



Bedell Cellars, in Cutchogue, is on the site of an old potato farm



A state-of-the-art tasting room awaits visitors to Bedell Cellars

## Art & Commerce

### At Bedell Cellars, the Two Worlds Collide

BY ALIA AKKAM

As much as New Yorkers love sipping their robust Cabernet Sauvignons throughout winter, once the temperature starts to creep up, their allegiances quickly shift to rosé. The once-shunned, pink-hued wine is not only embraced these days for its quality, but its crisp, pleasant flavor profile signals the arrival of summer and long-awaited alfresco dining.

Trent Preszler, the dynamic 33-year-old CEO of Bedell Cellars, is thrilled with the wine's seasonal popularity. Leveraging growing consumer interest in refreshing rosé, this month the Cutchogue winery releases its Taste Rosé, a blend of Merlot, Cabernet Franc, Syrah and Petit Verdot. "The grapes were grown on our estate and underwent a gentle whole-cluster pressing right after harvest," Preszler explains. Taste Rosé joins its sister wines—the premium blends Taste White and Taste Red—all of which bear artist Barbara Kruger's film noir-ish label evoking a seductive blonde pin-up model.

Taste is just one of the offerings in Bedell's portfolio, ranging from the First Crush series, made from the first grapes that arrive each harvest, to top-of-the-line red blend, Musée. Paul Schutte, marketing manager for Lauber Imports which distributes Bedell's wines, says this range is one of the winery's most significant attributes. "Whether it is value or prestige a customer is after, there's something for everyone in Bedell's portfolio," he shares.

#### The Sophisticated Side

Bedell Cellars is one of Long Island's oldest wineries in a relatively new winemaking region. Kip Bedell, who passionately

made wine at home, sought out the ideal location for his own vineyard back in 1979, and found it at the old 50-acre David's Potato Farm on the North Fork. Over 30 years later, the winery is not only synonymous with quality, but sophistication.

Bedell's identity has long acquired a glamorous sheen ever since film executive Michael Lynne became owner in 2000. The tasting room, set in a circa 1919 barn, stays true to its roots yet has evolved to a modern showroom. "We wanted to create a space that was indicative of Bedell's history, but at the same time stylish," says Preszler. From the mezzanine, guests are treated to sweeping vineyard views, and to add an educational component, a glimpse of the high-tech bottling line. The centerpiece of the spacious, high-ceilinged tasting room, however, is Lynne's vibrant art collection. Lynne's love for art spawned Bedell's noteworthy Artist Series, a collaboration with contemporary artists like Ross Bleckner and April Gornick who have lent their original artwork to the labels of Bedell's wines.

**Sturdy Roots**

Dave Thompson, Bedell's vineyard manager, has been with the winery since its first vintage in 1985. Back then, long before the current eco-movement gained momentum, Thompson developed pioneering sustainable guidelines—now standard practice at wineries across the country—from implementing a cover crop of grasses to naturally fermenting wines. "It's not like Bedell is new to the party," says Preszler. "It's not something we talked about, but sustainable vineyards are something we always had."

Back in 1986, lauded winemaker Rich Olsen-Harbich wrote the North Fork AVA into existence, essentially paving the way for the Long Island wine industry. Last year, following in the footsteps of Kip Bedell, Olsen-Harbich joined the team as winemaker—crafting wines for Bedell's sister winery Corey Creek, too—after working in the vineyards of other East End properties, most recently, Raphael.



Bedell's Taste Rosé debuts April 1<sup>st</sup>



Impressive vineyard views from Bedell's mezzanine



BEDELL CELLARS IS ONE OF LONG ISLAND'S OLDEST WINERIES IN A RELATIVELY NEW WINEMAKING REGION.



**New Frontier**

As more and more consumers venture into New World territory when poring over wine lists, the once-reluctant are fast becoming Long Island wine converts—not only because it's a way to capitalize upon the locavore trend, but because they are discovering the bar has been raised on the quality of the wines coming from the area. "Long Island wines have come a long way over the last five to 10 years. There's a greater acceptance among sommeliers outside of the Long Island region now," notes Lauber's Schutte. Preszler adds, "The skyrocketing of consumer acceptance is part of the recognition that there's quality wine from everywhere in the world—and in our own backyard, too."

This is underscored by the fact over 100 NYC on-premise accounts, from Gotham Bar & Grill to Porter House New York, serve Bedell's wines. Preszler, who believes wine is better enjoyed with food overall, loves seeing these wines

resonate with diners. "We love selling to restaurants; it's a co-promotional partnership for us," he says.

Braithe Tidwell, wine director of Danny Meyer's Union Square Café, is one of these Bedell-smitten sommeliers, and has been pouring the Merlot 2008 by the glass for the last few months. "The appeal of Bedell is really the quality of the wine. I like the Merlot for its versatility—guests can enjoy a glass at the bar, paired with our beloved warm bar nuts or as an accompaniment to any of Chef Carmen's dishes," she says, pointing out the Merlot is a choice companion to the pappardelle with wild boar ragu or pan-roasted chicken. "Merlot's deliciously warm fruit characteristics play nicely with the great acid you tend to find in Long Island wines, with a lush, velvety mouth feel."

"It's groundbreaking," says Schutte of *Wine Spectator* bestowing 91 points on Bedell's flagship Musée, the first 90-plus rating for a Long Island wine. "Bedell is proof that quality wine exists on Long Island; the Lynne family is committed to bringing Long Island wine to the next level, and they are succeeding." ■

**FACT SHEET**  
BEDELL CELLARS

- Owner:** Michael Lynne
- Winemaker:** Rich Olsen-Harbich
- Founded:** 1980
- Production:** 10,000 cases a year
- Notable:** Musée
- Fun Fact:** Bedell employs more graduates of Cornell University's College of Agriculture and Life Sciences than any winery in the world: winemaker Rich Olsen-Harbich ('83), CEO Trent Preszler ('02), national sales manager Adriana Coderch ('10) and social media advisor Steve Carlson ('10)
- Distributed by:** Lauber Imports