

OntarioWineReview

A bi-weekly newsletter dedicated to helping you discover Ontario's best Wines and Wineries. Enjoyment comes from understanding - Passion comes from understanding more.



OntarioWineReview Newsletter – 120
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News ... Gewurztraminer Challenge & Sexy Winemaker Update

Gewurztraminer Challenge Update ... Three more wineries have added their Gewurztraminers to the list of wines being poured: Chateau des Charmes, Ravine Vineyard and Strewn Winery. We've also added a little bubbly to our wine and cheese reception, thanks to the folks at Hillebrand who have turned our "wine and cheese reception" into a Sparkling wine and cheese reception. Details, as they become available, can be found at www.ontariowinereview.com. Tickets are affordable and easy to get, and they're going fast, [click here to learn how you can be part of choosing Ontario's best Gewurztraminer](#).

Sexy Winemaker Update ... As is always the case somebody always has to ruin the fun for everybody else. Our cute little poll for Ontario's sexiest winemaker (male and female) has turned into somewhat of a battle; but somewhere along the line "there have been some shenanigans" according to my web master and some complaints about odd vote tallies. Which got me to thinking, there has to be another way to determine the winner. Considering this was a two woman and two man race from the outset, and considering these two are winemakers, maybe it's time that their craft spoke up for them. So now we're going to let palates decide the winner. Over the next month I'll be assembling a special panel to judge what the top four winemakers deem their best wines ... from that we'll crown Ontario's Sexiest male and female winemaker. Stayed tuned, this isn't over yet.



OntarioWineReview: Transparency, Not Idiocy

I have to admit, I'm not exactly sure where to go with this week's column. I'm sure that by now most of us are sick and tired of the Cellared in Canada (CiC) issue and just want to get on with the rest of our lives (and our drinking). Over the past few weeks there have been a lot of columns written from the perspective that this issue is over and done with (all that's left is the crying), but I can tell you with all seriousness that the fight is not over till the fat cats sing, I mean change. Don't let the smoke and mirrors routine, or the articles claiming victory, sway your mind away from what really needs to happen, true change, and not just the gallons of lip service from the companies making CiC wines saying, "We hear you. We are changing. Trust us." These are the same companies that wanted you to believe you were buying Canadian wine in those "cellared" bottles. We have to see the labels actually change so that they tell us what's inside that bottle of wine, we have to see the word Canada removed from the label. We need to see the truth in labeling we have been promised. My thoughts, or fears, are that we will not see real change to our CiC bottles if we all believe "the battle for the bottle" is done. The longer we let this issue lie around, and the more foot dragging that takes place, the greater the chance the big boys will do nothing, why should they, the battle is won, after all, you know what "Cellared in Canada" wine is all about? You've read the press, now let's move on, here have a glass of wine.

There are two things I wish to quickly touch on here: one is the government's knee jerk reaction to this issue, and the other is what some called 'backstabbing' by Globe and Mail wine columnist Beppi Crossariol ([B.C. and Ontario wines: the scandal that wasn't – October 21, 2009](#)). I got an email (or was that a dozen emails)

alluding to the fact that Beppi was “backstabbing” the industry. Now Beppi and I don’t really know each other – I recognize him at events and he nods to me with that I-should-know-who-that-is look; I also don’t often agree with his wine recommendations, but I think his article is a far cry from a ‘backstabbing’ of the industry. I think his column was grossly mis-titled, almost to the point of being sensationalized, but I would have to say that’s the newspaper’s doing, not Beppi’s. His facts are bang on and he’s right: “[for Jancis Robinson] to single out Canada as some kind of cowboy frontier for snake-oil peddlers smacks to me of picking on the little guy.” Especially, when every major cool climate wine producing country, including the almighty French, have been doing it for years (“winemakers around the world, especially in sun-deprived northern Europe, have a long history of misleading consumers.”). I think where Beppi and other columnists’ miss the point is by thinking it’s okay for us to be doing it too. Just because other are doing it that doesn’t make it right to deceive the public, why should we be a country of followers; we’re suppose to be the “New World”, our forefathers came here for a better life, not to emulate and repeat the mistakes of the world we left behind. Should we not do things better?

The real backstabbing is going to come from your government, and its agencies, not from some Globe and Mail columnist, and it’s going to come in the form of legislation and complacency. I’ll start with a quote from Laurie Macdonald (executive director of VQA Ontario) as taken from Beppi’s column: “I think the LCBO has done a good job in making changes to signage ... and I think it’s been a few years since the cellared in Canada wines were shelved under an Ontario banner.” Laurie is obviously not going into any of the LCBO locations I’ve been going into. This kind of comment is a simple case of delusion on her part. If she thinks the liquor monopoly in this province is not complacent to a great degree, an accomplice in deceiving the public, then I would suggest to Laurie that she stop doing that thinking-thing she professed to.

As for the LCBO (another agency of the government), it’s time to rearrange your stores (again) and to better educate your staff on the topic, and I mean now. Cellared in Canada is a hot button issue, and unless you want to be dragged into the center of this maelstrom I suggest you get on this right away. Move Cellared in Canada wines away from the Ontario section, and I mean far away – before being asked or legislated, take the initiative here. As for the staff, when I get emails from people telling me they asked an LCBO employee about the difference between CiC and VQA and they get the answer “it’s semantics” ... well, what can I say, it’s time for new staff (this is an actual reported occurrence in the new St. Catharines store). Continue the way you are and you not only continue to be complacent about the issue, but accomplices in the deception. End of story.

We’ll end this article with the legislation I spoke of: [the new guidelines for CiC coming in 2014](#). From now (2009) till then they propose to up the Ontario content from 30% in CiC wines to 40% - that’ll soak up some of the glut of grapes we have here in the province this year. My sources also tell me that quantity of quality grapes is down in 2009, so some of the glut will be soaked up from those sourcing grapes from other Ontario growers. But in 2014 this all stops – and the minimum local requirement in CiC brands goes down to zero, zilch, nada-thing (and yes I understand the tax on CiC wines will be raised). But considering that CiC brands take an estimated 50% of Ontario’s crop, where does the government expect those grapes to go? The pendulum has swung the wrong way; this knee jerk reaction to the presumed crisis will be once again become a front and center issue come 2014, unless we come up with a better solution than this. Yes zero percent works in B.C. because 1) they grow far less grapes and 2) their domestic consumption for BC VQA wines exceeds production ... that is not the case here in Ontario. Yup, we have 5 years to come up with a better solution to this mess, which I’m sure they’ll start working on sometime in the middle of 2013. Can’t wait.



Grape Guy’s Picks of the Bunch: *Two Whites and a Reserve*

Fielding Estate Winery 2008 White Conception - \$18.95 (W)

www.fieldingwines.com

For most people a white wine is something you pop the cork (or twist the screwcap) on, pour and enjoy. It offers immediate gratification – unlike many reds that require a little opening up (aeration) and a little time. For those who just open and pour this wine you will not find true enjoyment in this bottle, for those with some patience this wine will be magical. A blend of Pinot Gris (50%), Chardonnay Musque (21%), Gewurztraminer (18%), Riesling (6%) and Chardonnay (5%); the wine seemed shy upon opening, meaning there was little nose and hardly any taste: it tasted like white wine with a little peach and a little apple. I decided to give the wine a little time in glass, because, from what I had heard, this was a “fantastic” wine – and it sure wasn’t showing very “fantastic” to me – currently it was a mere 3 on the star scale (average). Half an hour later it popped. The nose had opened, revealing peach, lime, mineral chalkiness and a hint of talc. The palate had a peach/pear profile, some melon hints, lemon tartness and mineral notes along with a nice seam of acidity – thus raising its score from three to four (very good). I tucked this wine away in the fridge and 24 hours later unscrewed the top for some friends, to get their “day old” opinion. This wine blew everyone away, it now had a rosy, melon, tropical

note added to the smells and the flavours burst succulently in the mouth, all backed with a nice acid backbone that had you continually sipping and getting more flavours. As I said, a great wine if you have the patience. Price: \$18.95 – Rating: ****½ (excellent)

Flat Rock 2007 Pinot Noir Reserve - \$40.00 (W)

www.flatrockcellars.com

“Have I got something for you to try,” said Ed Madronich (owner) as I approached the Flat Rock table at the Taste Ontario event (Sept. 17, 2009), “something totally new for us.” Turns out it’s a Pinot Noir, nothing new from this Pinot, Chardonnay, Riesling house; but this one is a limited edition reserve that will only be made in the “very best years”; and from the ‘very best’ 2007 vintage only 200 cases were made. The outer packaging is very attractive, using the Flat Rock logo on a black label, giving the outer packaging some elegance and class – but wine should perform IN the glass (not just ON the glass) –and it does. There’s a good fruit to oak ratio making the palate quite elegant with vanilla, cinnamon, cranberry and other red fruit ... aromas follow what’s on the palate – or is that vice versa – whichever, this is definitely a tasty sniff. Ed is right, they do have something special here. Price: \$40 – Rating: ****½

Hidden Bench Winery 2007 Nuit Blanche - \$40.00 (W)

www.hidenbench.com

Those looking for translation of this wine’s name and feel their French may be a little too rusty to be of any help to figure it out, will be happy to know that the wine’s name does mean “Night White” – and no it is not a nod to the Gregory Hines film White Nights ... I will go out on a limb here and suspect that it is aptly named because this wine is a “night time wine”. Daytime wines are light and fruity affairs; night wines have power and heft; this one has a little of both, but is probably best consumed when the sun settles in the sky. The smells emanating from the glass are ones of fruit with a bit of vanilla, lemon and some smoky notes. The wine is a blend of Sauvignon Blanc (89%) and Semillon (11%) that has a barrel fermented aspect to it; so those looking for those fresh, crisp Sauvignon Blanc flavours will be (only slightly) disappointed ... which is what makes this a night time wine. There’s a creamy texture in the mouth (opposed to crisp), with toasty notes, vanilla, lemon cream and all comes together with delightful acidity that balances everything off just right. A wine to be sipped and enjoyed throughout the night – a white for night: “blanche pour nuit” if you will. Price: \$40.00 – Rating: ****

Availability legend: W (Winery) – L (LCBO/Vintages) – WTH (Winery to Home).



Weekly Wine Notes and More: *Angels Gate Chard, Colio courts the girls and more*

A new Ontario wine is reviewed every Tuesday ... take two minutes to listen to the [Podcast](#) or read the tasting notes on the [Blog](#).

[Weekly Wine Notes](#) (added to the Blog and Pod in the past two weeks):

October 20, 2009 – Angels Gate 2007 Mountainview Chardonnay ([READ](#)) ([LISTEN](#))

October 27, 2009 – Colio Wines 2008 Girls Night Out Riesling ([READ](#)) ([LISTEN](#))

[On the Road with the Grape Guy:](#)

Trips, tours and tastings – join me as I review the highs, and sometimes, the lows

[Skillogalee at the Fine Wine Reserve](#)
[Chilean Wine Festival](#)

[Lost and Found \(blog\)](#)

Wines that got “lost” in my cellar - some are Treasures others Trash ... Find out what happened
[Southbrook Winery 1998 Riesling Icewine](#)

[Taste it Again Grape Guy \(blog\)](#)

Find out what has happened to some of my favourites over the years
[Calamus Estate Winery 2005 Riesling](#)

[What I’m drinking Tonight \(blog\)](#)

When it’s not an Ontario wine, here’s what I’m pulling out of the cellar

www.ontariowinereview.com

[2 New Reviews Added](#)

Including: A new Show and a Particular Portuguese wine

[Vintages Release \(blog\)](#)

November Releases are ready: [November 7, 2009](#) and [November 21, 2009](#)

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The OntarioWineReview Great Gewurztraminer Challenge
Monday November 9, Thursday November 12 and Wednesday November 18
Buy all three nights and get an invitation to the exclusive "Curiosities of Gewurztraminer" – Nov. 23
www.ontariowinereview.com

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Quick Sips: *Occasionally interesting things cross my desk that I would like to pass on*

Quick Sips – October 2009

A Big Mac or a Big Wine, the results are the same ... an English study has shown that the average wine drinker consumes an extra 2000 calories a month; that means that over the course of a year it would be like eating 184 bags of chips, or to put it another way, a couple who share a bottle a night are having the equivalent of a Snickers bar in alcohol. Other equivalents are: A bottle of average strength red wine = 644 calories = McDonald's cheeseburger and medium fries; bottle of medium dry white = 570 calories = chicken with cashew nuts and egg fried rice ... and beer drinkers don't get off any easier: one pint of premium lager = 330 calories = one four ounce fillet steak; one pint of cider = 200 calories = one KFC drumstick.

More bad news for wine fans ... New nutrition research shows that "pale plonk packs an acidic punch that erodes enamel far more than red wine." But really the news isn't all bad, eating cheese with your white could help to counter the effects: "The tradition of enjoying different cheeses for dessert, or in combination with drinking wine, might have a beneficial effect on preventing dental erosion since cheeses contain calcium in a high concentration." Nobody wants you to stop drinking wine so Professor Damien Walmsley of the British Dental Association offers this advice: "If you're going to have a glass of wine do so with your meal and leave a break of at least 30 minutes afterwards before you brush your teeth and go to bed"

Box, Bag, Bottle or ... According to a new study at Brock University, TetraPak is better than any cork or screw-cap when it comes to reducing an unpleasant "green" taste that strikes some wines. This taste may come from one of two sources, said Gary J. Pickering, senior author of the study. Either the wine was made from unripe grapes, or the grapes were infested with a species of ladybug. For some reason the researchers can't explain, wines stored in Tetra Pak-brand cartons had the lowest levels of these unwanted chemicals, called methoxypyrazines. One possibility, Pickering said, is that the chemicals escape through the carton's innermost layer, made of polyethylene, and then attach to an adjacent layer made of aluminum foil. Something we all know, or should know, is that the boxes were not so good at preserving wine from oxidation over long periods. The study concluded that the best storage method for preventing that problem was a bottle sealed with a screwcap.

The Bugs are Back in Town ... Ladybugs have been spotted in both Toronto and Niagara, and not just any lady, the Asian kind that fouled up the wine works for Ontario in 2001 ... though many believe they won't be a problem this year because we have learned to deal with them in our less than illustrious past.

Smokin' Idea ... Reif Estate Winery has got a new tool in the evolution of making fine wine: Two giant tobacco kilns. The first kiln will be used to dry out grapes to produce a style of richer wine with more sugar concentration, called passito or Amarone-style wine. The second kiln will blast humidity to purposely taint grapes with a fungus called botrytis cinera, which can, under the right conditions, produce beautifully sweet wine. Wines using these methods won't see the light of day for consumers until 2011 at the earliest.



Wine Event Spotlight: *North Bay Bound and Gourmet Tickets*

Grape Guy Going to North Bay ... If you live in the North Bay area, or frequent the beautiful north, then you'll want to check out the [Capitol Centre's Wine Gala – Tropical Dreams 2009](#) – Saturday November 7, 2009. I'll be there to have a little fun in the sun when I talk and taste my way through Hot, Hot Wines of Tropical Climes (hot wines from hot regions). For more information visit the [Capitol Centre website](#).

Attention all Torontonians and Wine & Food lovers ... The [Gourmet Food & Wine Expo](#) is coming to town and this is your chance to win tickets. Simply email me with the answer to this Skill Testing question: In which Northern Ontario city will the Grape Guy be going on Saturday November 7, 2009? Email your name, address (with postal code), phone number and answer to michael@ontariowinereview.com ... deadline for entries is 11:59pm on November 3, 2009.

OntarioWineReview's bi-weekly newsletter is devoted to the love, enjoyment and promotion of the wines of Ontario and the wineries that make them.



What can the Grape Guy do for you ... Michael Pinkus (Grape Guy) provides a variety of wine related services that you might be interested in taking advantage of: he gives lectures, leads seminars, conducts tastings, sets up tours; consults, selects and judges. He also gives interviews, broadcasts, podcasts and writes. [Contact the Grape Guy if you require any of these services or have any questions.](#)



Psst, Pass It On ... keep the good wine flowing. Forward this newsletter to your mom in Mimico your uncle in Uxbridge, your great aunt in Grand Bend or any other family member or loved one that you know needs good wine advice.

To contact us with feedback, article ideas, comments, concerns or questions – email michael@ontariowinereview.com. We look forward to hearing from you!

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