



1 Keuka Business Park, Suite 208
Penn Yan, NY 14527
T 315-924-3700 • F 315-924-3701
www.newyorkwines.org

Sam Filler, *Executive Director*
Dana Alexander, *Director of Operations*
Paul Brady, *Brand Ambassador*
Jennifer Cooper, *Special Projects Manager*
Julie Hosbach, *Communications Manager*
Kim Hughes, *Finance Manager*
Amy Ellsworth, *Administrative Assistant*
Valerie Venezia-Ross, *Director of Member Relations and Development*

Interview with Dan Belmont, Wine & Cheese Ambassador, Bedales Wines

NYWGF: When was the moment you fell in love with wine/wine industry?

DB: I was fascinated by the aromatics of a gewürztraminer – and it hooked me early on. From there, it was on one of my first visits to the Finger Lakes that the relationship between geography, climate, varietal and winemaker all started to make sense. The more I learned and tasted, the more it became evident that I'll never know, or taste it all. That life-long journey intrigued/excited me. Now, a decade or so later, and I've yet to be bored! I humbly aim to learn (or at least taste) something new each day. And I love helping consumers discover this world that's given me so much.

NYWGF: What's your best experience/event since you've been part of the industry?

DB: I've been fortunate to visit many vineyards & wineries domestically and abroad. Living in London I am spoiled with easy access to Europe: Epic vineyards in Lanzarote (if you don't know what I'm talking about, do a google image search for 'La Geria Lanzarote!'), impossibly steep terraced hillsides flanking the Danube in Wachau, and more. But for me, it's the people I've met along the way, sharing their passion, being invited into their homes. It's those relationships that make for the best experiences.

NYWGF: What's the one wine you can't live without?

DB: Like I said, I'm a sucker for aromatics. And drinking as much wine as I do, I crave acidity and freshness. With my earliest roles representing Finger Lakes producers, I've developed a deep love for RIESLING. It's still widely misunderstood – and I like a challenge. As I mostly lead consumer-focused events and tastings I fly the Riesling flag loud and proud! Aromatics, acidity, drinkability, ability-to-age – what's not to love?!

NYWGF: What do you think is going to be the next big wine trend?

DB: I'd love to see a more educated consumer base lean into, or at least develop a deeper curiosity for producers that have a respect for the environment in their practices. I'm not going to say we all need to drink nothing but hard-core natural wines - there is a time and a place for all wines, including those farmed and produced conventionally. However, I believe wine regions and healthy vineyards to be some of the most beautiful places on earth – and it's the only earth we have! Any producer that includes that responsibility for their little (or big) piece of earth in their company ethos – that's a trend I could get behind. Beyond that (and perhaps because of that) we'll continue to see more alternative packaging – cans, bag-in-box, pouches, etc. for premium wines with high drinkability. As we continue to address climate change, hybrid wines will likely continue to grow in popularity too. Just recently, the Bordeaux appellation approved seven new grape varieties adjusting for climate change! The vines they are a-changin'!

NYWGF: What do you think makes New York wines special and/or distinct?

DB: The people and community of the New York State wine industry make for a diverse tapestry. And they come together here, recognizing the very specific set of geological factors (brilliant bodies of water in the Finger Lakes, the Hudson River and those surrounding Long Island) that make the otherwise unfavorable climates work. They recognize the potential to be a part of the premium *terroir*-driven wine regions of the East Coast. They understand that places with this kind of potential to grow and produce high-quality premium wine are special. It's not an easy road, but New Yorkers are tough. It's an exciting time, and comparably to other major regions, the industry is still in its adolescence. It will be a thrill to see it (and the wines themselves!) mature over our lifetime.