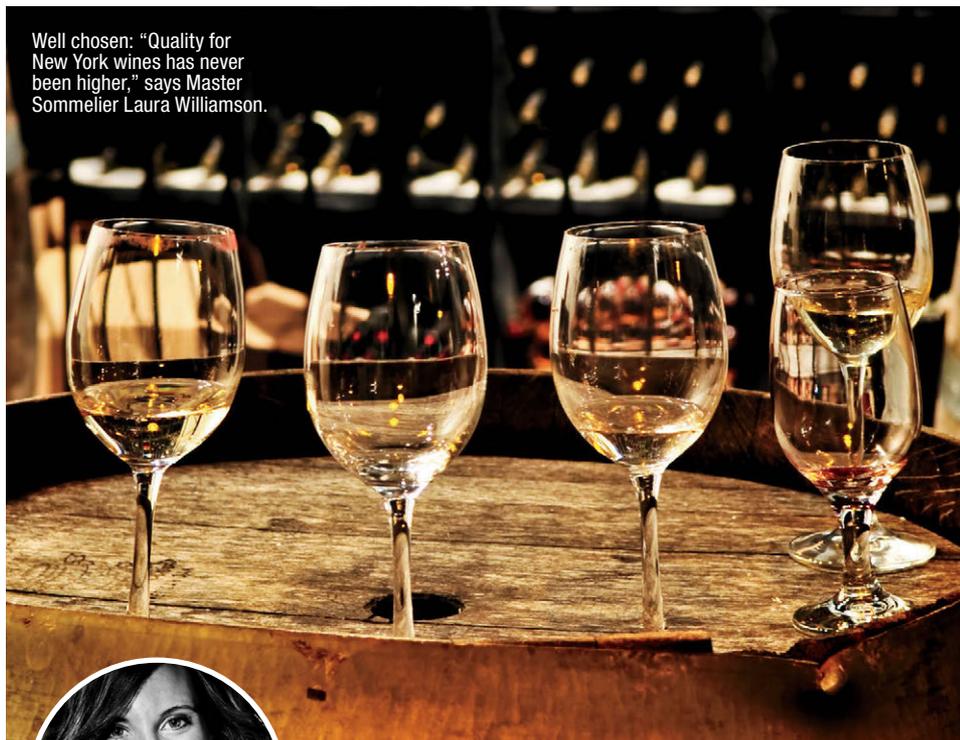


Well chosen: "Quality for New York wines has never been higher," says Master Sommelier Laura Williamson.



LAURA WILLIAMSON



PASCALINE LEPELTIER



MARIKA VIDA-ARNOLD



JESSICA CERTO

New York State of Wine

FEMALE SOMMELIERS GIVE A SHOUT-OUT TO LOCAL VINTAGES AND TELL WHY THE CITY HAS BEEN SO GOOD TO THEIR CAREERS. BY EVE ZIBART

New York's share of female sommeliers and wine directors is unequaled. Marika Vida-Arnold, wine director at The Ritz-Carlton Central Park, estimates that the number of women working as sommeliers in New York has at least doubled since 2008 and may constitute 40 percent of the field. While there are only 30 female master sommeliers in the world, three of them are in New York City, each of whose interviews follows. With those sterling numbers in mind, we asked the city's top women somms to muse on why New York has been so good for their careers, and then—keeping in mind the city and state where they have flourished—to give a shout-out to their favorite local vintages.

MASTER SOMMELIER LAURA WILLIAMSON

CURRENT POSITION: Corporate beverage director, Jean-Georges Restaurants.

BACKSTORY: Studied under two master sommeliers in Boulder, Colorado: Wayne Belding and Sally Mohr. Her specialty is German wines. **ON WOMEN AND WINE:** "Many [guests] will tell you that women sommeliers have an easier disposition" and can recommend wine regions "where eclectic styles create a more unique experience."

LOCAL FAVORITES: "Quality has never been higher for New York wines, specifically the North Fork of Long Island. The 2014 Paumanok Chenin Blanc is succulent, juicy, and lacking heaviness. The 2007 Shinn Estate Grace is a formidable

blend of their best Cabernet Franc and Merlot, [and] with a few years in the bottle, is now showing how exotically North Fork wines can blossom."

CERTIFIED SOMMELIER MARIKA VIDA-ARNOLD

CURRENT POSITION: Wine and beverage director, The Ritz-Carlton (50 Central Park South, 212-308-9100); owner of the consultancy Vida et Fils.

BACKSTORY: Worked as a market director at Alden Cellars for Sotheby's wine auctions, as cellar manager at Morrell & Company, and as sommelier for BLT Market. "I cut my teeth on Bordeaux and Burgundy, and they're still my passion."

ON WOMEN AND WINE: Vida-Arnold says women who are established in other fields, such as finance or law, turning their passion for wine into a profession. Women are also entering the business 15 years earlier than they used to, she says. "Young women don't want to be servers; they want to be sommeliers." **LOCAL FAVORITES:** "Hermann J. Wiemer is the king of Rieslings. Bedell is one of the very few [producers] who knows how to handle Cabernet Franc so it doesn't taste green."

MASTER SOMMELIER PASCALINE LEPELTIER

CURRENT POSITION: Beverage director, Rouge Tomate (126-128 W. 18th St., 646-237-8977).

BACKSTORY: Earned a master's degree in philosophy before becoming an assistant sommelier at L'Auberge Bretonne in Brittany. An advocate for sustainable and biodynamic winemaking, her specialty is the Loire Valley. **ON WOMEN AND WINE:** "There is an open-mindedness in this city that is quite unique, probably linked to the fact that it is so international and financially very dynamic. Maybe other criteria matter more here, like performance or

ambition, network or talent. And strong women in other fields paved the way." **LOCAL FAVORITES:** Bloomer Creek, Eminence Road, Element Winery, Bellwether, the sustainability pioneer Hermann J. Wiemer, and Ravines. From Long Island: Macari, Channing Daughters, Shinn, and Bedell. "And of course the ever-pushing-the-limit Red Hook Winery!"

MASTER SOMMELIER LAURA MANIEC

CURRENT POSITION: Owner, Corkbuzz (13 E. 13th St., 646-873-6071).

BACKSTORY: A sommelier at Blue Fin at age 21; at 25 she was wine and spirits director for the entire 20-brand BR Guest restaurant group. In 2009, Maniec became the youngest master sommelier in the world.

ON WOMEN AND WINE: "We all want to take care of each other and help the next generation." **LOCAL FAVORITES:** Lieb Cellars, Paumanok, Hermann J. Wiemer, Dr. Konstantin Frank, Channing Daughters Winery.

CERTIFIED SOMMELIER JESSICA CERTO

CURRENT POSITION: Head sommelier (of a four-woman team) at Del Frisco's Double Eagle Steak House (1221 Sixth Ave., 212-575-5129).

BACKSTORY: Started as a server and worked her way up. A "huge Riesling fan," she specializes in California Cabernets and "under-the-radar" boutique wines. **ON WOMEN AND WINE:** "Women are making amazing strides—winemakers, vineyard owners, CEOs, importers, beverage directors, educators, and sommeliers alike. The challenge continues to be shedding light on those achievements." **LOCAL FAVORITES:** Red Hook's "Black and Blue" 50/50 Cabernet Franc and Merlot, and Macari Vineyards Chardonnay. **G**