



Snøhetta   
The French Laundry  
Yountville, California, USA

February 20, 2018

## Snøhetta unveils The French Laundry's Kitchen Expansion and Courtyard Renovation

Snøhetta, in collaboration with Chef Thomas Keller and Envelope A+D, has completed a new kitchen and courtyard renovation at The French Laundry in Yountville, California. Opened in 1994, Thomas Keller's three-starred Michelin restaurant has been highly regarded as a mecca for fine French cuisine at the forefront of culinary culture over 20 years. The design is the first major overhaul to the historic site in over two decades and doubles the size of the existing landscape for guests while providing a world-class working environment for Keller and his team to innovate their craft and service. A new kitchen annex houses the French Laundry's support functions, including the butchery, produce breakdown, and wine collection, storing up to 15,000 bottles.

To begin the design process, the designers spent time with Chef Keller's team, observing the complex choreography of the kitchen. Through the rhythm, culture, pace, and precision of his work, Chef Keller cultivates an environment for his team to excel at creating one of the most esteemed kitchens in the world. The French Laundry has long been recognized for the culture of education and mentorship it provides its staff, and Snøhetta's design not only optimizes efficiency but also fosters a meaningful environment for the chefs who work there, setting a stage for cuisine that ignites the senses.

The new architecture at The French Laundry is shaped by simple geometries that are both modern and reminiscent of agrarian architectural forms. The pitched, low-slung roofs of the kitchen and annex allude to their utilitarian function. Flush at the corners where the eaves of the roof meet the siding, the kitchen's streamlined body is partly clad in charred wood. The familiarity and warmth of the burned finish juxtaposes the more contemporary fritted glass that wraps around the corner of the building. Up close, the frit reveals a dense composition of layered, swooping curves, evocative of the motions of chefs' hands at work.

The 2,000 SF kitchen provides a comfortable, light-filled working space for the chefs that is configured as a single, continuous space. With 25% more working space than the previous kitchen, the expansion is meticulously organized and allows direct visual connections between all stations. The curved form of the kitchen ceiling evokes a tablecloth being gently unfurled across a table, patterned with delicate wrinkles in the gypsum fiber-reinforced panels. These sweeping vaults conceal the ceiling's functional elements while also revealing long skylights that flood the kitchen with natural light. The concave ceiling also enhances the acoustics within the space, controlling and dampening sound reflectivity to improve communication and speech intelligibility. Located beneath the skylights at the highest point of the curve are custom-designed pass tables where dishes are plated for presentation and the handoff between back-of-house chefs and front-of-house servers takes place. Here, Chef Keller can share a calm conversation with his team amidst the commotion and bustle of the kitchen. The tables provide a mediating space between the kitchen and the dining room.

Arriving at The French Laundry, guests now begin their experience through a sequence of new garden spaces. Conceptualized as a series of thresholds, each moment in the arrival sequence has been treated with sensitive attention to detail. A new vehicular drop-off area welcomes visitors in a bright, open court, shaded by a grove of Japanese maples that line a basalt garden wall.

This intimate, weathered stone wall encloses the garden while framing two key views that orient guests to both The French Laundry's iconic blue door and the new Kitchen. Visitors follow a bluestone path through the entry portal into the heart of the garden. Crossing over this first threshold reveals another realm: a lush, highly-manicured ornamental garden reminiscent of the history of The French Laundry's previous garden. A broad, open lawn provides flexibility for events held periodically at the restaurant. Tucked away into hushed corners of the interior courtyard are discrete zones for gathering that can be used for outdoor dining or seating before and after meals. On the way to the dining room, guests are greeted by the glow of the kitchen at work, visible through the ribbon window of the new kitchen's fritted glass walls. These carefully sequenced moments for pause are intimate compositions of unique acoustic, color and tactile qualities, providing the visitor with a continuing sense of discovery as they move from space to space.

The French Laundry's influence on global culinary and restaurant culture is in part due to the ongoing success of its expertly trained staff, many of whom have gone on to explore their own culinary ambitions and today head some of the world's top-ranked restaurants. The creation of a thoughtful space for experimentation and collaboration along with a re-envisioned guest experience is Keller's next step in preserving that legacy.

**Project Facts**

Site Area: 0.5 acres

Kitchen: 1,980 sqft

Annex: 2,450 sqft

Building Program: Restaurant Kitchen, Prep Kitchen, Wine Storage, Butchery, Conference Room, Dry Storage, Administrative spaces

Address: 6640 Washington Street Yountville, CA 94599

Website: frenchlaundry.com, snohetta.com

**Project Team:**

Design Architect & Landscape Architect: Snøhetta

Executive Architect: Envelope A+D

Local Landscape Architect: Terremoto

Local Landscape Architect Consultant: Martin Poirier, PWP Landscape Architecture

Acoustician: Arup

Construction Manager: Wright Contracting

Food Service Consultant: Harrison Koellner, LLC

Structural Engineer: Vaziri Structural Engineering

MEP Engineers: Guttman Blaevet Consulting Engineering

Civil Engineer: CAB Consulting Engineering

Geotechnical Engineer: RGH Consultants, Inc.

Traffic Consultant: Crane Transportation Group

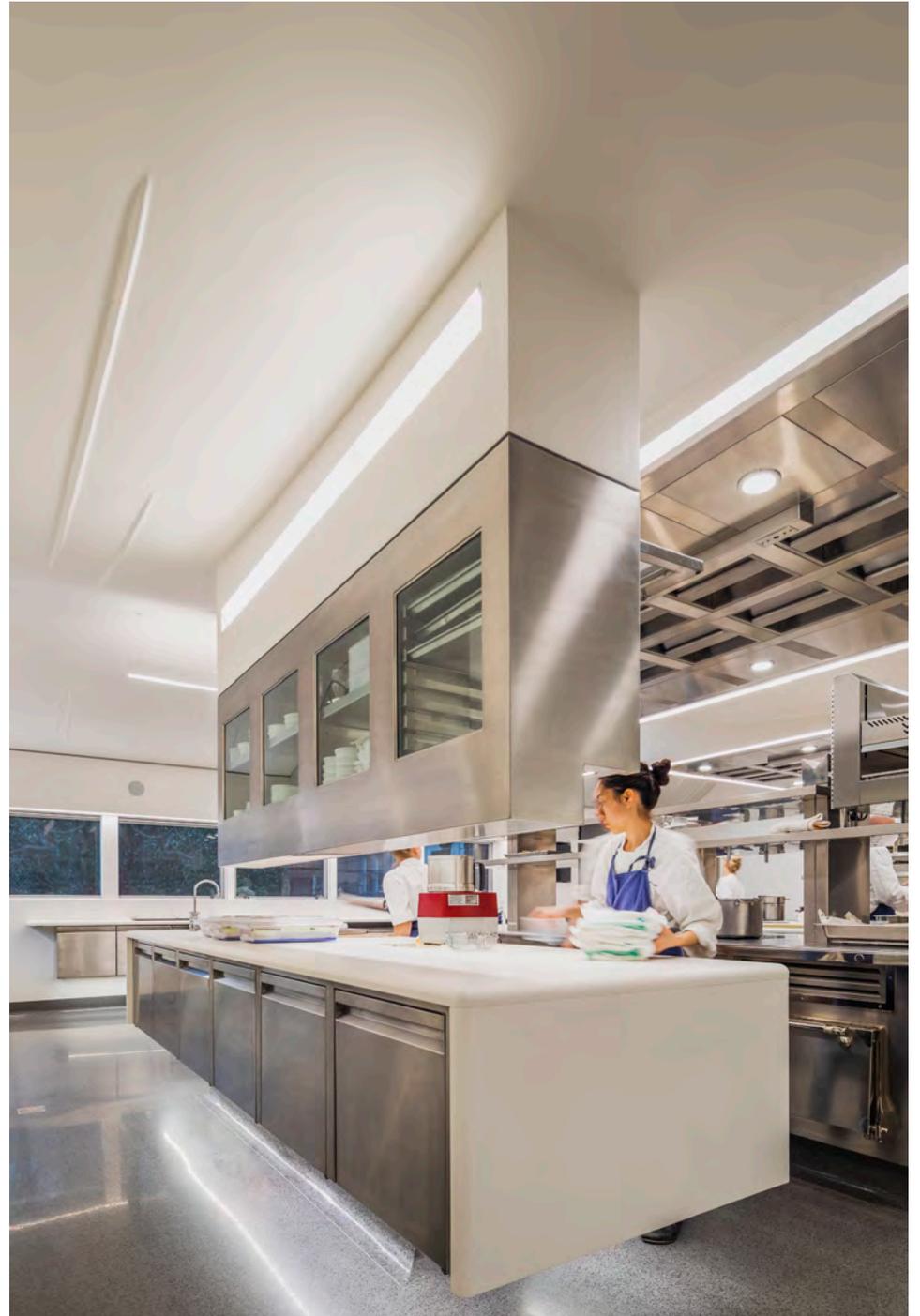
Waterproofing Consultant: Neumann Sloat Blanco Architects LLP

Ceiling Manufacturer: GC Products

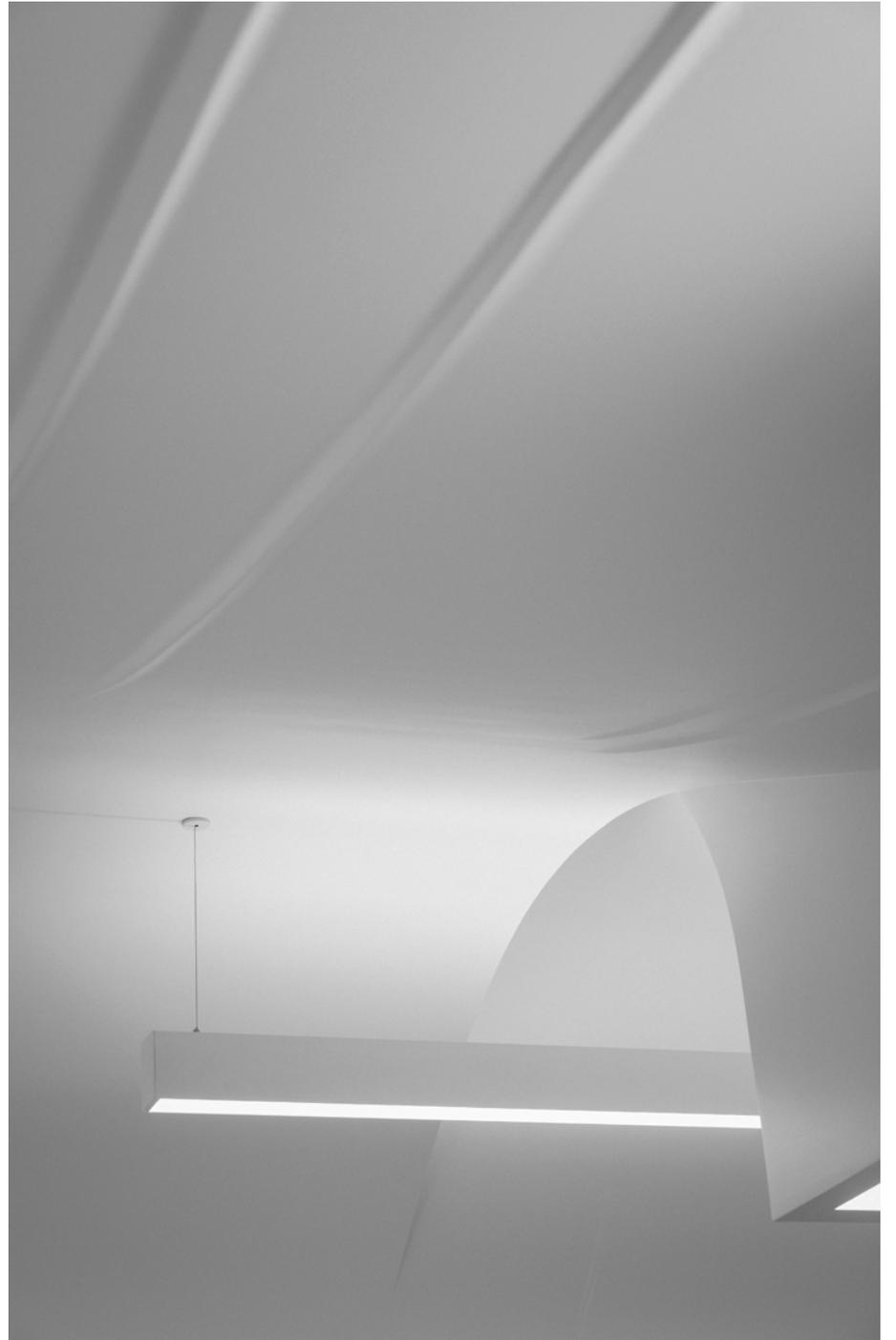
Solar Panels: NRG

Walls, flooring and countertops: Dekton by Cosentino

Ventilated ceiling systems: Halton America



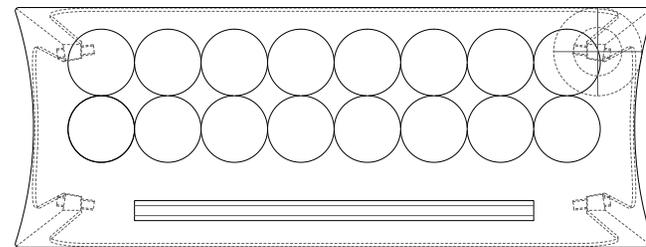
New appliances such as a rotisserie and a wood-burning oven expand the new kitchen's capacity for culinary innovation. The design introduces materials with better performance characteristics, such as flooring that cushions better under foot, prevents slipping, and is more easily cleaned. Countertop heights and dimensions of other elements were finely-tuned and adjusted to improve their ergonomics, according to the meticulous vision of Chef Keller.

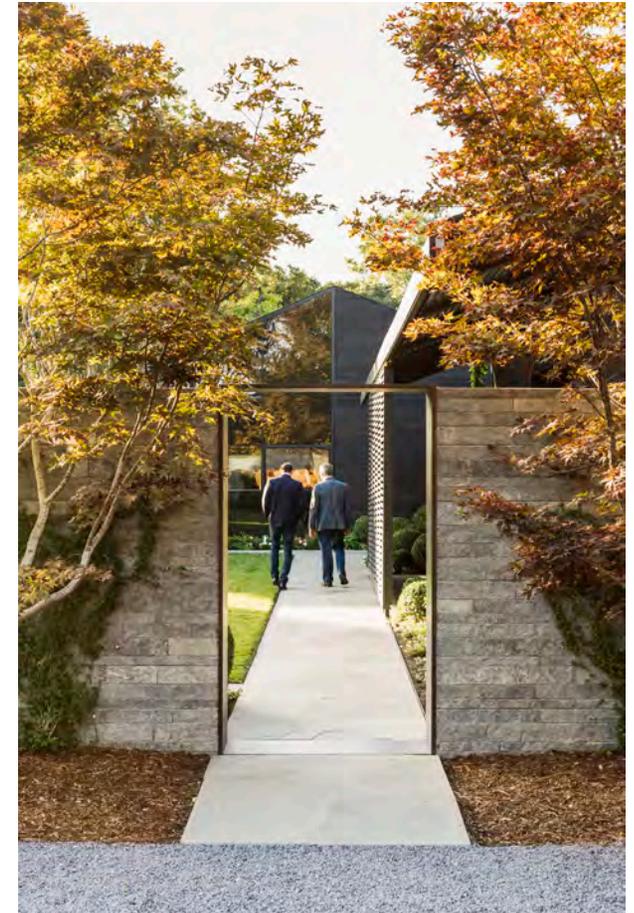




Skylights above bring natural light into the kitchen. Located beneath these skylights are custom-built pass tables that provide a mediating space between the kitchen and the dining room. The shorter ends of the tables are concave, protecting chefs in the aisles of the hectic kitchen and allowing them to better focus on the tasks at hand.

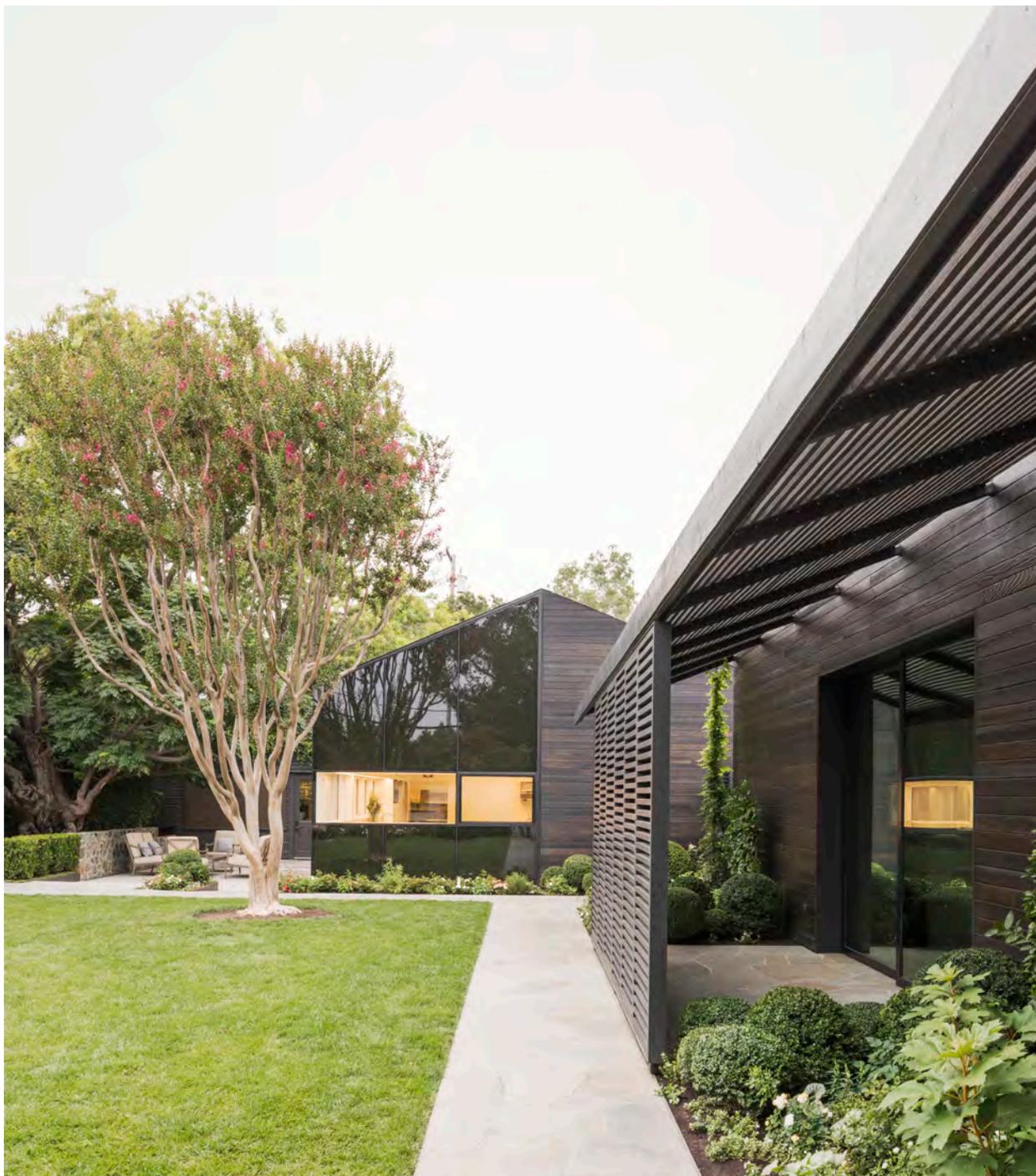
Below: Plan view of pass table

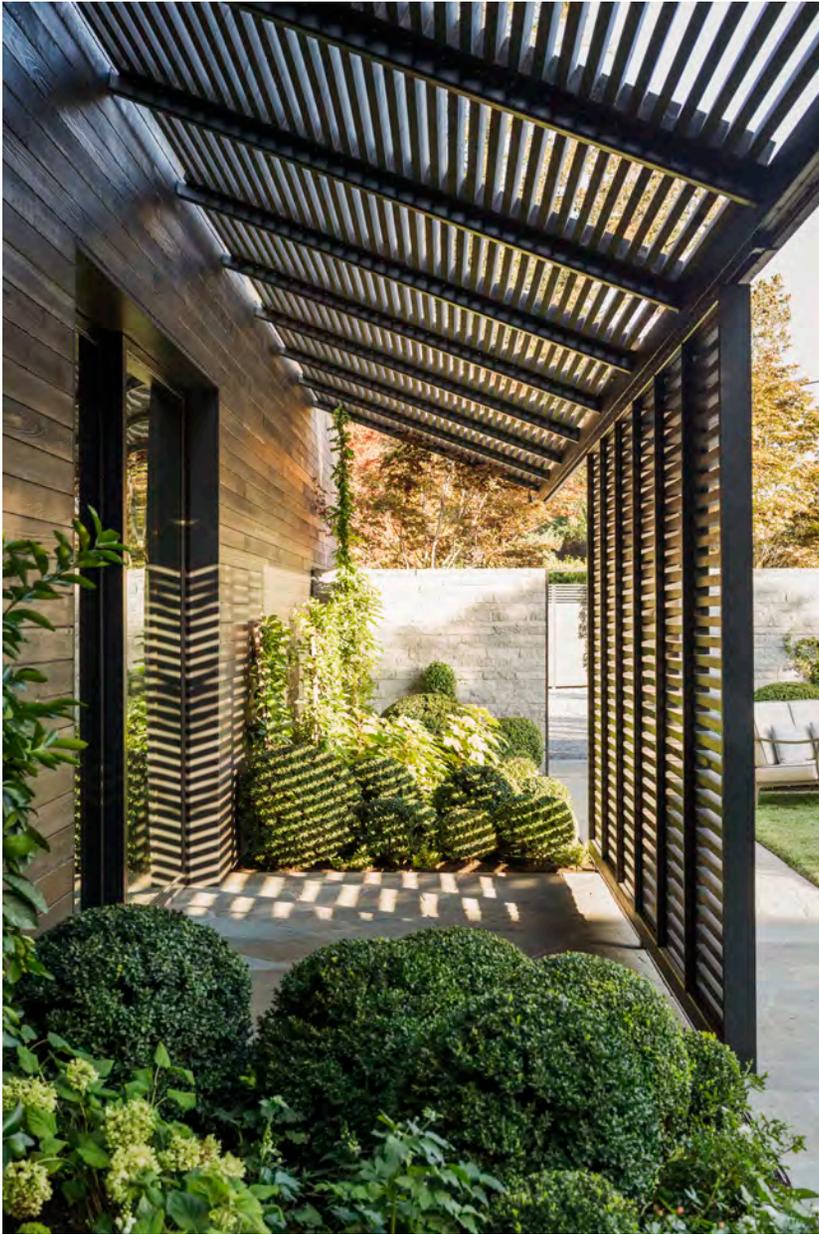




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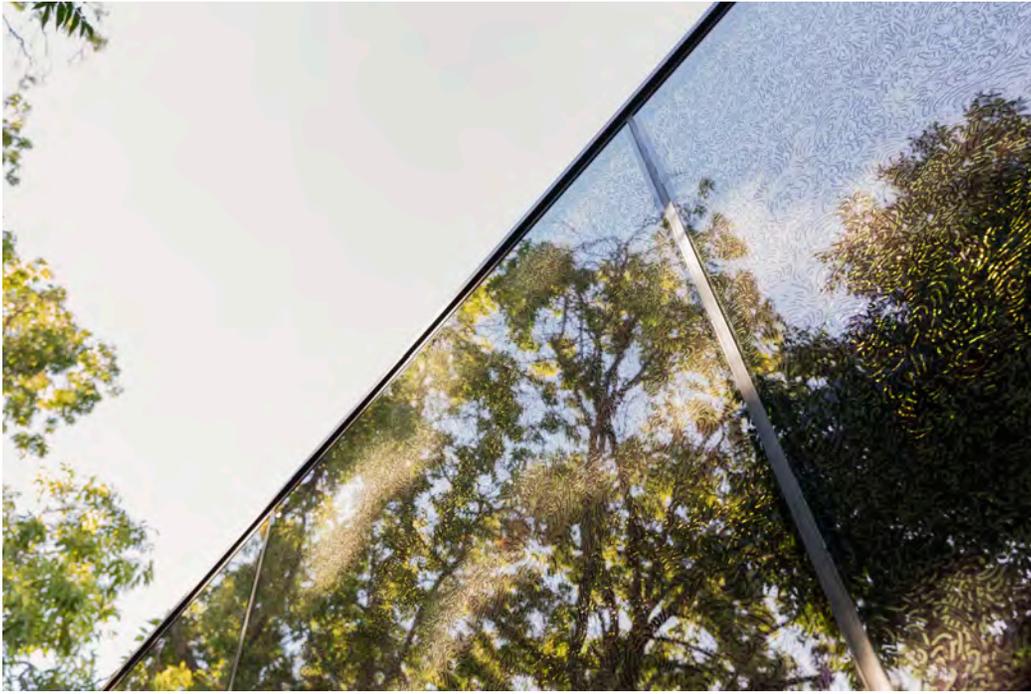
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The new 2,458 SF Annex houses The French Laundry's support functions. It includes offices, a conference room, test kitchen, butchery, and a breakdown area for produce, as well as a wine cellar that holds up to 15,000 bottles.





The glass frit wrapping the kitchen reveals a dense composition of layered, swooping curves, evocative of the motions of chefs' hands at work.





### **About Snøhetta**

For nearly 30 years, Snøhetta has designed some of the world's most notable public and cultural projects. Snøhetta kick-started its career in 1989 with the competition-winning entry for the new library of Alexandria, Egypt. This was later followed by the commission for the Norwegian National Opera in Oslo, and the National September 11 Memorial Museum Pavilion at the World Trade Center in New York City, among many others. Since its inception, the practice has maintained its original trans-disciplinary approach, integrating architectural, landscape and interior design in all of its projects.

Snøhetta is currently working on a number of projects internationally the Le Monde Headquarters in Paris, the Cornell University Executive Education Center and Hotel in New York. Recently completed works include the expansion to the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, the renovation and reinvention of noma's former Copenhagen location as Barr, and the design for Norway's new banknotes which went into circulation in 2017.

Among its many recognitions, Snøhetta received the World Architecture Award for the Bibliotheca Alexandrina and the Norwegian National Opera and Ballet, and the Aga Kahn Prize for Architecture for the Alexandria Library. In 2016, Snøhetta was named the Wall Street Journal's Architecture Innovator of the Year. For more information, contact [press@snohetta.com](mailto:press@snohetta.com).

### **About The French Laundry**

Opened in 1994, The French Laundry is Chef Thomas Keller's world-renowned, three-Michelin-starred restaurant, which has been highly regarded as one of the best restaurants in world for the past 23 years. Two tasting menus are offered daily; the Chef's Tasting and the Tasting of Vegetables which highlight French technique and the finest quality ingredients available including those from its notable culinary garden. The restaurant's beverage program is also acclaimed, consisting of an expansive wine list made up of selections from the worlds' best and most distinctive producers. The Spirits program, curated by Chef himself, includes the world's most fine and rare bottlings. The French Laundry is a member of French-based associated Relais & Chateaux, Relais Gourmands and Traditions & Qualité organizations, recognized for their dedication to maintaining the highest international standards for hospitality and culinary excellence.

For more information about The French Laundry, visit [www.frenchlaundry.com](http://www.frenchlaundry.com). For media requests, contact [TKRG@prconsulting.net](mailto:TKRG@prconsulting.net).

### **About envelope a+d**

envelope Architecture + Design is an award-winning, design-focused architecture practice whose work reaches across disciplinary boundaries to envision new ways of living and working. Founded in 2002, the firm is recognized for its pioneering work transforming underutilized sites across San Francisco and for crafting environments for work, hospitality and the arts that embrace the dynamics of contemporary life.

Taking an expansive view of design, envelope A+D engages a wide ranging set of questions spanning architecture, development, product design and curation. In addition to The French Laundry Kitchen Expansion, this approach has informed projects as varied as Forest<>House, an unconventional family retreat; PROXY, an interim use design and development strategy; the family of Delfina restaurants; and Hunters Point Shoreline, a half-mile long bayshore park on the site of a former power plant.

envelope A+D has been honored as part of Architectural Record's Design Vanguard and the United States Pavilion at the 2012 Venice Architecture Biennale. The New York Times, T Magazine, Architect, Architectural Record, Interior Design, Fast Company and Phaidon all have featured the firm's work. [envelopead.com](http://envelopead.com)