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For the second time in the winery's 28-year history, Keuka Spring Vineyards has won the prestigious Governor's Cup, the top award in the New York wine industry. Owners Len and Judy Wiltberger (left) and winemaker August Deimel were recognized for their 2012 Riesling.

Best in New York

Keuka Spring claims second Governor's Cup

By **JULIE ANDERSON**
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MILO — The owners of Keuka Spring Vineyards have every reason to party like it's 1999.

For the first time in 14 years and second time in the winery's 28-year history, Keuka Spring has won the prestigious Governor's Cup, the top award in the New York wine industry. Vineyard owners Len and Judy Wiltberger were recognized for their 2012 Riesling.

Gov. Andrew Cuomo announced the

award during the 28th annual New York Wine & Food Classic at the Glen Harbor Hotel in Watkins Glen Tuesday night.

Not only did Keuka Spring Vineyards land "Best in Show" in a competition featuring 875 entries, they received awards for Best White Wine, Best Medium Dry Riesling, Best Overall Riesling and Best Gewürztraminer — along with Best Limited Production for their 2012 Dry Rosé.

About Keuka Spring Winery

• **Owners:**

Len and Judy Wiltberger; winemaker, August Deimel



• **First vintage:** 1985

• **Timeline:** Opened a tasting room in the mid-1980s, adjacent to the vineyards, as an outlet for their premium wines; opened a new tasting room on the opposite side of the vineyard overlooking the lake, 2004.

• **Production:** Small initially, about 2,000 cases per year; increased in recent years, about 8,500 cases per year.

• **Governor's Cup winners:** 1998 Cabernet Franc, 2012 Riesling

• **Address:** 243 Route 54, East Lake Road, Penn Yan, (315) 536-3147

• **Website:** www.keukaspringwinery.com

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“Winning the Governor’s Cup is a great accomplishment, and the Keuka Spring family should be justifiably proud,” said Jim Trezise, president of the New York Wine and Grape Foundation.

The Wiltbergers called the honor the cream of the crop.

“It is a level playing field for grape varieties,” Len Wiltberger said. “It is not an international competition that have varying climates, and it is one that achieves distinction and notoriety among other New York wines.”

Keuka Spring Vineyards also won the Governor’s Cup in 1999 with its 1998 Cabernet Franc.

Winemaker August Deimel has spent the majority of his adult life in the production side of the business. After earning a master’s degree from Cornell in 2010, the Romulus resident began making wine at Keuka Spring about a year and a half ago.

The 2012 Riesling, which costs \$14.99 a bottle, was his first start-to-finish vintage.

“I didn’t expect it,” Deimel said. “We got the call around 12:30 in the afternoon (Tuesday). It is our best-selling wine, and it has already been selling big this year.”

Deimel called last year a perfect growing season for the vintage.

“It was hot and dry, and in September it cooled down quickly to prevent over-ripening,” the winemaker described.

Following stainless-steel storage, 800 cases were bottled in March — and Deimel believed he had

created the “ultimate” riesling.

“It is truly unique because it is balanced and broadly appealing,” he said. “It is sweet enough to please a range of people, yet dry enough to finish clean. It is a wine that you can have out on the boat, on the porch or at the dinner table ... and it was a hell of a lot of fun.”

“This riesling has a great combination of fruity aroma, and a medium-dry taste which is in perfect balance,” Trezise assessed. “It is a very versatile wine for food, from fruits and cheeses to chicken and spicy cuisine like Asian or Mexican.”

The Wiltbergers described the 2012 Riesling as a semidry, aromatic vintage with nice sugars, along with a hint of peach and lemon.

“The goal is always to make a better riesling, and we are very fortunate,” Len Wiltberger said. “To receive this award twice in the same competition shows that year in and year out people are receiving a quality wine.”

“We couldn’t have done it without people who help with the vineyards and the 17 people who work in our tasting room part time,” Judy Wiltberger said.

“They need to know how special they are. They know everything about our wines and have enthusiasm for the product.”

The New York Wine & Food Classic awards were based on blind tastings conducted by 22 expert judges, including nine and three from Europe.

Judging panels determined the initial awards, with the top-scoring wines being evaluated by all 22 judges for Best of Category and Governor’s Cup awards.

McCall Wines on Long Island was named the Winery of the Year.