

**If You Drink
No Noir, You
Pinot Noir**

PinotFile

The First Wine Newsletter Devoted to Pinotaficionados

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Finger Lakes Wines - Start Spreading the News

Last week I was browsing the magazine racks at the airport, waiting for my flight to New York. I planned to attend a wedding in the Big Apple and then head northeast to the Finger Lakes region of upstate New York. The only recent press I had seen on the Finger Lakes was a short article in the May, 2006 issue of *Gourmet*. Surprisingly, I came upon the latest issue of the *Wine Spectator* featuring New York wine country. I eagerly turned to the section on the Finger Lakes region, but only found a single sentence on Pinot Noir at the end of the article which read, "The jury is out on Pinot Noir; some winemakers love the challenge it poses in a tricky climate and have had decent results, while others say it's too much of a pain to grow." Didn't we hear this same refrain about the heartbreak grape in California and Oregon 30 years ago?

The best fit and the signature wine of the Finger Lakes region is Riesling. As good as the Rieslings are (easily comparable in quality to ones from Germany), it is only recently that this wine has gained interest among sommeliers and wine enthusiasts countrywide. This is partly due to the post-Prohibition heritage of the region's wine industry which was dominated by two family wine dynasties, the Taylors of Keuka Lake and the Widmars of Canandaigue Lake. The wines were made from hybrids resulting from the random cross-pollination of indigenous North America labrusca and "native American" vinifera varieties brought to this country by early colonists. The most well-known grapes of this type were Catawba and Concord. These grapes prospered in the region due to their hardiness resulting from the wild North American vine parentage. The wines were made with residual sweetness and still to this day, many New York wineries make semi-sweet styled wines among their portfolio to appeal to the local populace who are still accustomed to this type of wine.

In the mid-1900s, many new vineyards were planted to newer French-American hybrid varieties. These hybrids resulted from the intentional crossing of vinifera from Europe with North American varieties. The goal was to obtain the desired flavors of vinifera and gain the hardiness and disease resistance of North American types. Examples include Baco Noir, Cayuga, Chancellor, Foch (Marechal Foch), Seyval Blanc and Vidal Blanc. These hybrids were often blended with California bulk wine, but the public began to lose interest in these wines in the 1960s, a time when vinifera dry wines were attracting many wine drinkers. The New York wine industry was in dire straits when a Ukranian immigrant, **Dr. Konstantin Frank**, appeared on the scene. He was an iconoclast who preached the gospel of vinifera wines. He proved that vinifera vines could survive the sub-zero winters of the Finger Lakes if planted on proper rootstocks in sites close to the lake (more on him later in the section on Dr. Konstantin Frank Vinifera Wine Cellars). New York passed a Farm Winery Law in 1976 that encouraged and assisted grape growers, numerous small wineries sprang up, and the modern Finger Lakes wine industry was born. The center of winegrowing shifted to Seneca and Cayuga Lakes, along the shores of which most wineries are now located (see map of the region on the next page).

For the complete history of Finger Lakes wine, refer to the excellent book written by winemaker and journalist, Richard Figiel, titled *Culture In A Glass: Reflections on the Rich Heritage of Finger Lakes Wines*, 1995 (available from Silver Thread Vineyard at www.silverthreadwine.com, \$15).



Today, there are over 90 wineries in the Finger Lakes region that account for 85% of New York's wine production of 200 million bottles a year. On a volume basis, it is the largest wine producing region outside of California. It is not surprising to learn that in New York agriculture is the number one source of income for the state with tourism number two, not businesses such as the garment industry, banking, or the stock exchanges as many would assume. New York now ranks third behind California and Washington in vineyard acres planted (10,414 acres) and annual grape tonnage, and fourth behind Oregon in total number of wineries. New York is the second largest market for wine in the United States trailing only California.

The Finger Lakes region produces almost every common vinifera varietal including both whites (Riesling, Chardonnay, Pinot Gris, Gewurztraminer, Rkatsiteli) and reds (Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, Malbec, Merlot, Pinot Noir, Pinot Meunier, Syrah). Riesling is clearly the star here with former Konstantin Frank winemaker Peter Bell (now at Fox Run) asserting that Finger Lakes Rieslings are "more lush in their fruitiness, with more clear-cut fruit aromas," compared to their German equivalents. The styles range from bone-dry, mineral-toned Rieslings, to semi-dry more fruity types, to botrytized and ice wines. Sparkling wines have great untapped potential here, especially ones made from the Riesling grape. While in the region, I had a 2000 Chateau Frank Blanc de Noirs (100% Pinot Noir) and a Goose Watch Brut Rosé (100% Pinot Noir), both of which were superb and the equal of any sparkling wine I have had from California. Still Pinot Noir is more of a challenge and is only successful in warmer vintages. The 2003 and 2004 growing seasons were extremely cold with temperatures down to -13 degrees and yields were either extremely low or non-existent and many Pinot Noir vines were lost. As I traveled, there were very few examples of Pinot Noir available for tasting from these two vintages. On the upside, 2005 was a very warm and dry vintage and the Pinot Noirs out of barrels I tasted show tremendous potential. The Pinot Noirs from the Finger Lakes are more akin to Burgundy than Oregon or California. One must approach the Pinot Noirs with an open mind and a vinous curiosity, since they are unique expressions of the region. The acids are high, and the alcohol levels are low (around 12%). The wines are lighter in color, possess restrained and subtle flavors and are terrific partners with food. Because of the high acid levels, they also age extremely well and acquire more complexity over time.

The most striking image of motoring through the Finger Lakes region is the astonishing beauty of the lakes and the surrounding countryside which is dotted by red barns and fields of dandelions. After leaving the sometimes maddening hustle of New York City, it is a calming oasis of farms, vineyards, and historic properties. Cows graze lazily in the sun and colorful strings of clothing are hung out on lines to dry. It is no wonder that real estate values along the five major lakes (**Canandaigua, Cayuga, Keuka, Seneca, and Skaneateles**) have taken off. A six hour drive from New York City, but much closer to metropolitan areas such as Syracuse and Rochester, the Finger Lakes has quickly become a favorite vacation spot (area visitors boomed from 300,000 in 1985 to over three million in 2004). Developers and private investors now vie with winegrowers for prime land on or near the lakeshores. Modest established cottages on the lakeshores can approach a million dollars. The town of **Ithaca**, on the southern shores of Cayuga Lake was recently listed in *Kiplinger* magazine as the eight best place to live in the United States. It is the home to Ithaca College and Cornell University and in the magazine is described as “an Ivy League outpost with great food, beautiful scenery, Naderite politics and unburdened by big-city crime and traffic.” I found the traffic practically nonexistent throughout the Finger Lakes region.



Fortunate for me, I did not rely on the *Wine Spectator* feature to choose my accommodations during my trip. Although I heard positive feedback about the Taughannock Farms Inn and Restaurant mentioned in the article (this Inn is nicely located for wine touring between Cayuga and Seneca Lakes), the *Wine Spectator* neglected to list the **Aurora Inn** on the eastern shore of Cayuga Lake where I chose to stay. This is a haven of gentility, hospitality and fine dining that I have rarely encountered the equal of in my many travels to wine country regions of the United States. This country inn is one of the oldest in the United States, first opening in 1833 at a time when the town of Aurora was a prosperous village and a major stopover for boats carrying agricultural products on the Erie Canal. The history of Aurora (named after the Greek goddess of the dawn) is closely tied to the Morgan family who constructed most of the public buildings and mansions in the village. The senior Edwin B. Morgan, built the Aurora Inn and through the years it has been variously named the Aurora House, the Aurora Hotel, the Way-Side Inn, and now the Aurora Inn. E.B. Morgan became close friends with Henry Wells and together they founded the American Express and Wells Fargo Express companies. They also founded Wells College in Aurora, a prestigious school for women (it became co-educational in 2005). In more recent modern times, the village of Aurora had suffered economic decline, the public buildings were in disrepair, and the Aurora Inn was dilapidated. The Inn finally closed in 2000. Pleasant Rowland, the creator of the American Girls Collection of dolls and merchandise and a 1962 graduate of Wells College was the town’s savior. In the ribbon-cutting ceremony at the reopening of the Aurora Inn on May 29, 2003, she said: “It seemed to me then that if God’s glory was expressed in the natural beauty

of Aurora, man's glory was expressed in its handsome old buildings, the living legacy of a gracious past, a place of gentility, rare in the world as I had come to know it. Aurora was a very special place, indeed - a treasure to protect." Pleasant Rowland had formed a partnership with Wells College known as the Aurora Foundation and poured millions of dollars into the restoration of the 173-year old Aurora Inn and several of the adjacent town buildings. Pleasant Rowland also purchased MacKenzie-Childs, the noted maker of whimsical hand-crafted tableware and furniture which was threatening to relocate from Aurora. Today MacKenzie-Childs has a manufacturing studio, retail shop, restaurant, farmhouse, greenhouse, gardens, and a variety of animals. It is the beautifully restored Aurora Inn, however, that is the centerpiece of this quaint village (pictured below).



The brick Federal-style Inn combines 19th century charm with all of the modern comforts of the most stylish modern small hotel. Situated a stone's throw from the shore of Lake Cayuga (right), the lakeside rooms have generous verandas which provide breathtaking vistas of the lake and the nightly sunsets. Take a seat in one of the rocking chairs, curl up with a good read, and you really do realize that life is good. The 10 rooms (two are suites) are very large, stylish and romantic with designer fabrics and furnishings, marble bathrooms, and fireplaces. On the first floor, is a sophisticated restaurant serving three meals a day (a full sit-down breakfast is included in the room rates of \$125-350



depending on the season). Although my wife and I dined regally in New York City before arriving in Aurora, we were so impressed by the cuisine here that we ate dinner here every night of our stay. One shining culinary memory was a cold fresh peach vichyssoise paired with a Finger Lakes Treleven Semi-Dry Riesling (*merci!*). All of the meals are served on unique MacKenzie-Childs tableware. The toque, Mark Fitzgerald, is young, talented and enthusiastic. In his three years here, he has assembled a crack culinary team and besides executing the menu daily, caters the many onsite meetings and weddings, and provides take-home entrees for the village populace at the market attached to the Inn. The dining room is professionally managed by Carli Albright who is quite knowledgeable about wine and has assembled a small, but interesting wine list with emphasis on Finger Lakes wines as it should be. As elegant and stylish as this Inn is, it is really the people that make it special.

A block away, the original Italianate home of Edwin B. Morgan on the lakeshore has been faithfully restored and modernized. Aptly named the E.B. Morgan House, it is operated by the Aurora Inn as a seven guest room sister inn. It is the perfect spot for executive retreats and family reunions. Rates vary according to season, from \$125-300. For both the Aurora Inn and E.B. Morgan House, contact information is: 1-866-364-8808, or www.aurora-inn.com. Ask for Dan Derusha who is most helpful. You won't want to leave so plan accordingly.



There are a few wineries close to the town of Aurora, but most require about an hour's drive on empty roads. Part of the charm of the region is its picturesque countryside, and one is almost glad that it takes some driving to reach a winery destination. Rent a convertible. Many of the wineries are open daily or on weekends and offer small cafes or bistros. In the following pages three wineries I visited in the Finger Lakes region are profiled, ranging in size from boutique (Silver Thread, 1200 to 1500 cases a year) to modest (Thirsty Owl Wine Co, 12,000 cases a year) to relatively large (Dr. Konstantin Frank, 40,000 cases a year). All of them have distinctive and quite different personalities.

Silver Thread Vineyard



Richard Figiel is the man here, owner, farmer, winemaker, bottler, labeler and salesman. For years he was a noted journalist in New England and traveled extensively throughout the Finger Lakes region for wine magazine features, interviewing countless winegrowers including luminaries such as Dr. Konstantin Frank, whom he knew well. He had thoroughly researched the numerous microclimates in the region, and when the winemaking bug finally struck, he knew exactly where he wanted to settle. In the early 1980s, he began planting a vineyard with classic European varieties including Chardonnay, Riesling and Pinot Noir on the eastern shore of Seneca Lake. Seneca Lake is the deepest of the Finger Lakes (632 feet) which are all extraordinarily deep. The particular site he chose is a temperate island within a cool region. The Iroquois knew this 250 years ago when they had large peach orchards at this location. As Figiel explained to me and describes so clearly in his book (*Culture In a Glass*), “The Finger Lakes tend to maintain a stable temperature throughout the year. This causes the lakes to act as a colossal radiator in the winter months... often keeping vineyards 10-15 degrees warmer than locations just a half mile away. In the first hot days of April and May, the cooling influence of nearby water tends to delay the emergence of tender new vine shoots until the risk of damaging spring frosts has passed. In fall the effect reverses: summer heat stored in the surface layers of the lakes radiates up to ripening grapes, postponing first frosts until as late as November. Distinct microclimates along the hillsides rising from the lakeshores make it possible to reliably ripen grapes in a region that is generally too cold for viticulture and certainly too cold for delicate European vines like Chardonnay and Pinot Noir.” The photo below is taken from the deck of the winery toward Seneca Lake and shows a newly planted vineyard in the foreground.



It wasn't until 1992 that Figiel felt the vines were mature enough to produce distinctive wine. He practices sustainable organic farming with no chemical fertilizers or synthetic pesticides. The concept is to be a small artisan winery focusing on a few estate cool-climate varieties. The winery, designed by his architect brother, is built into the hillside (seen in the distance in the photo on page 6) to take advantage of natural temperature control and gravity flow and is a low-tech, traditional cellar. Winemaking is very Burgundian and truly hands-on. The manicured vineyard is pictured to the right.



The Silver Thread lineup of wines including Riesling, Chardonnay, Gewrztraminer, Cabernet Franc and Pinot Noir have acquired quite a cult following. Noted Canadian Pinot Noir winegrower and author Geoff Heinricks (*A Fool and Forty Acres*) has said, "I very much admire Silver Thread, and lured he and his wife north a few years ago to contribute to an organic viticulture seminar in Prince Edward County. I find his wines often have a purity and intelligence that outshines some of the more oafish Pinots, ones that used to be very overoaked and overcropped." The *New York Times* reported that "Silver Thread produces a mere 1,500 cases of wine, including the Finger Lakes' best Riesling and an age worthy Pinot Noir."

The Silver Thread wines sport a unique label featuring a turtle image. The image was carved in a rock beside one of New York's woodland rivers by a Native American artist many centuries ago. As an earth symbol to the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) people, the turtle is a reminder to care for the land and water that give the gift of wine.



2002 Silver Thread Estate Pinot Noir \$22. A beautifully composed Pinot Noir that sports an attractive nose of baking spices and cherries. This is beginning to take on a little bouquet of leather and sandalwood. The texture is soft and comfortable with flavors that feature spice and red fruits. The finish is lasting with lively acidity.

2005 Silver Thread Estate Pinot Noir (from barrel) The cold winters of 2003 and 2004 led to miniscule yields and many lost vines. The 2005 vintage was a different story - warm and with ideal growing conditions. This wine is flush with luscious Pinot fruits and the mouth feel is warm and plush. There is great material here and this wine should turn out to be memorable.



Silver Thread Vineyard wines are not currently shipped beyond New York. Figiel (left) is a very personable man who prefers to sell all of his wine directly to a faithful local clientele. The tasting room is open from May thru November on weekends. The phone is 607-582-6116 and the website is www.silverthreadwine.com.

The Thirsty Owl Wine Company

On Route 89 midway along the western shore of Cayuga Lake sits the Thirsty Owl Wine Company & Bistro. Situated on 150 acres with over one quarter mile of lake frontage, the views are spectacular. Many visitors arrive here for a look and once they meet the friendly staff, taste the excellent wines and food, and settle into a chair on the patio, they end up spending the day. There really is no pretentiousness here. From owner and visionary Ted Cupp, to his son and president of the company, Jonathan Cupp, to pr man Bob Pawlak, winemaker Shawn Kiane, and to honorary host Matthew Bonacci (a 73-year-old Italian wine enthusiast who is affectionately called the “Finger Lakes Elvis”), this is a warm crew that truly believes in living well and drinking good wine. What other winery do you know of holds an annual barrel tasting and polka party?



Grape growing on this property dates to 1972 when the Plane family planted a vineyard and began selling grapes to Great Western Wine Company. Eventually they built the enterprise into an 8,000-case-a-year winery. Ted Cupp acquired the estate in 2000 and began producing Thirsty Owl wines in 2002. The estate’s 30-year-old Riesling vineyard sits in the foreground of the photo above, with the tasting room and bistro on the lakeshore. The goal here is to produce about 12,000 cases of exceptional wines each year featuring Riesling, Chardonnay, Chancellor, Merlot, Pinot Noir and a number of distinctive blends and semi-sweet wines. Trials are on going with Syrah and Malbec also. Prices are in the sensible \$7-\$17 range.

As Patty (my wife) and I sat around a table with the crew in the Bistro, Ted recounted the time they were trying to find a name for the new winery. A number of bottles of wine had been consumed before the Thirsty Owl moniker came to be and is based loosely on a story involving one of the family. It goes like this. Years ago a gentleman was stumbling home after a night of faster horses, younger women, and older wine. Suddenly a 4-ft-6-inch owl landed in his path. The owl said: “I have a deal for

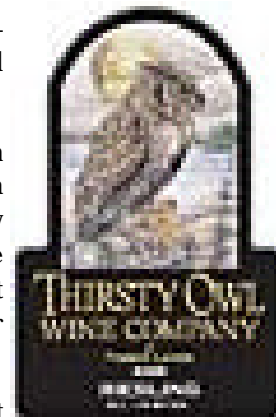
you. If you share your fine wine with me, I won't interfere with your faster horses or younger women. In fact, I am so thirsty, I will also protect your vineyards from birds and critters." The gentleman agreed. To this day, the owl can be seen proudly guarding the vineyards while savoring the best wines in New York. Ted found a chain saw sculptor who agreed to exchange a 4-ft-6-inch owl sculpture for wine and the business was started. (In the photo, from L to R, Bob, Jonathan, Ted).



2004 Thirsty Owl Wine Company Dry Riesling 11.2%alc., \$14. From 30-year-old vines. A seamless wine with a wonderful nose of exotic and tropical fruits. Very ease to drink and thoroughly enjoyable.

2004 Thirsty Owl Wine Company Pinot Noir 11.5% alc., \$17. Aged in American oak. Light garnet in color. Aromas of cherries, cranberries and a touch of sherry. The fruits are simple and a bit tart presumably due to low sugar. The wine finishes very light with brisk acidity. Although missing the mid-palate richness and finish that California versions of the grape offer, it remains an truly acceptable table wine that is varietally correct and nice for what it is. This wine will appeal to those with a French palate.

A 2005 Chardonnay from purchased grapes (40-year-old vines) was very fruit driven with lively acidity. A 2003 and 2005 Dry Riesling tasted side by side showed that with a little age, the wine harmonized: the fruit became more prominent, the acid less notable and the mouth feel full and pleasing.



Thirsty Owl Wine Company is located in Ovid, 6799 Elm Beach Road. The phone is 866-869-5805 and the website is www.thirstyowl.com. The tasting room is open daily, year 'round, and the Bistro is open during the warmer months. Bone up on your polka steps if you plan to visit.

Dr. Konstantin Frank Vinifera Wine Cellars



Dr. Konstantin Frank is a true icon to the winegrowers of the Finger Lakes region (photo above prominently displayed in the tasting room along with the numerous medals awarded to Vinifera Wine Cellars wines). He is the New York counterpart of California's Andre Tchelistcheff with whom he was friends. Konstantin Frank grew up in the Ukraine, became a professor of plant science, and rose to director of the Institute of Viticulture and Viniculture at the Polytechnic in Odessa during the 1940s. He first came to America in 1951, when he was 54 years old. Barely able to speak English, he obtained a menial laborer's job at Cornell University Geneva Experiment Station. Here he urged New York State winemakers to move away from labrusca and French hybrid grapes and embrace *Vitis vinifera*, the species that includes all of the most important grapes of fine wine. He was convinced that vinifera varieties would succeed provided they were winter-hardy varieties and planted on phylloxera-resistant roots. Frank was told that it was too cold in the Finger Lakes to harvest vinifera successfully. He was ridiculed for his revolutionary ideas but he was ornery and persistent. He told women who drank wine from labrusca hybrids that they would not get pregnant. His legendary comment to doubters was that he had grown Riesling, Chardonnay and Pinot Noir in Odessa, "where the temperature goes to forty below, where when we spit, it froze before it hit the ground."

In 1953 Frank met Charles Fournier, the head of the Gold Seal Vineyards brand of sparkling wines made with Finger Laker hybrid grapes. Fournier's experience working at Veuve Clicquot Champagne in France made him realize that Frank was likely correct and hired him as a vineyard research consultant for Gold Seal in 1953. They teamed up and planted thousands of grafted Chardonnay and Riesling vines on a hardy rootstock discovered in the garden of a convent in Quebec, Canada, where they found Pinot Noir growing. By 1957, he was proven correct.

Frank went on to found Vinifera Wine Cellars right up the road from Gold Seal (now completely absorbed by a large wine conglomerate). His original 9-acre Pinot Noir vineyard was planted on a hillside bluff, overlooking Keuka Lake's western shore, just up the road a few miles from Hammondsport. According to Frank's grandson, Frederick, the clone planted here came to the United States



in the mid-1950s through Maryland from Europe. The clone is now numbered 7 and appropriately named the **Dr. Frank clone**. In recent years, a Pinot Noir clonal trial was carried out at nearby Cornell University and the results indicated clone 7 was extremely hardy and disease resistant and the best performing clone for this region. The oldest blocks of Pinot Noir were planted from 1959 to 1961, and, according to John Haeger's *North American Pinot Noir*, are older than all California plantings still in production except two: the 1946 block at Chalone and the 1953 block at Hanzell. A gnarled, low-growing Pinot Noir vine from the original vineyard is pictured below.



Frank worked every day in his Keuka Lake vineyards and winery until he was 82. His plantings of Riesling, Chardonnay, Pinot Noir, Gewurztraminer, Cabernet Sauvignon and the exotic Rkatsiteli thrived and formed the basis for New York's wine industry resurgence. The number of wineries in New York increased from 19 in 1951 to over 219 today. He made America's first Riesling Trockenbeereauslese (TBA) in the United States in 1962. His Rieslings have been identified as the best in the United States by many prominent sources including *The New York Times* and *Time Magazine*. The prevailing Riesling clone is German Neustadt clone 90 first introduced by Konstantin Frank in the late 1950s. Recent vertical tastings back to 1960 show that Franks' Rieslings are built for the long haul. Dr. Frank's Pinot Noir was selected twice to be featured at the New York Wine Experience and was chosen twice to be poured at the prestigious International Pinot Noir Celebration in McMinnville, Oregon. His Pinot Noirs age extremely well, picking up considerable complexity along the way. His grandson, Frederick, told me a humorous story. A group of wine connoisseurs meet monthly in New York as the New York City Wine Media Guild. When Willy was an invited guest, he decided to bring his latest release, a 2001 Pinot Noir, and a bottle of the 1960 Pinot Noir, the oldest wine in the winery's library. The sommelier refused to open the 1960 vintage, claiming it would be nothing but vinegar. Willy, himself had to open the bottle, and it turned out to be superb, the hit of the entire wine lineup at the dinner.

With Frank's passing in 1985 at the age of 86, the winery was in the hands of his capable son, **Willy Frank**. Willy was well-schooled in viticulture and viniculture. He was convinced the Finger Lakes could produce a world-class sparkling wine. Konstantin was undaunted and claimed, "They only make sparkling wine in Champagne because they can't get their grapes ripe enough to make decent table wine." Willy set up a separate business next door to the family winery and began producing a "methode champenoise" Finger Lakes sparkling wine in the late 1980s using Chardonnay, Pinot Noir, and Pinot Meunier (Frank's vineyards were one of the first in the nation to plant Pinot Meunier). The Chateau Frank Brut, Blanc de Blanc, and Celebre Cremant have received numerous Gold Medals and are truly exquisite examples of their type. On my visit, I had the distinct privilege to sample the 2000 Chateau Frank Blanc de Noirs, 100% Pinot Noir. (\$40). With a soft mousse and ripe acidity, this beauty had a fine cordon of bubbles. Truly a celebration unto itself.



Perhaps Willy's greatest contribution to Dr. Konstantin Frank Vinifera VWC is that he was a businessman that knew it was vital to run the winery like a profitable business, not like a money-losing experimental station that Konstantin preferred. He reduced the number of varietals from 60 to 12, ran his own Chateau Frank sparkling wine business, and brought more publicity and recognition to the New York wine industry. Willy passed away in March of this year at the age of 80.

Konstantin Frank's grandson, **Frederick Frank**, has been the president of Dr. Frank VWC since 1993. A businessman, like his father Willy, he has further expanded the reach of the business, developing a popular second label, Salmon Run, from purchased grapes, while purchasing and developing vineyards in the Finger Lakes area to ensure that in the future nearly all of the winery's grapes will come from estate owned and farmed vineyards. He studied winemaking at Geisenheim, like his grandfather, and speaks fluent German. He has now expanded the reach of Konstantin Frank wines and today the winery sells its wines in 30 states. Frederick grins as he talks about finally getting his wines distributed in



California as if it was the ultimate badge of success! Most New York wines are only distributed within the state. With the new shipping laws, however, many of the wineries have purchased licenses to sell in California and Finger Lakes wines should be appearing on the West Coast in greater numbers.

Frederick Frank has continued Willy's legacy and strikes a charismatic pose himself. Shortly after I e-mailed the winery asking for an appointment to visit, Frederick returned my request with a gracious invitation, offering to open some library wines for my sampling. Upon meeting the man, I was struck by his almost humble, soft-spoken manner and impressed by his wine knowledge and passion for his wines. He is currently assisted by a team of five winemakers. The following wines were tasted with him. Most of the wines are at or near 12% alcohol.

2000 Chateau Frank Blanc de Noirs (\$40). Discussed previously.

2005 Dr. Konstantin Frank Dry Riesling (\$18). Like most Rieslings from the Keuka Lake region, this wine is mineral-driven with great purity of flavors and razor-sharp acidity. (He explained that the Rieslings from the Seneca Lake region are more fruit-driven in aromas and flavors and perform better in a semi-dry style. The best sites for different styles of Riesling are still being discovered.)

2005 Dr. Konstantin Frank Rkatsiteli (\$30). This was a first for me. The Rkatsiteli grape is surprisingly the third most planted grape in the world with large plantings in Konstantin Frank's homeland. This is a fun wine that would stump any taster sampled blind. The flavors are reserved and similar in profile to a Riesling, but more citrus like a Sauvignon Blanc. Crisp acidity makes this unusual wine very satisfying.

There are three Pinot Noirs produced here. The Salmon Run bottling contains young estate and purchased fruit, the Fleur de Pinot is similar but not vintage-dated. Both are made in a lighter, back porch-sipping style. The Dr. Konstantin Frank Pinot Noir is a very serious and age-worthy example made from the estate's oldest vines. The 1999 and 2001 Pinot Noirs were from the winery's library cellar and are not currently offered for sale. Interestingly, Cornell University Professor Leroy L. Creasy's studies on the resveratrol content of wines found that Finger Lakes Pinot Noirs have about fifty percent more resveratrol than ones from other regions of California and France. This finding is attributed to the humid climate in the Finger Lakes, not uncommonly 70 to 90 percent. The wine with the highest concentration of resveratrol Creasy encountered was Dr. Konstantin Frank's Fleur de Pinot Noir which had a rating of 46.1 uMolar t-resveratrol (the average range for red wines is between 0.1-12.0 uM).

2004 Dr. Konstantin Frank Pinot Noir (\$25). Clone 7 aged in French oak. Light in color but plenty of spunk. Attractive nose of dried cherries and spice. Flavors of tart cherry and pomegranate with lively acidity.

2001 Dr. Konstantin Frank Reserve Pinot Noir This wine is from a hot, dry vintage with plenty of color and body. An initially barnyardy nose blossoms with air time into an attractive marriage of ripe cherries and earthy mushrooms. The flavors feature a mélange of dark cherries, gingerbread and brown sugar-coated raisins. A clean, balanced wine with great interest.

1999 Dr. Konstantin Frank Pinot Noir. This is one of those Pinot Noirs that almost bring you to your knees - I could still taste it the next day. The color is slightly brickish. The exuberant nose of toasty fruit is sexy and alluring. Crushed, tart cherries dominate the palate with hints of cloves, beef bouillon, and smoked bacon. The texture is soft and silky, and the finish lengthy, clean and lively. I would have loved to spend a few hours with this one to see how it gave up its charms over time. Start spreading the news.

Dr. Konstantin Frank wines are widely distributed in the United States. They may be purchased directly from the winery's website, www.drfrankwines.com. The tasting room is open daily. The phone is 1-800-320-0735.





PrinceofPinot.com

Taughannock Falls along the eastern shore of Cayuga Lake is 215 ft high - taller than Niagara Falls and the highest single drop waterfall in NE.

If You Drink No Noir, You Pinot Noir

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Sources for information on Finger Lakes wines

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- www.fingerlakeswinegazette.com
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- www.FLBBA.org (Finger lakes B&B Assoc)
- www.fingerlakescottages.com
- www.eastcoastwineries.blogspot.com
- www.nywinecork.com (a retailer in Glens Falls, NY specializing in New York wines)
- www.vintagenewyork.com (Two tasting rooms in New York City and one in New Paltz, NY. Each location offers more than 200 wines from more than 60 New York wineries along with regional foods).
- *East Coast Wineries: A Complete Guide from Maine to Virginia*, author Carlo De Vito.
- *Finger Lakes Panoramas*, author Kristian S. Reynolds.



The Dr. Konstantin Frank Winery