



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Thomas F. O'Mara

Senator O'Mara's weekly column 'From the Capitol' -- for the week of July 25, 2022 -- 'One of New York's greatest success stories'

THOMAS F. O'MARA July 25, 2022

| ISSUE: **WINE AND CRAFT BEVERAGES**



New York government must continue to take commonsense steps and regulatory reforms that recognize the ongoing need to support these vibrant industries and help them continue to grow, create more jobs, and spark regional growth through the unlimited economic spin-off opportunities they offer.

Senator O'Mara offers his weekly perspective on many of the key challenges and issues facing the Legislature, as well as on legislative actions, local initiatives, state programs and policies, and more. Stop back every Monday for Senator O'Mara's latest column...

This week, "One of New York's greatest success stories"

The rebirth and spectacular rise of New York State's wine and grape industry over the past generation -- joined by, especially over the past decade, the burgeoning industry surrounding craft breweries, cideries, and distilleries -- stands as one of our state's great cultural and economic success stories.

Nowhere has this been truer than right here in the Finger Lakes region.

In late June, for example, the New York Wine and Grape Foundation noted in its annual report, "The State's investment in the wine and grape industry provides sound economic returns in the form of tax revenue, jobs, and rural economic development. This public-private partnership drives the grape and wine industry's growth and makes it a major state economic engine that generates more than \$6.65 billion in direct economic impact, supports 71,950 jobs, contributes \$1.12 billion in state and local taxes, and attracts over 4.71 million tourists to wineries every year who spend \$1.33 billion."

Those are remarkable numbers and the truest testament to the commitment, excellence, hard work, innovation, and quality of New York's wine producers and grape growers.

More recently, the 36th annual New York Wine Classic, a nationally recognized competition, announced its top winners. This year's Governor's Cup went to two wineries, one of our own Finger Lakes wineries, Hazlitt 1852 Vineyards for its Solera Sherry, and the other a Long Island winery, Wolffer Estate Vineyard, for its 2020 Diosa Late-Harvest.

Additionally, Weis Vineyards from the Finger Lakes received the "Winery of the Year" award, which is presented to the winery with the best overall showing based on the level and number of awards in relation to entries.

Several wineries from the Finger Lakes region were "Best in Category" winners, including:

Keuka Lake Vineyards (Best Red Wine, 2020 Leon Millot); Weis Vineyards (Best White Wine, 2020 Winzer Select Riesling A, and Best Pink Wine, 2021 Dry Rose); Dr. Konstantin Frank (Best Sparkling Wine, 2017 Blanc de Blanc); and Hazlitt 1852 Vineyards (Best Dessert Wine, Solera Sherry).

Leigh Hazlitt-Triner, Co-CEO of Hazlitt 1852 Vineyards, said, "We are honored to receive the coveted Governor's Cup. This award is a testament to our talented and hardworking winemaking and vineyard teams; we couldn't be more proud."

Peter & Ashlee Weis, Owners of Weis Vineyards, said, “Wow! We are so honored to receive this recognition of our hard work. As a relatively new winery, only five years in, this is an unexpected honor. It means so much for our continued growth and success. We put our heart and soul into our business, and we are overwhelmed with gratitude for this award. We would like to thank our entire Weis team, as we would not be here without them. Zum Wohl!”

Congratulations to all of you and thank you for your amazing contributions to our region and the quality, strength, and pride of so many of our communities!

It’s the reason *Travel + Leisure* magazine recently designated the Finger Lakes as New York State’s “most beautiful place,” singling out the region this way: “Glacial force shaped this beautiful upstate landscape, leaving behind 11 long, skinny, finger-like lakes in its wake. The region is heaven in the summer, when visitors can choose between waterfall hiking (Watkins Glen and She-Qua-Ga Falls are popular stops), endless lake activities, and more wineries, vineyards, and breweries than you can shake a stick at.”

Read and find out more about Finger Lakes Wine Country -- its wine trails, nearly 150 wineries, and over 9,000 acres of vineyards -- at: <https://newyorkwines.org/wineries/finger-lakes-wineries/>.

The same goes for the exciting future of the craft beverage industry. At this moment, there are more licensed breweries in New York than at any other time in the state’s history. The New York State Brewers Association (NYSBA, newyorkcraftbeer.com) currently ranks second in the nation in number of breweries with more than 300 active members.

I have welcomed numerous opportunities to help develop, sponsor, and strongly support bipartisan efforts to solidify our world-class wine and craft beverage industries, as well as agriculture, small business, and tourism throughout the Southern Tier and Finger Lakes regions, and statewide.

Most importantly, New York government must continue to take commonsense steps and regulatory reforms that recognize the ongoing need to support these vibrant industries and help them continue to grow, create more jobs, and spark regional growth through the unlimited economic spin-off opportunities they offer.

One thing is certain: We can never risk taxing, regulating, or mandating them out of business.

These industries are economic engines throughout this region and New York State overall, providing good, sustainable livelihoods for thousands of New Yorkers and serving as steady foundations for so many local communities.

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