



The Ojai Valley Inn Debuts The Farmhouse by Backen & Gillam Architects

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The contemporary barn-style space for culinary-focused meetings and events opens this week



A new culinary experience in Ojai, 80 miles north of Los Angeles, juxtaposes the area's past and present design styles. The Farmhouse at the Ojai Valley Inn is the luxury resort's ambitious culinary and events center designed by Howard Backen of Backen & Gillam Architects, and features two large structures with extensive grounds that nod to the area's agricultural history.

With its barnlike steel design, the Farmhouse stands in contrast with the property's multiple white stucco and terra-cotta-roofed Spanish Colonial Revival style buildings, the earliest dating to 1923, when Wallace Neff designed what was originally the Ojai Country Club.



The new redwood-clad buildings contain the 8,500-square-foot multipurpose great room, with the kitchen and an anteroom located opposite a courtyard. Backen's team for the \$20 million project included principal Silvia Nobili, interior designer Leslie Hemmings, and Ventura-based firm McGillivray Construction as the contractor. The hotel evacuated for five weeks during the California fires, but narrowly escaped the worst of the damage. "We were one of the lucky ones," says Ojai Valley Inn owner Steve Crown.

The library contains tables that Jeff Menchaca Fine Woodworking custom-built in Napa, while Ironcad Ltd. in Santa Barbara fabricated the custom large chandeliers in both spaces. The showstopping open kitchen is outfitted with appliances from Viking and is designed to host demonstrations and classes for guests; a fully equipped Lynx outdoor kitchen will be completed soon.



The exterior's gray-hued redwood treatment helps blend the buildings into the setting, and over time will "change quite a bit," Backen notes. The materials at The Farmhouse were selected to ensure the addition is "a good neighbor to everything that's there," the designer says.