



Finger Lakes Riesling Knows How to Sparkle

WINES FROM FAR-FLUNG places are intriguing by nature, but there's something special about sipping a bottle from my home state of New York. The global pandemic derailed my plans to visit wineries abroad, but thanks to webinars and virtual tasting opportunities organized by the New York Wine & Grape Foundation and the Finger Lakes Wine Alliance, I've developed a deeper knowledge and appreciation for local producers.

There's much to appreciate, especially if the New York wines on the table are from the Finger Lakes. The quality and diversity of expressions made here are astounding, but the region's prowess with Riesling has been its global calling card. Home to more than 115 wineries and 848 acres of Riesling that produce 220,000 cases of wine, the Finger Lakes benefit from a combination of cool-climate terroir and talented winemakers that produces impressive results.

As a fan of sparkling wine, I'm increasingly intrigued by its different styles of sparkling Riesling. Dr. Konstantin Frank Winery, a pioneer in the region, has recently introduced its elegant **2018 Riesling Nature (\$25)**. Crisp and nuanced with lively fruit flavors, this no-dosage traditional-method bubbly is aged on the lees for 12–24 months in the winery's underground cellar. "Our family has been making traditional-method sparkling wines for over 35 years, building on the success of my great-grandfather's work to pioneer the European grape varieties in 1962," said Meaghan Frank, vice president of Dr. Konstantin Frank Winery, when I reached out to her recently after an online tasting. The Nature in particular, she noted, "marries what we do best in the Finger Lakes—Riesling and traditional-method sparkling wines. There is no dosage added, which leaves a racy and vibrant acidity, making this



▲ Meaghan Frank is vice president of Dr. Konstantin Frank Winery in Hammondsport, NY.

wine a perfect accompaniment on the table. A quiche Lorraine served with fresh salad greens alongside the 2018 Riesling Nature [is] a match made in brunch heaven!"

The team at Buttonwood Grove Winery took a different approach with its unfiltered and unfiltered **2020 Riesling Pét-Nat (\$20)**, which is equal parts fresh, fruit forward, and fizzy. "We like to focus on the grapes that grow best in our region and experiment with different styles," winemaker Sue Passmore told me. "The Riesling Pét-Nat project has been really exciting. This year's Pét-Nat really allows the Riesling fruit to shine." Inspired by pairings prepared by chefs in the Finger Lakes, Passmore recommends matching the wine with dishes focused on seasonal ingredients like wild ramps. Added Buttonwood Grove's director of wholesale sales, Car-

PHOTO: DAVE SIT

▼ Sue Passmore is winemaker at Buttonwood Grove Winery in Romulus, NY.



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mela Barbagallo, "The Riesling Pét-Nat is a nod to our region's long-standing sparkling wine production and shows how Finger Lakes winemakers are constantly putting creative touches on their wines."

The history of sparkling wine in the Finger Lakes spans almost a century. By embracing that rich tradition to craft diverse styles of sparkling Riesling, the region's winemakers honor the past while showing their knack for innovation. As a native New Yorker, I'll concede that the bubbliness of our personalities is debatable, but the quality of our wines, still and sparkling, can't be disputed. *WJ*

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