

Long Island's New Wine Wave

Once seen as New York's answer to Bordeaux, the island now yields a range of wine styles.

BY ANNA LEE C. IJIMA

Best Red

91 Paumanok 2010 Cabernet Franc (North Fork of Long Island).
abv: 13.9% Price: \$28

Ripe and concentrated, yet profoundly elegant and feminine in style, Paumanok's 2010 Cabernet Franc is "one of the best Cabernet Francs that Paumanok has ever produced," says Kareem Massoud, winemaker at his multigenerational, family-owned winery. Massoud credits the hot, dry 2010 vintage, but certainly much of the success is due to the efforts of the entire Massoud family—Kareem's parents, Ursula and Charles, and brothers, Nabeel and Salim—who have produced limited quantities of exceptional wines in the North Fork since 1983.

While the triumph of the 2010 Cabernet Franc—what Massoud refers humbly to as their lighter bodied, more approachable "white label" made from younger vines—has been heartening, he looks even more ambitiously toward the just-bottled, unreleased 2010 Grand Vintage Cabernet Franc.

"Our Grand Vintage is intended to be even more ageworthy... of even greater complexity and concentration," he says.

Other recommended reds:

90 The Grapes of Roth 2005 Merlot (Long Island).
abv: 13.5% Price: \$50

89 Macari 2008 Dos Aguas (North Fork of Long Island).
abv: 13.5% Price: \$27

89 McCall 2007 Corchaug Estate Ben's Blend (North Fork of Long Island).
abv: 13.1% Price: \$48



From grape growing to winemaking, bottling to distribution, Ursula and Charles Massoud and their three sons manage every aspect of Paumanok's operations. Kareem Massoud's wife, Marilee Foster, is a North Fork native whose own family spans five generations of farming in Long Island.

Best White

90 Shinn Estate 2010 Haven Sauvignon Blanc-Sémillon (North Fork of Long Island).
abv: 13.4% Price: \$35

Don't make the mistake of describing Haven (a blend of Sauvignon Blanc and Sémillon fermented in French oak) as a Bordeaux-style blend in the presence of Shinn co-owner David Page.

"I don't think I make anything that has to do with traditional Bordeaux," he says with amusement. "That's why we call it Haven, the name given to the soils by the U.S. Geological Survey. That name is so important to us because that's what we're trying to do—create wines that express this place."

Haven, like most of the wines made by Page and his wife, co-owner Barbara Shinn, are crafted from estate-grown fruit that has been hand harvested and fermented with indigenous yeast based on biodynamic and organic principles.

"We could have used a Bordeaux yeast and had it taste more like a Bordeaux, but that's never been our intention," Page says playfully.

Left on the skins for three days, the wine has a riveting hint of tannin and a fleshy quality intended for long aging.

Other recommended whites:

90 Channing Daughters 2010 Sylvanus (The Hamptons, Long Island).
abv: 12.5% Price: \$24

89 Bedell 2010 Chardonnay (North Fork of Long Island).
abv: 13% Price: \$25

89 Bedell 2010 Taste White (North Fork of Long Island).
abv: 13.3% Price: \$25



While the 2010 Haven is only the third vintage of this wine, Page hopes it will be a bottling to enjoy over the next 15-20 years—or longer.

Best Sparkling Wine

90 Sparkling Pointe 2008 Blanc de Noirs (North Fork of Long Island).
abv: 12.5% Price: \$75

The only winery in New York devoted entirely to the production of Champagne-style sparkling wines, Sparkling Pointe in Southold produces some of the best in the state.

Owned by the appropriately effervescent husband-and-wife team, Tom and Cynthia Rosecki (whose love for all things Rio and *Carnaval* runs rampant throughout the estate), the winery is a hybrid of New World flair and Old World tradition.

Winemaker Gilles Martin, a French native who grew up not far from Champagne, came to Long Island after extended stints in Germany, Australia, Virginia and California (where he worked at Roederer Estate).

According to Martin, the elegance and finesse of Sparkling Pointe's wines is rooted in traditional Champagne blending—a harmony created from Chardonnay, Pinot Noir and Pinot Meunier—and a focus on the distinctions in terroir of the winery's various North Fork vineyard sites.

The 2008 Blanc de Noirs, a blend of Pinot Noir and Pinot Meunier, is seductive in its concentrated fruit profile, yet remarkably complex and subtle on the nose and palate.

Other recommended sparkling wines:

90 Sparkling Pointe 2002 Brut Séduction (North Fork of Long Island).
abv: 12.5% Price: \$60

88 Sparkling Pointe 2006 Blanc de Blancs (North Fork of Long Island).
abv: 12.5% Price: \$42



Tom and Cynthia Rosecki first met at a debutante ball at New York City's iconic The Waldorf-Astoria hotel. Today, Sparkling Pointe's 2007 Brut is on the wine list at the hotel's Peacock Alley restaurant.

Long Island wine country is situated on the North and South Forks of Long Island—two scraggy tines of land that extend into the Atlantic Ocean. With its maritime climate and northerly latitude, the region's vintners have long embraced comparisons to Bordeaux and other Old World wine regions.

Yet, nearly 40 years since its first commercial vinifera vineyard was planted, a new era is emerging in an area once mainly occupied by potato farms and fishing villages. Amidst the pioneers who started it all, second-generation Long Island vintners, as well as new international winemakers, are choos-

ing to stay and work on Long Island.

Experimenting with an array of grape varieties and wine styles, many of the best winemakers are focused on producing artisanal, small-lot wines intended to express the island's terroir.

"Winemakers in this coun-

try for decades tried to marry themselves with these other better-known places," says David Page, co-owner of Shinn Estate Vineyards and Farmhouse, "but we realized soon after we set foot on this property that our goal—our job—was to figure out a way to make these wines unique."

Best Rosé

90 Anthony Nappa 2011 Anomaly White Pinot Noir (New York).
abv: 12.8% Price: \$19

From the summer Hamptons' classic, the Wölffer Estate Vineyard Rosé, to the eight varietal "pink" wines produced by Channing Daughters, dry rosé is plentiful on Long Island. One of the best, and arguably most unusual bottlings, is Anthony Nappa's Anomaly.

As its name suggests, Anomaly isn't considered a rosé at all, but instead, as Nappa describes it, a "white wine made from red grapes," vinified with virtually no skin contact and fermented entirely in stainless steel "as if it was never a red grape."

Made from Pinot Noir sourced from the Finger Lakes and the North Fork, Anomaly is firmly structured yet effortlessly quaffable. "It captures the essence of a Pinot Noir—its silkiness and the earthiness—combined with the acidity of white wine," says Nappa.

Nappa's wife, chef and co-owner, Sarah Evans Nappa, pairs Anomaly with a ceviche of local Peconic Bay scallops adorned with candied ginger, herbs and pink peppercorns.



Nappa, long-time winemaker at Shinn Estate, left in 2011 to focus on his own label and start The Winemaker Studio by Anthony Nappa Wines, a cooperative tasting room featuring wines from some of Long Island's best winemakers.

Other recommended rosés:

90 Channing Daughters 2011 Mudd Vineyard Rosato Merlot (North Fork of Long Island).
abv: 13% Price: \$18

89 Paumanok 2011 Dry Rosé (North Fork of Long Island).
abv: 12% Price: \$18

88 Channing Daughters 2011 Mudd Vineyard Rosato Cabernet Sauvignon (North Fork of Long Island).
abv: 13% Price: \$18

Best Unusual Varietal

90 Channing Daughters 2010 Mudd West Vineyard Blaufränkisch (North Fork of Long Island).
abv: 12.8% Price: \$27

With a portfolio that ranges from Lagrein to "orange" wine made from Pinot Grigio grapes vinified on their skins, Channing Daughters on the South Fork is known for its bold experimentation and innovative wine styles. The Mudd West Vineyard Blaufränkisch is hardly unusual by Channing Daughters standards, but it's one of the most distinctive of Long Island wines.

"Blaufränkisch is an important part of our portfolio, one of the few we release as a varietal wine," notes J. Christopher Tracy, partner and winemaker. "I love the grape itself and how it performs in our terroir, developing all these red, blue and black raspberry and briary fruit flavors that change according to the vintage."

All of Channing Daughters' wines are made from hand-picked fruit, crushed by foot and punched down by hand. The 2010 Blaufränkisch was fermented entirely using ambient yeast and bottled by gravity without fining or filtration.

Other recommended unusual varieties:

89 Anthony Nappa 2010 Spezia Gewürztraminer (North Fork of Long Island).
abv: 14.6% Price: \$18

89 Paumanok 2011 Dry Chenin Blanc (North Fork of Long Island).
abv: 11% Price: \$25

88 Channing Daughters 2011 Home Farm Vineyard Rosato Refosco (The Hamptons, Long Island).
abv: 13% Price: \$20



"Our wines hold a distinct middle ground between the Old and New World. They appeal to people of both preferences—New World wines with overt ripeness, but also wines that pair easily with food, with juicy acid, moderate alcohol and structure that leans towards the Old World." —J. Christopher Tracy

Best Sweet Wine

90 The Grapes of Roth 2009 Noble Roth Late Harvest Riesling (Long Island).
abv: 10.8% Price: \$36/375 ml

In the 20 years since Roman Roth first arrived in Long Island from his native Germany (with stops in California and Australia along the way), his wines for Wölffer Estate Vineyard, and since 2001, his personal label, The Grapes of Roth, have come to represent some of Long Island's most popular Merlot, rosé and sparkling wines.

"But when it comes to making white wine," Roth says, "there is no higher achievement than to make a *trockenbeerenauslese*," the unctuous German dessert wine made from rare botrytized grapes. "It's the nectar [of] the gods when it comes—like a trophy," he says.

The first vintage of the Noble Roth Late Harvest was this 2009. Shriveled and delicate to the touch, concentrated late-harvest grapes are painstakingly harvested and selected by hand, keeping production small.

With limited acreage devoted to Riesling on the North Fork, Roth debates whether to attempt it again.

"The bigger the acreage, the smaller the risk. But if you only have five or even three acres, your risk is much higher," Roth says.

"From a business point of view," he says, "it's a risky venture. From a trophy point of view, the risk is justified."

Other recommended sweet wines:

90 Paumanok 2010 Late Harvest Riesling (North Fork of Long Island).
abv: 9% Price: \$50/375 ml



Roth's father was a winemaker and cooper in Rottweil, Germany. A childhood picture of Roth atop one of his father's barrels decorates most of The Grapes of Roth labels—a photo he's since replicated with his daughter Indira atop one of his own barrels.

PHOTOS: JON VAN GORDER