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NY Cab Franc moves forward



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A movement to cement Cabernet Franc as the preeminent variety of this East Coast state. Above, the Wölffer Estate on Long Island at dusk.

signature red grape of Northern California? However improbable that may sound in the case of California's North Coast, such an agreement has recently been reached among a group of winegrowers in the state of New York, who have united across the Finger Lakes, the Hudson Valley and Long Island wine regions to proclaim Cabernet Franc as the state's signature red variety.

They have even formed an advocacy organisation, [Cab Franc Forward](#), which they hope to use in their evangelising efforts on this theme. This past February, the organisation hosted a first-of-its-kind tasting, with 35 wineries from the state's three wine regions pouring their rendition of Cabernet Franc for the press, trade and wine consumers.

'On Long Island, we'd really been Merlot-focused from the beginning', says Max Rohn, CEO of Wölffer Estate. 'But the Merlot thing didn't really work out, and for a long time we've been struggling for some sense of identity as Long Island. But gradually, on its own, Cabernet Franc was bubbling to the surface, and it became very apparent that it was the leader, and it had to be this way.'

Rohn called up his friend and neighbour Gabriella Macari of Macari Estate, and together they hatched a plan.

'Max put the idea out and I 100% agreed', says Macari. 'But immediately I knew we had to sit down together as a group and taste, to make sure this made sense. I had a bunch of Finger Lakes Cabernet Franc in my cellar, so we got together with a few other winemakers in the room and tasted – and the quality was there. It was undeniable. Once we had all these wines in the glass, it was easy.'

Winegrowers in the Hudson Valley established a [Hudson Valley Cabernet Franc Coalition](#) in 2016, but Cab Franc Forward is the first organisation to unite wineries across the state's major wine regions.

The group's 'founding committee' consists of eight wineries, with more than 25 others signed on as 'partners' in the grass-roots effort. Macari and Rohn were clear from the outset that they didn't want to create yet another bureaucratic entity.

organisation and instead focus on getting out there and talking with people about our wines. So we went for the low-overhead approach.'

The eight founding wineries each pitched in some money to get things started, and for the February tasting, partner wineries were asked to pay a nominal fee to participate and cover event costs.

'Technically we're a 501(c)(6) trade organisation', says Rohn. 'We're still finalising the details and getting a bank account sorted.'



Macari Vineyards (credit: Stirling Elmendorf)

A 50-year journey

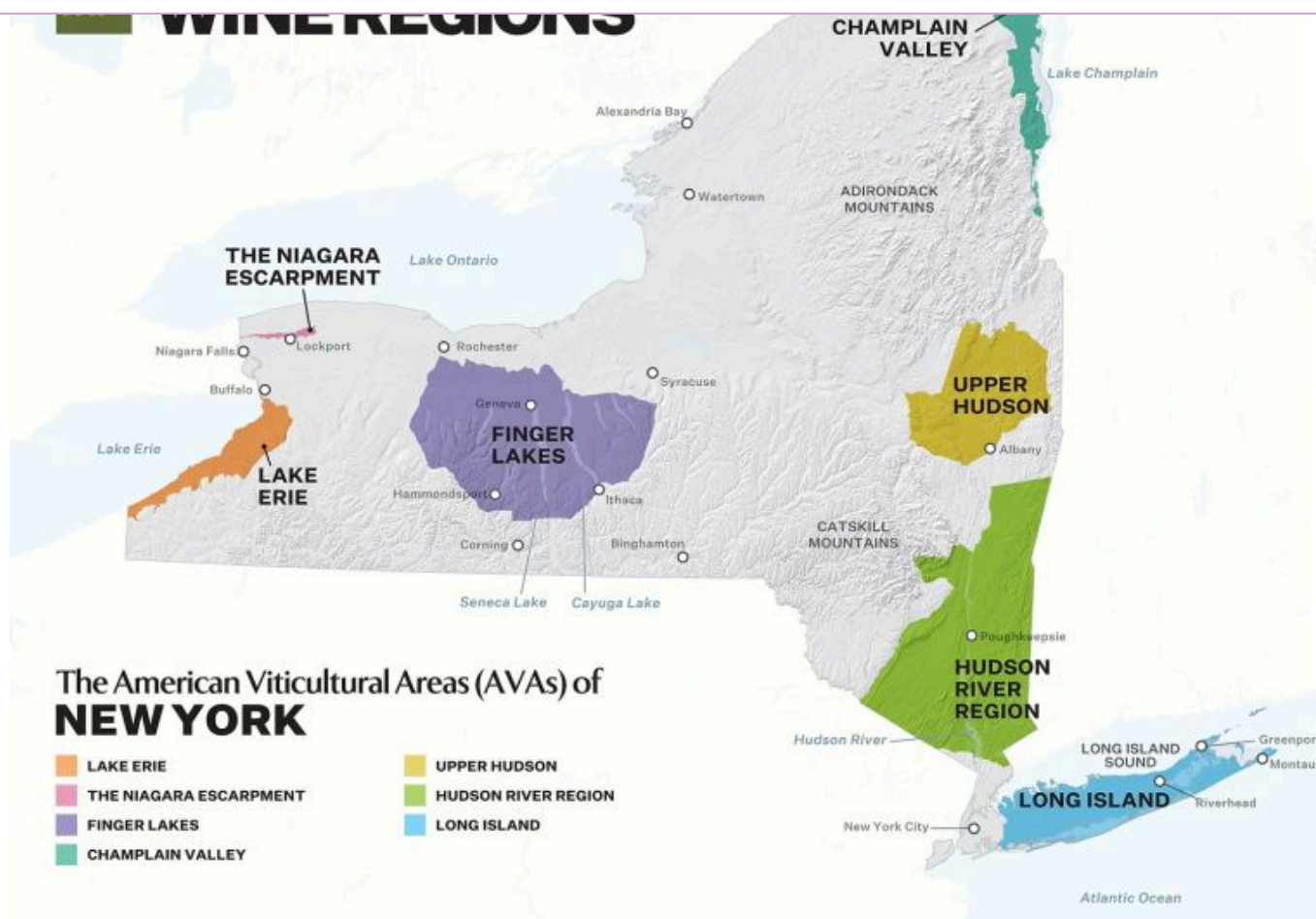
Dr Konstantin Frank, widely known as 'the father of *vinifera*' for being the first to introduce the species to New York, could also easily be considered the father of New York Cabernet Franc, as his small 1974 planting was likely the first in the state. The grape's combination of earlier ripening than Cabernet Sauvignon and

late 1990s.

The Hargrave Vineyard in the Long Island town of Cutchogue became the site of the first significant commercial planting of the grape in the early 1980s.

Hargrave (now known as Castello di Borghese, following its sale in 1999) was established in 1973 as the region's first commercial winery, and its initial plantings of bordeaux varieties helped shape both the trajectory and style of Long Island winegrowing, as well as influence many growers elsewhere in the state.

As of 2024, New York had 638 acres (258 ha) of Cabernet Franc under vine – which may not sound like a lot, but it remains the state's most widely planted red *vinifera* variety, and the second most planted red variety after Concord. Nearly half of that acreage can be found in the Finger Lakes, with the remainder spread across the Hudson Valley, Long Island and the Niagara Escarpment. Long Island still has more Merlot planted than Cabernet Franc, but that gap continues to narrow each year.



New York wine regions (map by the New York Wine and Grape Foundation)

Regional sensibilities – NY AVAs

To say that there are distinct regional styles of New York Cabernet Franc would be to considerably overstate the case, but the state's major winegrowing regions each manage to leave predictable imprints on their wines.

The **Niagara Escarpment** is the state's coldest growing region, with somewhat brutal winters and a fully continental climate. This climate, combined with glacial till and calcareous soils, results in Cabernet Francs that tend to be quite light and lean, often featuring the herbal or capsicum tones of pyrazines and very modest ripeness. Alcohol levels rarely exceed 13%. Given the lighter nature of these wines, many producers eschew new oak or use it judiciously.

The **Finger Lakes**, though also continental in climate, benefit greatly from the [thermal moderation of the lakes](#), allowing producers a longer growing season than Niagara and the opportunity to achieve greater ripeness in Cabernet Franc.

water pooling in the root zone), the flavour profiles of Finger Lakes Cabernet Franc have become richer and more substantially structured, with alcohol levels regularly in the mid-13% range. Oak use and extraction vary across the region, with producers exploring both restrained and more robust approaches to tannin management.



Boundary Breaks vineyard at Seneca Lake, Finger Lakes region

Despite being further south, the **Hudson Valley** region also qualifies as a continental climate, with the river offering only a modest buffer against chilly temperatures for a few growing sites. Many vineyards are far enough away from the river to receive little thermal benefit. The region's combination of more fertile alluvial soils, higher rainfall and greater disease pressure can sometimes result, somewhat counterintuitively, in lighter, less ripe expressions

Long Island, by contrast, offers a more moderate maritime climate for growing Cabernet Franc, with a growing season that can be 20 days longer than either the Finger Lakes or the Hudson Valley. That said, the region's maritime climate can be volatile, and humidity-driven disease pressure keeps producers on their toes. Vintage variation can be significant here, even without the (scarily increasing) threat of hurricanes. In the better vintages, Long Island growers have the opportunity to ripen grapes solidly into the mid-13% or even 14% alcohol range and develop the [phenolics](#) that result in more structured wines that can handle greater wood influence in their élevage (though the best examples often see only a modest amount of new oak).

Despite the significant climatic differences among regions, New York's Cabernet Francs have a number of admirable features in common. Their restrained alcohol levels, excellent acidity and purity of red-fruit character (often uncomplicated by too much 'winemaking') make them appealing and highly food-friendly.

While they don't achieve the heights of aromatic expression and alluring texture that characterise top examples from the Loire, the best New York Cabernet Francs are extremely pleasurable to drink. Properly made, they can not only last for a decade or two in the cellar – they can blossom, as a number of the older vintages I tasted for this article demonstrate. Some producers are also beginning to take the grape in interesting new directions, with rosés, [pet-nats](#), lower-intervention wines and even [blancs de noirs](#) versions.

Does every wine region need a signature grape? I'm not sure. But where New York State is concerned, they certainly seem to be betting on the right horse.

Moving forward

With more than 500 attendees, the initial Cab Franc Forward tasting was deemed an unqualified success, and the group has plans to host another in future. Beyond such tastings, however, the level of advocacy and outreach the organisation will undertake remains unclear.

they can go to experience the variety – beyond the websites and tasting rooms of the eight founding members.

I would love to see the group invest the time and money to create a comprehensive online guide to New York Cabernet Franc – one that eloquently champions the virtues of the variety in language that consumers can relate to, and that equally profiles *every* producer of the grape in the state, offering enough information for wine lovers to construct a weekend tasting itinerary wherever they are in New York.

Most of all, I would love to see the group push hard on the wine and hospitality industry in one of the largest wine markets in the world. There is absolutely no excuse for the lack of New York wines on the wine lists of most New York City restaurants. It is time for New Yorkers to get on the ‘drink local’ bandwagon. These wines are too good to ignore.

The 45 tasting notes below are ordered alphabetically but you can change this.

Select sorting option

Bedell, White Cabernet Franc 2024 North Fork of Long Island

15.5/20

WHITE

Whole-cluster pressed, then fermented and aged in stainless steel with no skin contact. 432 cases produced.

Pale gold with a faint effervescence. Aromas of apples and cherries. The wine is tingly on the tongue with dissolved CO₂ making flavours of apple, yellow plum, guava and herbs bright and snappy. There is a faint sweetness of residual sugar and excellent acidity. Made for fans of Moscato? (AY)

Alcohol: 11.4% Drink: 2025 – 2028

Price: \$25 RRP

Bedell Cabernet Franc 2023 North Fork of Long Island

17.5/20

RED

plum skin. Gauzy tannins wrap around a core of plum, plum skin, sage, sumac and dried flowers. Excellent acidity and just the faintest hint of salinity.

Beautifully executed. (AY)

Alcohol: 12.2% Drink: 2025 – 2037

Price: \$45 RRP

Boundary Breaks Cabernet Franc 2023 Finger Lakes

17 +/20

RED

Contains 13% Merlot. Aged for 9 months in neutral French oak. 1,200 cases produced.

Smells of plum, herbs, underbrush and dried flowers. Wonderfully bright acidity makes flavours of plum, earth and dried herbs juicy and mouth-watering. Fleecy tannins turn muscular in the finish, squeezing the palate, with lingering hints of orange peel and dried herbs. A bit young yet, but raring to go.

VG (AY)

Alcohol: 13.5% Drink: 2026 – 2032

Price: \$25 RRP

Boundary Breaks Cabernet Franc 2022 Finger Lakes

16.5 +/20

RED

A blend of 75% Cabernet Franc, 15% Cabernet Sauvignon and 10% Merlot aged for 9 months in neutral French oak. 580 cases produced.

Medium to dark garnet in the glass (getting more colour from the bits of Cabernet and Merlot blended in, presumably). Aromas of plums, cherries, dried herbs and dried flowers. Thick, fleecy tannins wrap around a core of bright plum and cherry fruit, as excellent acidity keeps things bright and juicy. Notes of dried herbs and underbrush linger in the finish. These tannins need some time. (AY)

Alcohol: 13.5% Drink: 2027 – 2037

Price: \$35 RRP

A blend of 85% Cabernet Franc, 10% Cabernet Sauvignon and 5% Merlot aged for 9 months in neutral French oak. 800 cases produced.

Smells of earth, herbs and flowers. Bright flavours of plum skin and cherry mix with dried herbs, dried citrus peel and earth. Excellent acidity and fleecy tannins that stay supple. There's a nice, appealing green-herbal freshness here. (AY)

Alcohol: 12.5% Drink: 2023 – 2032

Price: \$45 RRP

Boundary Breaks Cabernet Franc 2019 Finger Lakes

16/20

RED

Contains 25% Merlot. Aged for 9 months in neutral French oak. 950 cases produced.

Medium ruby. Aromas of plum, cherry and oak. Flavours of plum, cherry and minty green herbs are wrapped in beefy, muscular tannins and shot through with notes of espresso and sawdust. Showing a bit too much wood influence for my taste. Excellent acidity and freshness. (AY)

Alcohol: 13% Drink: 2021 – 2028

Price: \$55 RRP

Fjord Cabernet Franc 2022 Hudson River Region

16/20

RED

Aged for 8 months in 2- to 5-year-old 500-litre French oak puncheons. Screwcap. 450 cases produced.

Light to medium garnet. Aromas of flowers, crushed berries and plums. Bright berry and cherry flavours mix with plum skin and dried herbs. Gauzy, barely perceptible tannins and excellent acidity round out this accessible, fruity package. (AY)

Alcohol: 12.6% Drink: 2025 – 2031

Price: \$30 RRP

Grown on silt loam over shale at 700 ft of elevation. 307 cases produced.

Light to medium garnet. Smells of sour cherries, plum skin and flowers.

Electric, faintly saline flavours of plum skin and sour cherry have a thrumming vibrancy and faint fleecy tannins that coat the mouth. Tangy plum skin and orange peel linger in the finish. Excellent. **VG**V (AY)

Alcohol: 12.2% Drink: 2025 – 2033

Price: \$32 RRP

Forge Cellars, Willow Vineyard Cabernet Franc 2023 Seneca Lake

17.5/20

RED

Grown on silt loam over shale at 725 ft of elevation. 377 cases produced.

Aromas of pure cherry and elephant-heart plums with a floral top note.

Gorgeous plum and cherry flavours are shot through with pink peppercorns, dried herbs, poppy seeds and mandarin peel. Outstanding balance and vibrancy, with faint, supple tannins. **VG**V (AY)

Alcohol: 12.7% Drink: 2025 – 2037

Price: \$26 RRP

Forge Cellars, Railroad Vineyard Cabernet Franc 2023 Seneca Lake

17.5/20

RED

Grown on silt loam over shale at 720 ft of elevation. 463 cases produced.

Aromas of plums, flowers and chopped green herbs. Faintly saline flavours of plums, sour cherries, pomegranate and oregano have a lovely powdery chalk-dust texture and excellent acidity. Notes of matcha linger in the finish. **VG**V (AY)

Alcohol: 13% Drink: 2025 – 2037

Price: \$32 RRP

Dr Konstantin Frank Cabernet Franc 2022 Finger Lakes

16.5/20

RED

and plum skin mix with dried and fresh herbs as lightly grippy tannins coat the mouth. There's an admirable stony quality here with just a hint of dried citrus peel in the finish. Very good acidity. (AY)

Alcohol: 12% Drink: 2025 – 2032

Price: \$27 RRP

Dr Konstantin Frank Cabernet Franc 2017 Finger Lakes

16.5/20

RED

Aged for 18 months in 20% new French oak. 1,000 cases produced.

Light to medium ruby. Aromas of plum, wet earth and orange peel. Faintly saline flavours of plum and plum skin mix with citrus peel and dried herbs as lightly grippy tannins coat the mouth. Excellent acidity makes notes of orange oil, dried oregano and winter savoury bright in the finish. (AY)

Alcohol: 13% Drink: 2019 – 2028

Price: \$27 RRP

Dr Konstantin Frank Cabernet Franc 2012 Finger Lakes

16.5/20

RED

Aged for 18 months in French and American oak. 800 cases produced.

Dark ruby. Smells of black sesame, prunes and Chinese five spice. Notes of umeboshi, prunes, wintergreen and other dried herbs mix with a touch of molasses and black cherry. Putty-like tannins coat the mouth and excellent acidity keeps things quite fresh. Rich and still compelling at this age. (AY)

Alcohol: 13% Drink: 2015 – 2027

Price: \$27 RRP

Heron Hill, Ingle Vineyard Cabernet Franc 2023 Finger Lakes

16.5/20

RED

Aged for 18 months in French oak. Screwcap.

Smells of cherries, vanilla and plum. Polished and clean flavours of cherry and plum have a faint cola tinge, as excellent acidity keeps the wine fresh and

Alcohol: 13.6% Drink: 2025 – 2032

Price: \$40 RRP

[Macari, Horses Sparkling Rosé Cabernet Franc 2024 North Fork of Long Island](#) 15/20

ROSÉ

Destemmed and fermented at low temperatures. Bottled on 11 December 2024, to finish fermentation in the bottle. Undisgorged. 431 cases produced.

Cloudy orange in colour with a faint hint of pink and very fine bubbles. Smells of wet chalkboard, berries and winter melon. Lightly bitter flavours of winter melon mix with Asian pear and berries, along with a hint of white peppercorns. Very good acidity and a light, chalky texture. As with many pet-nats, this crown-capped bottle should be opened over the sink, as it will likely lose 10–15% of its volume to over-enthusiastic effervescence. (AY)

Alcohol: 12.8% Drink: 2025 – 2026

Price: \$32 RRP

[Macari, Meadowlark Rosé Cabernet Franc 2024 North Fork of Long Island](#) 16.5/20

ROSÉ

Destemmed and briefly left on the skins before pressing. Fermented and aged in stainless steel on light lees. 209 cases produced.

Palest peachy pink. Aromas of nectarines, sour cherries and orange peel. Bright, juicy flavours of orange peel, dried mango, redcurrant and dried herbs have a nice snap thanks to excellent acidity. Lean and bright, with a floral note that lingers in the finish. (AY)

Alcohol: 12.8% Drink: 2025 – 2028

Price: \$28RRP

[Macari, Meadowlark Whole Cluster Cabernet Franc 2023 North Fork of Long Island](#) 16.5/20

maceration on the skins. 20% of the lot was macerated carbonically in another tank before pressing separately and combining. Aged in stainless steel for 6 months. 264 cases produced.

Light to medium ruby. Smells of cherries, plums and the green herbal note of grape stems. Fine-grained, muscular tannins wrap around a core of crunchy cherry and plum fruit mixed with dried herbs. A high-toned blue note to the fruit likely reflects the partial carbonic maceration. Excellent acidity. A jaunty wine. (AY)

Alcohol: 12.8% Drink: 2025 – 2035

Price: \$30 RRP

Macari, Life Force Cabernet Franc 2023 North Fork of Long Island

16.5/20

RED

Destemmed and then given a 14-day maceration on the skins. Aged in concrete eggs for 7 months. 378 cases produced.

Light to medium ruby. Smells of earth, freshly chopped herbs, wild flowers and cedar. Faint gauzy tannins wrap around a core of plum, sour cherry and dried herbs tinged with a hint of baking spice. Decent acidity gives the wine some lift, though a little more cut would be welcome. Notes of herbs and a touch of sawdust linger in the finish. (AY)

Alcohol: 12.8% Drink: 2025 – 2032

Price: \$30 RRP

Macari Cabernet Franc 2022 North Fork of Long Island

17/20

RED

Destemmed and then given a 15-day maceration on the skins. Aged 15 months in neutral oak. 906 cases produced.

Bright, medium ruby with hints of garnet. Aromas of plum with a hint of green herbs and earth. Flavours of plum, cherry, earth and herbs mix under a gauzy haze of tannins, as very good acidity keeps things fresh. A hint of liquorice-root lingers in the finish along with the faint bitterness of fresh herbs. (AY)

Macari Cabernet Franc 2015 North Fork of Long Island

17/20

RED

Aged for 20 months in neutral French oak. 1,190 cases produced.

Light to medium ruby. Aromas of mulling spices, sandalwood and dried red-apple skin. Lovely mulling-spice and dried-plum flavours mix with dried cherries, cedar and some dried herbs. Very good acidity and gauzy tannins. At or near its peak? (AY)

Alcohol: 12.8% Drink: 2018 – 2027

Price: \$60 RRP

Macari Cabernet Franc 2004 North Fork of Long Island

16/20

RED

Aged for 14 months in 15% new French oak. 526 cases produced.

Light ruby, fading to brick-red at the rim. Smells of leather, mulling spices and, remarkably, fresh green herbs. The fruit has faded to notes of dried plum skin and dried sour cherries, as dried herbs and dried flowers emerge on the palate. Still-decent acidity and lightly gauzy tannins. A touch of road dust lingers in the finish. On a graceful downward slope. Drink up! (AY)

Alcohol: 12.8% Drink: 2008 – 2023

Price: \$50 RRP

Milea, Reserve Cabernet Franc 2022 Hudson River Region

17/20

RED

Aged for 18 months in 10% new French oak. 350 cases produced.

Light to medium garnet. Aromas of bright cherry and plum fruit with hints of pencil lead and bay leaf. Bright cherry and plum flavours have a hint of mocha and wintergreen, as well as a stony quality. Faint powdery tannins and excellent acidity. **GV** (AY)

Alcohol: 12.5% Drink: 2025 – 2032

Price: \$35 RRP

Full bottle 1,170 g. Aged for 18 months in 20% new French oak. 132 cases produced.

Aromas of struck match, toasted oak and red fruit. Faintly salty flavours of red fruit battle for attention amid smoky oak and mocha notes. Fleecy tannins and very good acidity round out this oak-driven package. A much lighter bottle – bravo! (AY)

Alcohol: 12.5% Drink: 2025 – 2029

Price: \$65 RRP

Milea, Sangs Vineyard Cabernet Franc 2022 Hudson River Region

15.5/20

RED

Aged for 18 months in 35% new French oak. 152 cases produced.

Smells of toasted oak and herbs. Nutty toasted oak and mocha flavours somewhat overshadow a core of red fruit and herbs. Decent acidity and supple, fleecy tannins, but ultimately too much wood gives the wine a caramelised quality. (AY)

Alcohol: 12.5% Drink: 2025 – 2029

Price: \$65 RRP

Paumanok Cabernet Franc 2022 North Fork of Long Island

17/20

RED

Contains 1% Merlot. Aged for 14 months in neutral French oak. Screwcap. 425 cases produced.

Smells of plums and a hint of both dried and freshly chopped herbs. Lightly fleecy tannins wrap around a bright and juicy core of plum and black-plum flavours that have a bright tinge of citrus peel and plum skin. Excellent acidity. The tannins gradually flex their muscles and stiffen through the finish. **GV** (AY)

Alcohol: 13.5% Drink: 2025 – 2035

Price: \$36 RRP

Paumanok, Minimalist Cabernet Franc 2021 North Fork of Long Island

17/20

extended maceration, followed by 12 months in neutral puncheon. No additions (including zero added sulphites). 92 cases produced.

Aromas of herbs and wild flowers layered over plum, with hints of baking spices. Bright and juicy flavours of plum, plum skin, baking spices and dried herbs are wrapped in a fleecy blanket of tannins that gradually stiffen. Excellent acidity and length. (AY)

Alcohol: 13% Drink: 2025 – 2035

Price: \$60 RRP

Paumanok, Grand Vintage Cabernet Franc 2022 North Fork of Long Island

16.5/20

RED

Aged for 17 months in neutral French oak. Screwcap. 174 cases produced.

Medium to dark garnet. Aromas of black plum and cherry tinged with oak.

Extremely juicy flavours of cherry and plum are shot through with the mocha toast of oak, as fleecy tannins coat the mouth and gradually stiffen. The wood is fairly well integrated, leaving more texture than flavour as fruit and dried herbs linger in the finish. (AY)

Alcohol: 13.5% Drink: 2025 – 2035

Price: \$65 RRP

Paumanok, Grand Vintage Cabernet Franc 2021 North Fork of Long Island

16/20

RED

Contains 8% Cabernet Sauvignon. Aged for 16 months in neutral French oak. Screwcap. 302 cases produced.

Medium to dark garnet. Smells of plum, cherry and toasted oak. Bright plum and cherry flavours have very good acidity and are wrapped in a muscular skein of cottony tannins. Notes of oak and plum skin linger in the finish with dried herbs. The oak feels somewhat compressing at this stage. (AY)

Alcohol: 13.5% Drink: 2023 – 2028

Paumanok, Grand Vintage Cabernet Franc 2010 North Fork of Long Island

17.5/20

RED

A surprisingly youthful dark garnet in the glass given the wine's age. Smells of violets, dark-chocolate-covered açai berries and black plums. Beautifully supple flavours of black cherry and plum are wrapped in powdery, mouth-watering tannins with fantastic acidity. Notes of graphite and dried herbs lend a lovely aged-bordeaux quality. Outstanding seamlessness. (AY)

Alcohol: 13.9% Drink: 2015 – 2033

Paumanok, Grand Vintage Cabernet Franc 2001 North Fork of Long Island

17/20

RED

Aged for 16 months in neutral French oak. 278 cases produced.

Light to medium ruby with orange highlights at the rim. Aromas of candied orange peel, dried cherries and dried flowers. Bright flavours of citrus peel, herbs, plum skin and floral notes have a lovely zing with excellent acidity. Faint powdery tannins add texture, and there's a distinct wet-pavement note in the finish. Beautifully aged, but best enjoyed soon, as it's unlikely to improve further. (AY)

Alcohol: 13.5% Drink: 2004 – 2026

Price: \$175 RRP

Paumanok, Grand Vintage Cabernet Franc 2000 North Fork of Long Island

15.5/20

RED

A blend of 97% Cabernet Franc, 2% Cabernet Sauvignon and 1% Merlot aged for 16 months neutral French oak. 234 cases produced.

Medium ruby with a coffee tinge. Smells of potpourri and baking spices. Dusty tannins wrap around a core of dried flowers, dried herbs and dried apple and citrus. Elegant, but past its prime of pleasure. (AY)

Roanoke, The Poet Cabernet Franc 2022 North Fork of Long Island

17/20

RED

Contains 14% Cabernet Sauvignon. Aged for 20 months in French oak, one-third new. Unfined, unfiltered.

Smells of plum, cherry and a hint of orange peel and cocoa powder. Bright flavours of cherry, plum, mocha and orange peel have a nice hint of cola, faintly fleecy tannins and excellent acidity. Fresh and bright, with a touch of bitter dried herbs in the finish. (AY)

Alcohol: 13.5% Drink: 2025 – 2033

Price: \$40 RRP

Roanoke, Gabby's Cabernet Franc 2022 North Fork of Long Island

16.5/20

RED

Contains 4.09% Cabernet Sauvignon. Open-top fermentation, then aged in 36% new French oak for 20 months. Unfined, unfiltered.

Light to medium garnet. Aromas of cherry and plum with sweet notes of oak. Cherry and plum flavours are wrapped in a faint gauzy blanket of tannins and shot through with the sweet mocha notes of oak. Bitter herbs and a touch of espresso linger in the finish. Excellent acidity. (AY)

Alcohol: 13.4% Drink: 2025 – 2033

Price: \$65 RRP

Roanoke Cabernet Franc 2022 North Fork of Long Island

16.5/20

RED

Contains 11.2% Merlot. Aged for 16 months in 20% new French oak. Unfined, unfiltered.

Aromas of cherry, plum and red apples. Fresh and bright flavours of cherry and plum are shot through with a hint of black tea and dried herbs. Notes of burnt oregano in the finish. Lightly fleecy tannins and excellent acidity. (AY)

Alcohol: 13.5% Drink: 2025 – 2032

Suhru & Lieb, Lieb Estate Cabernet Franc 2023 North Fork of Long Island 16/20

RED

Contains 9% Cabernet Sauvignon and 3% Malbec. The wine is fermented and punched down in open-top tanks with a total of 20 days on the skins. Aged for 14 months in Hungarian oak. Screwcap. 534 cases produced.

Aromas of mocha, caramelised sugar, plum and cherry with hints of dried herbs. Mocha and cherry flavours mix with plum and plum skin as powdery tannins coat the mouth and stiffen slightly. Notes of oak and plum linger with herbs in the finish. Very good acidity. (AY)

Alcohol: 13% Drink: 2025 – 2032

Price: \$38 RRP

Usonia Cabernet Franc 2023 Finger Lakes

16/20

RED

75% of the final blend is fermented entirely whole-cluster with carbonic maceration for 10 days, followed by 9 days of alcoholic fermentation. The remainder of the fruit was destemmed and macerated for 10 days. Aged in neutral barrels. SO₂ added only after malolactic conversion and at bottling.

Aromas of plum skin, plum, sour cherry and herbs. Faintly saline flavours of leather, plum, plum skin and dried herbs have a faint bitterness and perhaps hints of *Brettanomyces*? Rustic but fresh, with excellent acidity. (AY)

Alcohol: 12.5% Drink: 2025 – 2030

Price: \$30 RRP

Usonia, New Suns Cabernet Franc 2023 Cayuga Lake

16.5/20

RED

Destemmed and macerated for three weeks. Aged in neutral barrique for nine months. SO₂ added only after malolactic conversion and at bottling. Unfined and unfiltered.

Smells of plum, black cherry, herbs and a hint of barnyard. Bright flavours of plum, plum skin and sour cherry are wrapped in lightly fleecy tannins and shot

somewhat rustic Loire renditions of this grape. Very well done. (AY)

Alcohol: 12% Drink: 2025 – 2032

Price: \$34 RRP

Whitecliff Cabernet Franc 2023 Hudson River Region

15.5/20

RED

Closed with a technical (resin) cork.

Smells of faintly grapey cherry and plum. A nice, fruity aromatic sweetness surrounds plum and plum-skin flavours shot through with bitter greens and a hint of citrus peel. (AY)

Alcohol: 12.5% Drink: 2025 – 2028

Price: \$35 RRP

Hermann J Wiemer, Magdalena Vineyard Cabernet Franc 2023 Finger Lakes

16.5/20

RED

Fermented with 25% whole clusters. Aged in a mix of 500-litre Hungarian (17% new) and 225-litre French oak barrels. 500 cases produced.

Aromas of blackberries, cherries and dried flowers with a hint of graphite. Flavours of cherry, blueberry and plum are wrapped in a muscular blanket of tannins that stiffens slightly as notes of blueberry and plum linger with dried herbs, a minty freshness and a faint bitterness. Excellent acidity. (AY)

Alcohol: 12.8% Drink: 2025 – 2035

Price: \$45 RRP

Hermann J Wiemer Cabernet Franc 2022 Finger Lakes

16.5/20

RED

Aged for 20 months, racked five times during that period. 800 cases produced. Light to medium garnet. Smells of perfumed floral and cherry aromas. Bright candied plum and cherry fruit flavours are charming and wrapped in

Alcohol: 12.5% Drink: 2025 – 2032

Price: \$27 RRP

Hermann J Wiemer Cabernet Franc 2016 Finger Lakes

17/20

RED

500 cases produced.

Smells of graphite, nori seaweed, sumac and cherry fruit. Bright cherry and plum flavours are wrapped in gauzy tannins and shot through with a stony, minty freshness and a hint of salinity. Notes of pencil shavings and dried flowers linger in the finish. Excellent acidity. Poised and seamless. Very pretty. (AY)

Alcohol: 12.5% Drink: 2018 – 2029

Price: \$85 RRP

Wölffer Cabernet Franc 2023 The Hamptons, Long Island

16/20

RED

A blend of 82% Cabernet Franc, 11% Merlot, 6% Cabernet Sauvignon, 1% Petit Verdot. Destemmed, then cold-soaked for 24 hours. Three pumpovers or punchdowns per day during peak fermentation. Matured in a combination of barrels, an upright oak tank and a stainless-steel tank. The wine was racked a total of four times before being bottled unfined. 1,665 cases produced.

Light to medium garnet with ruby highlights. Aromas of struck match, plum and mocha. Dusty tannins wrap around a core of mocha, red fruits and dried herbs, with very good acidity. There's a bit too much wood influence here for my taste. (AY)

Alcohol: 13.5% Drink: 2025 – 2030

Price: \$25 RRP

Wölffer, Caya Cabernet Franc 2021 The Hamptons, Long Island

17/20

RED

*days of maceration. Aged for 20 months in 40% new and 60% 1- to 3-year-old French oak barriques with four rackings before bottling. 1,286 cases produced. Light to medium garnet. Smells of fresh flowers, plums and sour cherries. Bright flavours of plum and sour cherry are wrapped in faintly fleecy tannins and shot through with orange oil, dried herbs and a hint of fennel seed. Faint dried herbs linger in the finish. Excellent acidity. **GV** (AY)*

Alcohol: 13.5% Drink: 2024 – 2034

Price: \$37 RRP

Wölffer, Caya Cabernet Franc 2005 The Hamptons, Long Island

17/20

RED

Contains 12% Merlot. Destemmed and then cold-soaked for 24 hours. Fermented in stainless steel, with three pumpovers per day during peak fermentation and a total maceration time of 23 days. Aged in 75% new and 25% 2-year-old barriques. 196 cases produced.

Light to medium garnet with ruby highlights. Smells of cedar, cocoa powder, graphite and flowers. Bright cherry and plum flavours are wrapped in powdery tannins and shot through with orange oil, dried herbs and flowers. Notes of graphite and pink peppercorn linger in the finish. Excellent acidity. (AY)

Alcohol: 13% Drink: 2010 – 2032

Price: \$190 RRP

Wölffer Cabernet Franc 2000 The Hamptons, Long Island

16.5/20

RED

Contains 16% Merlot. Destemmed and crushed into 1-ton bins for fermentation. Punchdowns every 8 hours for a total maceration time of 9 days. Aged for 18.5 months in 35% new French oak. 172 cases produced. Tasted from magnum.

Light to medium ruby. Aromas of smoked pork belly, dried flowers and aromatic herbs. Saline flavours of dried cherries, red miso, dried flowers and herbs. Notes of baking spices linger in the finish. Faint, gauzy tannins and excellent acidity. (AY)

Alcohol: 13.1% Drink: 2005 – 2028

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