

Ep 94: New York State: The Finger Lakes Part 1 with Meaghan Frank from Dr Konstantin Frank winery



Janina Doyle 00:00:07 Welcome to Eat Sleep Wine Repeat, a podcast for all you wine lovers, who, if you're like me, just can not get enough of the good stuff. I'm Janina Doyle, your host, Brand Ambassador, Wine Educator, and Sommelier. So, stick with me as we dive deeper into this ever evolving, wonderful world of wine and wherever you are listening to this, cheers to you!

Hello to all you beautiful wine lovers and welcome back to another episode. So today I am taking you to upstate New York. We are gonna go to the cool climate wine region, the Finger Lakes. Now this is about five hours from Manhattan. Currently there's around 130, 140 wineries. Well, this wine region didn't really exist until the 1960s. Dr. Konstantin Frank arrives from Ukraine in 1951 and changed everything around. The Vinifera revolution. And I say that because before he turned up, there were growing vines like Vitis Labrusca. So today I am joined by Meaghan Frank. She is fourth generation, and she's gonna take us through what is Vitis Labrusca and its flavors and why we are all drinking Vitis Vinifera around the world now. What her great-grandfather did, his story, which is so iconic and so important to this region. You'll learn about hilling up the vines and hilling down. What is that, in such a harsh, cool climate region? And of course why Finger Lakes is so special. Now it's the laser focused Rieslings that have put the Finger Lakes on the wine map, but there are so many exciting varieties making world class wines. And this winery is one of them. Their story is incredible. I think you're gonna enjoy this episode so much. This is gonna be a four part series. So the first two episodes are with Meaghan, but I'll keep you in the dark, who's gonna finish off with the other two. Now apologies on my audio coming up. Apparently my phone didn't want to behave. So sounds like I'm talking from the middle of a huge large indoor venue of sorts. But the good news is I hardly do any talking at all, but Meaghan 's sound quality is delicious. So over to that chat now.

Janina Doyle 00:02:44 Meaghan, thank you so much for joining me and coming on the podcast. I'm, I'm ready to delve into the incredible history that is Dr. Konstantin Frank. So where do we start? I mean, we have to go right back to the beginning, right?

Meaghan Frank 00:03:01 Absolutely Janina, It's so nice to be with you today.

Janina Doyle 00:03:04 Yay. Okay. And, and I'm, everybody listening, you are in for a treat because this is a pretty impressive story. Not so many wineries have stories quite like this. So I'm gonna take a step back and um, pass it over to you.

Meaghan Frank 00:03:19 Absolutely. Yeah. So our story begins with my great-grandfather Dr. Konstantin Frank. So his name adorns every bottle of wine we, we release and you know, he has a

doctor in front of his name. He wasn't a medical doctor, but actually earned a PhD in viticulture from, uh, the Polytechnic university of Odessa. So he was Ukrainian, born in Odessa, spent his entire professional career up until the time he moved to New York, for over 35 years in Eastern Europe. Uh, he was a researcher, a scientist, an experimenter, and he made incredible advancements, you know, in Ukraine. And then the family fled during world war II out of Odessa and came to New York actually. So Konstantin was 52 years old. He didn't speak a single word. Um, he did have six other language under his belt which was quite handy.

Janina Doyle 00:04:21 Oh my God. Hang on, six other languages and England hadn't come into it. Now that's interesting, isn't it?

Meaghan Frank 00:04:27 Yes. I, it would've come in big, big, handy, you know, coming to New York. But, um, but he arrived here and, uh, was shortly, uh, in New York city, just working as a dishwasher, figuring out his next move. Uh, he arrived with his wife Eugenia and three children. And shortly after, was told that the Finger Lakes region is not far and it's in New York state, they're producing wine. He decided to take a trip and he was really shocked by what he saw in the Finger Lakes, that there was no Vinifera. You know, there was no Chardonnay, no Riesling, no Pinot noir, no Cabernet Sauvignon, all of the varieties he was familiar with in Eastern Europe. And when he asked researchers, why, why is this? They told him it's too cold. And he laughed at this response. He said, no way, you know. I came from a place where in the winter, he would say, your spit froze before it hit the ground. It was so cold.

Janina Doyle 00:05:31 I'm not going there, not going there. No thank you.

Meaghan Frank 00:05:33 I know. Right. Very cold. Yeah. Very cold and vinifera was possible. So he had a theory. It wasn't due to the cold. It was the lack of proper rootstock and Phylloxera. But that was the reason why the vinifera, the early vinifera trials were not successful. So he began this sort of crusade of trying to convince anyone who would listen to him that vinifera was possible here in the Eastern United States. And, um, you know, he was really fighting against a very profitable industry at the time. There was, um, yes, there was quite a bit of wine produced where we are today on Keuka lake, which is one of the 11 Finger Lakes, a booming wine industry producing, uh, wines from Concord, Catawba, Niagara. These, um, sort of...

Janina Doyle 00:06:24 Are, they are all the Vitis Labrusca vines aren't they?

Meaghan Frank 00:06:27 That's right. Exactly. Exactly.

Janina Doyle 00:06:28 Okay. And this is, just to pause us for one second, in the Finger Lakes at that moment. Was it all just that species? The Vitis Labrusca or were there some other species around?

Meaghan Frank 00:06:39 Yeah, so it was mostly that, uh, mostly the American varieties, but also the French American hybrids were becoming popular. So the crossing. And Konstantin disliked the American varieties, but he, he much more disliked the hybrids because he felt, he was so frustrated. He felt that if you can achieve excellence, why bother with anything else? So he would say you Americans deserve only excellence. You know, why, why, you know, settle for less. Basically set out on his own, uh, purchased a hundred acres where we are today in 1957 and began essentially his own experiment station, because he was a researcher by trade. This was his, his life's work and planted over 66 different vinifera varieties.

Janina Doyle 00:07:29 56?

Meaghan Frank 00:07:31 Yes. Yes.

Janina Doyle 00:07:32 Okay. Now that's dedication.

Meaghan Frank 00:07:33 Yes, incredible array. And grapes, like Riesling. Obviously that's become the backbone of, you know, the landscape here in the Finger Lakes, but also oddball varieties that we no longer have, uh, like Aligoté, Pedro Ximénez, you know?

Janina Doyle 00:07:50 Wow. Okay. Yeah. So he's really....

Meaghan Frank 00:07:51 Very unusual, yes. So really testing the boundaries of what was possible and, you know, working with the correct rootstock. Cold hearty rootstocks, uh, that would avoid Phylloxera. That was the key to his success. Um, you know, grafting the, the correct plant material and working with the different soil types that we have and, and looking at different clones. So this body of research, um, you know, from the late 1950s, all the way up to his passing in 1985 has really helped the Finger Lakes, um, you know, explore what is possible, uh, what is possible here in terms of varieties and, and different combinations.

Janina Doyle 00:08:37 Yeah. And amazing. You said, of course, he's done all this experiment and it has certainly set the path for so many winemakers after him. Now, one of the techniques I read about was the whole hilling up, which is really to do with grafting, right. Grafting, those rootstocks onto the Vitis vinifera plants. Can you just talk a little bit about that, so that people listening actually understand what hilling up is, and of course, how amazing Konstantin was to, to create this and then get other winemakers to follow.

Meaghan Frank 00:09:08 Yes, absolutely. It is certainly a technique that is, is only really needed in cold climates so it's not talked about very often. Um, yeah. So where he was actually in parts of Odessa, they had to bury the entire vine in the winter. So this was, this was a little less, less severe. Um, hilling up is pretty much exactly how it sounds, right after harvest typically. So we're talking in November prior to the first freeze we hill up about a foot of soil. So we have a specific plow that we use to collect soil from both sides of the vine and cover the graft union. So the portion that connects the American root stock with the vinifera scion, and that is the most vulnerable portion of the vine for winter damage. So by covering it and insulating it with soil, um, to help, uh, sort of combat our very cold winter temperatures, it really helps to mitigate the risk. Um, so we have to hill up prior to, to the winter, and then we also have to hill down in the springtime, so....

Janina Doyle 00:10:21 Of course, of course. Yeah. How, how do you hill down?

Meaghan Frank 00:10:26 Yes. It is very, very time consuming. So you can imagine there's, we have, what's called a takeout plow, and we have someone on our team who was hired by Konstantin, he's worked here for over 45 years and he could do this in his sleep. So it's very dangerous work because you are basically looking behind you and removing, uh, the soil from both sides of the vine. And one, one wrong movement could result in, you know, you can take out the whole plant. Yeah. So it is very time consuming and it's something that really...

Janina Doyle 00:11:04 Not trainees, trainees don't do this!

Meaghan Frank 00:11:06 Trainees do not. No interns allowed. Yeah exactly. Yes. Not for the faint of heart, for sure. Um, but that's very important work because, um, in the Finger Lakes there have been, or in, in, in cooler climate areas, there's a temptation, well, I'll just leave it hilled up because we're just gonna have to hill up next year anyway. But what happens is you get a sucker, that'll come from the vinifera portion of the vine, and that will, will basically start its own roots system, uh, on its own roots. And it won't be protected from Phylloxera. So that's the danger. That's why we have to, to hill up and then hill down in the spring. Yep.

Janina Doyle 00:11:50 It's hard work, but it allows these vines to grow. So interesting, just, I wanna quickly go back to Vitis Labrusca before, because obviously we all know it is not superior to Vitis vinifera. Hence why all the grape varieties in general, um, that people know about, and are drinking is Vitis vinifera. How would you describe typically Vitis Labrusca vines and the grape juice they can produce to people and why are they inferior? Just so people could understand.

Meaghan Frank 00:12:19 Yes. Oh, absolutely. And it, it, they are kind of unique varieties. So they're, they're...

Janina Doyle 00:12:24 I use the word Foxy.

Meaghan Frank 00:12:25 Foxy. Exactly. Yeah. That's how we would describe them. And I thought you just love that adjective it's so it's so great. So it makes them sound really fun.

Janina Doyle 00:12:35 Not so fun.

Meaghan Frank 00:12:36 Not so fun. Yeah. So definitely that, that word Foxy they're, they're an extremely strong flavored, um, basically grape that we have Concord Catawba, Niagra. Those are the three, um, largest sort of plantings prior to prohibition, you know, going all the way back to the 1860s. We have history of these varieties being cultivated here, and they're very strong in flavor. They're more of what we would associate for jams and jellies today. So if you think of like, Welch's grape juice,

Janina Doyle 00:13:12 OK, I haven't, I'm gonna go with jam. I'm gonna stick jam.

Meaghan Frank 00:13:14 Jam. Yeah. Yeah. That very Grapey flavor. You know, that's what we think of as like Foxy or it's a very strong flavor and because it's such a strong and pungent, uh, flavor, the wines often had a very high residual sweetness level. So even today, there's a long history of producing grape pies and we have a festival in a nearby town and they make these grape pies from Concord. And they're often very, very sweet because the flavor is so strong that they need like a very, a very high sugar level. They're an acquired taste, but they're a very interesting thing.

Janina Doyle 00:13:56 Keep it for that, but, okay. So it's still controversial.

Meaghan Frank 00:13:57 A little bit, a little bit. Yeah. They're, they're very tasty. You, you kind of have to have a few pieces before you get used to it, but...

Janina Doyle 00:14:07 Like olives keep going and eventually. Yeah yeah yeah, okay. An acquired taste. So let's get back to a slightly less acquired taste and let's talk about Riesling cause ultimately already we know that Konstantin literally led the way with Vitis vinifera and for the whole Finger Lakes region, but he's certainly 100% a pioneer for Riesling. So why Riesling, is there a story behind that or it just grows better there than other grape varieties?

Meaghan Frank 00:14:36 Yes, no, it's an excellent question. I think that, you know, Konstantin saw a lot of potential with Riesling here because, because of our cool climate, um, because of the moderating influence of the lakes, you know, we are on Keuka lake, which is, uh, nearly 200 feet deep. We have, um, vineyards also on Seneca lake, the next lake over, which, at its deepest point is 640 feet deep. Um, so incredibly deep lakes that are helping to moderate the climate. So he knew that, you know, focusing on a variety that would be more of an asset in a cool climate rather than a liability would, would be very successful. And I think the region reminded him of his travels, you know, in Germany and Austria and, and looking at the vineyards there and also the steep slopes we have going down to the lake, the very Rocky soils. We have a very high content of shale in the soils here.

Janina Doyle 00:15:38 Could you compare slightly to Mosel?

Meaghan Frank 00:15:41 I think so. You know, I, I cautiously, yeah, I cautiously generalize. No, but certainly I, I certainly think there are parallels. I certainly I certainly think so. And I think, you know, we're not talking 80%, you know, gradient, but we are talking 30% at some points in our, in our vineyards and the Rocky soils, you know, not so much, um, the slate, but more of the shale, uh, definitely contributes to a really wonderful mineral focus to the wines. And certainly I think in the Mosel, the, the parallel will be that floral note that you get in a lot of Finger Lakes Rieslings, uh, and that there's a, an elegance and a lightness and a, a, uh, sort of a delicateness coming from these wines that is, uh, really, I think, key to our style as a region.

Janina Doyle 00:16:38 Okay. Okay. That's good. And you've even compared to, you know, Germany as well, which I think is always nice for people to, to understand, the similarities or differences. Now, what, I mean, Riesling is a huge part of the portfolio, right? So you do a whole load of different styles, don't you, with Riesling?

Meaghan Frank 00:16:54 We do. Yeah. We're full, full into Riesling. Um, we work, we work with, um, 17 different vinifera varieties so we're still very, you know, holding true to Konstantin's spirit of experimentation, but, um, over 60% of what we produce is Riesling in nine different styles. Yes. And that is very common throughout the Finger Lakes, because Riesling is so versatile. You know, we're working with traditional method sparkling Riesling. We do bone dry, single vineyard styles. We have some off dry styles, semi-dry, all the way up to Botrytis styles. So there's just so much to work with and explore. Um, and especially because Riesling is so transparent, uh, about where it's grown, there's like so much to work with in, in our region and the Finger Lakes. Because of the way, um, you know, the glaciers were formed during the last ice age, 10,000 years ago, this glacial till, and this pulling and forming of these very deep lakes created, uh, uh, a myriad of different soil types to work with. And I think that there's so much that we still haven't explored, you know, in the Finger Lakes, which is really exciting.

Janina Doyle 00:18:18 Right. Well, what is very exciting is that I have a glass of 2020 dry Riesling in front of me.

Meaghan Frank 00:18:25 That is very exciting.

Janina Doyle 00:18:27 It is. And as much as I'm loving listening to you, I'm also wanting to have a little try. So please, I'm gonna give this little go. Um, can you talk to us about then the dry Riesling and what you do to it, your production, just a little bit about this wine?

Meaghan Frank 00:18:42 Absolutely. Yeah. So the dry Riesling is our most popular style out of the nine styles of what we produce the most of. And it, it really has helped build our reputation as a winery. Uh, the 2020 vintage was quite a warm vintage in the Finger Lakes. We only have one or two every decade that reached kind of the level of the 2020 season. So the 2020 you are getting some really nice ripeness of tropical notes coming through, um, and that is really, I think, an interesting part of where we are in the Finger Lakes. We are a true, cool climate region with, with some vintage variation, making it kind of exciting to explore the wines year after year. But the dry style, you know, typically we're harvesting, we have estate vineyards on the west side of Keuka lake which we get the, um, afternoon sun. It's a cooler site, higher elevation, shale based soil. So that's much more in tune with the style, that citric, linear, high acid style that the dry Riesling is known for. Um, and then the vineyards on the east side of Seneca lake, where we have additional acreage, it's a much warmer area, known as the banana belt of the Finger Lakes. I know, no bananas, but it is what, yeah...

Janina Doyle 00:20:05 Yes. I don't expect bananas to be growing here, it's actually incredibly cool climate, but you can always hope. A girl can drink.

Meaghan Frank 00:20:10 You can always hope, like a, a specific, cool climate banana, right. It is quite, yes, it is quite warm there. So that's where we have more tender varieties. And we also have Riesling there as well, which fits in a little bit better to our off-dry semi-dry styles. Um...

Janina Doyle 00:20:30 Because it's, if it's warmer and riper, then of course it lends itself to the slightly sweeter versions of Riesling doesn't it?

Meaghan Frank 00:20:37 It's perfect. Exactly.

Janina Doyle 00:20:39 I think you hit the nose on the head when you said like a kind of more linear style, like, for me, this is the zippiness of the acidity, beautiful mouthwatering. You've got this beautiful kind of lemon-pear note, but for me, I get more of that tropicals on the palate where it really does seem, it's very textural. Like it's, it's still about medium body. I think, you know, it's not, but it still feels really, really light and, uh, and vibrant. Um, but that minerality of like kind of wet stones, um it's and even there is actually to everyone listening kind of classic Riesling, there'll be sometimes a petrol note. And I think there's a little touch of that in here as well. Um, But I, the direction, absolutely. There's good texture, a lovely mouth coating feel on the tongue, but definitely this is not rounded. It's really directional. It's quite straight. It's quite precise. It's quite tense. It's really beautiful. And I would definitely say minerals. It's it's, it's got this kind of lovely elegance and lift, yummy.

Meaghan Frank 00:21:46 I'm so happy you are enjoying it Janina, it's wonderful.

Janina Doyle 00:21:50 Um, I just, for me, I, I like that structure. And how, how many times have we in the industry been saying like, Riesling is just one of the best varieties hands down in the world and it's the consumer that's like, I don't get it, I'm not sure, I'm not gonna go for it. It's still confusing. And it's just like, oh.

Meaghan Frank 00:22:08 Yes.

Janina Doyle 00:22:09 You know, yes. The sweetness thing is confusing. I like the fact that you put dry on the bottle that makes life super, super simple. But I always say to everyone, like the acidity levels,

that freshness that will always cut through this, it allows such balance with sweet versions as well. Like you know, if you find a good producer, sweet or dry, it's just gonna be magnificent, right?

Meaghan Frank 00:22:31 Absolutely. Yeah. And I think it is, we're sort of, it's like an underdog grape variety and it, it works very well for the Finger Lakes. Like we're sort of an underdog region in America, you know, we haven't sure had, had a lot of lime light and a lot of spotlight on us, you know, for a very long time. That's changing now, but, um, this kind of fighter variety that it's, it's sort of misunderstood in a lot of ways, because as you pointed out the sweetness and, um, you know, people don't always know what to expect from the variety. Yeah. And it's funny, you know, even thinking of our history, you know, we've produced a dry style for a very long time. And I remember my grandfather saying you couldn't even give away a bottle of Finger Lakes, dry Riesling. If you were to stand on the streets of Manhattan, like if you were to say free dry Riesling from the Finger Lakes, trying to give it away. And today you, you have Michelin star restaurants in Manhattan that have whole categories of their wine list, Finger Lakes, Riesling. And it's just incredible to see, um, that movement, you know, and that acceptance. So it is changing and I'm happy that you're a Riesling ambassador too.

Janina Doyle 00:23:47 Oh 100%.

Meaghan Frank 00:23:48 We appreciate that.

Janina Doyle 00:23:50 In, at the end of the day, if you had to live with one grape variety for the rest of your life, like, no, you can't, Chardonnays can be stunning, Pinot Noir can be incredible, but Riesling, you can do so much with it. It will give you so much happiness every time. And it will go with so food. What I like about this one as well is it is dry, but it's not bone dry for anybody who's trying. There is, you know, it's always confusing when you try to say to people, there is some sweetness. There definitely is, but it's more ripe fruit sweetness, but even I'm going back to the nose, the nose is so lifted and floral and there's this like, it's when I say lemon, it's almost like candied lemon. And then it has, it's almost like it's somehow been smoked a little bit like it like again, because that petrol note is going in there. So it's this whole mix of like candied lemon with this kind of sweeter smoke vibe. And then this lovely even flintiness on the nose. It's, it's got a very, very inviting note. I'm very happy.

Meaghan Frank 00:24:48 Oh wonderful.

Janina Doyle 00:24:49 What I've poured in my glass has almost gone.

Meaghan Frank 00:24:51 Good.

Janina Doyle 00:24:52 So, so, so I'm glad that Finger Lakes is now, you're not having to give it away for free, because you shouldn't. And I believe, I've quickly looked online. And for everyone in the UK, you can get this bottle for 20 pounds from goodwinexgoodpeople.com. So obviously it's good wine times good people for everyone, but in terms of how you would spell it, it's good wine X good people.com. So this is 20 pounds. They have a lot of wines don't they? Um, from New York state. They're big supporters.

Meaghan Frank 00:25:21 Big supporters.

Janina Doyle 00:25:22 Yeah. But definitely this wine is on there. Um, which I love now, go back to Finger Lakes as a region. Why is it so special? Why do people want to pay attention to the Finger Lakes?

Meaghan Frank 00:25:33 Yes. The Finger Lakes is it is. I mean, I am certainly biased because I spent my life here, but it is a very special place. I mean, not only is it a beautiful region, but we have an enormous diversity of different grape varieties being planted, a lot of experimentation happening. And again, going back to that cool climate cool climate has become sort of a trendy word, you know, in the last few years or trendy phrase, but we are truly cool climate here. So achieving these really fresh high acid, lower, more moderate alcohol wines. Um, I think it's really exciting. Um, you know, we're producing fantastic traditional methods sparkling wines, using Chardonnay, Pinot Noir, Pinot Meunier, also Riesling with sparkling, um, all the way to Georgian varieties we have Rkatsiteli. We have Saperavi. There's lots of diversity. And I mean, there's, so there's, we're a collection of 11 lakes, which you may not think, you know, 10, we have 10 fingers. You think we have 10 Finger Lakes, but we have one extra lake.

Janina Doyle 00:26:44 Listen, listen, um, anomalies happen something. In fact, I know a lovely, um, I know somebody who was very dear to my heart and they actually did have more than 10 fingers, so ultimately, you know, we don't have to go with a norm here. 11 fingers it is. Yes?

Meaghan Frank 00:27:01 Right. I love that. Yeah. So, so we do have, you know, these, these long slender lakes that, um, you know, again, really help to moderate, moderate the, the severe climate that we have, the very continental climate that we have. But they're also just beautiful places to live and, and to visit, you know, there's, uh, lots of fishing. Ice fishing in the winter, fishing in the summer, lots of water sports in the summer, lots of agriculture, cheeseries, cideries. It's just a booming industry for agriculture. So it is a truly special place. And because we're so rural and we're so off the beaten path I'm mean we're a little over five hours outside of New York city. We haven't had the influx of investment. And I think that has led to a slower growth. You know, we've, we're basically a collection of, of family farms here. Many of them multi-generational and because of that, you get a real sense of authenticity from the region. You know, oftentimes you're meeting with a family member, you're meeting with the winemaker, the vineyard manager, when you come and visit these wineries and you are really getting that inside look, you know, into life here and viticulture and the wine making here. So I, it really is a special place. You know, we don't have the glitz and the glam that other regions possess, but I think there's a beauty to that. And a realness to that.

Janina Doyle 00:28:37 Now you said, so the main, the most famous lake is the Seneca lake, which is the biggest, but also am I right, you said it's 640 feet deep. Is it the deepest as well?

Meaghan Frank 00:28:48 It is. It is. Yes. By far, actually.

Janina Doyle 00:28:51 Okay. And that's pretty much in the middle. Now you, you make, you have some vineyards there, but you are based, as you said, in the Keuka lake, which is to the west and it's much smaller and it's not as deep, you said 200 feet deep?

Meaghan Frank 00:29:05 Correct? Yep.

Janina Doyle 00:29:06 I'm gonna, everyone sorry, we're sticking with feet. I haven't got time to look at metres... uhhh americans!

Meaghan Frank 00:29:09 I'm so sorry. I know we're, I should have converted to metres. I know. We're the worst.

Janina Doyle 00:29:15 I know. Listen, everyone listening can pause it and quickly do the calculation. It's fine. Yeah. So the fact that the Keuka lake is less deep, you've said obvious Seneca is, it tends to be warmer. What, what, what else separates Keuka lake from, you know, say Seneca lake or the Cayuga lake, which is the other quite large one.

Meaghan Frank 00:29:37 Absolutely. Yeah. They're so, the three primary lakes, um, for wine growing are Keuka, where we are, Seneca, the middle lake and then on the other side Cayuga and these are all sort of native American names. Keuka in the Iroquois language means canoe landing.

Janina Doyle 00:29:56 Okay, cute.

Meaghan Frank 00:29:57 Yes right. I know.

Janina Doyle 00:29:58 Well, but don't get me upset. Cause you said about the banana belt and there was no bananas. Tell me there's canoe. OK. Thank you. Finally, something that makes sense.

Meaghan Frank 00:30:08 Something true right. But it, I think because it is such a picturesque, beautiful lake, like we have, this is where the industry started, was on Keuka lake because...

Janina Doyle 00:30:18 Okay. Yeah. Well of course it started with your great grandfather.

Meaghan Frank 00:30:21 Correct. And even before him, prior to prohibition, in the 1850s, there were vineyards on Keuka lake. So this is really the first place.

Janina Doyle 00:30:29 Why? Why that one first?

Meaghan Frank 00:30:31 I believe because of its proximity to other, um, sort of regional cities at the time. Uh, and also because for some reason it it's just the most, I mean, again, I'm biased, the most picturesque lake. Um, the topography is very extreme here, so we have higher elevation.

Janina Doyle 00:30:52 Is it more steep?

Meaghan Frank 00:30:52 It is more steep. Yes. Yeah.

Janina Doyle 00:30:55 Okay. So you get, do you get the high, you get higher elevation in Keuka lake than in Seneca and Cayuga okay. And steeper as well? Presumably with the altitude. So a bit more extreme then.

Meaghan Frank 00:31:07 It is. It is certainly. Yeah. So this is where a lot of the development started. So even there are many restaurants on the water's edge because of the development, you know, in many, many years ago. And, uh, it was just a very popular lake for, for tourism and also agriculture. Um, prior to prohibition, you know, we have basically tree like tree lined, um, around the lakes and before we experienced prohibition, there was, it was said to, you couldn't see a single tree. It was all vineyards. So it was just wow, an incredible booming industry at that time. Um, and it is, you know, today we have beautiful, you know, nature here today. It's so interesting. We had a, uh, an intern winemaker this past harvest who joined us. It was her first harvest. And, uh, she was coming from UC Davis and she had lived her whole life in Monterey, California and she arrived and she...

Janina Doyle 00:32:10 Very different. A little bit.

Meaghan Frank 00:32:11 Very different. She said, I can't believe you guys have this wine region here in a forest. You know, like she couldn't believe how many trees we had and how lush and how green. And so it's just, it is striking, you know, to see, to see the area and the topography here.

Janina Doyle 00:32:32 So tune in next week to part two, where we're gonna talk about much more of the different grape varieties that they grow. I'll be tasting a Gewürztraminer, their Cabernet Franc. We'll be talking about Rkatsiteli, which they grow. They grow Georgian varieties. I said there were some exciting varieties right in the Finger Lakes. Now to finish off, I have found a quote from the one and only Dr. Konstantin Frank. It seems only fair. And what a gorgeous quote it is. He said:

“Good grape varieties are not good enough for Americans. You Americans deserve only excellent. This is my duty as scientist. And this is my duty as an American Patriot.”

So with that kind of dedication, no, the Finger Lakes has grown to exactly what it is now. That's it for today. Thank you as always for listening and commenting and getting in touch with me, make sure you're subscribed. You've shared, you've like the podcast and leave me a comment if you can. Right. Well, you know, what's coming next week. So that means you have one week to get yourself a bottle Finger Lakes wine. And ideally, if you can get a bottle of Dr. Konstantin Frank, be back next week to join us for the second half with Meaghan Frank. Until then, cheers to you.