award winners include four projects—a restaurant, a yogurt shop, a healthy fast food shop, and even a winery—demonstrating that sophisticated design may now be found in a broad range of places catering to Washingtonians' various gustatory desires.

In just a few years of practice, **GrizForm Design Architects** has established itself as a leader in restaurant design. The reasons for this rapid rise are evident in **Redwood**, one of the firm's most recent projects, which is located in Bethesda Walk, a new pedestrian shopping precinct in downtown Bethesda. The design concept for this restaurant and bar was inspired by a quotation from the photographer *non-pareil*, Ansel Adams: "Yosemite Valley, to me, is always a sunrise, a glitter of green and golden wonder in a vast edifice of stone and space." The jurors were impressed by the designers' success in translating these evocative words into architecture. "The story," they said, "all held true."

Each of Redwood's four main public areas—lounge/bar, tasting bar, dining room, and private room—has a distinct architectural identity, though not so different as to compromise the unity of the design. Like an Adams photograph, the restaurant elicits an immediate, strong, emotional response, while allowing the viewer/patron to discover delightful details gradually. True to its name, the restaurant includes generous expanses of redwood, lending warmth and a measured rusticity to the space. Complementary materials such as sandstone add depth—both conceptually and visually—while custom light fixtures in shades of green evoke a canopy of leaves admitting dappled light to a forest floor. Overtly witty elements, such as a transparent "buck's head" trophy over the fireplace, add a wry twist to the sylvan fantasy. Ronnette Riley summed up the jury's response to the design and the enchanting storyline that guided it, saying, "We all wanted to eat at this restaurant."

KUBE Architects won an Award for Excellence in Interior Architecture for **Tangysweet** (which was profiled in the Fall 2008 issue of *ArchitectureDC*), part of the wave of frozen yogurt shops that cropped up—seemingly out of nowhere—over the past year. What sets Tangysweet apart from its competition is its successful integration of



Patio space outside Tangysweet.

Photo by Paul Burk Photography.

the product concept, marketing strategies, and the design of the physical space of the shop.

The existing space—an English basement of a commercial row house—had excellent street access, a small sidewalk patio area, and an auspicious Dupont Circle location, but it was low and dark. The darkness was part of the inspiration for the signature elements of the design solution: a series of C-shaped acrylic boxes, softly and internally lit by LED fixtures whose colors constantly shift, continually altering the mood and appearance of the small space. The bottom leg of each "C" also serves as a stand-up table. "The lighting is a play on the food itself," remarked Ronnette Riley, noting that the frozen yogurt comes in a similar array of pastel colors. The shop has been very successful, and Tangysweet is using the Dupont Circle outlet as a prototype for more "lounges" in the works.

Another small food establishment, **Sweetgreen**, won a Presidential Citation for Sustainable Design. This shop, by **CORE architecture + design**, also sells frozen yogurt, but is primarily known for its salads and wraps. Formerly part of the Little Tavern regional chain of hamburger huts, the building is tiny—less than 500 square feet. The jurors were amazed that "so many sustainable strategies could fit in such a small space."

Generally speaking, smaller projects are inherently greener, since they require less material to construct and have less volume to heat, air condition, and light, so Sweetgreen had an upfront advantage in terms of its low environmental impact. The one big design gesture in the space is a wide band of hickory planks, reclaimed from a Virginia barn, which run from floor to wall to ceiling. The rich honey tones of the wood provide for a warmly lit interior even though all the light fixtures are high-efficiency fluorescents.

Photos by Darko Zagar.

Also central to the project's sustainability—if not directly the work of the architects—are operational choices, most of which are unusual for a take-out shop. Sweetgreen follows a strict recycling program, uses organic and locally grown ingredients in its food, prints menus and napkins on recycled paper, and offers biodegradable cutlery and reusable containers. Purchased wind power accounts for 100% of the electricity use, and the owners buy Renewable Energy Credits to offset all carbon-creating operations.

While Sweetgreen is one of many local food purveyors committed to using locally produced food products, another award winner is truly right at the source. Indeed, at Sugarloaf Mountain Vineyard (featured in the Spring 2008 issue of *ArchitectureDC*), by Cunningham | Quill Architects, the source and creation of the product are central to the visitor's experience. The setting, near the base of Sugarloaf Mountain in Montgomery County, Maryland, and adjacent to a historic Civil War battlefield, is almost achingly bucolic. It is also a testament to the vision of county planners and powers-that-be, who in the 1970s designated 90,000 acres as an agricultural preserve.

The project is a new building known as the Wine Production Facility. It has two parts: a windowless, low-profile barrel-aging room nestled into the slope, and a dramatic glass-fronted fermentation room, whose piping and stainless steel vats are on display to all visitors and, for that matter, to anyone driving by on rural Comus Road. Both parts of the building are clad in corrugated steel panels, painted barn red. Detailing is simple but meticulous, especially at the focal glass wall and its deeply overhanging roof. The new building is actually only the first phase of the project, with rehabilitation of the adjacent existing historic barn as the second.

"The architects brought a very contemporary piece of architecture which easily could have been a jarring contrast [to the existing barn and landscape]," noted the jury. "But it's an elegantly simple building that holds its own without upstaging the barn. The exposure of the wine-making mechanics is celebratory." If you feel like joining the celebration, you are welcome to take a drive out to Sugarloaf and drink in the wine, the landscape, and the architecture. 🍷

Top and Middle: Exterior and interior views of Sweetgreen.
Below: Sugarloaf Mountain Winery.

Presidential Citation for Sustainable Design

Sweetgreen
Washington, DC

CORE architecture + design

Contractor: MCN Construction



Photo by Michael Moran Photography.



Photo by Michael Moran Photography.



Photo by Paul Burk Photography.

Award for Excellence in Architecture

Sugarloaf Mountain Vineyard
Dickerson, Maryland

Cunningham | Quill Architects

Contractor: Whalen Construction Company