



Red Newt Cellars Today

Over the past three decades, there has been a revolutionary change in the Finger Lakes wine industry. Red Newt Cellars has been part of the most exciting era of these changes.

During the first 13 years of Red Newt, winemaker David Whiting and Chef Debra Whiting was a husband and wife, food and wine, team that rocked the Finger Lakes wine and food scene. They were part of the community that saw the region change from an emerging wine region to one that is firmly planted on the world stage. The food scene in the Finger Lakes changed as well: from just a few farmers and as few restaurants focused on local cuisine to a localvore wine and food mecca. Debra's death in 2011 shook the entire region, and ushered in fundamental changes to Red Newt Cellars.



The Bistro pushed forward to continue to raise the localvore bar even higher, with literally 99% of everything in the Restaurant coming from the Finger Lakes. The only exceptions? Coffee, cocoa, black pepper, vanilla, cane sugar. That's it. Connections with local farmers became stronger, and the commitment to innovation and excellence was unmatched. The region had so evolved from the early days that it seemed that

"everything" could come from our neighbors... and it nearly did.

By 2014, David Whiting had passed the reigns of winemaking to Kelby Russell and shifted his focus to the Bistro. Having worked behind the scenes with Debra for 20 years did not qualify David to operate a fancy localvore restaurant, but it absolutely gave him the inspiration to parse the most essential aspects of Debra's culinary goals and carry them forward with the pragmatism that made Debra's efforts so successful: Focus on community, quality, and simplicity.



The menu today is local, simple and delicious. With a focus on hearty local lunch fare, Red Newt Bistro continues to source from local farms and makes the example that localvore does not have to mean fancy and expensive. What it does mean is that eating local is delicious, fresh, simple, and builds communities of farmers and producers whose lives are driven by passion.

With the winemaking under Kelby's direction, connections with our growers, and focus on the individual expressions of distinct vineyard sites became our priority. Today Kelby oversees the production of a stable of single vineyard designated Riesling, Gewurztraminer and Pinot Gris as well as limited quantities of Pinot Noir, Cabernet Franc and Merlot. In 2013 Kelby and Red Newt launched the "Kelby James Russell" winemaker signature series of wines. The first release was the KJR Cabernet Franc Rosé – a single vineyard selection from "Nutt Road Vineyards" on the west side of Seneca Lake. Red Newt's reputation and distribution continues to grow with wines now available in most north-eastern states, select states in the midwest. Farther afield, find Red Newt in California, Belgium and the UK.

