

CITY NEWS



Sam Nahid, above, and Bill Reed, below left, pour glasses of wine at Humboldt & Jackson, a new bar in Brooklyn. Below right, owner Charlie Marshall in the wine cellar at the Marshal restaurant in the Hell's Kitchen. Both bars serve only American wine.

UNCORKING THE CITY | By Lettie Teague

A Particularly American Holiday



This is the time of year when otherwise international-minded New York diners turn to American food and wine. In other words, it's time for Thanksgiving.

And while options abound for American food, there aren't many New York bars or restaurants that serve American wine exclusively.

Two places that do offer only domestic labels are the 4-month-old Humboldt & Jackson in Brooklyn's Williamsburg neighborhood and the Marshal in Midtown Manhattan.

The Marshal boasts a nearly all-New York selection while Humboldt & Jackson has a list with wines from across the country—from Michigan to Maryland to New Mexico and parts beyond.

But Humboldt & Jackson, named for its approximate location at Humboldt and Jackson streets (434 Humboldt St.), isn't so much a bar as a "tasting room," according to co-owner Bill Reed, who has gone to great lengths to acquire wines that no one else carries. "I tell sales reps, 'Bring me wines that you can't sell to anyone else,'" he said with a laugh.

That includes wines like a Gamay (the grape of Beaujolais) from Traverse City, Mich., and a rosé from Friendsville, Md., as well as a few more predictable options like a Napa Merlot.

Right now, there are eight states represented on the list, although Mr. Reed and his two partners—his wife, Pam Reed, and Sam Nahid—are hoping to add many more.

By-the-glass wine drinkers, though, shouldn't get too attached to any wine since the partners switch up the options quite often.

"We only buy three to six bottles of each of the wines that are sold by the glass," said Mr. Reed.

All by-the-glass picks are priced at \$10 (5-ounce pour or 2 ounces for \$5) because "in



this neighborhood people look at price first," said Mr. Reed.

When all wines are priced the same, drinkers will pay attention to other attributes, such as flavors and grapes, Mr. Reed said.

The all-American focus is a way to highlight otherwise undersung wine-producing states and it's also helpful for his staff, said Mr. Reed.

"It's easier for them to talk about grapes and states—like 'This wine is made just outside Detroit.'"

A wine made within hailing distance of a bankrupt city sounds like an unlikely selling point; on the other hand, it also sounds like a lot more fun to describe than some glass of Sancerre or ubiquitous Pinot Grigio.

There are several wines from New York, including a number from Long Island. But just as notably, the place itself is made from wood that has New York origins—the pallet wood on the ceiling and the top of the bar is wood reclaimed from the Rockaways after superstorm Sandy. (Mike Swan was the designer and contractor, but Mr. Reed and Mr. Nahid did much of the work themselves.)

Humboldt & Jackson fits nicely into the neighborhood, but it's a concept that Mr. Reed concedes might not work in Manhattan.



"I think it would be harder to do in the city because there are a lot of Europeans there," he said. "I don't know how well this would work in SoHo."

Charlie Marshall, chef-owner of the Marshal, a tiny outpost on 10th Avenue, has been selling New York wine almost exclusively for more than a year and says he has lots of "industry" people stopping in to taste selections that they might not be able to sample otherwise.

'It's easier for [the staff] to talk about grapes and states....'

His focus—in both food and wine—is hyperlocal farm-to-table. In fact, a full page of the menu is devoted to biographies of the farmers he works with, although not the winemakers. A few, though, do appear on an accompanying map.

The wine list that Mr. Marshall has created must surely be one of the most extensive of New York state wines in the city; there are more than 80 options ranging from \$26 to \$89. (That \$89 bottle, by the way, is one of the few non-New York wines: It's from Barbourville, Va.)

There are also local ciders,

beers and cocktails are bit wider ranging; there's gin from West Virginia and rye whiskey from North Carolina, too.

The one New York wine that is missing is Riesling; there's a Canadian Riesling that will soon be replaced by a Canadian Pinot Noir, said Mr. Marshall.

Although the signature grape of the Finger Lakes region, "Riesling just doesn't sell in New York," he said.

The best-selling white wine is, in fact, from the Finger Lakes, but it's a Sauvignon Blanc from Hosmer Vineyards (\$44 a bottle, \$12 a glass).

My friend and I sampled it, but we ultimately opted for the snappy Macari Sauvignon Blanc, which is from the North Fork of Long Island (\$39 a bottle).

The Macari proved a good match with the mustard-and-tarragon-crusted Montauk monkfish, but it was perfect with the roasted Brussels sprouts salad, which may be the best Brussels sprouts dish I've ever tasted.

The roasted Brussels sprouts salad is on the Marshal's Thanksgiving dinner menu (\$45 for three courses), but there are just a few seats left.

There is, however, always plenty of New York state wine to enjoy—except Riesling, that is.