

## Fox Run Vineyards

670 Route 14, Penn Yan, NY 14527

[www.foxrunvineyards.com](http://www.foxrunvineyards.com)

Situated high on Torrey Ridge on the west side of Seneca Lake, Fox Run Vineyards has evolved into one of the most successful growers of vinifera grapes in the Finger Lakes Region. Under the forward-looking ownership of Scott Osborn, Fox Run strives to incorporate sustainable practices in all aspects of its grape and wine production.

In 1993, Osborn co-purchased Fox Run's then 25 acres of grapes, and to alleviate problems inherent to the vineyard, undertook a major conversion of the trellising system. Revitalizing the vineyard was critical to the long-term profitability and production of world-class wines Osborn desired.

Vertical Shoot Positioning (VSP), a labor-intensive trellising method that maintains shoots in an upright position between sets of catch wires, was the system of choice. VSP has produced outstanding results in Germany, France and Australia, yet few Finger Lakes growers have adopted this approach due to the added labor requirements. Significant time is required to tuck the shoots within the catch wires, hedge excessive growth and remove leaves from the fruiting zone, but concurrent with this dedication of time, the system permits greater mechanization (and an increased *efficiency* of time spent



managing the vineyard), enhances the uniformity and ripeness of the fruit (which speaks to the quality of the wine), stabilizes fruit yield (buffering the economic side of the business), and reduces the number of agrichemical sprays applied to the vines (and their potential environmental and human health impact). At a cost of \$500 per acre, the conversion to VSP more than paid for itself in terms of increased recognition of Fox Run as a producer of high quality wines by the public and wine professionals alike. Implementing a modern trellis system was a big step toward both the environmental and economic sustainability of the business and Fox Run's vision of excellence for itself and the Finger Lakes wine-producing region.

Today, Fox Run has 55 acres of grapes planted with the following varieties: Chardonnay, Gewurztraminer, Riesling, Cabernet franc, Merlot, Gamay beaujolais, Lemberger, Cabernet sauvignon and Pinot noir. They have received countless awards for their wines including the only gold medal awarded to an American winery at the prestigious international Riesling du Monde Wine Competition held in Strasbourg, France, for their 2005 Riesling.





Fox Run has participated in New York State's Agricultural Environmental Management (AEM) program since April 2000. The AEM program is a voluntary, incentive-based program that helps farm operators make common-sense, cost-effective and science-based decisions that help meet business objectives while protecting and conserving the state's natural resources. With the help of the Yates County Soil and Water Conservation District office, Fox Run completed their initial conservation plan in March 2002. This cooperative effort has led to the construction of a modern pesticide handling facility (October 2003) and the application of mulch in row middles to prevent erosion and add organic matter to the soil (Fall 2007).

*VineBalance*, New York State's sustainable viticulture program was launched in 2006. Established through a cooperative effort between the Finger Lakes Grape Program, Lake Erie Regional Grape Program and Long Island's grape extension program, the program is designed to both document sustainable grape growing practices already in place and promote sustainable practices throughout the industry. Scott Osborn, again showing his proactive approach to growing grapes sustainably, was among the first group of growers to participate in this voluntary program.

The foundation of *VineBalance* is a grower self-assessment workbook – 134 questions in 8 sections covering the multitude of management decisions faced by New York State grape growers. After completing the workbook, growers develop an action plan based on the results of their self-assessment, which details the practices they believe they can effectively modify within the financial and management capacity of their farm. Looking at the present practices of the Finger Lakes growers that have completed the workbook thus far, Fox Run has been rated the most sustainable – and in addition to being ahead of the curve, Osborn has identified 10 subject areas in his action plan that he feels he can modify to an even higher level of sustainability.

Fox Run Vineyards is proof that economic viability and environmental protection are not mutually exclusive in the wine and grape industry. Scott Osborn, through the adoption of sustainable practices, continues to seek ways to produce high quality wine while minimizing the potential threats to environmental and human health, as well as his business's bottom line.

