

33RD ANNUAL BUYING GUIDE

SPECIAL ISSUE

Wine & Spirits

TOP 100 WINERIES OF 2019

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TOP 100 WINES & TOP 100 BEST BUYS

Dr. Konstantin Frank

NEW YORK | FINGER LAKES

The Konstantin Frank winery makes a remarkable range of wines, with more confidence and detail than ever before.



MARK VERAGUTH

DR. KONSTANTIN FRANK CAME TO New York City from the Ukraine in 1951, armed with a degree in oenology and a PhD thesis that explored the effects of frost on grapes and vines, before establishing his winery on the shores of Keuka Lake in 1962. Perhaps no one, then, was better equipped to take on the great conversion in the Finger Lakes from hybrid and labrusca vines to vinifera. For four generations, under son Willi, grandson Fred and now Fred's daughter Meaghan, the winery has been a quiet innovator for the region, bringing a wild assortment of varieties into production. Some, like riesling, cabernet franc and pinot noir, have become standard bearers, while others, like rkatsiteli and gruner veltliner, are emblematic of the region's potential. The winery's new vineyards on Seneca Lake near Hector, described as the Finger Lakes' banana belt, have added range to the repertoire, the site warm enough to ripen a range of red varieties as well as produce late-harvest rieslings. —P.J.C.



FOUNDED: 1962
OWNER: The Frank family
WINEMAKER: Mark Veraguth
VITICULTURIST: Erik Volz
ACRES OWNED: 125
CASES PRODUCED: 35,000
ESTATE GROWN: 90%

2014 Finger Lakes Brut (\$25, 92 points) Konstantin Frank has been making sparkling wine since 1985 (under a separate label, Chateau Frank which merged with the home label in 2017). There are seven sparklers at present, made by Eric Bauman, who's been in charge of sparkling wine production here for 13 years. Perhaps folding one label into the other has led to more focus, because the current crop of sparklers show great character and clarity. The 2014 Brut, a blend of pinot noir and chardonnay, with a dollop of pinot meunier, is bright, nervy and on point, with bracing notes of citrus and salt and a mildly leesy savor.

2013 Finger Lakes Blanc de Noirs (\$35, 91 points) Made from pinot noir blended with five percent pinot meunier, this is posh and stylish, with a light peach color and a lively mousse. It's generous and clean, with talc-like acidity driving notes of Rainier cherries and bose pear.

2017 Finger Lakes Margrit Dry Riesling (\$35, 91 points) Margrit, named for Meaghan Frank's grandmother, comes from estate vineyards overlooking Seneca Lake, a warmer setting than Keuka. It is vibrant and thrillingly dry, with a brisk scent bearing a slightly herbal tinge, and explosive citrus flavors delivered in a delicious, juicy burst.

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THIS YEAR, WE TASTED SOME 11,500 wines and found 2,600 that deserved 90-plus scores: And we believe the most valuable information we generate from all that tasting is a record of standout wineries.

The 100 wineries profiled in these pages are performing at the very top of their league, whether that's Santa Barbara grenache or Champagne, Armenian areni or Willamette pinot noir. It's a diverse group, and what they all share is a track-record of exceptional wines.

Introducing our Top 100 Wineries of 2019.

We present the US wineries first, followed by the winners from Europe, then the rest of the New World. You can count on every one of them for consistently great wines, whether you're exploring a wine list, building your collection or stocking up for the holidays.

Reported by Patrick J. Comiskey, Joshua Greene, Stephanie Johnson, Sydney Love, Karen Moneymaker, Rachel DellRocco Terrazas, Tara Q. Thomas and Corey Warren.