Every year come August, I make my annual trip to visit friends at their home in Hampton Bays, New York.

I can't tell you how much I love the area. Besides gawking at the typical uber-mansions owned by celebrity A-listers and New York financiers, there are plenty of charming mom-and-pop restaurants and a surprising surfer vibe. If that weren't enough, Eastern Long Island is emerging as one of the top wine regions in the nation, an area called the North Fork.

Along with my boyfriend Joe, we had a few friends flying in from the Cincinnati Area (Shadia and Michael) as well as Atlanta (Marcus) and I wanted to plan a few things in advance that would be memorable for them. Since there were seven of us (Marcus' friend Carolyn joined us for the day), we decided to rent a limo for seven hours that would convey us to various vineyards. To our surprise, we found a rental company, Trawell Inc. that only charged $375 total for the round trip.

See a video Montage of our trip below: (*Video Credits: Joe Condit*)

{youtube}Qz7I8xYuNn0{/youtube}

As fate would have it, when I actually planned ahead for something memorable, nature tried to upstage me. As all of us were heading to the Hamptons after our short stay in NYC, Hurricane Irene was churning in the Atlantic on a direct path to the Northeast. Instead of canceling our day trip, we thought we would risk our chances and try to get one good day in before all hell broke loose and evacuation became necessary.

After attempting to reassure our worried parents that we would not be swept out to sea by the coming hurricane, we made preparations for the fun day ahead. Elyse and I packed a picnic lunch beforehand of sandwiches, chips, fruit and various cheeses since most vineyards have picnic areas to enjoy an al fresco meal. It's more affordable and convenient to bring your own food and most of them do not provide substantial fare beyond cheese.

Note: It is imperative when planning your trip to call ahead to the wineries. Some can close early for private events, so be sure to check before you make the trip. Additionally, if you are arriving via limo, you must make reservations with the receptionist and inform them of an estimated arrival time.

Please see the Google driving map of our trip from Hampton Bays to all five vineyards *here*

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The limo arrived at 12:30 to Elyse's home. Our friendly driver Dan explained to us that they provided, at no extra charge, ice, bottled water and various alcoholic beverages inside the vehicle. (Although I wouldn't recommend drinking any of their spirits since they are served in glass bottles with masking tape for a label...creepy.) After snapping a few pictures, we embarked on our journey to Hamptons' wine country. We couldn't have asked for a more beautiful day; it was hard to believe that a monster storm was just a day away. We listened to some fun dance music on our iPods (hookup provided by the limo service) and we watched the rows of vines and farmers' markets pass by our window.

Stop 1: **Bedell Cellars**

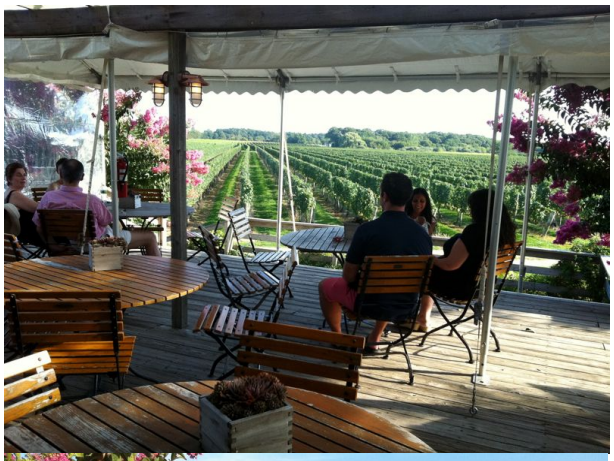
Bedell, along with Sparkling Pointe, is my absolute favorite spot on the North Fork. My plan was to visit Bedell towards the end, but they were shutting down early for a wedding (good thing we called ahead). By rearranging our trip and stopping there first, we were able to stay in the tasting room. I was slightly disappointed because the veranda where we usually sip wine was being prepared for the wedding. What I love about Bedell is that it is owned by Michael Lynne

who was the CEO of New Line Cinema. He was responsible for producing some of my favorite films like the ***The Lord of the Rings*** Trilogy, ***Dumb and Dumber***, Joe's favorite movie, ***Wag the Dog***
plus a dozen other famous films. The original owner, Kip Bedell, is still a winemaker at the property after selling his successful winery to Lynne back in 2000. Besides making Bedell a marketing success, Lynne's creative energies have been focused on the labels. Described as a modern art fiend, Lynne has been on the board at MoMA since 2003. He asked personal artist friends to submit some stunning designs. My favorite bottles are the Taste Series done by Contemporary Artist Barbara Kruger.

VINEYARD
48

LITTLE
Cigar
FACTORY

LITTLE
Cigar
FACTORY



Welcome
to
COREY
CREEK
VINEYARDS

Club Car

VINTAGE
2005
SPARKLING POINTE
METHODE CHAMPENOISE