

cab franc, frankly



CONVERSATIONS WITH WINE lovers inevitably include discussion of *terroir*, a French term that generally refers to how the environmental elements in which a wine is produced affect the character of the wine itself—that is, how a “sense of place” is presented in the wine.

Doug Glorie, owner of Glorie Farm Winery, in Marlboro (Ulster County), believes the *terroir* of the Hudson Valley is perfectly presented by the Cabernet Franc made here. So, in 2016, he and his wife MaryEllen, along with Robert Bedford and Linda Pierro, publishers of *Hudson Valley Wine* magazine, established the **Hudson Valley Cabernet Franc Coalition** as a way to showcase what they believe is the Hudson Valley’s signature red grape.

HUDSON VALLEY CABERNET FRANC TASTING NOTES

Glorie Farm Winery 2016

Tart cranberry and pomegranate, cooked herbs and more than a hint of citrus peel lead to a charming, spicy, green herbs-and-pepper finish, with a lingering, gentle tannin. Think semihard cheeses and charcuterie, or slow-roasted chicken. \$22

Fjord Vineyards 2015

Bright strawberry and bramble fruit mingle with a light fall baking-spice profile. More tart and lively than the 2014, this offering is fresh and playful with more strawberry, tart cranberry and spicy, firm tannin on the finish. Great with pulled pork or for a pizza night. \$25

Millbrook Vineyards Proprietor's Reserve 2015

Cabernet Franc with a smidge of Merlot. A taste of wild blackberries, black pepper and spice. Medium- to full-bodied wine with admirable restraint. A perfect pairing with lamb. \$40

Robibero Family Vineyards 2016

Brooding, juicy, plummy fruits, earthy graphite, baking spices and leather all backed by firm tannins and a lightly oaky backbone. Snappy black pepper finish. The perfect pairing for beef bourguignon or a hearty fall stew. \$35

Whitecliff Estate Bottled 2016

Tart cherry, black currants and raspberry fruit complemented by light tannins and fresh acidity. A hint of savory oak balanced by near-ripe strawberries, a touch of cooked herbs and green pepper finish. Would pair well with Coq au Vin or rich, saucy fish dishes. \$25.95



The group, a loose association of regional wineries, aims to bring greater attention to all the wines of the region by boosting recognition of the Cabernet Franc produced here. Similar campaigns have been successful in raising public awareness and appreciation of wines from the Finger Lakes region (where Riesling is the signature grape) and on Long Island (where Merlot rules).

The coalition has modeled itself on Tuscany's *Consorzio Vino Chianti Classico*, whose goals are to promote the wines of Italy's *Chianti Classico* region and to improve the quality of those wines. Taking a cue from the *Consorzio's* use of a black rooster as its symbolic imprimatur adorning bottles of wine of special quality and distinction from the region, the Hudson Valley coalition chose a hawk to adorn the neck of members' bottles—both to honor the wine and to tease the customer. If "they have a bottle of Cab Franc and see the hawk on the label," consumers may be more likely to try another wine with the same designation, Glorie suggests.

Hudson Valley Cabernet Franc tends to be "softer, less acidic, easier drinking" than many of its international counterparts, Glorie says. The grape is well suited to the region's relatively cool climate, and many wineries currently include it on their roster. Oenophiles acknowledge that the Cab Franc grape is one of the most important and beloved blending grapes both here and in France, especially in Bordeaux, where it forms the basis for many of the prized wines from that region. (It is, in fact, the parent grape of both Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot, as any ampelographer will tell you.)



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In addition to Glorie Farm Winery, the coalition lists Fjord Vineyards, Milea Estate, Millbrook Vineyards, Nostrano Vineyard, Robibero Family Vineyards, Tousey Winery and Whitecliff Vineyard as legacy members. The coalition has set a standard that at least 85 percent of the grapes used to make their wine be grown in the Hudson Valley and that the wine has been aged at least 12 months.

Matthew Spaccarelli, principal at Fjord Vineyards, says the wines of the Hudson Valley "need a regional identity to get on the global radar," adding that the coalition may help stimulate dialogue among the region's diverse producers, reinforce the sense of community and potentially help elevate the overall quality of the region's wines. ❖

For more on Cabernet Franc, see "A signature grape for the Hudson Valley?" by Steven Kolpan, *Valley Table* 65, March-May 2014.