

# WINES & VINES

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## Andis Winery Opens in Amador

Striking, modern California facility designed for quality and consumer attraction

by [Jon Tourney](#)



*The tasting room pours wine-on-tap, and sells refillable, 1-liter bottles.*

*Plymouth, Calif.*—[Andis Wines](#), a project launched less than three years ago to produce premium Sierra Foothills wines, opened the newest and most architecturally modern winery and tasting room in Amador County last week. Located along a well-traveled road in the Shenandoah Valley American Viticultural Area, where Andis hopes to capitalize on direct sales to visitors, the 17,000-square-foot building is designed to be functionally efficient, visually attractive and unique in appearance. The facility occupies a knoll on a 26-acre property, with a 22-acre, 30- to 40-year-old vineyard planted to Amador's signature vine, head-pruned Zinfandel.

“Andis” is a combination of the first names of owners and spouses Andrew Friedlander and Janis Akuna, who now divide their time between nearby Sutter Creek and Honolulu, Hawaii. Both continue to work in Hawaii—Friedlander as a commercial real estate broker with Colliers Monroe Friedlander, and Akuna as a financial advisor with Morgan Stanley.

The couple became interested in starting a winery during visits to California. Friedlander's passion for Zinfandel eventually led to Amador County, where he was captivated by the rural environment, the community and the area's wine quality. Andis' origins grew from a dinner in

February 2008, during the [Amador Vintners Association's](#) annual "Behind the Cellar Door" event, when Friedlander and Akuna were seated with Mark and Heather McKenna.

Mark has spent his entire career in Amador County learning the region's vineyards and holding winemaking positions at [Domaine de la Terra Rouge](#) and at [Montevina/Terra de Oro](#) wineries. Heather is also in the wine business, working on consulting projects with Mark. Friedlander said, "Mark and I got to talking, and it evolved from there. We were just very comfortable in Amador." Mark serves as Andis' winemaker and general manager, and Heather is a winery adviser and staff member.



*Andis' striking new winery/tasting room rises above head-pruned old vine Zinfandel vineyards.*

#### **Design and construction goals achieved**

The project came together quickly, with the property located and purchased after a short search. The facility was designed by Sage Architecture of Sacramento, and the general contractor was Sunseri Associates Inc., also based in Sacramento. Construction broke ground May 4, 2010. In just four months, the processing facility and equipment were ready for the 2010 crush. Final permits were issued in mid-November to open the tasting room for visitors. "The contractor worked with us to keep on schedule and on budget, and it was a major team effort to get everything up and running as quickly as we did," Friedlander observed.

Explaining the design process, Friedlander said: "Because of my experience in commercial real estate, I know that you have to build a building from the inside out. We came up with a plan of how we wanted the building to function, and Mark was instrumental with the functional aspects based on his wine-processing experience. Then we asked the architect to put a skin on it."

The design team was charged with two other goals. "We wanted a building that was considered 'green,' built with high energy-efficiency and with materials that will last and not require excessive maintenance," Friedlander said. The structure exceeds California's Title 24 Building Energy Efficiency Standards by 17%. Last but not least, Friedlander said, "Our goal visually was to have a building that looked like no other winery in the county."

During construction, the new building raised some eyebrows among locals and visitors because of its size and modern style. Subsequently, the design has achieved its goal of attracting attention and getting visitors to enter the driveway and to try Andis wines. At the same time, the owners are committed to being good neighbors and part of the Amador winemaking community. Andis held a party exclusively for the Shenandoah Valley in advance of the public

opening, attended by nearly 180 local residents and winery personnel to get acquainted with the new facility, the owners and staff.

The rectangular building runs east/west; the east end houses the tasting room/hospitality area, which appears to rise out of the vineyard and is visible above Shenandoah Road. The tasting area has large windows on three sides to provide a 270° view. This end of the building also houses winery offices, a wine lab and a private tasting room for groups by appointment.



*A concrete fermentation egg is part of the winemaking array.*

The winemaking area includes a 4,200-square-foot fermentation room and a barrel room of the same size. A covered crushpad area is between the two rooms, with paved access around the production area and a drive-through space to enable efficient grape delivery and process flow. [Criveller Corp.](#) supplied much of the winery's equipment, including stainless steel fermentation tanks, an Enoventa membrane press and Enoventa and Francesca pumps. Stainless steel tanks include both open- and closed-top tanks to process 5- and 7-ton lots. The fermentation room also has floor space for small batch processing with open top plastic bin fermentations. Andis uses both French and American oak for barrel aging, and oak

alternatives. [Sonoma Cast Stone](#) supplied a 500-gallon concrete fermentation egg and concrete countertops for the tasting room.

The building's structure is prefabricated metal with large roof canopy overhangs on three sides to offer shelter and shade around the building perimeter and to shield walls from summer sun. The roof and walls are heavily insulated. The building exterior is white and silver, providing a clean, modern look while reducing interior heat gain in summer. Windows are efficient, thermally insulated Low E glass.

A signature architectural feature (still being completed) on the visitor entrance side of the building is a screen wall: panels of used barrel staves stacked vertically to create a textured, woven effect. An outdoor shaded patio and picnic area will allow visitors to enjoy a glass or bottle of wine. Windows near the tasting bar are designed to slide open to serve outdoor guests.

Wines bottled under the Andis label began with the 2007 vintage. The 2008 and 2009 vintages were produced by custom crush at nearby [Bray Vineyards](#). Current varietal releases include Sauvignon Blanc, Zinfandel, Barbera, Grenache, Petite Sirah, Cabernet Sauvignon, a port-style Petite Sirah dessert wine and a proprietary blend of Rhône and Portuguese varietals called "Painted Fields." Wines are priced from \$20 to \$36/bottle.

An innovative program at the Andis tasting room is wine on tap, available for sale by the glass, or in a stylish refillable, resealable 1L bottle to drink on premise or take home. Customers can

buy the first full bottle for \$18, and then pay \$14 per refill. The winery uses 20L kegs in cabinets under the bar, supplied by Plastic Kegs of America. They can be cleaned, refilled and sealed in 20 minutes. The tap program provides flexibility, offering a greater variety of wines to visitors that can change from day to day, and new releases direct- from-barrel the same day.

The winery is designed for production capacity of 20,000 cases per year. Production of Andis' 2010 vintage will be about 3,000 cases. Some custom crush work was done for other labels. Friedlander said, "Our direct sales at the winery and our wine club should take care of the production we have now." Looking toward the future, he said, "We want to start slowly and see what the public likes and wants, then possibly change our varietal lineup as we progress, and increase case production gradually by 500 to 1,000 cases each year." Part of the estate vineyard may be replanted to other varieties in the future. McKenna will continue to source fruit from area vineyard sites that produce the best varietal quality.



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415.453.9700 | Fax: 415.453.2517

[info@winesandvines.com](mailto:info@winesandvines.com)