THERE ARE NO SIGNS ON THE ROAD TO PARADISE. It’s just a narrow track leading off Highway 116, down into a fog-trapping gulley and then up a steep hillside of roses and vines. Rodney Strong led Audrey and Barry Sterling there when he was just beginning to plant the vineyard. The Sterlings bought the estate in 1976 and started making sparkling wines as their chardonnay and pinot noir vines matured. While any number of heavily financed Champagne ventures founded in Carneros and Napa Valley, the Sterlings’ green valley sparklers began to gain traction. Today, Joy Sterling, Audrey and Barry’s daughter, runs the estate with her brother, Laurence. This fall, she’s on her way to Washington, DC, to take part in an inaugural event in Hillary Clinton’s Diplomatic Culinary Partnerships initiative: purely American bubbles.

What is paradise if not a place in the clouds, one that converts Goldridge soil, cool morning sun and overnight banks of ocean mist into chardonnay and pinot noir grapes that develop flavor depth before they turn too fully ripe for sparkling wine? That flavor depth adds spicy citrus and delicate red fruit to the ‘03 Brut LD, while it creates the refreshing contrast in the 1997 jovial, a wine that rested for 14 years en tirage, developing Bosc pear and pie crust richness tamed by green apple acidity.

Laurence works with winemaker David Munksgard and consultant Daniel Roberts to shepherd individual blocks toward sparkling wine or a range of chardonnay and pinot noir bottlings. Their 2010 chardonnays are impressive, particularly the Heritage Clone from a 20-acre block Roberts helped the Sterlings plant in 2004 and 2006. It’s cool and vibrant, fragrant with citrus blossom scents. The 2010 Rued Clone is equally floral, with a textural elasticity and snap to its clean pear flavors. Corral Vineyards is at the southeastern corner of the property, at the entry point for the fog, an eight-acre block planted in 1987 that builds a richer beeswax texture into its wine, along with tangy citrus sweetness that would be delicious with crab, whether at the White House or at home. —J.G.

MARK WAGNER’S FAMILY HAS BEEN IN THE Finger Lakes grape business in one form or another since his great-grandfather’s day, growing vinifera and French-American hybrid grapes for sale to wine producers since the early 1940s. Mark took over the family vineyard in 1978 and began a shift toward growing vinifera grapes for local winemakers. He started producing his own wine in 1990 and built a winery in 1992, named after the 19th century steamboat landing near his vineyards on the eastern shore of Seneca Lake. Today, Lamoreaux Landing has 115 acres of vines at seven sites and at altitudes varying from 400 to 1,800 feet. The lake’s proximity offers not only aesthetic benefits, but also viticultural ones: its 4.2 trillion gallons of water act as a natural insulator for Lamoreaux’s microclimate.

Today, Lamoreaux’s vineyards are almost entirely vinifera, a quarter of them devoted to riesling, the balance in chardonnay, gewürztraminer, merlot, pinot noir, cabernets franc and sauvignon, and a little vidal. The team farms sustainably and compost their pomace, leaves and vine cuttings. That team includes winery partner Josh Wig (married to Wagner’s niece) and Collin Grant, both of whom share in the winemaking with Wagner.

A standout among Lamoreaux’s reds is the T23 Cabernet Franc, made in a style inspired by the Loire and aged in stainless steel. But the focus here is on riesling. All are fermented in steel, marked by crispness and driven by acidity. The 2011 Dry Riesling yields tart notes of passion fruit and lime leaves, a vivacious wine with a long line of flavor. The single-vineyard selection from Red Oak, a five-acre parcel of riesling planted on Honeyeye silt-loam, shows a lot of complexity from vines just six years old. It’s a juicy wine with pear scents and a sharp edge of flint, bright and youthful. The Semi-Dry offers a richly floral scent and a modest sweetness, balanced to age. All of these 2011s buzz with a bright, delicate drive. —L.D.