

# long island **LIVING**

FALL 2019

SIP, TASTE, DISCOVER  
east end wineries

**IN STYLE**

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*WITH TINY CAKES*

**IT'S A PATTERN**

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# *on the* VINE

By David Fluhrer

NEW GRAPES, TASTES AND  
**ADVENTURES** FROM  
EAST END WINERIES

Photo credit: Elizabeth Glasgow





**I** **MAGINE YOURSELF** astride a windswept bluff with an army of sun-kissed whitecaps rolling toward the shore. A stemless goblet in your palm throws off a glint of gold from an aromatic blend of chardonnay, sauvignon blanc and viognier.

You might think it's the California coast. But it's Greenport and you're savoring the 2016 Anemometer White from Kontokosta Winery, a beautiful Soundfront venue that's easy to miss, even after multiple tasting treks out East.



That's the thing about Long Island wine country. Poke around a bit and every trip becomes an adventure. You'll find new grapes here, a dynamic winemaker there and a host of other cool discoveries in potables, cuisine, lodging and art. But today's experience is less about the busload in a tasting room and more toward understanding the elements of a great bottle.

"Yes, it is tourism," says Anthony Sannino, until recently the Long Island Wine Council's president, "but I think the influence now is not just wine tasting, but more of an experience-driven visit where you might be learning about specific things when it comes to wine. Somebody may be hosting a wine-barrel tasting. It could be a viticultural-based educational experience, a vertical or horizontal tasting, things that are just a little bit more wine-focused." As co-owner and winemaker of Peconic-based

Sannino Vineyard, he's been focused on launching a new tasting house and often helps visitors create their own blends through periodic winemaker-for-a-day programs.

But leave vinification to the pros and you'll discover an overflow of creativity. Sannino planted eight new French- or Italian-style grapes to add zest to future wine club offerings. Bridgehampton's Channing Daughters, under partner/winemaker Christopher Tracy, sells scads of different, intricately detailed wine blends involving obscure varietals, such as auxerrois, blaufränkisch, dornfelder and teroldego, not to mention some very neat vermouths.

Shaking up chardonnay at 31-year-old Lenz Winery in Peconic is winemaker Thomas Spotteck, 30, who took over last year from veteran vintner Eric Fry. "I'm not trying to break far from the Lenz tradition or style," he says.

**At Kontokosta Winery in Greenport, you can sip wines and gaze out over Long Island Sound.**



Photo credit: Elizabeth Glasgow



Photo credit: Randee Daddona



“But at the same time, there are different things that influence my style. I guess food inspires me a lot.” An avid fisherman, Spotteck promises new seafood-compatible chards next year with “brighter acidity, kind of enhancing the fruit, but still maintaining an oak profile that’s more subtle.” While you wait, try the 2015 Estate Selection Malbec with his “twist and spin on it” and stay tuned for upcoming syrahs.

In Riverhead, buzzworthy RGNV launched in May after Mexico’s Rivero González winemaking family bought the former Martha Clara Vineyards. Chief executive Maria Rivero González calls it “the new kid on the block,” and you’ll already see changes to the wines, tasting room and visitor experience. Expect some new reds and maybe even a bed-and-breakfast or farm-to-table restaurant.

If you’ve plowed through Long Island’s exceptional rosés, such as Summer in a Bottle from Sagaponack’s classy Wölffer Estate, it may be time to try something new: the fizzy pétillant naturel, or pét-nat. This festive, sediment-studded potion ferments partly in the bottle and is somewhat less bubbly and lighter than champagne.

Channing Daughters’ Tracy produces a gaggle of pét-nats and Brooklyn Oenology (BOE) winemaker Alie Shaper released one named Gratitude under her As If label. “I decided to get really weird on this one,” she says. “It’s a skin-fermented white wine, which is in the category of orange wines, but then I did it as a pét-nat. The beautiful thing is that it comes to market really quickly, and by November I’ll have a new one.”

Shaper and business partner Robin Epperson-McCarthy recently opened the enticing Peconic Cellar Door tasting room to feature Shaper’s BOE, As If and Haywater Cove wines, and Epperson-McCarthy’s Saltbird Cellars brand. “We want to spread the gospel of drinking fun wine,” says Shaper. “We’re serious about what we do, but we’re also not curing

Photo credit: Veronique Louis



**Left, from top: Wines from Bedell Cellars in Cutchogue and Palmer Vineyards in Riverhead.**





Sherwood House Vineyards in Jamesport.

Photo credit: Aaron Zeebrook



Castello di Borghese Vineyard in Cutchogue.

Photo credit: Randee Daddona

## Western Wineries to Watch

The Wine Council's Sannino recommends off-season weekdays as the best time to visit, but if East End traffic still gets you down, fear not. The grand Del Vino Vineyards in Northport opened not quite a year ago with a distinctly Italian flair and offers an array of sophisticated reds, whites and pinks to pair with tapas served on site. Owners and winemakers Lisa and Fred Giachetti highlight their family's century-old Italian winemaking heritage traced to the village of San Leucio in Campania, where the family made custom blends for royalty. Harmony Vineyards in St. James is another western tasting stop, where you can sample a number of wine and food pairings at its circa 1690 tasting room and then stroll its art gallery or the idyllic grounds fronting Stony Brook Harbor. For some whimsy, go south to Sayville's Loughlin Vineyard, which celebrated its 35th birthday this year and offers several different varieties. Nearly all labels bear the image of Pinky, a donkey that founder Barney Loughlin once rescued from Freedomland U.S.A., the defunct Bronx amusement park.

Est. 2002

**TEN  
LEADERS**

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the world's ills. It's about being social and it's about being together and it's about learning a little something."

To boost the fun, tasting rooms are also serving new, grape-friendly fare every day beyond the obligatory cheese and charcuterie platters. Freshly shucked oysters star at Jamesport's Sherwood House Vineyards and Riverhead's Palmer Vineyards. Little Oak is a new "farm to fire pizzeria" at Jamesport Vineyards. Food trucks, oysters and brewery-style wine taps and growlers mark Southold's Corey Creek Tap Room from Bedell Cellars. Cutchogue's intimate Suhru Wines fetches Italian dishes from the restaurant across the road, while nearby Coffee Pot Cellars purveys the owners' local honey. RGNV allows you to reserve high-brow cuisine online, and McCall Wines in Cutchogue sells raw cuts of Charolais beef from its own cattle ranch.

For overnight lodging, try Shinn Estate Vineyards' Mattituck farmhouse chic, Jamesport Vineyards' historic Milford T. Benjamin House or Sannino's Tuscan-style

bedrooms. Wake up to a water view at Kontokosta's scenic Harborfront Inn or drift off in a converted potato packing barn at Scarola Vineyards' homey Mattituck B&B.

And if your tasting regimen works up a thirst for art, Cutchogue's Castello di Borghese Vineyard has a rotating exhibit, and Sherwood House sits snug against the elegant William Ris Gallery. You can even make a day of it by visiting the acclaimed Parrish Art Museum in Water Mill and then heading over to nearby Wölffer and Channing Daughters, where the latter features outdoor sculptures by partner Walter Channing.

Whatever your itinerary, there's always something different as an evolving Long Island wine region strengthens its own identity for others to follow. "In 30 years," says Lenz's Spotteck, "if you're in a winery in Virginia, and they say, 'This is a sauvignon blanc made in the Long Island style,' that would be really cool." *LIL*

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Wölffer Estate wines and vineyard in Sagaponack.

Photo credit: Gordon Grant

