

REPRINTED BY PERMISSION OF RIC CERRINI

# VIEW ON VARIETALS

## MICHIGAN HAS COOL-CLIMATE WHITES WHY NOT COOL-CLIMATE REDS?

One of the distinguishing qualities of many European wine regions is the distinctive character of wines in particular locales. Much of this is the result of centuries of discovering which grape types do best in their particular climates and soil — generations of testing, learning and borrowing from successes in similar terroir.

Drawing from this handbook, the early local viticulture in northwest Michigan focused heavily on the white vinifera varieties from the colder climates and shorter growing seasons of northern Europe: Riesling, Pinot Gris, Gewürztraminer, Pinot Blanc and others. I have always wondered, however, why the wineries didn't follow this logic with the red varieties.

There is some evidence now of a shift in the approach to the red wines. Both Left Foot Charley and Shady Lane have seen success in fuller red wines utilizing the Austrian alpine Blaufränkisch grape. Also some test plantings of Austria's other primary red variety — Zweigelt — along with northern Italian Teroldego and Lagrein vines and others are being explored. A recent conversation with a local winemaker who had just returned from a tour of Northern Italy left him eager to experiment with Schiava grapes (known as Trollinger in Germany and Austria) and other vintners are testing other classic, largely Alpine red varieties, providing numerous other possibilities.

This may require a bit of a learning curve for many American wine drinkers, but also offer an exciting range of solid, distinctive options. It may also result in a unique and alluring niche for Northern Michigan wines, drawing more eager wine drinkers seeking to expand their horizons.

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**Ric Cerrini**, a wine connoisseur from Ann Arbor, teamed up with Corporate CFO John Dressler to create Bon Vin in Traverse City. While both direct the retail operation, Ric is the store face and expert wine buyer. Ric worked at Ann Arbor's famous Village Corner from 1973 to 2011.



Burgenland, Neusiedlersee, Gols © ÖWM / Marcus Wiesner

