

Grapevine

New York Wines

by **Bella & Anthony**
of Valley Wines & Liquors

People sometimes crack-up after we suggest they buy a bottle of Long Island Chardonnay or Riesling from the Finger Lake area. We are trying not to take it personally, because we realize there are many wine consumers who don't know that New York State has the oldest established industry in the country. Maybe they are picturing a guy squishing grapes under the Brooklyn Bridge or something. But, in any case, New York is second only to California in US wine production. The number of wineries in the state more than quadrupled between 1983; though New York produces less than one-tenth of California's volume, its wine production is 15 times greater than the third largest wine producing state, Washington.

The four Major wine regions in New York State are the Finger Lakes, the Hudson River Region, the Lake Erie district, and Long Island. There are three types of grapes grown in New York: Native American (*vitis Labrusco*), French-American (French-American hybrids), and European (*vitis vinifera*). The Native American varieties are very popular among grape growers in New York State. They are hearty grapes, and can

withstand the cold winters. Among the most familiar grapes of this group are Concord Catabwa and Delaware.

The European grape is a new-comer to New York State. Thirty years ago, some new wineries began to experiment with the traditional European grapes. Dr. Konstantin Frank, a Russian viticulturist skilled in cold-climate grape growing, came to America to grow *vitis vinifera* in New York. This was unheard of and laughed at... years ago. At that time, other vintners predicted he would fail, and said it was impossible to grow *vinifera* in New York's cold climate. Yet, Dr. Frank was successful with *vinifera* and has produced some world-class wines, especially his Riesling and Chardonnay.

Some New York winemakers have chosen to plant French-American hybrid varieties. These grapes combine European taste characteristics with vine hardiness, to withstand New York cold winters. These varieties were originally developed by French viticulturists in the 19th century. They include Seyval Blanc and Ravat, Baco Noir and Chancellor.

Since 1976, more than 50 wineries have opened in New York State. These new vineyards specialize in wine made from either European or French-American grape varieties. Several wineries in the Finger Lakes region have already established themselves as consistent producers of high-quality wines. Three well-known examples are Glenora, Wagner, and Brotherhood.

In the future, we will tell you more details about these wineries and their work. But for now, here are some facts: most of New York State's new wineries are only beginning to discover and develop their own style, which makes New York a very exciting region to watch. Essentially, New York is in the midst of a wine-making renaissance, combining over a century of tradition with new experimentation in grape growing and winemaking. More and more wineries, including several in the Hudson Valley, will be producing world class wines.

If you don't live near Napanoch, and cannot come to our store to choose from a great selection of New York State wines, visit your local wine shop and serve your next party or intimate dinner with a great bottle from a great region. Cheers!

Contact Bella & Anthony at ZLiquorman@aol.com, or **845-647-1709, 1-800-780-1709; fax 845-647-8855**, or their websites at www.Winegivers.com or www.valley.toastnetwork.com or their shop at the **Valley Mall Plaza** in Napanoch. 

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