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Interview with Sam Filler, Executive Director, and Paul Brady, Brand Ambassador, New York Wine & Grape Foundation

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

SF: I lived with my aunts (Gina and Lorri) in Los Angeles in 2007. They are huge oenophiles. They have a whole room in their house that they converted into a wine cellar and it is filled with some incredible wines. They generously allowed me to drink any wine from their everyday rack, which had minimum bottle value of \$20. This helped develop my palate for wine. My aunts are also really great cooks, so I enjoyed many top tier wines with them over delicious meals. I credit them for sparking my love for wine and I hope to return the favor by organizing a comprehensive New York wine country tour for them.

PB: Around 2008, at a restaurant near my parent's cottage in Ontario, I had a Riesling from Cave Spring. That was my "a ha" moment that sent me down the path.

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

SF: Hosting the NY Drinks NY Grand Tasting this past March at the Rainbow Room will always be one of my best memories. It was an incredible space to showcase the best wines from New York. The sky was clear, so the space had the most iconic views of New York City. Most importantly, it was an all hands-on deck event for the NYWGF team, and our team really united together to pull off a special experience for everyone involved.

PB: In 2013 when I was a manager in the Hearth/Terroir Wine Bar universe I was tasked with booking the band for the Summer of Riesling Boat Cruise, which to this day I still consider the ne plus ultra of wine industry achievements. Fast forward to now and I get to attend that same boat cruise representing New York wines!

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

SF: Sparkling wine always hits the spot for me for all occasions.

PB: Gamay Noir. There are some really fine examples of it from New York and other parts of northeastern North America and I hear rumors of more plantings going in, which is music to my ears.

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

SF: I think artisanal brandy is starting to percolate as the next grape product to generate consumer interest, and New York grows a variety of heritage grapes that could be used to create some interesting expressions. Personally, I would like to see more artisanal vermouths being made because my favorite cocktail is a Negroni.

PB: The conversation that encompasses farming. Wine is agriculture. We're seeing consumers become more interested in the details of wine's agricultural origins and that will continue to be a driving part of the dominant discourse.

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

SF: I think that every major wine region in New York is distinguished by a body of water influencing the viticulture. Rivers, lakes, and an ocean all exert influence on what is grown and where it is grown. This combined with regional differences in soil composition help to produce wines of elegance and character. Our wine industry truly reflects the geographic and cultural diversity of New York.

PB: The sincerity of each vintage. Every growing year is different, and it's exciting to know that we as drinkers get to experience something entirely new every year.