

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 – 126
February 4, 2010

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OntarioWineReview: *What I Didn't Learn at College ...*

The other day I received a call from a casual acquaintance asking me ... no, telling me, about the poor state of wine education in this province ... no, "this country". Now, I have to admit that I never actually took the call, the message was left on my answering machine – but the complaint was real and heartfelt. He was genuinely upset about the issue.

The complaint he was passing my way was fueled by a recent experience he had while visiting the Niagara College Teaching Winery (in Niagara-on-the-Lake). "I asked them about Cellared in Canada and why they didn't tell people about it and they said it wasn't part of their mandate." He went on to say that he felt it should be part of what they taught the public about Ontario wine.

Over the next few hours, this call was all I could think about. Whose responsibility is it to talk about Cellared in Canada wines? The answer isn't simple and may not please my caller, but I am absolutely certain of one thing, it's not the job of Niagara College.

The Niagara College Teaching Winery is, after all, a winery as well as an institute of learning and a visitors center. I have to admit it is not exactly what I had envisioned when [I came back from visiting the Finger Lakes and New York State's Wine and Culinary Centre](#), but it's not a bad start. One thing was for certain, New York State's center didn't tell us about bulk wine production nor about the abomination of grapes and juice from other states, they may or may not bring in, to enhance their own production (when necessary). Their purpose was to welcome us to the beautiful state of New York and introduce us to the wines produced in the state by home grown wineries. They did not focus on what New York did wrong, they were there to promote what New York did right; and that's exactly what Niagara College Teaching Winery (NCT) should be all about: promoting the region. It's not their job to inform the public about Cellared in Canada. First of all, they don't make any. Their job, first and foremost, is to tell visitors what's good about Ontario wine. I've been to the center, and besides an over emphasis on the royal visit (I was there two days after Prince Charles had come a calling – unfortunately there was no pomp and circumstance for me), the emphasis at NCT was on displaying Ontario made wines. Granted, they only pour their own product (whereas the [New York Center](#) is not affiliated with any one winery). To my way of thinking, this means they are far from where they should be as a "Visitor's Centre", ie: an independent welcoming center, but they are making strides in the right direction. Which other winery can you name that has bottles from more than 3-dozen wineries on display?

As for my friend's indignation that Cellared in Canada is not on the curriculum, I must say, tough – it is up to writers, LCBO staff, and wine store staff (of those offsite winery stores in grocery chains and stand alones) to educate the public as to what they are buying. I once got a call from a winery principal telling me that alerting people to CiC is great, but they have to know about the alternative, and "that's getting lost in this whole Cellared-in mess", and he was right.

During my [Gewurztraminer Challenge](#) my back page questionnaire asked folks the difference between Cellared in Canada and VQA – more knew about Cellared wine because they had heard about it in the news over the past few months – the downside to all that was VQA seems to have gotten lost in the shuffle; and don't get me

started on those that are 100% pure Ontario product and yet can not display a proud Ontario banner on their label!

Should a Welcoming Center tell / inform / educate visitors' about the negative aspects of an industry? Absolutely not, we don't need those folks going home and telling their friends and family what they "learned", because undoubtedly it would become a game of 'broken telephone' where by the end message goes from "buy only VQA if you want 100% Ontario wine" to "all Ontario makes is foreign blends". Let us deal with our dirty laundry internally, to the world coming to our door, we have to show a unified front of quality winemaking from 100% Ontario grown fruit.



Grape Guy's Picks of the Bunch: *Three Regions are Represented*

Southbrook 2007 Poetica Chardonnay - \$50.00 (W)

www.southbrook.com

For those confused about Southbrook's packaging (as I am these days), let me see if I can set the record straight. "Triomphe" is their reserve line of wines and "Whimsy" is their one-off-unique-barrel-limited-edition wines. That leaves us with 'Poetica', which for old school Southbrookers who remember the farm in its Richmond Hill location, this is the old 'Triumphus' line. These are the premium reserves, the best of the best barrels from any given vintage. This 2007 is comprised of 4187 bottles, 167 cases, or to put it in other terms, made up from the combination of 7 of the best barrels from that year. All that said (and I hope you aren't too confused), this is one excellent Chardonnay. The nose is buttery, vanilla, slightly nutty with sweet butterscotch notes that are truly inviting. The palate is also very impressive with a mix of fruit and barrel notes: apple, peach and citrus acidity – creamy vanilla, candied almonds and butterscotch all combine with toasty notes and a nice long finish. It's a little pricey, but it's meant to be, these wines are intended to age so that in years to come you'll think, "my investment was well worth this pleasure". Price: \$50.00 – Rating: ****½

Sanson Estate Winery 2005 Bird Dog Red - \$19.95 (W)

www.sansonestate.com

While most wineries are parading their 2007 wines, Dennis Sanson has been quietly sitting on another fine Ontario vintage worth of wine, his 2005s, and now it's time to see the light of day. A blend of 45% Cabernet Sauvignon, 35% Cabernet Franc and 20% Merlot grown during the last "great" Ontario vintage, the one that wasn't 2007. The nose is spicy with vanilla, oak and black sour cherry notes. Flavours are spicy with blackberries and a smooth dry black cherry finish ... there's an added complexity to the wine that only a wine with a bit of age could have. Ready for enjoying now or over the next 4-5 years. Price: \$19.95 – Rating: ****½

Rosehall Run 2007 Rosehall Vineyard Pinot Noir - \$37.95 (W)

www.rosehallrun.com

Winemaker/owner Dan Sullivan is sure making a name for himself out there in Prince Edward County. (I somehow suspect that he was voted "Most Likely to succeed" in his high school year book). This wine is another of Dan's successes. It consists of the best nine barrels of Pinot Noir from the 2007 vintage, sourced from the Rosehall home vineyard. It's then aged 18 months in oak. The nose is floral and delicate with red fruits a la raspberry and cherry aromas. The palate is smooth and silky with cherry and cranberry notes; lots of bright fruit and a nice length of finish making this a delicate and very seductive wine. Price: \$37.95 – Rating: ****½

Winter Time Means Sweet Wine ... this week's selection is:

[Ridgepoint Wines 2008 Late Harvest Cabernet Sauvignon](#)

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



Weekly Wine Notes and More: *Pillitterri and the Daredevil*

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 few weeks):

January 26, 2010 – Pillitteri Estates 2008 Viognier ([READ](#)) ([LISTEN](#))
February 2, 2010 – Daredevil Wines 2007 Cabernet ([READ](#)) ([LISTEN](#))

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

Trips, tours and tastings – join me as I review the highs, and sometimes, the lows
[Chateau St. Jean Lunch at Biff's](#)

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

Wines that got "lost" in my cellar - some are Treasures others Trash ... Find out what happened
Nothing new this week – but keep checking back

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

Find out what has happened to some of my favourites over the years
Nothing new this week – but keep checking back

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

When it's not an Ontario wine, here's what I'm pulling out of the cellar
[10 New Reviews Added](#)
Including: A few nights of multiple bottles – not all of them good

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

[February 6, 2010 Release Report](#)
[February 20, 2010 Release Report](#)

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Must Visit: *Twin Pines Orchards and Cider House*

At this year's London Wine and Food Show (Ontario), I bumped into two guys who have taken their longtime family business into a new phase. Brothers Mike and Mark Vansteenkiste have an orchard in Thedford, Ontario that has been in their family since dad started it in 1968. The orchard covers 50 acres and has approximately 10,000 trees worth of fruit (mainly apples, but a few pears and other hanging fruit). About 4 years ago, the boys opened a new part of the family business, and it was this that brought them to the Wine and Food Show, they started making cider. At a show full of wines and beers, [Twin Pines Orchards and Cider House](#) stood out as my "find of the day". Four products on display (2 apple ciders, 1 pear cider and an a dessert ice apple wine). Their ciders are packaged in the most eye-catching litre bottles (which is what brought me to their table). It was here that the boys really showed off not only their wares, but their innovation and their passion for what they have embarked upon. When I asked them if they were new to the show they told me they had been there last year – unfortunately, somehow, I missed them the previous year; but as always, a great find is better late than never.

Innovation not only starts with your product, which took the boys, "years and countless experiments to find the best apples to use" for their ciders, but also comes in the form of unique packaging and what you do with them. The unique 1 litre "growler"-type bottles they use, not only has a Grosch-style (Dutch beer) resealable closure,

but they have their own recycling program. “We decided on a litre bottle because it’s the perfect single person single serving size,” Mike Vansteenkiste said with a grin, “ but seriously, it allows two people to pour themselves a pint and enjoy the sunset on their deck or wherever else they decide to drink it.” As you can see from the response, Mike sees theirs as a serious cider with a fun side. They even have their own environmental initiative designed as an incentive to have you come back to the orchard. A bottle will fetch you the usual 20-cent return at the Beer Store, but return it to Twin Pines and you’ll get back a buck – and while you’re there you might as well pick up the next round. Here’s the kicker, each litre of cider will only set you back \$9.95, and with the return that makes the deal even sweeter. Twin pines makes about 10,000-15,000 L of cider per year.

I am already formulating a plan to make the trek to Thedford (about 3 hours from both Toronto and Niagara, an hour from London, and 2 hours from Windsor - according to Google), currently the boys have no way of shipping their fine ciders to you, but they say they are working on that. This is another case where Ontario’s draconian liquor policy of not being able to sell local products at a local show really hurts the producers in our own province; had Twin Pines been able to sell on the premises I personally know 4 people who would have been stuffing their cars with a variety of Twin Pines ciders ... and one was traveling by train.

Check out these Reviews:

[Hammer Bent Hard Cider](#) - [Russet Scrumpy](#) - [Hammer Bent Perry](#) - [2008 Iced Cider](#)



Wine Event Spotlight: *Cuvee 2010*

Cuvee 2010 ... From Friday, February 19 to Sunday, February 21, wine lovers can enjoy tastings at a record 44 wineries participating in Cuvée en Route. Cuvée en Route is part of the much anticipated Cuvée Weekend, the industry’s foremost wine and food celebration ... lovingly referred to as the Oscars of Ontario wine.

Cuvée en Route passport holders can travel the Wine Route enjoying complimentary rare tasting flights and nine different winery restaurant events. Each winery will offer a flight of complimentary wines within their chosen theme, such as winemaker’s choice, limited editions, unique varietals, past Cuvée Award winners, and horizontal or vertical flights of distinctive varietals and Icewine.

And don’t forget about the Gala happening February 19, 2010 ...for details of both these events check out www.cuvee.ca.

Passport Giveaway ... OntarioWineReview has put their mitts on a few Cuvee Passports to give away, all you have to do is email me (michael@ontariowinereview.com) your name, address (with postal code), and phone number along with the answer to this week’s challenging skill testing question (see below). Entry deadline is Sunday February 7, 2010 at 11:59pm. Good Luck.

Skill Testing Question: Who was just elected Vice President of the Wine Writers Circle of Canada? (Hint: He writes this newsletter)

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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