

## 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 – 131**  
**April 15, 2010**

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### OntarioWineReview: *Explosion of Flavour or Explosion of Furor*

A few weeks ago, while looking at the wines selected for the [Cool Chardonnay tasting in London, England](#) and checking my notes from the judging, to create the reviews (you will be seeing over the next few newsletters of the wines I felt worthy of making the trip). I suddenly noticed a discrepancy of 5 wines on the published list, which were not on the original list (I had received) of the wines going to England. I must be wrong, I thought to myself, so I did what my father always told me to do "check, check and double check", and still 5 wines appeared on my list that were not on my original "going" list. I decided to do some investigating, and lo and behold, there were some late entries that the judging panel were unable to assemble to try – so head judge, Tony Aspler, who will also be in London, England (representing these wines, and the esteemed judging panel), tasted and made the call on these wines. Now far be it from me to argue with the godfather (or is that grandfather – what moniker would Tony prefer?) of Canadian wine writing, but I do question the addition of one particular wine on the list, the Pillitteri 2008 Chardonnay Icewine.

Now, before everyone goes off into a tizzy, allow me to say that I have nothing against Pillitteri, nor their icewine. I have tasted it and I find it a very good dessert/icewine. My objection stems from the idea of putting all these dry Chardonnays on a table with an icewine. There are some who argue about the inclusion of sparkling wine or even Chardonnay Musque, but my concern is that icewine is something our UK friends already know we make, so why are we showing it to them again?

It was my impression that we were going to London to showcase a wine that we made well, in this case Chardonnay, Cool Climate Chardonnay to be exact, and to prove to them that we are more than a sweet wine making nation. We've invited the British media and other industry insiders and trade people to come and sample what Ontario makes. Most will be expecting to see an icewine (or a few dozen), after all that's what Canadian wine is known for. Wouldn't it be surprising and refreshing if we didn't conform to stereotype and showed them we make something other than the sweet stuff? Might even give us a better reputation in the wine world, and isn't that why we are going in the first place?

Let's face it, everybody loves a sweetie (I'm talking wine here), and the British are no different. Which wine do you think will garner the most attention, the 37 dry Chardonnay table wines or the one Chardonnay icewine? Which wine do you think will taste better, score higher and stand out? Well if you follow wine competitions in this country and around the world, you'll know that sweeties get the highest marks and usually walk away with top honours, and our wineries have the icewine hardware to prove it.

It is my opinion that by having an icewine on the table, we are undermining our entire reason for being there. We will not be perceived as a wine making country/region that happens to make icewine, we will be seen as an icewine making country/region that also happens to make table wine. If we are going to showcase even one icewine my questions is plain and simple: What's the point of going? They already know we make icewine. We should be showing them something different, something they've (most likely) never seen from Ontario.

Bill Redelmeier, the brains behind this showing, in defending the inclusion of an icewine on the table said in an email, "a) [we] didn't want to restrict the styles the wineries wanted to submit, and b) wanted to show the depth

of styles.” To which a fellow writer, who also opposes the icewine’s inclusion stated, “Why are we not including any Chardonnay “verjus”, Chardonnay vinegar, Chardonnay jams and jellies?” Maybe, he suggests, we should find out about including some Chardonnay ice cream. This of course is a humorous way to get his point across. How do we prove that we make more than just icewine? By simply leaving the icewine off the table. I can’t stress this point enough: they already know we make icewine. The question we should be answering, and the one that should be on their minds (the British wine press and trade): What else you do? Let’s show them; and leave the icewine at home.

Another writer (and judge) did not mince his words with his opinion: “It is ridiculous to send an icewine to this event. Should we perhaps send Polar Bears and Mounties also? This is exactly what we want to avoid.” I couldn’t agree more strongly.

My suspicion is that the British media will walk away from the tasting saying: “they make nice wines, but that icewine was the best thing on the table” – why even give them the opportunity to do so. So I say again, get the icewine off the table.

I would also like to point out, as one of the eight judges who sat on the panel, we did not try any icewines – nor were we informed that icewine was up for consideration, it was all about dry table wine. At least 3 judges have voiced their anti-icewine opinion about its inclusion and yet this has fallen on the deaf ears of the organizers, who, by the way, is a producer himself. Can you say “conflict of interest”? I knew you could.

On a positive note, I think the initiative is a bold move to re-energize our wine industry and get the Ontario name out there to the wider public and media at large. London is still the hub of the wine world and bringing our product to their door is a step in the right direction. And if it’s Chardonnay that leads the way, so be it. The likes of Oz Clarke, Jancis Robinson and the man who changed the course of California wines, Steven Spurrier, are all confirmed attendees ... they will be tasting Ontario wines of quality. These wines were panel judged by eight experienced Canadian judges on a cool Sunday afternoon in January; we gave of our time and our expertise, to help decide which wines would best represent Ontario Cool Climate Chardonnay. We tasted nothing but dry wines ... suddenly an interloper appeared in the form of a sticky. To me that’s one wine too many, in this case more is not always better. Therefore, I just have one thing left to say, and I say it as forcefully as I can: GET THE ICEWINE OFF THE TABLE.

Have some thoughts you wish to share on this topic, send to [Bill Redelmeier](mailto:Bill.Redelmeier) or send me an email [michael@ontariowinereview.com](mailto:michael@ontariowinereview.com) - you can also vote on my website [www.ontariowinereview.com](http://www.ontariowinereview.com) (see the right hand side of the home page).



### **Grape Guy’s Picks of the Bunch: *Triple the Cabernet***

#### **Hillbrand 2007 Limited Edition Artist Series Cabernet Merlot - \$17.45 (W)**

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

It’s hard to believe in this day and age of inflated wine prices, that you’d find a limited edition anything for under \$20. Remarkably, this Limited Edition sells for an amazing \$17.45 and hails from the exquisite 2007 vintage – a double whammy of good value. Its make up is 40% Merlot, along with an equal share of the Cabernet duo of Franc and Sauvignon (that’s 30% each) and is aged 10 months in a mix of French and American oak. The nose is lots of fun with a mixture of blue and black berries along with other dark fruits. Taste follows that dark fruit promise with some spice, oak tannins and a hint of refreshing vanilla, which ties it all together nicely. Only 2900 cases were made, and while that may sound like a lot, a wine this good, at this price, won’t be around that long. Price: \$17.45 – Rating: \*\*\*\*½

#### **Peller Estates 2007 Private Reserve Cabernet Franc - \$19.95 (W)**

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

Talk about belaboring a point, I’m going to tell you once again how much I enjoy a well made Ontario Cabernet Franc and this one truly is a beauty. The nose is just all fruit topped off with candied cherries, there’s also a pretty floral note that makes it even nicer to sit and sniff. The taste is where this one develops more into a wine of rich refinement and enjoyability: juicy cherry fruit, tobacco and enough vanilla notes to make it fully enjoyable ... smooth and easy drinking. This wine will help turn you into a Cabernet Franc fan, if you’re not already, if you are, you’ll want to make a multiple purchase and lie a couple of bottles down for a few years to see how it develops. Experience tells me you’ll gonna love this one in 5 years time. As for what it leaves behind on the palate – good acid balance and a supple medium-long black cherry finish – simply delightful, I

can't recommend this wine any higher than I am about to. Price: \$19.95 – Rating: \*\*\*\*\*

**Pillitteri 2006 Cabernet Sauvignon Reserve - \$32.00 (W)**

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

This wine comes in a funky port-style bottle which will make you immediately think it's a sweetie. We wine drinkers have been conditioned to judge a wine by its bottle shape. The wine itself has gone through quite a bit to get into your glass, 33 months of ageing, 1 year in barrel, then "washed over pressed skins from the 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon vintage", then returned to bottle for another 21 months. Think of this in terms of an Italian Ripasso. The result is a wine of interest and complexity. The nose is fairly simple, offering up raspberries and hints of cherry. My notes about the palate run the gamut as more and more air entered the wine. First it was cherry, vanilla, white pepper and woody tannins. Then the wood dropped out, leaving behind sweet fruit: a raspberry-cherry combo that was nuanced with vanilla. Finally, it became red fruit oriented, smooth with plum and cherry notes along with good palate cleansing acidity on the soft supple finish. This one's good to drink now and over the next 2-3 years. Price: \$32.00 – Rating: \*\*\*\*\*

**Must Try – Must Buy ... Sweetie:** [Chateau des Charmes 2006 Savagnin Icewine](#)

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

**Flight 2: 2005 / 2006** - [Hidden Bench 2006 Tete de Cuvée Chardonnay](#) (W)  
[Le Clos Jordanne 2006 Le Clos Jordanne Vineyard](#)

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



**Weekly Wine Notes and More:** *Reds from the County and Vintages Reports*

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):

**April 6, 2010** – Casa Dea Estate 2008 Cabernet Franc ( [LISTEN](#) )

**April 17, 2010** – Huff Estates 2008 Merlot ( [LISTEN](#) )

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

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

**Nothing new this week – but keep checking back ... there is stuff coming**

**[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

[11 New Reviews Added](#)

Including: some French, Australian, Californian and Italian wines

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

[April 17, 2010 Release Report](#)

[May 1, 2010 Release Report](#)

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## **Ontario Wine Review:** When these Wineries Talk, Bullshit Walks (in)

It has been very quiet on the Cellared in Canada front over the last few months. The furor has come and gone over CiC and so have the Olympics – and still nothing has been done. Not here in Ontario anyway. Out west, they've moved the offending product away from the real stuff (100% local product) and made a special section for it. Amazed that the LCBO hasn't followed suit? Not really. There's a lot of money in CiC wines and most of what the LCBO calls "Ontario" sales comes from the Cellared section of the store; so why mess with a good thing – even if it is confusing to the customer.

Both major wine companies (Peller and Vincor), who promised changes, have been lagging in that department – there are no new labels on bottles and the fine print is still there. "It's coming," we are told, yet we see nothing of substance – and I for one am beginning to feel deceived.

I am looking at an article that's been sitting on my desk since January that tells me labels will soon read, "Blended from International and Canadian wines" – on the front of the bottle – have you seen these bottles? Neither have I. The same article states "... Jackson-Triggs Estate Winery will be one of the first out of the gate this March with new labels distinguishing its blended brands from its Vintners Quality Alliance products ..." Well it's April, obviously telling time is the same as telling the truth ... stretched (like the water used in these wines). The new Jackson-Triggs wines are reported to be called "Unity" and will have an explanation of how the wines are made. Could this be yet another ruse by Vincor – they once produced a wine that fused Ontario and British Columbia grapes together and called it "Unity" – those of us who remember are cringing on how they are now bastardizing the good name of that brand by bringing it back as a foreign blend wine – have they no shame?

Sad to say, I saw this coming. With the Olympics now behind us, team Canada (hockey) with the gold and the record for the most golds won by a host nation still shining in our collective eyes – the thoughts of a wine industry pulling the wool over those same eyes seems a million months ago ... and when it comes to the public consciousness and attention span of an issue, it might as well be. We settled for a handshake and a promise, and it would seem that is all we are going to get. The Liquor Board has gone about its business as usual and the wine companies have done the same. Except now, they have a lobby group to keep their blended interests in front of a blasé government when it comes to the wine industry. Facebook has gone dormant and so have all those that fought so justly for the cause ... it was never about banning, it was about proper labeling practices, Truth justice and the ... oh wait, the completion to the phrase is "the American Way" – and I guess that's how we validate this travesty. In America, they'd sue for misrepresentation and false advertising, it would be a multi-million dollar ordeal with wineries and consumers banding together in outrage. But here in Canada we differentiate ourselves from our American cousins by just taking it. Bend over Ontario, here's a bottle of wine for you – worse thing about it is that neither the wine nor the bottle we're being screwed with is Canadian. Talk about having a foreign affair.



## **Wine Event Spotlight:** *More Events than you can shake a Vine at*

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**4th-Annual Ontario Consumers' Riesling Challenge** ... This event will be held in Guelph at the LCBO store located at 615 Scottsdale Drive on Saturday May 15, from 12:00 noon to 4 p.m. Wineries will feature multiple styles of Riesling, from dry to off-dry and trophies will be awarded for the winner in each category. Local food purveyors will provide refreshments that will include organic coffee, regional cheeses, artisanal breads, and water. The cost is \$10 (admission fee), which allows patrons 4 samples - once again being donated to [www.braceletofhope.ca](http://www.braceletofhope.ca).

**Sip...Savour...Discover** - Back by popular demand, Cave Spring Cellars are starting up their wine and hike program for the season. Once again, wine and hike enthusiast Peter Carr-Locke will take those interested on a journey to enjoy the beauty of the Niagara Escarpment. He will guide you on a rugged, moderate level hike along a picturesque Bruce Trail route through wooded slopes to quiet ponds below the village of Jordan. Enjoy a tasting of a Cave Spring wine en route and then conclude the afternoon back at the winery with an in-depth pairing of Cave Spring wines and artisanal cheeses. May 15 and 29 starting at 11:00am and running (or is that hiking) till approximately 2:00pm. Reservations required. [www.cavespringcellars.com](http://www.cavespringcellars.com)

**The 5th Annual Dionysus Festival at Mastronardi Estate Winery** ... anyone who has attended will want to attend again. If you haven't gone you don't know what you missing - for more info: <http://www.mastronardiwines.com/dionysus2010.php> - that's all you need to know.

**Rock n' Ribs is Back** ... Start the evening with an-all-you-can-eat corn on the cob and ribs featuring Harbour Estates own wine infused rib sauce. There's also a silent auction with all proceeds going to Conservation Niagara Foundation. Of course, it's all followed by April Wine in one of the most intimate concert settings: This year's event takes place on September 11, 2010 at Harbour Estates Winery, for more information checkout: <http://www.hewwine.com/Event%20descriptions/rocknribs.htm>

**Celebrate Mom in Style** ... Experience the splendor of Sprucewood Shores with your mother for an afternoon she won't forget! Taste 5 delicious wines, learn about pairing wines with your favorite summer bbq recipes and enjoy an incredible menu by Janine at Taste Bud Food. To reserve your spot today, \$33 per person. Contact us at (519) 738-9253 or email: [info@sprucewoodshores.com](mailto:info@sprucewoodshores.com) - advanced ticket purchase required. Details can be found at [www.sprucewoodshores.com](http://www.sprucewoodshores.com).

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**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!

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