

Andis Wines opens today in the Shenandoah Valley

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- Gwen Johnson

Starting today, wine lovers will have a new stop along the Shenandoah Valley wine loop to try out. Andis Wines opens Nov. 26, giving oenophiles a chance to experience a new dimension in Amador County winemaking.

"We were looking to create a balance in the wine," said Andrew Friedlander, who owns Andis Wine with his wife, Janis Akuna. "We really wanted to maximize the flavors in the varietals."

The portfolio for Andis Wines includes Zinfandel, Barbera, Grenache, Cabernet Sauvignon, Petite Sirah and a blend called "Painted Red." Friedlander and Akuna own a home in Sutter Creek, although their careers are both established in Akuna's native state of Hawaii. Friedlander is a principal broker in the commercial real estate firm Colliers Monroe Friedlander - a firm he's been with since 1973. Akuna is a financial adviser with Morgan Stanley Smith Barney. Their son, Chris, lives in Plymouth and is currently learning the ins and outs of cellar activities.

"We have always enjoyed wine," Friedlander said, although the thought of opening their own winery didn't occur to him and his wife until they met local winemaker Mark McKenna and his wife Heather at the 2008 Behind the Cellar Door dinner party. McKenna is known throughout Amador County for his work with Montevina (now Terra d'Oro) and Bray wineries.

"We felt comfortable with him," Friedlander commented, explaining why he chose to partner with McKenna. "We liked his style of winemaking and thought he had more potential to grow. Mark's wines have a high alcohol content, but they're perfectly balanced and gracious."

When the two couples first started discussing possibilities of collaborating on some type of project, the original plan was to do a small-scale wine operation.

"But after looking at the numbers, it didn't make sense to do a small winery," Friedlander said. "The costs involved with putting in roads, a well and other requirements were the same as a big winery."

When considering a design for the facility, Friedlander and Akuna wanted something original, as well as environmentally friendly. After interviewing several architects, they settled on Sacramento-based Paul Almond and Pam Whitehead of Sage Architecture, who had designed a residence for a local friend of theirs.

"We liked the quality, style and uniqueness," Friedlander commented. "We were impressed with Sage's attention to detail. They were great listeners."

According to Sage Architecture, Inc.'s website, the Andis facility has exceeded California's stringent Title 24 Energy Compliance requirements by more than 15 percent. "This is accomplished by a combination of design elements," the website states. "The building's siting on the land and its shape, the use of prefabricated composite panels for the building walls, with a high insulative value, windows that are carefully placed to avoid solar heat gain, and the storefront with thermally insulated Low-E glass all contribute to the compliance. There is also a decorative screen wall that helps to shade the north side of the building from the early morning and late afternoon sun in the summer months."

Andis Wines is located at 11000 Shenandoah Road in Plymouth. For more information, call 245-6177 or visit www.andiswines.com.



The egg-shaped fermenter holds 500 gallons of fermenting must at Andis Wines in the Shenandoah Valley. Photo courtesy of Deborah Budrick.