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Headlines

Nickel & Nickel Breaks Ground on Napa Winery

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By Daniel Sogg

Nickel & Nickel, the Napa Valley-based estate started by the partners in Far Niente, has begun construction of a winery facility and restoration of the 1880s-era Sullenger house on their property, just north of Opus One in Oakville. This is the second historical restoration undertaken by founder Gil Nickel, who renovated an 1885 winery when he bought the Far Niente property in 1979.

"[The restoration] was a prerequisite to getting the winery approved [by Napa]. The appeal is that we've been through it before and know what's involved," said Dirk Hampson, partner and director of winemaking at Nickel & Nickel and Far Niente. "There's an added measure of pride in restoring historical structures. Our employees respond to it, and visitors respond to it."

Started in 1997, [Nickel & Nickel](#) makes small lots of single-vineyard wines. This harvest, they expect to produce about 11,000 cases of 14 different bottlings, mostly Cabernet, as well as Chardonnay, Merlot and Zinfandel. The wines are currently made at the custom-crush facilities of the Napa Wine Company. Eventually, Nickel & Nickel will produce up to 25 bottlings.

Hampson, Nickel and their partner Larry Maguire expect to have their new winery's press and fermentation areas, as well as a subterranean barrel cellar, completed in time for next year's harvest. In keeping with the 1880s design of the Sullenger house, the winery will be built from turn-of-the-century timbers salvaged from old bridges, train trusses and mine shafts from throughout the Pacific Northwest.

The restoration phase of the project will begin after next year's harvest, and construction will include excavation of a new basement that will house a wine library and dining room. The other floors will be renovated for tasting rooms, a reception area and administrative offices.



The Sullenger home, which dates to the 1880s, will be restored as part of the Nickel & Nickel winery construction.