

Introduction

If you want something you have never had, you must be willing to do something you have never done.

—Thomas Jefferson

In his seminal text entitled *Facing East from Indian Country: A Native History of Early America*, Dr. Daniel Richter presents an intriguing narrative of early colonial history from the Native-American point of view. The reader is asked to imagine what Native Americans thought when they first saw European settlers coming ashore as Dr. Richter turned the table on the Eurocentric version of American history. From their perspective, the native peoples lived in the familiar Old World, and the strange, white-skinned visitors were the ones from a brand-New World, building on historian Carl Becker's famous assertion that history is often "an imaginative creation."¹

The dichotomy between the Old and New World has been ingrained in the wine lexicon for decades. The term *Old World* describes a miscellaneous category, with grape varieties, viticultural techniques, and winemaking practices adapted around their unique climates and landscapes. Old World wines are the product of European experience and taste, grown in less-than-perfect conditions dictated by agricultural evolution, terroir, and tradition.

New World wines are typically associated with grapes grown in warmer climates outside the boundaries of greater Europe, with dark, inky extraction, high levels of alcohol, and overly ripe fruit. The traditional view of New World winemaking philosophy generally places less emphasis on terroir and more on the preservation of varietal fruit character, believing that the appropriate use of science and technology in the vineyard and winery can fix

any flaws and push the envelope of quality. Compared to New World wines, Old World wines tend to be lower in alcohol and hence more elegant and refreshing, with less extraction and a natural balance. Old World wines have been around for centuries and are considered New World wines' archetypes.

Like the Eastern Native Americans in Dr. Richter's text, East Coast winemakers are beginning to turn these long-held assumptions upside down. The wine districts in the region of the New World where our country began can no longer be considered "New" in the traditional sense.

American consumers have become tired of high alcohol, overly extracted wines. They want variety and choice, but mainly sincerity, purity, and something they can drink with a meal. I describe this trend as a maturation of the wine consumer; they've become secure enough in their taste buds that they no longer feel the need to impress anyone. We've witnessed an evolution of the consumer palate, leading to a more serious level of wine and food appreciation. This trend is especially robust in younger wine drinkers who are unimpressed by the traditional 100-point wine ratings from journals that are supported by large corporate advertising revenue and instead, rely on their own philosophy and palates.

The North Fork of Long Island has produced aromatic, elegant, and low alcohol wines for almost fifty years, with ever-increasing quality and little need for winemaker intervention. Our style has never wavered—we have a dedicated, monogamous relationship with crisp, aromatic whites and edgy yet elegant reds—all with moderate amounts of alcohol and a refreshing minerality. Thankfully, we don't need nor want to change to become fashionable. It's what our vineyards genuinely produce and the wine we sincerely create. It's what our terroir does all by itself. We may not fit the New World stereotype, but we'll always stay true to our identity. We have a long-term commitment to our terroir.

New York has always been where the best information, inventions, food, and fashions have come to be tested and accepted. The growing popularity of low-alcohol, cool-climate wine continues to rise in this country and is not going away. We know from our great reception in the marketplace that we have passed the test. Now we need more people to learn about what we do.

Perhaps there is a lesson we can learn from the Native Americans of Dr. Richter's text—that the New World is not quite what it seems to be. We make wine in the oldest part of America—our country's historic birthplace—in a refreshing style that is all our own. This requires a new definition along with a new *nom de plume*—one that breaks with the standard dogma and accurately describes our part of the world. It's an edgy, temperate zone

with four seasons, unpredictable rainfall, humid summers, and cool ripening conditions. It's near the sea with fertile soils, mild temperatures, and lots of sunshine—all wrapped up in a distinctive New York state of wine. It's a place like nowhere else on earth.

I call it something else entirely: the Cool New World.