

Wine Spectator

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Riesling Prevails in New York's Finger Lakes

A difficult 2013 yields mixed results, but the region's top grape succeeds once again

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Nature giveth and nature taketh away. Following the 2012 harvest, considered by most Finger Lakes vintners to be the best in recent memory, 2013 proved a challenge. The growing season was marked by wet and humid weather, which created higher-than-usual disease pressures and placed a premium on careful viticulture.

"2013 was warm and wet," says Paul Brock, who, along with his wife, Shannon, is owner and winemaker of Silver Thread winery, on Seneca Lake. "I worked in 11 different Riesling vineyards across the region and I saw nearly perfectly clean fruit and nearly devastated fruit [to rot]."

Luckily, the difficult growing season was offset by a warm, dry September, which helped freshen the vineyards and ripen grapes, particularly aromatic whites and other earlier-ripening varieties. Later-ripening grapes and most reds still struggled, as the weather broke down again in October.

Since last year's report ("Riesling Succeeds in 2012," Jan. 31 - Feb. 28, 2014), I have blind-tasted 265 wines from New York's Finger Lakes region. Of these, 14 earned outstanding ratings of 90 points or better on *Wine Spectator's* 100-point scale, while 215 (more than 80 percent) earned a very good 85 points or higher. Riesling, the region's leading vinifera variety, dominates the offerings here, with 121 wines. Wines from the 2013 vintage, now being released, account for 76 bottlings in this report. (A free alphabetical list of scores and prices for all wines tasted is available.)

The standout for the early-released 2013s is the Heart & Hands Riesling Finger Lakes Patrician Verona Vineyard 2013 (90, \$28), a single-vineyard bottling from owner and winemaker Tom Higgins, whose lineup has expanded quickly in recent vintages. Also among the outstanding 2013s is a trio of wines from Silver Thread: its Riesling Cayuga Lake Randolph O'Neill Vineyard 2013 (90, \$25), Riesling Finger Lakes Gridley Bluff Point Vineyard 2013 (90, \$25) and Riesling Seneca Lake Doyle East Seneca Vineyard 2013 (90, \$25). All three show a dry, bony style, a hallmark of many vintages marked by cooler temperatures.

Growers noted that *terroir* is becoming more pronounced in an increasing number of single-vineyard bottlings. Keuka Lake Vineyards, Atwater Estate and Red Tail Ridge produced notable examples of site-specific Rieslings in 2013. These single-vineyard bottlings show a distinctive range of slate, peach, jasmine and floral notes, but production remains limited. In contrast, wines produced from a blend of vineyard sources, including the Forge Riesling Finger Lakes Dry 2013 (89, \$24) and Ravines Riesling Finger Lakes Dry 2013 (89, \$17), are more accessible and easier to find. Some top producers, including Hermann J. Wiemer and Red Newt Cellars, have not yet released their 2013s.



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Because 2013 will require some sifting to find quality, consumers interested in trying Finger Lakes wines might be best served by grabbing any remaining 2012s. The vintage was drier and more consistent overall. The highest-scoring wines in this report are late-releases from 2012, including the Hermann J. Wiemer Riesling Seneca Lake Dry HJW Vineyard 2012 (92, \$39) and Forge Riesling Finger Lakes Les Alliés 2012 (92, \$26).

Although Riesling remains king, consumers can find other impressive white varietals, such as the Damiani Gewürztraminer Finger Lakes Sunrise Hill Vineyards 2012 (88, \$19) and Domaine LeSeurre Chardonnay Finger Lakes Barrel Select 2012 (88, \$25). Reds, primarily Pinot Noir, are improving, but at a slower pace; look for the Forge Pinot Noir Finger Lakes Les Alliés 2012 (89, \$32) or Atwater Estate Cabernet Franc Finger Lakes North Block Six 2012 (88, \$28).

Senior editor James Molesworth has been with Wine Spectator since 1997.

- [New York Finger Lakes Wine Regions Map \(in PDF Format\)](#)

RECOMMENDED 2013 RIESLINGS FROM THE FINGER LAKES

Score	Wine	Price
90	HEART & HANDS Riesling Finger Lakes Patrician Verona Vineyard 2013	\$28
90	SILVER THREAD Riesling Cayuga Lake Randolph O'Neill Vineyard 2013	\$25
89	FORGE Riesling Finger Lakes Dry 2013	\$24
89	HEART & HANDS Riesling Finger Lakes Dry 2013	\$23
89	KEUKA LAKE VINEYARDS Riesling Finger Lakes Dry Evergreen Lek Vineyard 2013	\$27
89	RAVINES Riesling Finger Lakes Dry 2013	\$17
89	SILVER THREAD Riesling Seneca Lake STV Estate Vineyard 2013	\$25
89	STANDING STONE Riesling Finger Lakes Ice 2013 (375ml)	\$25
88	DR. KONSTANTIN FRANK Riesling Finger Lakes Dry 2013	\$15
88	HERON HILL Riesling Finger Lakes Dry 2013	\$14
88	LAKWOOD Riesling Finger Lakes 2013	\$13
88	RED TAIL RIDGE Riesling Finger Lakes Dry RTR Vineyard 2013	\$19
88	SILVER THREAD Riesling Finger Lakes Dry 2013	\$18