



Meet Leigh Triner, owner of Hazlitt 1852 Vineyards, Inc...

1. Describe Your Business:

We are an estate, family-owned winery in Hector. We have been operating since 1985. It was established by Jerry and Elaine Hazlitt and now my brother Doug and I own and operate the business together.

2. Tell us your story:

We have been operating since 1985. The winery was established by Jerry and Elaine Hazlitt and now my brother Doug and I own and operate the business together. We started as a very small farm winery producing 3,000 gallons a year and now we are one of the largest wineries in the state producing over 700,000 gallons. In 2010 we purchased the old Widmer winery over in Naples, NY. There we make all of our sweeter wines as well as operate East Coast Crush and Copack which is a custom crush business for the wine and cider industry. Including all of our custom crush business we produce about 1 million gallons

total. In Hector we make only our estate vinifera wines.

We both oversee all facets of both operations but Doug specializes in vineyard, production and wholesale and I specialize in retail, HR, finance and marketing.

3. What has helped you succeed and gain experience?

I grew up living and breathing the farming and winery business. I would tie vines as a kid and I worked in the tasting room as a teenager. I then went off to college at Cornell where I majored in Hotel Administration. That education gave a great foundation in management and tourism in general. I worked in middle management with Wyndham and Marriott for a few years and then returned to the winery when my mother was in need of help.

Working outside the industry definitely helped me to succeed in the family business. I think it's really important to get out and gain that experience outside of the family. Much of what I learned at school and in the hotel industry can be translated to the wine business. I was willing to be innovative and take risks. Some ideas panned out and others didn't but ultimately it drove business and allowed us to grow and prosper as a company.

4. What inspires you?

I've always had a strong drive to succeed and grow. I was inspired by my parents' willingness to risk everything to start this business. And I'm inspired when I see one of our ideas come to fruition.

5. What keeps you up at night? What are your challenges?

My kids keep me up at night! I would say the two biggest challenges in this business are state and federal taxes and regulations. They make it really tough to succeed at business in NYS. We recently were audited by the Federal Tax and Trade Bureau and they fined us several hundred thousand dollars for nit-picky laws that actually were nullified the following year. The other challenge is how saturated this area has become with other wineries and breweries.

6. What is your favorite local activity?

Boating and paddle boarding on Seneca Lake.