

**Dr. Frank's Vinifera Wine Cell****2000 Chateau Frank Blanc de Noirs  
(Finger Lakes)**

When Willie Frank wanted to etch his own identity in the wine business separate from his compelling father, Dr. Konstantin Frank, he turned to sparkling wine. Dr. Frank was known to thunder that "The only reason they make sparkling wine in Champagne is because they can't get their

fruit ripe." Chateau Frank was born in 1985. The Finger Lakes has a pre- and post-Prohibition reputation for fine sparkling wine. Charles Fournier of Veuve Clicquot and Guy Devaux of Moët & Chandon and later Mumm Napa, came to the Finger Lakes to make sparkling wine.

Willie Frank passed away in 2005 but Chateau Frank carries on the region's fine winemaking tradition at a time when others have abandoned it. Chateau Frank is now an adjunct to Dr. Frank's Vinifera Wine Cellars, which focuses on making the high-quality sparkling wine. In the stubborn spirit of its founder, Chateau Frank's sparkling wines unflinchingly refer to themselves as "Finger Lakes Champagne." Faithful to the method champenois standards, Mr. Frank insisted he had earned the right to use the term.

Those rigors are evident. This Blanc de Noirs was disgorged in mid-2007, after seven years on the yeast. Comprised of 90 percent Pinot Noir and 10 Pinot Meunier, estate grown and hand picked, the clusters are gently pressed to extract flavor, but not color. Bottles were aged four years before the first riddling.

Some of the fruit comes from estate vineyards in slatey soils on the west side of Keuka, offering a minerality to the cuvee. Other fruit comes from the rich, deep, loamy soils of vineyards on Seneca Lake near Watkins Glen, N.Y., which offer fruity character. 2000 was a good sparkling wine year, offering a cooler growing season and sufficient acid development.

Lean and bright apple and white grapefruit characters combine with notes of vanilla and hazelnut, closing with a laser-like lemon finish softened by one percent residual sugar. Neither overly doughy like some Champagnes, nor awkwardly fruity like new world sparklers, this is a well-crafted food wine and an outstanding find.

This is one of the last vintage years declared by Willie Frank (the other was 2002), so raise a glass in his honor.

Reviewed December 20, 2007 by [David Falchek](#).

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**THE WINE**

**Winery:** [Dr. Frank's Vinifera Wine Cell](#)

**Vintage:** 2000

**Wine:** Chateau Frank Blanc de Noirs

**Appellation:** [Finger Lakes](#)

**Grapes:** Pinot Noir, Pinot Meunier

**Price:** \$34.99

**THE REVIEWER****David Falchek**

David Falchek writes a weekly wine column for several newspapers in Pennsylvania, including the *Scranton Times-Tribune*. He also contributes regularly to trade publications such as *Vineyard & Winery Management* and *Beverage Media*. David has judged regional, national, and international wine competitions where he likes to think he lauds outstanding Seyval or Foch just as readily as Cabernet or Riesling.