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Red Tail Ridge Poised to be Finger Lakes' Greenest Winery



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The rapidly growing wine industry in the Finger Lakes Region of New York has been attracting a good deal of attention for the quality of its wines. One winery is looking to make a name for itself both for its wines and its commitment to the environment.

[Red Tail Ridge Winery](#), in Penn Yan, N.Y., will break ground this spring on a new wine making building designed to meet the U.S. Green Building Council's [LEED](#) standards. It would be the first New York winery building to earn LEED certification, according to a search of the USGBC's online LEED project database. Husband and wife owners Mike Schnelle and Nancy Ireland opened Red Tail Ridge after moving to the region from California, where Ireland worked for Gallo wineries. Their tasting room opened in August 2007.

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In an interview with CleanTechnica, Ireland said the sustainability movement is gaining steam in the wine industry, and that she and her husband wanted a winery that not only makes great wines but reflects their values. Environmentally friendly projects in California and Canada's Niagara wine region helped provide ideas for the Red Tail project, she said.

"You don't get to build too many wineries," said Ireland. "If you're going to build one, it had better be something that represents you."

When the building is completed this fall it will include a geothermal heating and cooling system. Waste water will be reused on the fields. Building materials are being sourced locally whenever possible. When they planted their 34-acre vineyard, the winemakers used techniques to prevent soil erosion and water runoff.

The wineries plans fit quite well into the LEED requirements, said Allen Rossignol, of Edge Architecture, who designed the building. Some items like water efficiency and waste water recovery were just natural fits for the project, he said.

"Natural light, daylighting and natural ventilation were also key components that lend to improve the interior environment and reduce lighting requirements," he said. Red Tail Ridge should be able to recover their investment in about three years because of the energy savings, Rossignol said.

Most importantly, Ireland notes, the energy saving techniques do nothing to impact the wine making techniques, meaning that oenophiles won't notice any different when they pop the cork on a Red Tail Ridge bottle.

[California wineries](#) have been at the forefront of [more eco-friendly wine making](#). It's worth watching to see if Red Tail Ridge starts a trend in New York.

Image Credit: Building rendering, [Edge Architecture](#).

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