

## 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 – 130  
April 1, 2010

### In this Edition

---

- **OntarioWineReview:** *Is it a Shop or is it a Bar? Whichever it is, I Want One Here*
  - **Grape Guy's Picks of the Bunch:** *Climbing the Ratings Ladder, 4, 4.5, 5*
  - **Weekly Wine Notes and More:** *Willow Springs, Cab Franc from King and lots more*
  - **Must Read:** *The House of Mondavi – a book review*
  - **Wine Event Spotlight:** *Gearing up for a busy Season of events*
- 



### OntarioWineReview: *Is it a Shop or is it a Bar? Whichever it is, I Want One Here*

This article, in its original form, appeared as an [On the Road with the Grape Guy](#) article entitled, "[Wine Shop in Florida, or is it a Bar?](#)" – but then I got to thinking: "this has got to be more than just a footnote of places I've visited to taste wine. It's a call to action of what could be." Let me fill you in on my adventure, before I get off on some kind of rant.

I found myself in Florida visiting a place that Archie Hood (former sommelier at Southbrook) recommended I visit if I were around the area of Orlando. I was and I did. I thought it was an aggrandized wine store, "We're not a wine store," said the girl behind the counter, "we're classified as a bar." The words spill out of her mouth fast and she is very bubbly in her mannerisms. She apologizes for her rapid-fire speech, blaming the coffee and some over-tiredness. She's enthusiastic about the place, and after a brief look around, so am I.

I am Winter Park, Florida (just north of Orlando) at a place called [The Wine Room on Park Avenue](#), whose tagline is "By the Glass. Buy the Bottle". The Wine Room has installed a number of '[Enomatic Wine Serving Systems](#)', which allow a bottle to be stored in a stand up position with a hose inserted (as wine is emptied from the bottle it is replaced with an inert gas to keep the wine fresh for a period of up to 30 days).

Your visit starts when you walk in the door and are greeted by "the hostess" at the front desk. This person issues you a chip-style credit card, at a cost of \$3, which you can fill up in \$5 increments (I got \$20 worth). You then circulate through "the bar", sliding your card in the appropriate slot(s) (a digital screen tells you the balance remaining on your card), then you select the wine you want to try or drink; you can buy by the tasting (1 oz), the half glass (2.5 oz), or the glass (5 oz). I would say there are well over 70 wines from which to choose and hundreds to buy. I spoke to a few of the staff members circulating about to get the lay of the land: Bottles on for sampling change every 30 days or so, some popular wines are permanently on for tasting while about 50% of the samplers are changed monthly. They have two kinds of Enomatic dispensers, ones that arrange bottles in a straight line and others that are in a circular carousel-type arrangement (although you are the one that has to walk around the machine – think of it as a sobriety test). Prices per ounce depend on the price of the bottle. An ounce of Ridge Lytton Springs Zinfandel (regular \$29.99 – on sale for \$19.99) was \$3.50 for a one-ounce squirt while an Antinori Tignanello was \$20 for the same amount. Each and every bottle, whether samplable or not, was for sale.

Enhancing your experience were the cushy lounge chairs, bar stools, high stand-up-at tables and low rider coffee tables. A cheese display at the back allows you to purchase a nibble, and a bar, complete with stools where you could order a beer or spirit-based drink (these are cash purchases only, the chip card is only for wine).

I took a variety of pictures ([which can be seen on the blog](#)), but the experience far outweighs any photograph (even if they are worth a thousand words). This is the kind of place we should aspire to see here in Ontario. I know that some of us balk at the idea of paying for samples at wineries and events, but here I did not mind paying for my samples or the experience. I'm an Ontarian, so this was new to me – a place where I could freely walk around, sample wine in a relaxed bar-like setting, selecting from a variety of reasonably priced wines (by

the ounce or by the glass), and at the end of the visit being able to walk out with an armful of my favourites – what a novel concept. My fiancée, Erica, was less than impressed by such an establishment, “We have one of these in Michigan,” she informs me as she sips on a glass of German Riesling and looks bored. I’ll have to check that out one day soon. Then it hits me, the difference between the American and Canadian wine experience (Alberta not included). Because we live under a monopoly regime that has no intention of loosening restrictive laws, we will never see “wine bar/stores” like this. Americans are jaded to these luxuries of free market access to wine and loads of selection. You read magazines where they tell you to talk with your retailer about finding the best wines from out of the way places and dedicated small producers, and the knowledgeable Ontarian’s reaction is “Yeah, right not in my lifetime will I see that.” While in the U.S. the ‘little guy’ whose passion for wine you can feel the moment you walk in the door and engage in a “which wine should I get” conversation. A recent discussion with an ex-pat American wine collector and drinker (just recently moved north of the 49th parallel) elicited disgust about the LCBO and its selection. “I’m from Chicago,” he tells me, “and I can’t find a decent bottle of wine up here and the selection is ...” he trails off and shakes his head. Ontarians are used to it. We’ve grown up with Big Brother’s iron fist clamped firmly around our throat and his sweaty palm covering our eyes to what the world outside our borders is doing with booze (wine in particular).

I usually urge you to take a trip to wine country, but this year I want you to take a trip abroad, not to a wine country or region, but to a U.S. wine retailer or specialty shop, a grocery store will do in a pinch (yes I did say a grocery store). Check out, not only the selection but the price, what’s on sale and for how much, wines for under \$4, 2 for 1, 3 for 1 or sometimes more for one low price. Discounts for multiple purchases, sale prices that actually seem like you are saving money and not just a dollar or two off. Pay attention to what you see, then ask yourself, “why don’t we have that here in Ontario?” You know the answer, it stares at you with big white letters on a big green background and they go by a four-letter acronym (do I really have to spell it out?) How about this, their first letters are L.C., although they should be K.G. If you are any kind of oenophile, be it novice or pro, you’ll realize that a trip across the border is enthralling and liberating – but then it’s back to the oppressive world of Ontario with Big Brother’s hands shielding you and stopping you and then you tell me honestly, which system would you like to live under?



#### **Grape Guy’s Picks of the Bunch: *Climbing the Ratings Ladder, 4, 4.5, 5***

##### **Chateau des Charmes 2006 Rosé Sparkling - \$28.95 (W)**

[www.chateaudescharmes](http://www.chateaudescharmes)

The 2005 vintage was the first trial for this Rosee and it did amazingly well. When I first tried the 2005 Rosé Sparkling it was a secreted bottle from a limited batch, and the formula was all very hush-hush. The formula is still a big mystery but the wine is not. This is one of those wines that should be shouted about from the rooftops. Paul Bosc has done it again. Now, I must admit to a bit of a bias when it comes to this wine – I got engaged over a bottle of this bubbly, actually it’s predecessor (the 2005) so it has a special place in my heart. That said, the 2005 vintage is gonna be hard to top for the reason given above ... but I grudgingly have to say that maybe it has been. This 2006 is loaded with fresh red fruit – the aromas are like a bowl of red berries: strawberries, raspberries and cherries. The fresh berries follow through onto the palate ... bottom line this wine is simply lovely to sip on, with all those strawberries and cherries wafting and swishing around, gracing the palate with lovely acidity and a clean ready-for-more finish. This 3-year bottle aged bubbly is a masterstroke. I always thought nothing could beat the 2005 pink bottle of bubbly I had, but this just might do it ... makes me want to get engaged all over again. Price: \$28.95 – Rating: \*\*\*\*\*

##### **Huff Estates 2007 Cabernet-Merlot - \$29.95 (W)**

[www.huffestates.com](http://www.huffestates.com)

The County isn’t really known for its Bordeaux style blends (those using the Cabernets and Merlots); when you think of Prince Edward County you probably think along the lines of Burgundian wines (Chardonnays and Pinot Noirs). But in 2007, everything in Ontario ripened well, especially the reds and down in the County, Frederic Picard took full advantage of it. As a proponent of Merlot, Frederic has made it a large part of the blend (70%), making it more of a right bank wine. 18 months in French oak, 15% of which was new, and dropping the crop load to about 1 ton per acre for maximum flavour concentration. The nose is smoky, sour cherry, black fruit with hints of tobacco, while the palate has a touch of herbs, some vanilla, and a toasty-smoky note. Good smoothness with nice red fruit finish ... lovely, especially when you consider it’s a County wine. Price: \$29.95 – Rating: \*\*\*\*½

##### **Hillebrand 2008 Trius Red - \$21.95 (W, L)**

[www.hillebrand.com](http://www.hillebrand.com)

[www.ontariowinereview.com](http://www.ontariowinereview.com)

Last year was the first year in many that Hillebrand finally raised the price of their Trius Red ... it was a long time coming actually. The wine had been out-performing its price point of \$20 year after year and the 2007 seemed the best vintage to raise the price. Now, as we move into the 2008 wine, we hope for big things from Trius – and in fact, we get something new – Malbec added to the blend. The 2008 Trius Red has the usual blend of Merlot (46%), Cabernet Franc (31%), Cabernet Sauvignon (20%) and this year, for the first time ever, there's the addition of Malbec (3%). The nose is red and black fruit oriented, while on the palate it's red fruit dominant with hints of spice; those looking for a good finish will find it here with a long spicy red fruit ending. Easy drinking and quite smooth, this one's ready to consume now. Price: \$21.95 – Rating: \*\*\*\*

**Favourites from the Cool Chardonnay Tasting** ...visit [coolchardonnay.ca](http://coolchardonnay.ca) for details:

**Flight 1: Unoaked** - [Colio 2007 Chardonnay Musque](#) (W)  
[Chateau des Charmes 2008 Chardonnay Musque](#) (W)

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



**Weekly Wine Notes and More:** *Willow Springs, Cab Franc from King and lots 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 few weeks):

**March 23, 2010** – Willow Springs 2007 Merlot ( [READ](#) ) ( [LISTEN](#) )  
**March 30, 2010** – King's Court 2008 Cabernet Franc Icewine ( [LISTEN](#) )

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

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

[Wine Writers' Circle Bonus Tasting](#)  
[California Preview Tasting](#)

[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

[Peninsula Ridge 2005 Syrah](#)  
[Inniskillin 2004 Brae Burn Vineyard Shiraz](#)

[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 couple from DeLoach, a Farnese and Trapiche worth buying more of

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

[April 3, 2010 Release Report](#)  
[May 1, 2010 Release Report](#)  
April 17, 2010 – coming soon

---

Advertisement



### Virtual Wineries – Real Brunch

Join the Nyarai Facebook Page: <http://www.facebook.com/#!/group.php?gid=99470571104&ref=ts>  
See the invite on Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/#!/event.php?eid=107247489302708&ref=mf>  
Or call for details: 905 562-3457

---

Advertisement



### Must Read: The House of Mondavi – a book review

[Many months ago, I called upon the Ontario wine industry to find themselves a "Mondavi"](#) – a leader to help them thru these desperate times. I got plenty of response including some who believed they were or could be the Mondavi I called for, while others had suggestions as to whom it could be. To most of us, Robert Mondavi signifies a man who led his industry with bold moves, faced the challenge of his industry head on and pulled an industry out of the mire and into a brave new world where California now reigns amongst the world wine leaders like France and Italy when it comes to making fine wine. I can tell you that without a doubt (since I inventory a lot of cellars), California ranks right up there with these two countries amongst the most collectable wines in the world. And the California industry can thank the likes of Robert Mondavi for putting a face on a re-burgeoning industry. Robert realized that if one succeeds all succeed.

After reading [The House of Mondavi: the Rise and Fall of an American Wine Dynasty](#) by Julia Flynn Siler, I have to say I see Robert Mondavi, and his family, in a whole new light. Don't get me wrong, I still view him as a leader, but he's just a man who's vision wasn't followed by those who took the reigns from him, sadly you realize that a man of his dedication and stature does not come this way often, nor do the genes of such a man always get passed down to his offspring.

While reading [The House of Mondavi](#), the thought that kept coming to mind was, "what a dysfunctional family". Before you're even a third of the way through the book, mother and son aren't talking anymore, the brothers have thrown fists in a disagreement over how to run the family winery and this all leads to Robert being ousted from Krug (the family winery) and a court battle where Robert sues his own brother and mother, all but breaking the back (monetarily) of the once powerful family.

The book is broken down into 4 parts, 24 chapters and takes us through the immigrant days of Robert's father Cesare, the brothers (Robert and Peter) growing up and the eventual break up, Robert's new eponymous winery's early days, his sons' battles for supremacy within the newly formed company that mirrors the struggles of the brothers a generation before, and finally the fall – where the Robert Mondavi winery is taken over by Constellation. The book takes us through the who, what, where, when and why of the rise and fall of this family owned iconic winery. It relates the epic journey of kings and princes of an industry thru to a broken and bitter family feud. If you think your family is battling it out, you have to read how a real family feud should be played out. The journey you'll take with this first family of wine is a real page turner, I had trouble putting the book down finding myself reading well into the night and up early the next morning to continue the saga, all the time thinking, "how can they screw this up and worse". With each subsequent chapter, history repeated, battle scars got bigger, fissures got wider until the house came tumbling down. And that's not giving anything away, cause even if you know the ending (and it's staring at you on the front cover in the sub-title "the rise and fall of an American Wine Dynasty", it's the how that is the most intriguing.

If you haven't already read this one – and sometimes I find myself late to the best seller party – I suggest putting this one on your must read list. Light summer reading? Hardly. Intriguing, shake-your-head-in-disbelief-can't-put-the-book-down reading? You bet.



---

## Wine Event Spotlight: *Gearing up for a busy Season of events*

**Virtual Wineries Have a REAL Brunch ...** Join Niagara's award-winning "virtual" wineries, Nyarai Cellars and Twenty Twenty- Seven Cellars at About Thyme Bistro for a truly unique food and wine experience! Winemakers, Steve Byfield and Kevin Panagapka will be on hand to introduce guests to their perspectives on the innovative decision to own and produce wines without a "brick and mortar" retail winery. Sample both wineries' outstanding wines paired with a tantalizing 4 course Brunch menu created by Chef Ryan Shapiro. The brunch will take place on Sunday, April 11th at 11:30 am. Seating is limited so purchase your seating for \$68 now by calling [About Thyme Bistro](http://www.aboutthymbistro.com) at 905 562-3457 or e-mail [sharon@nyarai-cellars.ca](mailto:sharon@nyarai-cellars.ca).

**The Doctor is in ...** Chef Lucy Waverman discusses her new cookbook, A Year in Lucy's Kitchen. You get to sample three recipes. Then Wine Doctor Edward Finstein guides you through a tasting of three wines that complement Lucy's dishes. This event takes place at the new premiere event venue The Bram & Bluma Appel Salon at the Toronto Reference Library on Wednesday, April 14, 2010, 6 to 8:30pm. Tickets are \$35 and can be purchased online: [https://secure3.ticket-ops.com/Keep\\_Toronto\\_Reading/eDirect](https://secure3.ticket-ops.com/Keep_Toronto_Reading/eDirect)

**Brooker Speaks ...** On April 15 winemaker Darryl Brooker, of Hillebrand, will be speaking at a meeting of the Canadian Club of Halton Peel (Oakville Conference Centre - 2515 Wyecroft Road, Oakville, Ontario). The title for his remarks will be "Canada Makes Wine? An Australian Winemaker's Experience in Niagara". Tickets are \$30 for members and \$40 for non-members. More info and enquiries can be found here: <http://search.hipinfo.info/record/OAK0392>

**Wine & Herb Festival ...** Weekends in May from 11 am to 5 pm, the 22 Wineries of Niagara-on-the-Lake kick off their spring event with great wine and fresh herbs! Your weekend touring pass gives you access to all 22 wineries, each featuring an herb-themed food pairing matched to a premium VQA wine sample selected to highlight the flavour and aroma of the herb. Passes can be used any weekend in May. Advance Ticket Price \$38 (until April 23), \$43 as of April 24 (plus applicable taxes). Passes will be available at participating wineries after April 24. [For details about pairings, wineries and tickets visit click here.](#)

---

**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](mailto:michael@ontariowinereview.com). We look forward to hearing from you!

© OntarioWineReview.com 2010. All rights reserved.

You may use the content of this newsletter by including full credit to Michael Pinkus, Grape Guy and a link to [www.ontariowinereview.com](http://www.ontariowinereview.com)