



WÖLFFER ESTATE
VINEYARD

ROBERT PARKER'S THE WINE ADVOCATE
Mark Squires, Reviewer
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Wölffer is one of the region's flagships, founded in 1988 by German Christian Wölffer in the Hamptons (the South Fork). It is fair to say that this was one of the more impressive tastings I had on Long Island, featuring many competitors for "best" I had of its type during my survey—Rosé, Chardonnay, Cab Franc, dessert wines, to name a few. The competition in Merlot might be stiffer, but not because this winery doesn't excel there. It's just that every fine producer on Long Island seems to make an impressive one. If I had to name a "short list" of top wineries in the region, this would have to be on it, without requiring any thought.

Under winemaker/partner Roman Roth and Vineyard Manager Rich Pisacano (who also owns Roanoke, at which Roth is also the winemaker), this winery excels in making age-worthy, structured wines. The terroir is defined by loam soil and maritime breezes from the nearby Atlantic Ocean. Roth's "Grapes of Roth" label is separately listed.

<i>Wine</i>	<i>Rating</i>	<i>Maturity</i>
Wölffer Estate Rose 2014 The 2014 Rosé is the winery's dry, entry-level pink, a blend of 56% Merlot, 18% Chardonnay, 16% Cabernet Franc, 5% Pinot Noir, 4% Riesling and 1% Cabernet Sauvignon. The first pink here that was bottled with a screwcap, this is classic in its perky demeanor, crisp finish and fine flavor. It should be a great summer refresher, but drink it young to preserve that freshness, however long it theoretically lasts.	87	Mature
Wölffer Estate Grandioso 2014 The 2014 Grandioso Rosé is a bit pricey for a pink, but it's worth it. A blend of 34% Cabernet Franc, 30% Merlot and 36% Chardonnay, this is essentially the winery's Reserve pink, fermented in 7-year-old (neutral) French oak. It takes the Summer in a Bottle bottling reviewed this issue and ups the ante in depth and intensity. With structure and some power, it also tastes great, dry and balanced. It is a red wine substitute in the heat. It may hold awhile, too, if well stored.	91	Early
Wölffer Estate Summer in a Bottle Rosé 2014 The 2014 Summer in a Bottle, a somewhat iconic Rosé, comes in a very pretty bottle you won't miss. The thing is, though, you can actually appreciate this for the wine, too. A blend of 50% Merlot, 19% Chardonnay, 19% Cabernet Franc and 12% Gewurztraminer, this is most notable because it has a distinctive zing on the finish and a gloriously fresh feel. It also seems riper and more concentrated than the winery's basic pink, also reviewed this issue. That gives it extra structure, extra zest and a better mouthfeel. Add fine flavor and bit of spice on the finish and this is quite a tasty treat. After awhile, you may want to buy it just for the wine, not the pretty bottle.	89	Early
Wölffer Estate Sauvignon Blanc 2014 The 2014 Sauvignon Blanc shows plenty of veggies, but enthusiasts of the grape won't find it too much. Grassy up front and showing some broccoli on palate, it remains both perky and rather nicely concentrated for the style. It comes in at 12.5% alcohol. It is in fine balance and should be a great summer sipper this year, however long it theoretically lasts.	89	Early



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Wölffer Estate Chardonnay Perle 2013

91 Early

The 2013 Chardonnay Perle was aged in 30% new French oak for about seven months and sourced from 1993 vines (Dijon clone). It is a bit closed just now, but it is a fine competitor to the 2012 reviewed this issue, and probably better. It comes in at 13.3% alcohol. Beautifully balanced, this oak-fermented Chard handles its oak well even in its youth and finishes with bright intensity. This should have the opportunity to improve a bit more in the cellar if you have some patience. It should also age very well, but let's take that in stages and see where we are when we get there.

The Grapes of Roth by Wölffer Estate Virgin Berry Dry Riesling 2013

90 Early

The 2013 Virgin Berry Dry Riesling is an interesting wine that winemaker Roman Roth calls his "Grosses Gewächs." It is not much of a threat just now to the great German GGs, but it is pretty fine in its own right. The "Virgin Berry" name derives from the occasional tendency of "unfertilized flowers [to] develop tiny golden...seedless grapes of extra sweetness and aromatic power," says the winery. "These virgin berries ripen much faster than regular Riesling grapes, developing greater sugar concentration." Well, whatever magic occurred in the vineyard, it seemed to work out great here. Bright, vivacious, fruity on the finish and quite lingering, this youthful Riesling seems both perky and substantial. It has, by the way, 7 grams per liter of residual sugar. While it is hardly bone dry, the sugar expresses itself as fruitiness and is balanced by the acidity well. It should age very well and most of what this winery produces does. Let's take that in stages, though. Sourced from grapes on the North Fork, actually, it produced just 149 cases and 16 magnums.

Wölffer Estate Christian's Cuvée Merlot 2012

92 Young

The 2012 Christian's Cuvée Merlot, sourced from the winery's 1990 vines, also has 3% Cabernet Sauvignon and less than 1% Petit Verdot. It comes in at 13.5% alcohol and was aged for 19 months in French oak (60% new). Fresh, young and viscous, but also a creature of its vintage, this doesn't necessarily show impressive depth. However, the intensity of flavor and the beautiful craftsmanship in its structure makes it a winner. The fruit is hammered into the palate by the acidity. The lingering finish is very pleasing, to say the least. This should age beautifully, but be approachable fairly young. It would still be nice if you could give it a few years in the cellar for better results. There were 2,610 bottles produced, but 48 magnums.

Wölffer Estate Diosa Late Harvest 2012

94 Early

The 2012 Diosa Late Harvest is a blend of 70% Chardonnay, 12% Vignoles, 13% Gewurztraminer and 5% Trebbiano. Tank-fermented, it comes in at 9.9% alcohol with 225 grams per liter of residual sugar. Just super, this accomplishes the feat you most want to see—a beautiful mingling of acidity and all that sugar. Fresh, aromatic and lively, it is a perfect warm-weather finisher that should leave you both refreshed and drooling over its delicious finish. It will age a long time, but of course its character may change. As wines like this oxidize in the cellar, they give up some freshness, but often flesh out and become more distinctive. There were 528 cases of 375ml bottles produced (on which size this review is based).



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94 Early

Wölffer Estate Descencia Botrytis Chardonnay 2012

The 2012 Descencia Botrytis Chardonnay is a 25th Anniversary wine, sourced from fruit on the North Fork. It was aged in new French oak for four months after final blending and after separate fermentation of different lots. It comes in at 174 grams per liter of residual sugar. Adding more weight to the Diosa, also reviewed this issue, it is a big mouthful that coats the palate. If it is not quite as luscious as the Diosa, it is far more concentrated, ending with an irresistible and mouthwatering finish. This was reviewed from a 375ml bottle. There were 1,800 375ml bottles produced.

Wölffer Estate White Mischief 2012

The 2012 White Mischief is a bit different in the winery's Chardonnay lineup: it is wild-yeast fermented, plus only a one-third of the juice was barrel fermented, using only about 25% new French oak (unlike the Perle). Fresh, gorgeously balanced and very elegant, it has a lingering finish. It is the type of wine that will never make you go "wow," but when you look up, the bottle is already empty and you wish you had more. This looks like a nice success. Typically, this winery makes wines to age. Given the structure and overall track record, there is a pretty good chance here for things to go well with extended aging, and likely better than I think. Still, let's be a bit conservative just now. Sourced from 1993 vines, there were 539 cases produced.

91 Early

Wölffer Estate Chardonnay Perle 2012

The 2012 Chardonnay "Perle" is 100% barrel fermented, unlike the White Mischief bottling, also reviewed this issue. Notably (and not surprisingly) oakier than White Mischief, although not overly woody by most standards, this has nice weight, some pop and grip on the finish and fine freshness to balance the oak. It is a lovely Chard that should continue to develop with time. Its graceful demeanor and lifted feel makes it a pleasure at the moment. I do think it was and will be surpassed by its 2013 counterpart, but it's pretty close.

90 Early

Wölffer Estate Merlot Lambardo 2012

The 2012 Merlot "Lambardo" is 100% Merlot, sourced from the winery's oldest vines (1990) and also from Leslie Alexander's North Fork vineyard (hence, the appellation Long Island, rather than The Hamptons). The Wölffer Estate fruit was fermented in a 6,000-liter French oak tank, while the North Fork fruit was tank-fermented. Eventually, the juice was transferred to a 50/50 mixture of new and second-use French barriques for 18 months. It comes in at 13.5% alcohol. Young, fresh and fruity, this sometimes seemed on par with the wonderful 2010 Grapes of Roth Merlot also reviewed, but its tight, unevolved nature left some questions. Ultimately, they may wind up in much the same place, with this being just a little less concentrated and voluptuous, relatively speaking. A year or two in the cellar to calm down wouldn't hurt. There were 272 cases produced, but the wine will not be released until the Summer of 2015.

90 Young



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Wölffer Estate Fatalis Fatum 2012 The 2012 Fatalis Fatum is a Bordeaux blend, 57% Merlot, 22% Cabernet Sauvignon, 19% Cabernet Franc and 2% Petit Verdot. Opening with smoky nuances, which I took to be somewhat reductive, perhaps combining with some youthful exuberance in herbaceousness, this was rather tight and tannic on the edge, with an angular feel. I retasted this with more time to play with it and it was far more impressive, a very good sign. Showing exceptional concentration for this vintage, this is beautifully balanced, a little tight on the finish and surprisingly lush at times. This is approachable, in a sense, but it is nowhere near peak and it is a bit tight. If you can, give it another year or three in the cellar.	91	Young
Wölffer Estate Cabernet Franc Caya 2012 The 2012 Cabernet Franc “Caya” (Caya being a horse from the winery’s stables) also has 18% Merlot blended in. It was aged in a mixture of used (60%) and new French oak (40%) for 18 months. The tank-fermented Merlot was blended in separately in October, 2013, roughly a year after harvest. It comes in a 13.5% alcohol. Very different in demeanor than the graceful and more mature 2005, also reviewed this issue, this youthful 2012 is otherwise in a similar style, with impeccable balance, an elegant mid-palate, sensual texture and grip on the finish. It looks like another success in this bottling. There were 268 cases produced.	90	Early
Wölffer Estate Noblesse Oblige Rosé Extra Brut 2011 The 2011 Noblesse Oblige Rosé Extra Brut is a blend of 63% Pinot Noit and 37% Chardonnay from the winery’s 1990 block. Vintage 2011 was one of the weaker ones in recent years, but for a sparkler and the grapes involved, the winery says the cooler growing season made it “perfect for sparkling wine.” Given how this shows, they might be right. This was bottled in May, 2014, disgorged with a dosage of 6.0 grams per liter of residual sugar after 29 months of aging. About 9% of the juice saw new French oak. Bright, with a fine mouthfeel, this is dry, fresh and lingering with a very tasty finish. It is a very fine effort that has a bit more to it than you might at first think, thanks to the acidity which drives home the flavor. It should hold just fine, but there is no reason to wait. Winemaker Roman Roth indicated that the first vintage of this was the 2003, still holding well given “low pH and high acid and the CO2.” There were 6,680 bottles produced.	90	Early
The Grapes of Roth by Wölffer Estate Merlot 2010 The 2010 Merlot also has 18% Cabernet Sauvignon from Jamesport on the North Fork. It was aged for 21 months in an equal mixture of new, second- and third-use oak and comes in at 13.5% alcohol. Simply gorgeous, this is fresh, sunny and very flavorful on the finish. Lively and youthful, its bright demeanor and controlled tannins finish off the picture. Always elegant, but always persistent, this is easy to drink and easier to love. It should age well, too. There were 2,592 bottles produced and 36 magnums.	92	Early
Wölffer Estate Fatalis Fatum 2007 The 2007 Fatalis Fatum is a Bordeaux blend, 57% Merlot (sourced from the winery’s 1990 vines), 30% Cabernet Franc and 13% Cabernet Sauvignon. It comes in at 13.2% alcohol. After separate fermentations, it was aged in French oak for 20 months (70% new). From a fine vintage, this not surprisingly shows superbly. Startlingly fresh and young, it is hard to believe it is even this old at first. With aeration, some hints of earth did pop up, but the first impression was a touch of licorice, flavorful fruit and a vibrant, sunny finish. This elegant wine shows beautifully and it should keep aging well. There were 669 cases produced.	91	Early