



■ Andrew Stover, sommelier at Oya in DC's Penn Quarter, champions oft-neglected wines of the East Coast.

A Vine Grows in the East

Wines from the East Coast are no longer expensive novelties—the best are beginning to take their place among the world's elite. So why are they so hard to find in better restaurants and wine shops?

WHEN ANDREW STOVER LEANS OVER the table and says, "I've got a wine for you," expect the unexpected. It may be a Viognier from North Carolina, a Cabernet Sauvignon from Georgia, or a Cab-

ernet Franc dessert wine from Ohio. Stover, the sommelier at Oya in DC's Penn Quarter, picks among the best producers in the eastern United States to showcase delicious wines from unexpected places.

He's not alone in his enthusiasm for these oft-neglected wines. At 2941 restaurant in Falls Church, sommelier Kathy Morgan offers adventurous diners an Rkatsiteli—pronounced "ar-katsiteli"—from Dr. Konstantin Frank Vinifera Wine Cellars in New York's Finger Lakes region. The "Rkats"—a white variety from ex-Soviet Georgia—is a refreshing wine whose abundant ripe fruit can make jaded Chardonnay drinkers thump the table in delight.

At Capitol Hill's Charlie Palmer Steak, wine director Nadine Brown maintains a list that includes a wine from nearly every state. Diners who insist on drinking only the best that California, Oregon, and Washington state have to offer risk missing out on a Bordeaux doppelgänger from Raphael winery in Long Island or a vibrant Chardonnay from Virginia's Linden.

Stover says he realized East Coast wines were beginning to catch on when, in one week, he sold six bottles of a rich and complex Bordeaux-style red from Frog-town Cellars in Georgia.

"I like to offer wines that are unusual—things consumers would not get unless they went to the winery," he says. "Most of them don't want to drink the same wines they have at home. Listing these regional wines, I can offer something they can't find anywhere else."

Brown, who also offers the Dr. Frank Rkatsiteli, says people buy it "because they like to say it and because more consumers are willing to try something new."

Brown says one of her favorite tactics is