

Session 1: Finger Lakes Riesling Past, Present and Future



Estate Riesling with some *botrytis* at Silver Thread
2021



NY-81, developed at Cornell, has loose
clusters

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Charles Fournier (left) and Dr. Konstantin Frank



History of Riesling in the Finger Lakes

- 1902 first Cornell planting
- 1950's Seneca Lake nearly froze; plantings died
- 1958 first planting by Dr. Frank at Keuka Lake
- 1973 first planting in Caywood by Charles Fournier for Gold Seal
- Early styles were usually semi-sweet or sweet due to cold seasons, high acidity; "Johannisberg" designation was used
- Hermann J. Wiemer, Silver Thread and others introduce "Dry" Riesling in late 1980s, early 1990s
- "Bone-dry" style: 2010s-present

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Dry Riesling

- Shows more complexity
- Requires warmer temperatures during growing season for acid reduction; cool nights to retain and develop aromatics and flavors
- Other regions specializing in this style: Alsace, Austria, Australia
- Our 2021 Dry Riesling has:
 - 6.7 g/L residual sugar
 - 7.6 g/L titratable acidity
 - 0.88 sugar to acid ratio
 - pH 3.19
 - Therefore, it is DRY on the IRF scale
- Good article on Dry Riesling from *Wine Folly*:

<https://winefolly.com/tips/bring-on-the-dry-riesling/>



IRF RIESLING TASTE PROFILE, TECHNICAL GUIDELINES SUMMARY					
	SUGAR TO ACID RATIO	pH		pH	SHIFT DUE TO pH
DRY	< 1.0	3.1 to 3.2	If	= or > 3.3	Med Dry
				3.5 or >	Med Sweet
MEDIUM DRY	1.0 to 2.0			= or > 3.3	Medium Sweet
				< or = 2.9	Dry
MEDIUM SWEET	2.1 to 4.0			= or > 3.3	Sweet
				< or = 2.9	Medium Dry
				< or = 2.8	Dry
SWEET	= or > 4.1			< or = 2.9	Medium Sweet
				< or = 2.8	Medium Dry

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History of Locally-adapted Varieties

- 1800s-hybridization for disease tolerance and cold-hardiness in U.S. and France
- 1960s-Charles Fournier brought French-American varieties to the Finger Lakes
- 1973-Cornell releases Cayuga White as first wine cultivar
- 2000-2020-quality producers turn away from hybrids and commit to vinifera

Interesting articles about hybrid grapes:

- Extension Foundation:
<https://grapes.extension.org/interspecific-hybrid-french-american-wine-grapes/>
- Wine Enthusiast:
<https://www.winemag.com/2020/05/21/hybrid-wine-grapes-guide/>
- Origins of American Grape Breeding:
<https://arboretum.harvard.edu/stories/e-s-rogers-and-the-origins-of-american-grape-breeding/>
- Cornell Grape Varieties for NYS 1979:
<https://ecommons.cornell.edu/bitstream/handle/1813/5087/FLS-080.pdf;sequence=1>

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Return to Locally-adapted Varieties

- Fringe movement that is gaining steam
- Sustainability-less inputs needed to grow them
- Climate resilience-more resistant to extreme weather
- Winemaking quality-great wines can be made in the hands of skilled artisans
- Consumer openness-people are more willing to try unique varieties

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Dry Riesling vs. Good Earth White

	Dry Riesling 2021	Good Earth White 2021
Variety	<i>Vitis vinifera</i>	70% Locally-adapted, 30% <i>vitis vinifera</i>
Winemaking	Mostly stainless steel, blend of fermentations	Mostly neutral barrel with malolactic fermentation and <i>sur lie</i> aging
Balance	Dry with high acidity, low residual sugar	Dry with low acidity, low residual sugar
Flavors	Fruity, floral, savory	Fruity, creamy
Ageability	5-8 years (maybe more)	2-3 years

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Glossary of Terms: *Oxford Companion to Wine third ed.; Robinson J.; 2006*

Riesling—great vine variety of Germany; often deemed the finest white grape variety in the world due to the longevity of its wines and their ability to transmit vineyard characteristics

Residual Sugar—the total quantity of sugars remaining unfermented in the finished wine, including both glucose and fructose. Riesling is made at all levels of residual sugar.

Acidity—the fresh, tart or sour taste produced by the natural organic acids present in a liquid

Balance—a wine is well-balanced if its alcoholic strength, acidity, residual sugar and fruit complement each other so that no single one dominates the palate. Balance is unrelated to a wine's flavor.

Aroma—volatile compounds which are sensed by the nose, usually referring to a simple smell such as that of a grape or young wine, or those arising from fermentation

Bouquet—complex aromatic compounds which result from extended bottle age, sometimes called tertiary aromas

Hybrid—the offspring of two varieties of different species. Sometimes confused with a cross, which occurs between two varieties of the same species. Hybrids can yield good wine with no recognizably non-*vinifera* characteristics. The pedigree of many modern hybrids can involve seven or eight generations of crosses so that their ancestry is typically complex and includes *vinifera*, American varieties and also early released French hybrids.