

Once again I find myself with the same old problem. Franco went and fell in love with another wine region; this time it's the Finger Lakes. I have to bribe him to get going because we have another assignment and the only thing that will work is a picnic lunch consisting of McDonalds Burgers, French Fries and a bottle of Lakes Region Sparkling Rose. I like the combo, but it's on my dime. I agreed and I sent the luncheon tab to Margaret Evans. I'll take the heat, but at least it will get us to Long Island on time to get some work done.

Long Island wine country is fairly new. It is, however, the fastest growing and most widely recognized region in the northeast. The Long Island wine region was founded over 30 years ago by Louisa Hargrave and her husband Alex. The region now has over 40 wineries that produce wine respected by the world's most recognized experts. Actually, 30 years is nothing in the life of a vineyard. Long Island has done quite well in this short period to be as successful as it is.

Lenn Thompson, who writes for THE NEW YORK CORK REPORT, published an article and an interview with Louisa Hargrave that pretty well sets the stage for where Long Island wines are today. He refers to Louisa Hargrave as the "Founding Mother" of Long Island Wine. She was the co-founder of the first vineyard on Long Island's North Fork. The vineyard was named Hargrave Vineyards, and she planted the first grapes on the North Fork in 1973. (Look at a map of Long Island and you will see that at the end of the Island, the land splits into two areas; thus the North Fork and The South Fork. (The South Fork is also known as the Hamptons.) Most of the wineries are located on the North Fork. Why? Because The North Fork is surrounded by water. This helps to regulate temperature and humidity and creates an excellent environment for the vines. Louisa is also the founder and member emeritus of the Long Island Wine Council. After 26 years of running her winery, Louisa sold it to Mario and Anne Marie Borghese. It is now called Castello di Borghese Vineyard and Winery. Ms. Hargrave is now a consultant, wine judge, and holds a prominent position at The Stony Brook University Center for Wine, Food and Culture.

In the interview with Mr. Thompson, Ms. Hargrave pointed out several wineries. At this point I would like to talk about four of the wineries as representative of the Long Island AVA. The first is

Paumanok Winery, run by the Massoud Family. They feature Chardonnay, Chenin Blanc, Cabernet Sauvignon, Riesling, Merlot, and Petit Verdot. Prices range from \$17 to over \$36 per bottle. The winery dates back to 1976, is well run, very friendly and is worth the stop.

The second winery is Lenz Winery, which features a very talented winemaker named Eric Fry. He has met with success making Pinot Noir, Chardonnay, Merlot, Gewurztraminer, and an outstanding Sparkling wine. Mr. Fry has an additional reputation for being an excellent teacher of wine tasting. This is a must stop on your visit to Long Island.

Castello di Borghese is our third winery. It produces wines in the Tuscany tradition, and they succeed quite well. Some of the wines produced are Chardonnay, Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, and a dessert wine that is to die for called Allegra Late Harvest Chardonnay. The winery is famous in its own right, but received an extra five minutes in the sun when it was featured on “Good Morning America.” Kevin Heffernan, the Executive Chef at South Gate Restaurant in New York City, was showing his signature preparation of Roasted Whole Sea Bass Stuffed with Crab. His choice of wine to accompany the Sea Bass was Castello di Borghese Chardonnay. Since it was TV, I must content myself with only *imagining* the excellence of this match!

The last winery I want to mention is Bedell. Bedell does it all. They combine excellent wine with excellent Art in their tasting room. They infuse art into their Chardonnay by calling it “Gallery.” It is actually a Chardonnay blend with Viognier and Sauvignon Blanc. \$40. Michael Lynne is the winemaker and he has put together a respected operation that should be on your next Long Island visit.

An opinion, if I may be allowed: Long Island wines are pricey. Do not be embarrassed to “shop” for deals. They can be found.

WINESPEAK. Something got my attention when I mentioned above the Stony Brook University Center for Food, Wine and Culture. This is a respected institution included in a list of colleges and universities worldwide that exist to provide serious students with an opportunity to obtain anything from a certificate in a special course, to a four-year degree in Food Technology or Oenology. Students can place their emphasis on Food, Winemaking, or Agriculture. Here in the United States the top universities that have programs in this discipline are The University of California at Davis or Fresno, Boston University Elizabeth Bishop Wine Resource Center, Cornell University, Washington State, Oregon State, the University of Missouri, Johnson and Wales with three locations and The Culinary Institute of America with two locations. As we can see, the wine industry is not without serious educational support.

Next Stop is Michigan. Cheers!

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