

PREMIUM

New York State: Sparkling wines to try

Sparkling wine plays an important role in the New York State wine scene. Charles Curtis MW discovers why and selects a handful to try.



Charles Curtis MW

November 6, 2021



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The first traditional-method sparkling wine from European grape varieties (*v. vinifera*) was made in 1985 by the Dr. Konstantin Frank Winery.

They continue to stress traditional-method sparklers along with other producers such as Hermann J. Weimer in the Finger Lakes and Wölffer, Bedell, and Lenz on the North Fork.

Others, such as Sheldrake Point and Ravines, produce a Sekt-style sparkler from **Riesling** that can be delightfully refreshing.

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Another trend in New York (as everywhere, it seems) is the revival of the méthode ancestrale sparkling wine.

This type of wine is produced by stopping the initial fermentation of the grape juice into wine, rather than by secondary fermentation in the bottle as is done in **Champagne** (known as traditional-method sparkling wine).

Often slightly sweet, this style gained currency in the modern era in France, where it is called today 'pét-nat', short for 'pétillant naturel'. Today, pét-nat is produced worldwide from France, Austria and Spain to the New World.

In New York State, some producers, such as Red Tail Ridge, use Riesling.

Others, such as the joint venture between winemaker Nathan Kendall and sommelier Pascaline Lepeltier called chëpika, use traditional New York hybrids such as Catawba and Delaware.

In contrast, others use inventive blends such as the **Merlot**/Lagrein produced at Channing Daughters.

Charles Curtis MW's top New York sparkling wines



Dr. Konstantin Frank, Blanc de Blancs, Finger Lakes, New York State 2017

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This sparkling wine is one of the references for the region. It shows an astonishing purity of fruit with lovely lemon and green apple aromas, a bit of smoke and yeast, and a distinct underlying minerality. Bottled in the March following the vintage and disgorged just over three...

Points 95

Chöpika, Catawba, Finger Lakes, New York State 2020

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The new vintage of the Catawba pet-nat from Nathan Kendall and Pascaline Lepeltier is their most successful yet. They have managed to tame the unruly acidity and somewhat unorthodox aromas of the Catawba grape and craft a distinctive, elegant, and satisfying wine. The mousse...

Points 93



Hermann J. Wiemer, Cuvée Brut, Finger Lakes, New York State 2016

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This wine is a lovely example of the potential of traditional-method sparkling wine from the Finger Lakes. The classic blend of 63% Chardonnay and 37% Pinot Noir (all from estate vineyards) is picked by hand, pressed as whole clusters, and carefully fermented before aging...

Points 92



Dr. Konstantin Frank, Brut, Finger Lakes, New York State 2019

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This wine is a blend of 55% Chardonnay, 40% Pinot Noir, and 5% Meunier (explicitly planted for the sparkling program). The wine is harmonious and pure, with a nose that adds rich almond

and cream notes to the citrus/floral underpinning from the Chardonnay. The wine is three...

Points 92



Dr. Konstantin Frank, Blanc de Noirs, Finger Lakes, New York State 2017

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This substantial sparkling wine shows pronounced aromas of fresh flowers, marzipan and toast. The texture of the wine is just slightly chewy, and there is perhaps a hint of (good) bitterness from the skins at the end, all perfectly spot-on for the blanc-de-noirs style. The...

Points 91



Anthony Road, Sparkling Riesling, Finger Lakes, New York State 2017

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Done in the style of a German Sekt, this sparkling Riesling shows a pleasantly peachy fruit with honeysuckle notes on the nose. The palate features bright, fresh acidity and a liling texture.

The wine is perfect for summer quaffing, although it perhaps lacks concentration, precision, ...

Points 89



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