Wine Spectator

Wine Country

Exploring New York

Plus: Best Wineries To Visit, Restaurants And Hotels

2003 Red Burgundy: Opulent and Age-worthy

Gifts For Home Cooks And Wine Lovers

800 Wines Rated
“Lamoreaux has one of the more beautiful tasting rooms in the Finger Lakes, a wooden Greek Revival building with magnificent views of the vine-filled slopes and Seneca Lake.”

-Wine Spectator, May 2006
Owner and Winemaker Mark Wagner’s wines are the perfect accompaniment to the view; his Chardonnay, Cabernet Franc and Riesling are particularly strong.”

-Wine Spectator, May 2006
New York Rising

The Empire State's wine regions offer beautiful vineyards, boutique wineries, fine dining and distinctive culture

By Mitch Frank
From Wine Spectator magazine, May 31, 2006 issue

January 14 was a typical winter day in New York's Finger Lakes region. Outside, the temperature had fallen to 14°F, and biting winds were driving heavy snow across the hillsides above Seneca Lake. But inside the stately tasting room at Lamoreaux Landing Wine Cellars, a crowd of visitors was swarming the bar to sample winemaker Mark Wagner's Rieslings and Chardonnays. The winery's parking lot was filled with cars and even a stretch limo. Just down the road, a tour bus was pulling into Standing Stone Vineyards. The vines in the region may have been dormant, but many wineries were alive with wine lovers.

If you'd like to explore America's next great wine region, there's no need to look to the West Coast. A quiet wine revolution has been taking place back east, in the Empire State. New York was once known for industrial bulk wine production, but passionate vintners, most working from small wineries, have dramatically improved the quality of the state's wines—so much so that in 2004, New York wineries attracted more than 4 million tourists.

And now that New York legislators have passed one of the nation's more liberal direct-shipping laws, these wines are more widely available than ever. This summer, head to New York and see what all the fuss is about—and June is an even better time than January for a visit.

Try a Riesling from the Finger Lakes, a Merlot from Long Island or a Cabernet Franc from the Hudson River Valley, and you'll understand. These are the state's three major wine regions, and each has a distinctive culture, signature wines and diverse attractions.

On Long Island's East End, you'll find two wine regions in one. The North Fork is a quiet stretch of coastal towns where farmers grow herbs, fruit and vegetables, fisherman pull in oysters and scallops and wineries make elegant Bordeaux-style reds and fresh whites. Across Peconic Bay, the Hamptons offer upscale shopping and dining and a high-profile social scene.

North of New York City, the Hudson River Valley is a pastoral paradise, with horse farms, 19th-century mansions and a burgeoning culinary scene. Local farms and historic sites provide plenty of entertainment for families. The wine landscape is less developed, but several producers are making strides with Cabernet Franc, Chardonnay and even Pinot Noir.

Farther upstate, the Finger Lakes region is America's answer to Germany's Mosel River Valley. The area has built its reputation on Riesling, but Gewürztraminer, Cabernet Franc and Pinot Noir are also showing potential. This sleepy farm area, striking for the natural beauty of its rocky slopes and deep glacial lakes, is slowly becoming a premier wine region.

New York has historically been wine country—French Huguenots planted grapes in the Hudson Valley in 1699. During the century following the Civil War, New York was the capital of East Coast winemaking, and second only to California in the nation. But the wines were made from native American grapes (like Concord) by behemoth companies such as Taylor, Gold Seal and Great Western.
It was believed that *Vitis vinifera* varieties could never tolerate East Coast winters. When American palates tired of sweet jug wines in the early ’70s, the great New York wine companies became dinosaurs. (Ironically, the one that adapted and survived is now Constellation, the world’s biggest wine company.) Still, even today, 95 percent of New York’s production is bulk wine.

But as New York’s industrial wineries were dying, seeds were being planting for the current fine-wine rebirth. Ukrainian immigrant Konstantin Frank began trials with *vinifera* vines in the Finger Lakes in the late ’50s. In 1973, a young married couple, Alex and Louisa Hargrave, started the first commercial winery on Long Island. And in 1976, the state government passed the Farm Winery Act, which helped struggling grapegrowers establish their own wineries and sell their wines directly to visitors.

In the past 30 years, growth has been exponential. A study by the New York Wine & Grape Foundation last year found that New York, which had 21 wineries in 1976, now has 212, producing 200 million bottles a year, part of a $3.4 billion industry. These new wineries are committed to the noble *vinifera* grapes: acreage has grown from an estimated 2,200 in 1990 to more than 4,500 today.

If you travel to these promising regions, you’ll discover that the proliferation of fine wines is prodding chefs to offer fine cuisine. In the coming pages, you’ll find profiles of not just wineries to visit but also the best dining options, as well as welcoming country inns and hotels. The most popular times of year for tourism are summer and autumn. The wineries stay open in the winter, but many of the hotels and restaurants do not.

As with any hidden wine region, visiting New York requires some careful planning—but taking the road less traveled is half the fun. And no matter the season, the taste of good wine and food will put you in a New York state of mind.

*Note: Restaurants and lodgings listed here accept all major credit cards unless otherwise noted. Winery hours may vary seasonally. We strongly recommend calling ahead to confirm.*

### VITICULTURE IN NEW YORK STATE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Number of Wineries</th>
<th>Total Acres Under Vine</th>
<th>Acres Planted to <em>Vinifera</em></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Long Island</td>
<td>38</td>
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<td>Finger Lakes</td>
<td>94</td>
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<td>Hudson River</td>
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