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## Mint Locations

by [Tyler Davidson](#)  
*Meetings West*, August 2006

Meeting planners who want a Northern California event site straight out of the pages of a high-end home design magazine need look no further than Belvedere, Calif.-based Mint Locations, which can produce a soup-to-nuts affair in jaw-dropping estates that are truly equipped to entertain in high style.

"In a nutshell, we are a portal that introduces event planners to very unique, exceptional properties in the [Greater] Bay Area for rent," says Cindi Osborn, co-owner of Mint Locations. "Most of them are really architectural showcase homes, and are private and gated. We only represent from 20 to 40 properties at any given time, and right now we have 30.

"Right now we're only in Northern California," she continues, "but talk to us in a year—we're thinking big."

Osborn, who has a background in television production, started the company with veteran event planner Nancy Frumkes after realizing Northern California was lacking the same inventory of high-end homes available for rent as event locations that are available in Southern California.

"I knew there was a market for a good location service in the Bay Area for film shoots and photo shoots, but there wasn't anyone doing it in a stylish, easy-to-access way like they do in Los Angeles," she says. "My business partner Nancy was an event planner who realized a parallel need in the events industry."

### Discretion is Key

Of course, maintaining the privacy of their upper-class clients, who typically are not on-site during the event, is the top priority for Osborn and Frumkes, so Mint Locations checks out all potential customers who want to rent a location. The company also has a site representative on-site at all times. And while renting an estate doesn't come cheap, the big price tag does tend to weed out undesirables.

"We're expensive, so you have to be able to pay the fee," she says. "[The houses] run from \$5,000 per day and up, and some have guest houses on them so the featured guest or host can spend the night."

As with all things, you get what you pay for, and Mint Locations' homes tend to give plenty of bang for their big bucks.

"We have some amazing properties, where the winemakers are there to pour their wines, or the chef goes through the organic garden to discuss the meal he's preparing," Osborn says. "We can set up spa services, wine tours. We have a whole nexus of high-end vendors that we work with as well, and we can provide a list of private chefs. It's going to be an easy turnkey. They simply say, 'Hey, I want a dinner for 25 under the stars at a winery in Napa'—we do it all."

Meeting and event planners also have the option of just renting a facility and providing their own vendors, Osborn says. Either way, planners typically don't have

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to fret about decor.

"Typically, you wouldn't need decor—the homes are pretty exceptional as they are," she says. "Most have been published in the top shelter magazines. They're all of magazine quality.

"Contemporary art collections in a striking Italian neo-Palladian home, bocce ball courts above wineries where it literally sits on top of the winemaking vats," Osborn continues, describing some of her sites. "You can feel like you're in Provence when you're there, with the olive trees and the lavender—you just feel a world away."

Osborn says property options can range from Mint Locations' newest site, a "storybook summer garden location" called Summer House in Napa Valley's Oakville that is perfect for an outdoor event, to what is currently perhaps the shiniest jewel in their crown, the House Above the Clouds, an "ultra-modern, ultra-hip—and green—location on 1,700 acres high on a hill above the Napa Valley."

Mint Locations' event clients have included Williams-Sonoma Home and Restoration Hardware, two companies that know a thing or two about good livin'.

As far as the separation of work duties, Osborn says she typically handles the sourcing of the homes while business partner Frumkes, who has more than two decades of experience in the catering and events industry, functions more as the business manager, but they both share clients.

"People comment that I'm definitely the Californian and she's definitely the New Yorker," Osborn jokes. "We're very friendly and easy to work with, and we're very happy to talk through ideas and issues and concerns—we're with you all the way.

"We defiantly have a shared vision for what Mint Locations is," Osborn continues. "There's no B-list."

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