We're the northernmost wine region in New York. The safe and staid wine crowd says we can't make a go of it up here. But we're reaching new heights every day, making mellow, delicious wines that undeniably position us on our way up.

CHAMPLAIN VALLEY

GRAPES: Hybrids, native, and small plantings of vinifera
SIZE: 21 farms, 122 acres (49 hectares) under vine
AVERAGE GROWING SEASON: ~160 days

We're a hardy bunch
Like the people who live here, our grapes are hardy and handle the cold exceptionally well. Cold-hardy Minnesota French–American varieties thrive here. And some producers are experimenting with the most cold-hardy vinifera.

Marquette—features aromas of black fruit, such as cherries, black currants, plums, and blackberries, as well as spicy aromas, such as tobacco, leather, and black pepper.

Frontenac—characterized by red fruit flavors of cherry and red currant.

La Crescent—features aromas of citrus, apricot, pineapple, and muscat and lacks the “grapey” aromas associated with Vitis labrusca and herbaceous aromas associated with Vitis riparia.

Way up and coming
There’s an expression that says, “There’s no place to go but up.” When you’re a young winegrowing region at a latitude that some say isn’t ideal, it’s tempting to think that sentiment applies to our AVA. But we look at that phrase in a different way.

Wine haven
The Champlain Valley AVA sits between the Adirondack Mountains to the west, the Green Mountains of Vermont to the east, the Taconic Mountains to the south, and Canada to the north.
Since vineyards and wineries require land, our AVA is proving to be a destination for people looking to put down roots. Land is affordable, and the economic climate is inviting, so more new wineries are finding a home—and welcoming enthusiasts in—every year.

Cool history
You might be tempted to see New York as a young winemaking region. But don’t be fooled; the history of wine in the United States runs right through our state.

The natives—The native species of grapes that thrive in New York, Quebec, and Vermont—Vitis riparia—are wild grapes that were first documented on the St. Lawrence River by French explorer Jacques Cartier in 1535.

The transplants—Almost a century later, Samuel de Champlain tried to transplant French vinifera vines, but the cold climate kept the plants from producing.

Delivery from home—While some wine was made from native grapes, the early French settlers in the Champlain Valley imported most of their wine from France.

Our time arrives—In the 1970s, farmers again began in earnest to experiment with grape growing. Twenty years later, viticulture had developed high-quality, disease-resistant grapes that could thrive and produce delicious wines.

When the levee breaks
As the last Ice Age retreated, an ice dam formed and created Lake Vermont from the waters that flowed north. When the dam broke, lake levels dropped 300 feet (91 meters) within hours.

Not only is our region stunningly beautiful, but more and more wineries, cideries, and microbreweries are opening every year. It makes the Champlain Valley an ideal destination for people who love nature—and all that it can offer. For more about New York wines and our AVAs, visit newyorkwines.org.