

The Washington Post

New York's growing empire

*By: Dave McIntyre
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More New York wines are available in the Washington area than ever before. That demonstrates the growth of regional wine production in all 50 states, as more-established regions gain reputations for quality and make inroads in distribution channels. New York vino is no longer a novelty to bring home from family trips up north.

This is an exciting development for a number of reasons. First, and most simply, it gives us another wine region to explore in depth. Variety is always good.

Second, New York's modern wine industry, which took root about two decades before Virginia's, is beginning to feel comfortable with its identity. That means Long Island's leading producers no longer are trying to make Pomerol - just the best darn Long Island merlot they possibly can.

"A distinct style is emerging, and we are finding it easier to describe and celebrate Long Island wines for what they are," Trent Preszler, chief executive of Bedell Cellars on the North Fork of Long Island, said in an e-mail. "It turns out consumers are responding favorably to the level of authenticity and distinctiveness in our winemaking."

The same can be said for the Finger Lakes, where top producers are scratching out a distinctive style of Riesling, not modeled after Germany's Mosel or Rheingau but something uniquely New York.

In fact, the Finger Lakes can stake a claim as the country's best region for Riesling. The most familiar names, Dr. Konstantin Frank and Hermann J. Wiemer, have been joined by others such as Anthony Road, Chateau Lafayette Reneau, Fox Run, Glenora, Heron Hill, Lamoreaux Landing, Lucas, Keuka Lake Vineyards and Red Newt, which are among my favorites.

Winemakers Peter Bell of Fox Run, Johannes Reinhardt of Anthony Road and David Whiting of Red Newt collaborate each year on a single dry Riesling called Tierce, which they describe as an effort to define the terroir around Seneca Lake, the largest of the Finger Lakes. Tierce and Red Newt are not distributed here, but some of the superb wines of Fox Run and Anthony Road are available.

The Finger Lakes style of Riesling that has emerged over the past decade or so features flavors of lime zest and apricots, but winemakers have detected variations around the different lakes as well. Rieslings grown near Seneca Lake can be nearly ephemeral, with bracing minerality and a slight floral hint of talc. Keuka Lake Rieslings tend to be richer and more oily in

texture, while Cayuga Lake's are more overtly fruity. Most wineries produce dry, semi-dry and sweet (dessert) versions, so there is much to explore.

Don't let me give you the impression that New York wines are all merlot and Riesling. There is also cabernet franc, Gewurztraminer and some excellent chardonnay that benefits from the cool climate. Pinot noir lovers will want to explore the Hudson River Valley and the Niagara Escarpment, New York's most cutting-edge wine region. But you will have to do that in person, or through direct shipping from the wineries.

Which brings me to a third reason to be excited about the arrival of New York wines: They have made it to our area despite the consolidation of the wholesale industry that has choked off market access for many boutique wineries. The New York wines are distributed here through small or medium-size independent companies. You won't find those companies' names on the labels, but they are striking a blow for wine diversity. Kudos to them.

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Recommended New York wines

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Here are some of the best New York wines available in the Washington area, with additional information on how to find others. The best location for one-stop shopping is Wegmans, which features New York wines at each of its Northern Virginia locations. In the District, Cleveland Park Wine and Spirits carries several wines from the East Coast, including some from New York.

Dr. Konstantin Frank Dry Riesling, 2008

*** 1/2 (Excellent – Exceptional)*

Finger Lakes, N.Y., \$20

It begins as racy and full-bodied, and then the structure emerges and takes control. Excellent wine from the pioneers of European vinifera grape varieties in New York.

Boutique Vineyards in Maryland/Suprex International in the District and Virginia: Available in the District at Cleveland Park Wine and Spirits; on the list at Charlie Palmer Steak. Available in Maryland at Calvert Wine & Spirits in Hunt Valley, Grand Cru and the Wine Source in Baltimore; on the list at Mr. Rain's Fun House in Baltimore, Shab Row Bistro and Wine Bar in Frederick. Available in Virginia at Red White & Bleu in Falls Church, various Wegmans locations.

