

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 – 135
June 10, 2010

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OntarioWineReview: *A Notch Above ... Wine and Herb Festival 2010 (May 22-23, 2010)*

Every year I attended one weekend of the Wineries of Niagara-on-the-Lake Wine and Herb festival, and every year I write it up [on the blog](#). I still believe this is one of the best events, worthy of your attendance and attention, for wine and food lovers. It ranks right up there with another NOTL favourite, Taste the Season. Don't get me wrong, there are plenty of Niagara events that are wonderful, but in my opinion, the Wineries of NOTL events set the standard for the region.

On the Monday after my tour I opened an email from a Niagara-on-the-Lake winemaker and he asked how I had found the event this year. He also made the following comment: "at the preview tasting I thought that there were some really good pairings this year - maybe the best Wine and Herb we have done!" Coincidentally, that is exactly what my fiancée (the foodie of our traveling twosome) and I had discussed the previous day as we were collaborating on the best of categories (food, wine, and pairing). In past years, we have found some real dogs amongst the pairings and others that stood heads and tails above the rest; but this year that was not the case. Everybody brought their A-game and we debated and struggled to determine our favourites. In the end, we came back to the core focus of the festival: herbs, after all it is a Wine and Herb Festival; the goal is to pair a wine that brings out the best in your herb and showcase the herb in your food. We didn't give a numeric score as I have published in the past, because we would have been talking about fractions of a mark; instead we adopted a Good, Better, Best ranking system (and all but the best are ranked alphabetically). The following rankings are based on the food presented.

Good ...

These pairing were quite tasty, they lacked a certain flair to make them truly stand out, but they were worth sampling nonetheless (in alphabetical order):

Hillebrand: Asparagus and Garden Fresh Cilantro paired with the Trius 2009 Sauvignon Blanc

As far as I am concerned this pairing is kind of a cheat. Asparagus is a natural pairing with Sauvignon Blanc, and this just lacks creativity – though it was tasty – one problem is that the herb sauce kept falling off the asparagus spears and was hard to get back on.

Inniskillin: Ricotta Tarragon Mousse paired with 2008 Pinot Grigio

The herb was noticeable in the offering but didn't really knock our socks off – I was happy to see a properly made, and named, Pinot Grigio with lots of Grigio characteristics (refresh lemony and citrus notes) – so many so-called Grigios are actually Gris (apple and fresh white fruit) masquerading as Grigio (did you follow that?).

Joseph's: Profiterole with Parsley, Tomatoes and Goat Cheese pairing with Caroline Gamay Rosé

Here the pastry seemed a bit sweet and overwhelmed the savoury filling – while the filling on its own was delicious.

Konzelmann: Braised Venison in a Cabernet, Thyme and Fig reduction with a Goat Cheese and Thyme infused Scone paired with 2008 Cabernet Sauvignon Reserve

The venison was served cold and the "scone" was soggy – plus there was no thyme (herb) taste in this bite-

sized delicacy. Good but rather bland.

Lailey: Vietnamese Spring Roll with rice, dill and lettuce paired with 2008 Riesling

This was a food that required a sauce to dip it in, sure there was a Riesling infused soy to shake into the roll, but it slid all the way down to the last bite and down your arm if you weren't careful (we found out the sauce completed the dish on the last bite – which is where the soy settled).

Pillitteri: Double Smoked (sic) Bacon and Chive Cornbread topped with Pepper Merlot Jelly paired with 2007 Merlot

I love corn bread but this one was a little on the dry side and needed the wine to wash it down – the topping was as peppery as promised.

Southbrook: Spicy Gazpacho Shooter paired with 2009 Fresh White

Not sure I got the cinnamon taste from the Basil Cinnamon (herb) even though I plucked a leaf off the plant and tried it. This was quite the spicy shot that my foodie fiancée informed me was decent on its own.

Sunnybrook: Curry Mango Cream Cheese spread on a Triscuit paired with 2009 Golden Plum

This did show some creativity, who would have thought to combine these ingredients, but in the end it was just 'good' and the wine made the food taste too sweet. On the plus side I tried a [2009 Bosc Pear](#) wine that was truly amazing.

Better ...

These are your middle of the pack foods – one's that if you didn't have a whole weekend ahead of you and needed to get the most out of the event a few of these would have set you on the right track (in alphabetical order).

Chateau des Charmes: Goat Cheese Tart with Oregano Marinated Grape Tomato paired with 2007 Cabernet Franc

Nice complementary pairing, the pastry doesn't overwhelm, it carried the goat cheese, the oregano and even the tomato nicely onto the palate ... and the wine, well I really like this Franc for it's flavour and its value, so it's unfair of me to name it best wine of the weekend so here it gets honourable mention and [a link to my original review](#).

Jackson-Triggs: Chevre and Arugula Tart paired with 2007 Gewurztraminer Grand Reserve

To many, arugula is a form of lettuce and how does one describe the taste of lettuce? But this was a very tasty tart none the less ... the trick here was to sip on the wine while waiting for the tart to cool.

Maleta: Lavender Infused Honey, Organic Cheddar Cheese on Wood Fired Pullman Bread paired with 2006 Grape Brain Cabernet

Simple yet delicious best describes this food – who could really go wrong with fresh bread, aged cheddar and honey? The wine proved to be a nice pairing too, but again, who could really go wrong with fresh bread, aged cheddar and honey?

Marynissen: Tuscan Ragu (Marjoram) paired with 2007 Solstice

Basically, we're talking about a big meaty stew served on Focaccia bread – this is the kind of recipe that makes you want to drag the crock pot out at home, thank goodness they provided the recipe. They were also offering a vegetarian option, but not sure why you would swing that way ...

Niagara College: French Sorrel Vichyssoise paired with 2007 Chardonnay Unoaked

This was a delicious soup served cold – and in the winter they should repeat it and make it hot, either way it would be very tasty.

Peller Estates: Lemon Balm infused Sponge Cake paired with 2008 Private Reserve Pinot Gris

Because Peller's restaurant follows the local 100-mile diet philosophy, citrus is out – so the chef was thrilled to be able to use anything lemon – even if it was an herb. This citrus sponge cake was by itself refreshing and tasty and the wine added to the enjoyment.

Ravine: Veal Saltimbocca in a Tomato Sage Sauce paired with 2007 Cabernet Franc

This was well worth the drive to Ravine – very tasty – we would have had seconds had they been offered.

Reif: Ontario Buffalo Mozzarella Pizza and Basil Pizza paired with 2006 Sauvignon Blanc

The pizza was goooooood – you really could pick up the herb (basil) ... the wine neither added nor detracted from the food.

Stonechurch: Rosemary Shortbread paired with 2008 Syrah Rosé
I really love shortbread and the rosemary was not overwhelming, in fact, it added an interesting twist.

Stratus: Smoked Salmon with Fennel slaw and Crème Fresh Sauce paired with 2006 Wildass White
The acidity of the slaw matched well with the smoked salmon and the fennel added subtlety of flavour.

Strewn: Tomato and Cheese Pinwheel paired with 2006 Cabernet Franc
A substantial “pizza”-like item – I’m not sure what Bay (herb) really tastes like outside of soup but it was in here (you could see it in the sauce).

Best ...

These are the top three food stuffs. Be it the blend of flavours, the best use of the herb or just a must eat morsel that made you want to go back for more.

#3 – Palatine Hills: Rosemary BBQ Burgers paired with 2008 Lakeshore Red

Great flavour in this infused BBQ sauce, we wanted more for sure, even if it was 10 in the morning when we tasted it. The only thing keeping it out of a higher position on this list was the excess of bun: too much bun too little burger – eat open faced to get the full effect.

#2 – Coyote’s Run: Vegetarian Paella, Shrimp and Saffron Aioli paired with 2009 Pinot Gris / Pinot Blanc

The Coyote never disappoints – this was one tasty shrimp dish, not sure we got the taste of the saffron but we would willingly go back again and again to try to find it.

#1 – Cattail Creek: Asian Wontons topped with Lemon Basil Pesto paired with 2007 Chardonnay Musque

This was the best use of the herb (lemon basil) because you really got the taste of the herb in the food they served ... and in the end that’s what the food stuff was all about, right?

Top Pairings ...

Interestingly, each one of the top pairings comes from one of the categories, and believe it or not, they do not necessarily follow the Good, Better, Best order as above. Presented in reverse order the top pairing for this year’s Wine and Herb festival are:

#3 – Southbrook ... The heat of the spicy shot was cooled by the sweetness in the Fresh White Vidal wine they served, making it memorable even after you walked away.

#2 – Cattail Creek ... The food really did change the wine character. First sip was all apple and white fruit flavours, but when paired with the lemon basil wonton there was a noticeable citrus component that really exploded in the mouth.

#1 – Marynissen ... Seems a no brainer to pair a hearty stew with a hearty wine but this one grabbed our attention. The tannins of the wine seemed to disappear when sipped on with the food making this a delectable dish and one that made me wish for a cold day in January to enjoy it – now how often do you wish for that in the middle of May.

Top Wines of the Day (with full reviews) can be found in the Pick of the Bunch section below.

[To see pictures from the Wine and Herb Festival head over to the blog.](#)



Grape Guy’s Picks of the Bunch: *Best Wines of the Wine and Herb*

Lailey Vineyard 2008 Riesling - \$15.95 (W)

www.laileyvineyard.com

Proving that sometimes a wine just needs a chance to come around, I give you my review of this 2008 Lailey Riesling. This was a wine I tried last year and I thought it sulfur ridden on the nose and pretty flat on the palate; I was fearful it would rest on Lailey’s shelves until doomsday. Well, it seems that doomsday is nigh because this wine has finally come out of its sulfur laden shell. The nose is citrus, lemon and apple; the palate shows a slight sweetness (1) with a lemonade-kiwi blend, quite the tasty little wine ... finally. Price: \$15.95 – Rating: ****

Hillebrand 2009 Trius Sauvignon Blanc - \$14.05 (W)

www.hillebrand.com

Darryl Brooker has left the building but his legacy lives on. Most of Darryl's (former winemaker at Hillebrand) 2009s are awaiting their time to shine but are being shepherded to bottle by another. However, this Sauvignon Blanc has been left to us by one of the bright stars that passed through Ontario – and how fitting that this Aussie should leave us with a Savvy B (it would have been even more appropriate had he left a Shiraz behind, but none were made under his tenure). This swan song is a beauty with lovely citrus, grassy and lemon notes from first sniff to last swallow where you'll also find some asparagus notes on the long finish. Price: \$14.05 – Rating: ****½

Ravine Vineyard 2007 Cabernet Franc - \$32.00 (W)

www.ravinevineyard.com

This wine is quite a nice one, considering it's taken from 2 year old vines (planted in 2005), seemingly a little young to be harvesting but when you're a new winery you have to make do with what you got. Winemaker Shauna White seems to have coaxed a real winner out of these young vined grapes. There's nice spice, blackberry, cinnamon, black cherry, tobacco and a smooth peppery finish. The wine was aged 10 months in a heavy French oak (90%) mix with some American barrels (10%) ... opened long enough the wine takes on some of that oakyness; drinking potential for maximum enjoyment is rather short 2-3 years (2012-2014). Price: \$32.00 – Rating: ****

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



Weekly Wine Notes and More: 2 Pinot Noirs, 2 Taste it Agains 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 few weeks):

June 1, 2010 – Fielding Estate Winery 2008 Pinot Noir ([LISTEN](#))

June 8, 2010 – Henry of Pelham 2007 Pinot Noir Reserve ([LISTEN](#))

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

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

There are at least 4 coming in the next couple of weeks

[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

[Chateau des Charmes 2002 Estate Cabernet Merlot](#)

[Fielding Estate Winery 2005 Cabernet Sauvignon](#)

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

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

[9 New Reviews Added](#)

Including: A Freak, A FuZion and a King, amongst others

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

[June 12, 2010 Release Report](#)

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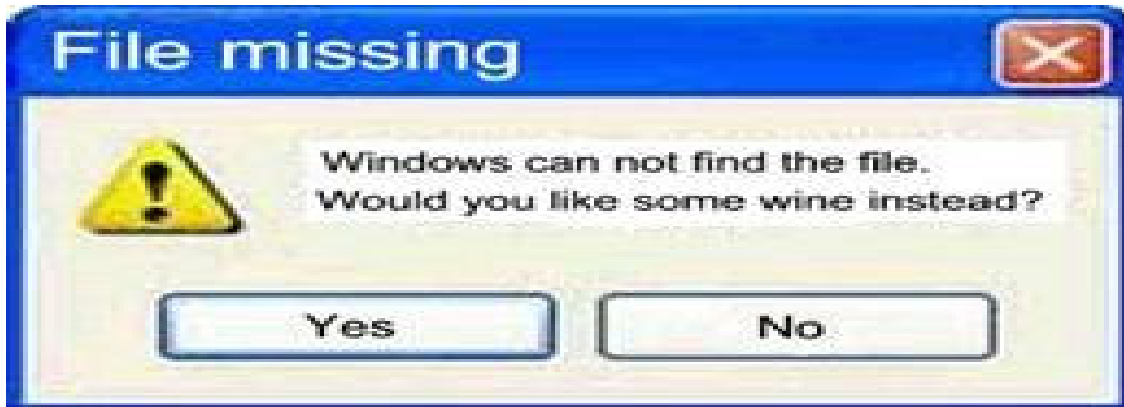
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<http://www.discoverfusion.ca/index.htm>

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OntarioWineReview: *Something to Make You Smile*



Wine Event Spotlight: *Music, Wine, Spirits, New Vintages, you name it*

Cave Springs brings you Seafood in the Summer July 3rd & 31st ... There is something so pleasing on the palate when it comes to light, delicate seafood and fresh, crisp wines. Enjoy some mouth-watering shrimp and scallop tastes prepared by Inn On The Twenty and paired with Cave Spring's best summer sippers. Take home some of Chef Kevin Maniaci's favourite recipes for summer entertaining. Saturday, July 3rd & 31st 12:00 pm \$30.00 per person. Reservations required.

Music and Wine, That Sounds Just Fine ... Sunday, June 27 2010, 3 to 5 pm - Fourever Summer in association with 13th Street Winery presents 4 incredible wines, 4 delicious tapas, 4 inspiring quartet movements In a beautiful private garden in Etobicoke (Royal York / Dundas area) Limited tickets for advance sale only: \$60. Order tickets at our online box office or send cheque payable to "Windermere String Quartet" to 344 Durie St., Toronto, ON, M6S 3G3. For more information call 416-769-7054 or email info@windemerestringquartet.com

The Toronto Wine & Spirit Festival ... the second year of this event takes place in the Distillery District, and again deliver a taste of summer! Mark your calendar for June 17-19 to join in on the fun at the Toronto Wine & Spirit Festival. Local wines, local beers, as well as wines and beers from around the world; coolers, ciders, sakes and liqueurs will also be up for sampling. Advance tickets are \$22 and include an official Toronto Wine & Spirit sampling glass and five food/drink vouchers. Tickets can be purchased on-site for \$30 (subject to availability). For detail go online to www.wineandspiritfestival.ca.

4th Annual Vintage Release held by the CREW ... join Colchester Ridge Estate Winery as they hold their New Vintage release party and BBQ – tickets are \$45 and details of the event can be found at www.colchesterridge.com

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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