

# Wine Spectator

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## 19 Ripe Rieslings

**New reviews of crisp whites from the 2012 vintage in New York's Finger Lakes region**

*James Molesworth*

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*Tasting Highlights bring the best wines from our editors' most recent tastings to WineSpectator.com members.*

In 2012, the Finger Lakes enjoyed an ideal growing season, with warm temperatures and a little bit of drought, resulting in ripe, concentrated wines. Riesling, the region's lead varietal, performed exceptionally well, retaining ample acidity to balance its more intense flavors. If you haven't tried Finger Lakes Rieslings yet, the 2012 vintage is the right place to start.

Leading the way from this set of recent releases is a reserve bottling, called Les Alliés, from Forge. A product of Château St.-Cosme vigneron Louis Barruol and his New York-based partners, Forge, in just its second vintage, is setting a bar for the region. The wine is whole-cluster pressed and fermented partially with indigenous yeasts, then aged in barrel as opposed to stainless steel—all techniques uncommon for the Finger Lakes. The resulting wine offers a texture that stands apart from the pack, combining creamy and racy notes that carry a wide range of flavors.

There are more new faces here, including Boundary Breaks, a new project from Fox Run winemaker Peter Bell, and the Hector Wine Company, a custom-crush facility that also produces its own line of wines.

Some of the region's more established producers contribute to this selection as well, including Red Newt Cellars, with its continually expanding line of single-vineyard—and even single-block—Rieslings, many of which are sourced from Sawmill Creek Vineyards, a well-respected site on the east side of Seneca farmed by the venerable Hazlitt family. Owner and head winemaker Dave Whiting has worked with fruit from Sawmill Creek since 1998, and his experience during that time has led him to parcel out blocks amid the vineyards based on vine age, soil differences and rootstocks. The North Block bottling is Mosel-like in profile, with green fruit flavors and a brisk feel, while the South Block is even leaner, delivering a bracing finish.

Damiani, Atwater, Rooster Hill and Heron Hill span from Seneca to Keuka Lake, and show off the region's steadily growing diversity. As always, value abounds, with most of the wines here retailing for \$20 or less per bottle.

For more on the Finger Lakes and the 2012 releases, look for my annual tasting report in the Jan. 31–Feb. 28, 2014, issue of *Wine Spectator* magazine.

**HERON HILL Riesling Finger Lakes Reserve 2012 Score: 87 | \$25**

A light, fresh, talc-framed style, with lime, kiwifruit pulp and green apple notes leading to a bright, unadorned finish. Drink now. 300 cases made. —*J.M.*



Red Newt Cellars

*Red Newt Cellars makes several Rieslings from Sawmill Creek Vineyards, on the east side of Seneca Lake.*

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