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ONE TO WATCH



CHANNING DAUGHTERS

Channing Daughters, a 5,000-case-a-year boutique in Bridgehampton on Long Island's chic South Fork, has glittered since 2002, when James Christopher Tracy, a pony-tailed chef and sommelier, became the winemaker. Every vintage sells out.

Given stylistic freedom by the venture-capitalist owner, Walter Channing, and the president and former winemaker, Larry Perrine, the experimental Chris Tracy, 34, has developed vivacious palate-cleansing whites from Friulian grapes. All are food-friendly, because, as Tracy says, 'I am a hedonist'.

The portfolio includes Sauvignon Blanc from leased 30-year-old North Fork vines; a varietal Tocai Friulano and a Pinot Grigio. Tracy has imparted verve to steel- and barrel-fermented Chardonnays, and produces three Merlots of varying depths. The 2002 and 2003 Blaufränkisch wines, Long Island's only versions, are promising. The 2002 vintage also yielded Research Cab, a wine composed of 81% Cabernet Sauvignon from a North Fork research vineyard, 17% Dornfelder (a northeastern oddity) and a little Merlot, the last two both estate grown.

The 10 planted hectares – becoming 11 this year – are cooled by breezes from the Atlantic, 5km south. Visitors to the estate, founded in 1997, will find a wide selection of grapes growing, while in the vineyards and winery, there is a selection of striking, witty wood sculptures by Channing, an accomplished artist; some of which are depicted on the labels.

■ Channing Daughters, Tocai Friulano, South of Long Island 2004 ★★★★★

Indistinguishable from a Friulian counterpart, this aromatic, inviting white (tasted from a barrel sample) is liquid fruit salad. Bone dry, herbal, slender, subtle, piquant and long, it is ideal for fish and shellfish meals. **\$22; US Markets**

by Howard G Goldberg