



By George Parkinson

## Grüner Veltliner



It was once thought that, given the shorter growing season, the extreme winter cold, and early to late spring frosts, Riesling would be the grape for the wine producers of the Northeastern corridor in the U.S. Today, with climate change issues; access to other wine grape materials; and a better scientific understanding of terroir, viticulture, and oenology, some other varietals have come forward as a better option to growing wine grapes and making wine in these areas.

Grüner Veltliner, a white grape variety of Austria—but also grown in Northern Italy, Slovenia, Hungary, Slovakia, and the Czech Republic—is showing great promise in places like Maryland, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Michigan, and New York.

According to Jancis Robinson in her book *Wine Grapes, DNA*



Grüner Veltliner grapes from Stony Run Winery

profiling has found that Grüner Veltliner is a natural cross between Traminer and an almost extinct wine grape named St. Georgener. Grüner also has a sibling or grandchild relationship with Pinot. The vine produces midsize berries of green to yellow color. The wines, depending on vinification methods, can be fruit forward showing peaches, pears, and apples to melon aromas as well as floral notes of hyacinth, tulip, and freesia. A versatile grape, Grüner Veltliner may be produced as a sparkling wine, with dry to sweet styles as well as full-barrel fermented styles like those of Burgundy's Chardonnay.

The vine is late ripening which helps it avoid frost issues in most places. It has no problem achieving ripeness, can grow in most soil types, and is high yielding. Given to producing very good acidity, these wines can be excellent food partners for sushi, grilled fish, pork, veal, chicken, and pasta.

Grüner Veltliner is often misunderstood by the consuming public as a sweet wine, yet dry, crisp unoaked Grüner is full of flavor and a great aperitif as well as a wine for a full-course meal. Eastern vineyard owners who grow this grape cover a great many terroir differences. These include New Jersey's outer coastal plain AVA with sandy loam soils; the rolling hills of the Lehigh Valley AVA; the vineyards of the Great Lakes AVAs including Lake Erie; the Finger Lakes in New York; and the wineries located in Michigan's Old Mission Peninsula AVA and in somewhat warmer, lower elevations of Maryland and Virginia.

A recent blind tasting of Grüner Veltliner produced from these areas showed color scales of translucent straw to bright gold with a wide range of aromatic notes including apricot, peach, tulip, cantaloupe, and pear. The wines were slightly sweet to bone

dry, with one or two showing rich yeast and cream notes without losing the aforementioned aromas. While all the wines were available to purchase DTC (direct to consumer), it will not be easy finding them on your local wine store shelves.

The following is a list of some producers we tasted. Some may be out of stock due to limited production. I suggest all these producers deserve a visit, and it may be time to recognize that great wines produced in the United States need not all come from California, Washington, or Oregon.

This spring, venture into the many vineyard producers of wine grapes located in the Northeast and try Grüner Veltliner.  
*Cheers!*

Dr. Konstantin Frank, Hammondsport NY  
<http://drfrankwines.com>

Ryan William Vineyards, Burdett NY  
<http://ryanwilliam.com>

Fulkerson Winery, Dundee NY  
<http://fulkersonwinery.com>

Monroeville Vineyards and Winery, Monroeville NJ  
<http://monroevillewinery.com>

Mount Salem Vineyards, Pittstown NJ  
<http://mountsalemvineyards.com>

Galen Glen Winery, Andreas PA  
<http://galenglen.com>

Stony Run Winery, Breinigsville PA  
<http://stonyrunwinery.com>

Waterfire Vineyards, Kewadin MI  
<http://waterfirewine.com>

Chateau Grand Traverse, Traverse City, MI  
<http://cgtwines.com>

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