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OLDE VINE

New club sets niche **Operators of course to open by next July offering** **memberships at \$32,500 and tie-in with Cherry Creek**

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The course has erudite-sounding tee positions called Merlot, Chardonnay and Cabernet, forgoing the typical blue, white and red.

Which is not, perhaps, inappropriate for Long Island's newest private golf club, Olde Vine, in which members will drive through a small vineyard on their way to the clubhouse.

Tucked into 110 acres about par-5 distance from the Links and the Woods courses at Cherry Creek in Riverhead, Olde Vine - also a housing development with 75 units - measures just under 6,000 yards. The course, designed by William Johnson, who also designed Mill Pond and Great Rock, is short but should be challenging. (It is scheduled to open by next July.)

Olde Vine features undulating greens, steep bunkers and few straight holes. The 485- yard 11th hole is a scaled-down version - not as long or uphill - as Bethpage Black's fourth hole. The course is treeless.

"The key thing is the winds, you'll have real tricky winds," said Ed Wankel, Olde Vine's general manager and the president of Long Island Golf Management. "While the course isn't as long, it's going to have a high level of difficulty."

Any new golf club needs a niche to separate it from the burgeoning competition among private clubs for Long Island's wealthiest citizens. Bruce Barnet, Olde Vine's co-developer and owner, along with John Blaney, said Olde Vine was conceived with that in mind; the primary niche being price.

The cost of joining Olde Vine is \$32,500. Clubs such as the Bridge and Friar's Head, Wankel said, cost \$500,000 and \$250,000, respectively, to join.

"We want to give a private club experience to the people who didn't want to spend a hundred grand or more to join a private club," Barnet said.

Not that Olde Vine is a not-for-profit organization. The estate houses range from \$550,000 to \$800,000. Of the 75 houses, 25 have been sold.

Barnet said membership at Olde Vine will be capped at 399. All members will have playing privileges at the Links and Woods courses at Cherry Creek.

"The real unique thing is you join this one, you can play three different courses and they're all contiguous; you don't have to travel," Wankel said.

Wankel, a former New York State Parks deputy commissioner, stressed that Cherry Creek's courses - both public - are not turning private or even semi-private. Rather, Olde Vine will purchase tee times on both courses in advance.

"We're not the Bridge or Friar's Head but if I'm looking for a club, I think I can deal with a little bit less of a course for that price, and to be able to play two other courses," Wankel said.

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