

EAST END WINE CLAN UNCORKS NEW BRAND

RGNY debuts as winery keys on customer experience

BY MARK HARRINGTON
mark.harrington@newsday.com

A year after acquiring Martha Clara Vineyards in Riverhead, the Rivero Gonzalez family is putting its stamp on the operation with a new name, RGNY, and a new focus on the vineyard “experience.”

Chief executive Maria Rivero Gonzalez, in an interview on Monday, said a formal launch of the new brand will take place this weekend at the company’s newly remodeled tasting room. The winery now sports signs touting the new RGNY name as well as new labels and tasting room upgrades since May 10. It has also begun planting five more acres of vines, adding to the current 80 acres already planted. Rivero Gonzalez said her hope is to eventually see 100

of the 205 acres under vine.

But the focus now is on “curating the wine experience” at the former Martha Clara tasting room and operations, she said. Customers will be able to rent “gardens” at the vineyard to host catered gatherings with wine, blend their own wines from varietals at the winery, and take private tastings in an upper floor of the main tasting room, which has been remodeled.

Most of the five new acres of vines have been planted closer to garden areas behind the tasting areas, to bring customers closer to grapes as they mature.

“We are looking to attract people who want to have a good time but are also interested in wines,” Rivero Gonzalez said.

The main tasting room has also been remodeled, with an open, more modern feel. An adja-

cent store features bottles bearing the new RGNY and Scielo brands. The wine list has been whittled from up to 26 wines under Martha Clara to around 11 this year, with eight available now, including a new rosé, two sparkling wines and numerous whites. Wines under the Martha Clara name are continuing, with sales through a distributor.

There are bigger plans that could eventually involve converting a house on the former Entenmann property into a bed-and-breakfast, and opening a winery for larger-scale production, Rivero Gonzalez said. She also has ambitions for a farm-to-table restaurant. But that’s all in the future and will take a back seat to more immediate plans centered on building the wine experience. “We have to go step by step,” she said.



Maria Rivero Gonzalez, who heads the rebranded RGNY winery, in its newly remodeled tasting room. ■ Video: [newsday.com/riverhead](https://www.newsday.com/riverhead)

The small winery on site at the vineyard makes two wines, but the plan is to expand into bigger production. “We’re happy with Premium Wine,” the contract winery that makes most of the selection, along with Sparkling Pointe winery.

She said she’s been impressed

with the North Fork wine scene since her family bought the former Martha Clara for \$15 million. “The wine industry is very dynamic here right now,” she said. “That’s good for everyone. I think people are interested in the North Fork. We hope to ride that wave.”

Shark Bight: Great white found in LI waters

BY JOHN VALENTI
john.valenti@newsday.com

Just in time for the unofficial first weekend of summer, a great white shark is swimming in the waters off Long Island.

The nearly 10-foot-long shark was first detected Monday in the western end of the Long Island Sound, off Greenwich, Connecticut, according to OCEARCH, which electronically tags and tracks sharks. Later Monday the shark pinged in the Atlantic Ocean off the Hamptons, according to OCEARCH’s website.

The founding chairman of OCEARCH, Chris Fischer, told The Associated Press that while great whites in the Sound are not unheard of, “we were quite surprised to see this one so far to the west.” The shark, named Cabot after explorer John Cabot, was probably after bait fish, he said.

Cabot became an overnight sensation following a bunch of tweets at @GWSharkCabot — “I



heard sending a ping from the Long Island Sound had never been done before by a white shark . . . so naturally I had to visit and send one off. Hello Greenwich how are you today?!” read one tweet Monday.

The great white, it seems, then beat the traffic and headed out east.

On Tuesday, the shark pinged off the Hamptons, in the waters of the New York Bight. The Bight, which stretches from Cape May, New Jersey, to Montauk, has been found to be a nursing area for Atlantic Ocean great whites.

According to past tracks, Cabot has been spotted in recent

months from the Carolinas to near Nova Scotia. Scientists and marine biologists say great whites can travel in the range of 100 to 150 miles per day.

Of course, anyone who’s ever seen “Jaws” may know something about the history, and legends, of great white sharks and the waters surrounding Long Is-

land — the legendary fictional shark-hunter Quint, and the late, real-life, legendary Long Island shark hunter Frank Mundus, for example.

On Tuesday, the senior aquarist at the Long Island Aquarium, Jeff McCarthy, 43, told Newsday that swimmers and boaters shouldn’t necessarily fear the presence of a great white like Cabot in any of the waters off Long Island.

While there’s been reported great white attacks on swimmers and surfers off Australia and coastal California, the species tends to keep to deeper, offshore waters here in the Atlantic.

“This is more of a transitory place,” McCarthy said. “They show up, might surface for food.”

McCarthy said he believes Cabot is simply at an age where he’s exploratory, just like any other teen.

“This is some type of anomaly,” McCarthy said. “This shark was like, ‘What’s in here?’ I think he was just being curious.”