

# Ten Cool Wines from the Finger Lakes

by Meg Houston Maker



Two million years ago, the Laurentide Ice Sheet raked its claws across North America, scratching 11 deep lakes into the landscape. Born of ice, these lakes now temper the climate for the vines that hug their shores. Wine lovers rejoice.

Grapes have been cultivated here since the early 19th century, but *Vinifera* got a toehold only in the early 1960s with the advent of viable rootstocks. Today the region boasts more than 100 wineries, most along Seneca, Cayuga, Keuka and Canandaigua Lakes.

I've visited the Finger Lakes three times since 2010 and recently sampled nearly 50 current releases. With each encounter, I find the wines more complex and polished. They trend lean, and their alluring aromatics and cold-climate freshness make them superlative gastronomy wines. Prices are friendly too.

While dry Finger Lakes whites skew stony, off-dry styles highlight tropical and orchard fruits. The best Rieslings, which have justly made the region's reputation, evince a slick of oily minerals, utterly on-point.

The reds, principally Cabernet Franc and Pinot Noir, earn their structure from acidity, while a thread of herbaceousness feels—dare I say it?—cooling.



**Red Newt Cellars 2014 Dry Riesling, Finger Lakes (\$20)** Juicy tropical fruits—pineapple, guava, passion fruit, mango—are glossed with an oily sheen. Pair with the savory and salty.



**Boundary Breaks Vineyard 2014 Dry Riesling No. 239, Finger Lakes (\$20)** Crunchy minerals mix with tree fruits, apple blossom and pear. Felicitous and balanced, and great for salad.



**Dr. Konstantin Frank 2015 Semi-Dry Riesling, Finger Lakes (\$15)** Like a ripe yellow apple drenched in honeyed citrus and guava, but steely too, with a lean mineral streak. Lovely with a cheese course.



**Red Newt Cellars 2013 The Knoll Riesling, Lahoma Vineyards, Finger Lakes (\$35)** A surprising mouthful of tangerine adorned by citrus blossoms, guava and mango. Succulent and languorous, it's good by the glass.



**Hermann J. Wiemer 2015 Semi-Dry Riesling, Seneca Lake (\$18)** A paisley of white flowers and orchard fruits spangle its beautifully articulated frame. Extremely elegant and complex. Pair with seafood or poultry.



**Anthony Road Wine Company 2014 Devonian Red Blend, Finger Lakes (\$13)** A rosy Cabernet Franc–Lemberger blend saturated with strawberries steeped in lemon rind and thyme. A red for fish and chicken.



**Hermann J. Wiemer 2015 Cabernet Franc, Seneca Lake (\$25)** Wildly floral, redolent of field flowers, orchard fruits, strawberries and fennel. Suede-like tannins add gravitas. Incredibly versatile.



**Atwater Estate Vineyards 2014 Cabernet Franc, North Block Six, Finger Lakes (\$18)** Pomegranate, juniper berry and a demure sprinkling of purplish petals mingle with a breezy breath of evergreen. Pair with lamb.



**Damiani Wine Cellars 2007 Cabernet Franc, Finger Lakes (\$22)** Current releases have grippy tannins, but the 2007 shows bouillon, leathery fruits, pink petals, tea and potpourri. Cellaring the 2014 would reward the patient.



**Standing Stone Vineyards 2014 Saperavi, Finger Lakes (\$30)** Textbook Saperavi astringency carries black and blue fruits, rare meat and star anise. A very cool cool-climate wine. ■■