



The International
Wine Review

No.
76

SEPTEMBER 2019

iwinereview.com **AVAILABLE ONLINE ONLY**

PRICE \$25

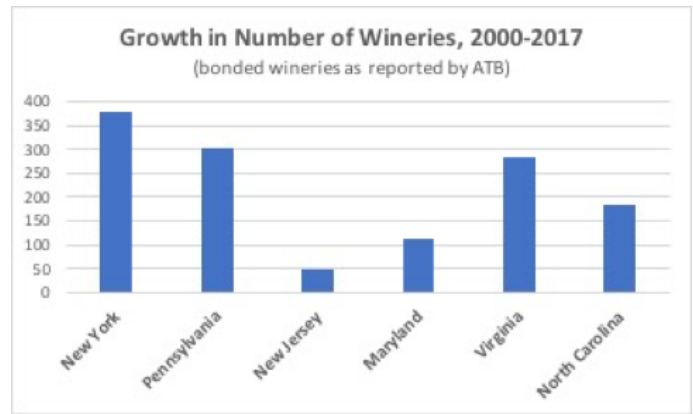


The Wines of North Carolina

Making Progress The New Generation Top Rated Wines

Table of Contents

Preface: North Carolina and the Transformation of East Coast Wine
 Introduction
 Top-Rated Producers
 History and Legal Framework
 Geography and Climate
 The North Carolina Vineyard
 Making Wine: North Carolina's Human Resources
 Looking to the Future
 North Carolina's Producers and Their Wines



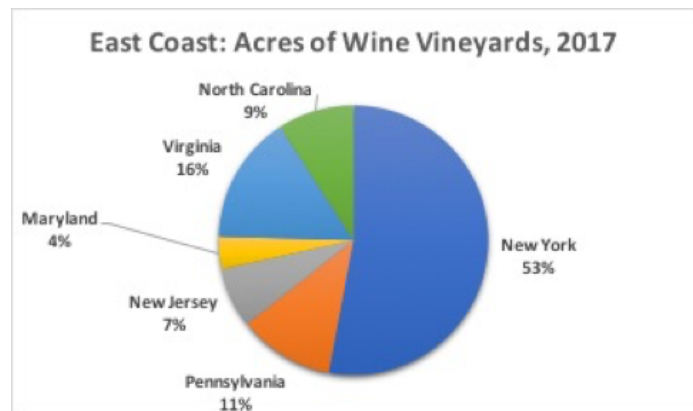
In the light of these developments, the International Wine Review (IWR) is publishing a series of reports in 2019 on the wines of the Atlantic Seaboard. Prepared in collaboration with the Atlantic Seaboard Wine Association and local wine associations, each report in the series focuses on the wineries, winemakers, vineyards, the regulatory framework and future prospects of the industry in each state. The reports also include extensive tasting notes and ratings of the principal wineries in each state. The reports are based on extensive field research, tastings and interviews with local winemakers and industry leaders carried out by the IWR team in late 2018-19.

This is the sixth in a series of reports on the wines of the East Coast, from North Carolina in the south to New York's Finger Lakes 800 miles to the north. The states included in the series, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Maryland, North Carolina and Virginia have about 20 thousand acres of vines, and New York has over half the total, as shown in the graph below. These states and the regions within them differ in terms of terroir, wine history, grape varieties grown, and development path of the wine industry. However, they are in many respects more similar than different. In this preface, we examine the similarities. The individual reports like this one on North Carolina explore the unique features of each growing area.

Preface: North Carolina and the Transformation of East Coast Wine

The wines of North Carolina are on the rise along with those of other states on the Atlantic Seaboard. Noteworthy improvements in the quality of North Carolina and other East Coast wines and their unique character are attracting growing numbers of wine enthusiasts. Today, more than ever before, consumers along the Atlantic Seaboard are interested in drinking local wines, and liberalized wine laws and regulations make it easier for them to do so. Their thirst for good wine and for learning more about the wines made in their own states is driving a dramatic growth in wine tourism and rising wine sales direct to consumers in tasting rooms, wine clubs and over the internet.

The East Coast wine industry has also expanded rapidly in recent years. The number of East Coast wineries more than tripled between 2000 and 2017, increasing from 405 to 1720, surpassing the number of wineries in California in the year 2000.



History

Wine production has a long and colorful history in the East. Up and down the coast, one of the first things European settlers tried to do was grow grapes and make wine. They saw a profusion of wild grapes, from the Muscadines of the south to the Labruscas of the north, giving hope they could grow the European varieties familiar to them. They all failed: Lord Baltimore in Maryland, Thomas Jefferson in Virginia, William Penn in Pennsylvania, etc., and soon began making wine from native grapes (e.g., Concord, Isabella, Scuppernong) and chance hybrids (e.g., Catawba, Niagara, Norton). Later on, in response to phylloxera, French agronomists developed large numbers of French-American hybrids, several (e.g., Chambourcin, Seyval Blanc, Vidal Blanc, Vignoles), of which are widely grown throughout the East, thanks in part to a Baltimore journalist, Philip Wagner, who advocated on their behalf. The European grape, *vitis vinifera*, only took root with the advent of modern fungicides and the development of techniques to prevent winter kill, popularized by Dr. Konstantin Frank in the Finger Lakes in the 1950s.

Legal and Financial Framework

After Prohibition, the states sought to regulate the wine industry by discouraging entry and prohibiting single ownership of all three tiers—production, distribution, and retail. Wineries were thus prohibited from selling wine at the winery and from directly distributing wines to retail stores. Wineries could only sell through distributors, which were often uninterested in selling the products of small producers. Some states, like Pennsylvania, set up a state monopoly to distribute and directly sell wines. With a vested interest in the three tier system, distributors and state monopolies were politically successful in preventing reforms for decades.

Beginning in the 1960s and 70s, states passed Farm Winery Laws to reduce license fees and permit grape growers to sell their own wine at tasting rooms, farm markets, and retail stores. Pennsylvania passed the first such law in 1968, followed by North Carolina (1973), New York (1976), and Virginia (1980). As part of their reforms, most states allowed their wineries to sell direct to consumers, but out of state wineries were prohibited from doing so. In 2005 the US Supreme Court ruled that in state and out of state wineries had to be treated equally. One by one, the states responded by adopting legislation to allow direct shipping from wineries anywhere.

Viticulture

Over the past decade or more, East Coast wineries have begun to put the focus on the *vitis vinifera* grapes that originate in Europe rather than hybrids and the grapes native to North America. In North Carolina this began with the Biltmore Winery in Asheville planting *vinifera* in the late 1980s. One of the largest grape revolutions took place in New York's Finger Lakes which grew only native American grapes like Catawba or Niagara until the arrival of Konstantin Frank. However, non *vinifera* varieties

continue to play an important role, especially in North Carolina and New York.

Growers have been learning where to plant grapes and how to match varieties to terroir. Many of the original vineyards in the East were plantings of convenience. Farmers who could no longer survive off tobacco or dairy cattle planted grapes instead. Or couples looking for a change of lifestyle would build a home and plant a vineyard in a location for its beautiful views. The original plantings were also often to popular varieties like Cabernet Sauvignon better suited to a warmer, drier climate. Today, most new vineyards are being sited only after careful soil analysis and with the advice of viticulture experts, and growers are replanting with varieties better suited to their terroir.

Winemaking.

There have always been outstanding winemakers in the East like Chuck Jones and Mark Friszolowski in North Carolina, Jim Law, Luca Paschina, and Michael Shaps in Virginia, Hermann J. Weimer and Konstantin Frank in the Finger Lakes, and Dave Collins and Ed Boyce and Sarah O'Herron in Maryland, and the numbers are growing fast. The region is also beginning to attract young winemakers from all over the world. Jacques van der Vyver of Chateau BuDe in Maryland and Stephen Bernard of Keswick in Virginia hail from South Africa. Matthieu Finot of Virginia's King Family and Morten Hallgren of Ravines in the Finger Lakes come from France; Luca Paschina of Barbourville in Virginia hails from Italy. Other winemakers come from Germany, Portugal, and, of course, California.

The homegrown winemaking talent is also getting better and better thanks to first rate enology and viticulture training offered at universities and community colleges throughout the East. Of particular note is the viticulture and enology program at Cornell University and the degree programs offered at Surry Community College in North Carolina and the Community College of the Finger Lakes in New York. Virginia Tech has long been a source for training of local winemaking talent in Virginia, and Penn State has played the same role in Pennsylvania.

Even more important, perhaps, is the growing number of agricultural extension agents offering advice on growing grapes and making wine and the viticulture consultants like Lucie Morton and Joyce Rigby and winemaking consultants like Lucien Guillemet and Stéphane Derenoncourt. In addition, winegrowers have formed their own, often informal groups to exchange ideas and taste wines with the goal of learning from experience to improve winemaking. Virginia's recently created Winemakers Research Exchange is an especially noteworthy effort to engage winemakers in practical research to improve grape growing and winemaking.

Climate and Grapes

The climate of the East is, in general, humid with rainfall throughout the growing season. This puts a premium on grape varieties that have the thick skins and loose clusters

that give good disease resistance. Vinifera varieties like Albariño, Petit Manseng, Vermentino, and Viognier show excellent promise among the whites, and Cabernet Franc and Petit Verdot are especially promising among the reds. French hybrids like Chardonel, Chambourcin, Traminette, and Vidal Blanc do especially well and may be the only varieties that can make good wine in a wet year like 2018.

The climate is warming throughout the Atlantic Seaboard as it is everywhere else in the wine world. This presents problems like heavier rainfall and more frequent extreme weather events, but it also extends the growing season. As a result, over time we can expect continued changes in the grape varieties successfully grown as well as changes in where they're grown. Jones von Drehle Vineyards in North Carolina already has vineyards at 1600' in the Yadkin Valley, and others are experimenting with very high altitude vineyards in the Blue Ridge Mountains, like Burntshirt's 3400' vineyard in North Carolina. In Pennsylvania, Galen Glen is making excellent cool climate whites at their 1000' vineyard. Vineyards that are now marginal in Virginia's Shenandoah Valley may become prime sites in the not too distant future. And one can expect better and better Pinot Noir and Cabernet Franc from the Finger Lakes as that region continues to warm.

The Future

All the stars appear to be in alignment for continued improvement in East Coast wine. In another decade we may very well look back and say there has been a "revolution" in the quality of wines coming from the Atlantic Seaboard. What's clear at the present is that each state has some outstanding winemakers making world quality wine. At the same time, most wineries are still producing wines of average quality. Raising the average quality of wine depends on many factors: enlightened public policies and support on the part of the states; continued strengthening of extension services and university-based viticulture and enology programs; new investment to increase the supply of high quality grapes and state of the art winemaking; and more retail distribution of wines to increase their visibility in the market and to strengthen incentives to raise quality and value. As indicated above, we think all of these factors are currently moving in the right direction and promise a very bright future for North Carolina and the other wines of the East Coast.

Acknowledgements.

This report could not have been written without the full collaboration and support of many of North Carolina's outstanding winemakers. They are too numerous to name here, but we are deeply indebted to them. We also are most grateful to the winemakers and viticulturists who enthusiastically shared their knowledge of North Carolina's wine industry with special thanks to Joyce Rigby, Dan McLaughlin, and Mark Hoffmann. Thanks also to Whit Winslow, Executive Director of the North Carolina Wine & Grape Council, who did an outstanding job organizing our winery visits and tastings at Surry Community College. Thanks, also, to the Atlantic Seaboard Wine Association (ASWA) and its President, Grant Crandall, for their support of this series of reports on the wines of the East Coast.

The i-winereview.com is published by the International Wine Review, LLC. Our office is located at 6625 Old Chesterbrook Road, McLean, VA 22101. Our email is: info@iwinereview.com Rates for individual online subscriptions are \$89 annually. Commercial online subscriptions for wine companies and member of the wine trade are \$149 annually. Subscriptions include exclusive access to all online resources of i-winereview.com. Contact us about eligibility and rates. Subscriptions may be purchased online at www.i-winereview.com Individual reports are also available for \$25. Reproduction of the material contained herein, including copying, without written permission is prohibited by law. Media, wine importers, distributors and retailers may use brief portions of this material in its original form if attributed to the International Wine Review.

Previous Wine Reports

Issues 1-15 are available at www.iwinereview.com

Issue 16	Oregon Pinot Noir
Issue 17	Sauvignon of the Loire
Issue 18	Wines of Navarra
Issue 19	Wines of Greece: Assyrtiko and Santorini
Issue 20	The Santa Lucia Highlands
Issue 21	The Chilean Wine Revolution
Issue 22	Grapes and Wines of the Western Loire
Issue 23	Ribera del Duero Revisited
Issue 24	The New Wines of Portugal Double Issue
Issue 25	The Wines of Austria
Issue 26	The Diverse Wines of Argentina Double Issue
Issue 27	Sweet and Dessert Wines of the World
Issue 28	The Wines of Priorat
Issue 29	The Wines of Monterey County
Issue 30	The Wines of South Africa Double Issue
Issue 31	Brunello di Montalcino
Issue 32	The New Wines of Israel
Issue 33	The Wines of Paso Robles
Issue 34	Champagne Revisited
Issue 35	The Wines of Soave
Special Report	South African Chenin Blanc
Issue 36	The Wines of Santa Barbara
Issue 37	The Wines of Sicily
Issue 38	The Wines of Washington State
Issue 39	The World of Grenache
Special Report	The Wines of Montefalco
Issue 40	Rosé Champagne and Sparkling Wine
Special Report	The Exciting Sparkling Wines of South Africa
Issue 41	The Amarones of Valpolicella
Issue 42	The Wines of Catalonia
Issue 43	The Wines of Rioja—A New Look
Issue 44	The Wines of Sonoma County
Issue 45	Virginia Wine Comes of Age
Issue 46	Special Report: The Best of Soave
Issue 47	Special Report: The Best of Tuscany
Issue 48	The Wines of Los Carneros
Issue 49	Special Report: The Best of Spain
Issue 50	The Wines of Chablis
Issue 51	Special Report: Best Indigenous Wines of Sicily
Issue 52	Special Report: The Best of Sherry
Issue 53	American Sparkling Wine
Issue 54	The Wines of Mount Veeder
Issue 55	Wines of South Africa: White Blends and Old Vines
Issue 56	Chianti Classico: Exciting Times
Issue 57	Tannat and Other Wines of Uruguay
Issue 58	Beaujolais in Transition
Issue 59	Wines of the Piedmont: Roero
Issue 60	Chile's Premium Wine Revolution
Issue 61	California Zinfandel: A New Look
Issue 62	Paso Robles: Cabernet Sauvignon & Other Bordeaux Varieties
Issue 63	The Wines of Friuli: Collio's Elegant Whites
Issue 64	Selections for the New Year: The Best Wines Tasted in 2017
Issue 65	The Vines and Wines of Lodi
Issue 66	The World of Rosé
Issue 67	The Wines of Bulgaria
Issue 68	Austrian Wine: Diverse Terroir, Exceptional Quality
Issue 69	The Wines of the Finger Lakes
Issue 70	The Rocks District: America's Unique Terroir
Issue 71	Washington State Revisited
Issue 72	The Wines of Maryland
Issue 73	The Wines of New Jersey
Issue 74	Pennsylvania Wine: Fifty Years of Progress
Issue 75	Virginia Wine: Moving Forward



i-winereview.com

These reports are available online at www.iwinereview.com