

NY to MI: Wanna buy grapes?

New York State growers are expecting a bountiful grape harvest in 2009, hopefully with the great quality levels of the past few years. Even for grapes for which we are most well known, like Riesling and Cabernet Franc, there will be a surplus. So the New York Wine & Grape Foundation (NYWGF) is partnering with Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE) to try to find "homes" for these wonderful grapes.

-- Letter to Michigan wineries from Jim Trezise

President, New York Wine & Grape Foundation

JULY 3 - New York wineries have a problem, and they hope Michigan wineries have the opposite problem.

In the next few days, every Michigan winery will get a letter from Jim Trezise, President of the New York Wine & Grape Foundation. Its message: We have surplus grapes to sell. Are you interested in buying?

To facilitate transactions, the Foundation and Cornell's Extension Service created a Grape & Wine classified ad website. Only New Yorkers can list grapes and bulk wine for sale -- but buyers from anywhere are welcome.

New York wineries and growers currently offer 46 lots of grapes and ten of finished wine for sale on the site.

According to Trezise, New York vineyards are expecting their third bumper crop in a row in 2009, leading to an expected grape glut.

"Cornell already had this website that existed within New York. So we decided to try an expanded marketing approach," he said.

"Let's balance supply with demand."

Trezise said his office mailed the first wave of letters on Wednesday, July 1, to wineries in Michigan, Ohio and Pennsylvania, noting that some growers in these states lost grapes to frost damage this spring.

Subsequent letters will go to wineries in further-away states, such as Missouri and Texas.

But don't expect to see any bottles labeled "Finger Lakes" from Michigan wineries any time soon.

According to Federal label restrictions, Michigan wineries that use New York grapes to make wine here can't put the grapes' origin on the front of their bottles. The only name they could legally use: "American" -- although back labels could mention where the grapes grew.