



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

Community Spotlight: Local Wine Trails

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Senator Ritchie's Weekly Column

Nearly 12 years ago, when the Thousand Islands-Seaway Wine Trail was created, many wondered how wineries, and in particular the grapes, would survive our harsh weather, our winters. The answer was, "They will not only survive these winters, they will thrive in them."

With the help of "cold-hardy" grapes—some that can grow in temperatures of 35-degrees below zero, our local wineries have not only survived, but are indeed thriving. Grapes such as the Frontenac, Marquette and La Crescent are doing quite well in our climate.

Due to this success, the Thousand Islands-Seaway Wine Trail, which now features seven member wineries and two dozen commercial vineyards—all family owned and operated—has brought hundreds of thousands of visitors to our region as they crisscross the trail to experience wineries, vineyards and tasting rooms, year-round. These wineries are also beating out the likes of California and Europe to take home trophies and medals from national and international competitions.

The success of this trail has dramatically raised the profile of the North Country as a whole. We have seen nearby cities and towns with crowded restaurants, museums, stores and other area attractions.

It also spurred the St. Lawrence Wine Trail, which I helped establish five years ago to highlight the growing number of wineries opening in St. Lawrence County. It became the 17th official wine trail in New York State. By putting these local businesses on the map, we are boosting tourism, creating jobs and encouraging more businesses to open up.

This summer, or anytime of the year, I highly encourage you to take a trip along your local wine trail to see—and taste—what our region and this near \$5 billion industry has to offer.

For more information on the Thousand Islands-Seaway Wine Trail, click [here](#).

For more information on the St. Lawrence Wine Trail, click [here](#).