

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 – 177
March 15, 2012

In this Edition

- **OntarioWineReview:** *The Bump, The Bump, The Bump*
 - **Grape Guy's Picks of the Bunch:** *Three 4.5 star wines + More Must Pile*
 - **Bi-Weekly OWR Updates:** *On the Road reviews, Vintages and more*
 - **Taste it Again:** *Does Ontario Wine Age ... Well?*
 - **Wine Event Spotlight:** *Something New in the Kawartha's, Toronto Gets RAW*
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OntarioWineReview: *The Bump, The Bump, The Bump*

Hollywood's big days are over, but here in Ontario we're heading into the big award season ... so, hot on the heels of Cuvee, and the controversy I seem to have stirred up with my last article, it's time to let you in on the reason wineries enter awards "shows" or competitions. Sure the prestige of winning an award is wonderful, it gives a new winery a chance to hang something on the wall or display on the tasting bar; an older more established and multiple winning winery adds it to their war chest of awards or sticks it in the medal room, or wherever they store their hardware. But in truth wineries see a lot of chances over the course of a year to add plaques and prizes to their coffers. A recent article on the Drink Business website (<http://www.thedrinksbusiness.com>) stated that, "Producers are becoming increasingly cynical about wine competitions, and more discerning about which ones they enter" and the main root of that is the cost factor. For those who don't know, a winery doesn't simply send their wines in to enter a competition, it's not like the Academy Awards where just releasing a product puts you up for consideration, there are fees involved. In the same Drinks Business article Gary Jordan (of Jordan Wine Estate in South Africa) states quite plainly, "Wineries are getting a bit tired of supporting someone else's bank balance".

A winery has to weigh the cost versus benefit of entering a competition, basically what do they get back in return, it's what all businesses do before laying out money, they must look at their return on investment ... What a winery is looking for is exposure and a bump in sales. "It's nice to be rewarded for your hard work," one winery owner told me, "but if it doesn't equal money in the till it doesn't mean a thing." The only way a competition makes sense is if it gets coverage ... and that coverage can't just be a one time thing, such as an event, it has to be continuing coverage, there has to be more than one outlet to get the results and it must recur.

There are plenty of award competitions, but let's focus on 4 "major" ones for the sake of brevity - three of which I have been a part of and one I watch with great anticipation and expectation: Ontario Wine Awards (OWA), Canadian Wine Awards (CWA), All Canadian Wine Championships (ACWC) and Cuvee. Two are all Ontario, two are cross-country. (I am not including InterVin because of its international scope).

For Ontario the OWAs seem to have the stronger following, that's because there is media involved from start to finish, and there are a plethora of things surrounding it. There's the awards dinner, the public tasting (usually held at a separate venue location some weeks later). There's Ontario Wine Week (OWA founder Tony Aspler helped to establish this officially recognized week in June every year), and the awards attempt to place itself in the midst of that time frame. And, of course, there is plenty of media coverage after all media makes up over 90% of the judges.

The same can be said for the CWAs, while no dinner or public tasting leads up to or follows the announcements, there is still plenty of media coverage in Wine Access magazine (who founded and puts the awards on) - plus you can pick up the magazine for months at your favourite winery - especially if they won. So it has impact long after the awards are published and announced across Canada.

The ACWC is Canada's longest running wine awards, and like the CWAs span the entire country, but has been losing ground to the CWAs in recent years. That's mainly due to its lack of coverage afterward. The good news is that is changing. There is a public tasting of the wines, now in its 6th year ... which is one of the only tastings at which consumers can get a taste of both Ontario and British Columbia wines, as well as the wines from the other producing provinces ... the problem of course is getting the wines you like (if they are from out of your province). My understanding is that the ACWC realizes they're stumbling at getting their winners' information out to the public, and they are taking steps to get a more media-friendly, media-astute, media-centric and media-savvy panel of judges. Time will tell, but that sounds like a step in the right direction. Now if only they could take that tasting on the road.

Which leads us to Cuvee ... the only competition that doesn't get it, the media part that is. Even InterVin (a competition that lay dormant for years, now resurrected by Town Media) understands the need to get their message out there. Cuvee continues to remain insular. Yes there is an awards ceremony and a tasting right after, but there is no attempt to engage the public after Cuvee weekend. Let's start with the judging, it's done by winemakers, who have no venue for getting the message out and hype the awards and/or the results (except maybe to their immediate customers). It seems that once Cuvee weekend is finished there's no afterglow, no residual effect ... there's no lying in bed with a cigarette feeling the tingle ... once it's over it's over. The outspoken owner of Coyote's Run, Jeff Aubry, in three Facebook posts let his feeling be known: "We hate Cuvee, and haven't been in it for many years. It is a poor competition ... my issue with Cuvee is the structure of the competition ... [eg] one Chard category to cover three unique styles [and] they drop categories ...". But Jeff leaves his most stinging comment for the very thing I mentioned - no afterglow: "My favourite part," he writes, his words laced with sarcasm, "is the Cuvee Gold winners. Gary Pickering once stood up at the beginning of the ceremony and reminded us all to not forget them. Then he proceeded to say nothing else about them again that night. Winners get balloons on their table, but otherwise, might as well have finished dead last."

Another winery owner, whom I bumped into at Coyote's Run the week after Cuvee said to me, "after I explained Cuvee to my partners and told them the reasons I disliked the competition they asked me, 'so why are we involved', and I didn't have a good answer for them."

Once Cuvee is over it is totally up to the winery to promote its victory ... that's not much return on investment, and as for "the bump", well, without someone else to crow about, or at least speak about the awards, they go un-noticed by a majority of Ontario's consumers and wine buyers. It's nice that we, the media, have a pre-tasting, as mentioned in my last newsletter, but how about instead of a useless pre-tasting why not an after-tasting of the winners, would that not at least be a step in the right direction? Or how about a public tasting of winners wines? That would also be a help ... I shouldn't be the one handing out this free advice to a competition that's been around for 24 years and has had the chance to look around at other competitions within their own province for ideas ... makes you think that organizers have their heads in the sand. Just because you've been around a long time doesn't mean you can remain stagnant ... just look at the corporate world for examples of what standing still does to a business.

Cuvee likes to tout itself as the Oscars - but with little external push before or after the awards it's more like the SAGs (Screen Actors' Guild) awards: they're given out but little interest is paid to them outside the industry. It's time for that to change.

Three of four competitions get it ... so why don't they all? One thing for certain, the one that doesn't will see its 25 year but unless they change with the times and the needs of their "clients" they won't

see 30. If the return on investment isn't brought to a satisfactory level there are lots of other competitions ready and willing to take a winery's money and give them what they need: exposure and a bump. In the end the only thing that really matters about competitions, from a winery's point of view, is the bump - an up-tick in sales of their award winning wines and more people coming thru their doors to buy more wine. Brian Schmidt of Vineland Estates sums it up best: "I am sure you know I have a general distain for awards. The consumer votes everyday by offering their hard earned dollars in exchange for our wines. They will not buy a second bottle if they do not like it."

Maybe it's time to stop being mad at the messenger and listen to the message instead.



Grape Guy's Picks of the Bunch: *Three 4.5 star wines + More Must Pile*

Vineland 2009 Dry Riesling - \$13.95 (W, L)

www.vineland.com

I've been waiting to try this yet-to-be-released Riesling for some time, at least since trying the [semi-dry](#) and the [St. Urban](#) Riesling from the same year ... I was finally secreted a bottle by the winemaker himself - and I can definitely tell you the wine was worth the wait (and will be once released). The nose is lemon-lime, green apple and wet stone - in other words lots of acid and mineral. On the palate that continues, the minerality and acidity are off-the-chart giving you the cheek-sweats; there's also a crisp green apple finish that's long and lingering ... this fabulous '09 has lots of zip and zing with bite ... a good one to age over the next 10+ years or for enjoying the summer with. Price: \$13.95 - Rating: **** 1/2+

Featherstone 2008 Joy - \$34.95 (W)

www.featherstonewinery.ca

I won't say that everybody and their dog is getting into the sparkling wine game, though I am sure Bocci (Featherstone's resident canine) would love the reference. This is a beauty of a bubbly from this small producer ... made in the traditional method from 100% Chardonnay with a full 3 years in bottle on lees - keep in mind only 112 cases were made of this first effort, so it's rather limited. Owner Louise Engel gives full credit for this wine to their consultant and on-premise virtual winery owner Kevin Panagapka (20-27 Cellars) for his expertise and experience with sparkling - and this is an excellent first vintage bubble for the folks at the 'Stone. I loved the toasty-apple-y notes, the nice balance of acid and fruit in the mouth with almond biscotti and citrus notes playing off one another; there's also a great finish of lemon/apple and zingy bubbles. I'd like to say I'm surprised at the quality - but I've learned not be surprised from anything coming out of Featherstone, I've learned to expect it. Price: \$34.95 - Rating: **** 1/2

Alvento 2007 Aria (Nebbiolo) - \$34.95 (W)

www.alvento.ca

You hear rumours that Nebbiolo (a hard to grow Italian grape variety used to make Barolo) is being made in Ontario and you all at once cringe and are intrigued. The folks at Alvento bring with them Italian know-how, experience and familiarity with the grape, so you do hope they know what they are doing. There's lots of pepper and spice with high acidity in this wine - backed by a delicacy of fruit, more sour than fresh with a lovely strawberry seam. The nose is strawberry and spice with a background of cocoa-nibs ... the taste follows suit with a great acid bite and a sour fruit filled middle and did I mention the great lingering finish. The real question here is what do you compare an Ontario Nebbiolo to? This one might be a benchmark for the variety here in Ontario if we continue to grow and make it. ... Price: \$34.95 - Rating: **** 1/2

Must Pile ...

Wines tasted last year that did not make it into last year's publication ...

[Karlo Estates 2010 Riesling - \\$22.00](#) (PEC)
[Lacey Estates 2008 Baco Noir - \\$20.00](#) (PEC)
[Muscedere 2008 Meritage - \\$30.00](#) (LENS)
[Riverview 2009 Cabernet Sauvignon - \\$16.95](#) (NIAG)
[Rosehall Run 2009 Cuvee County Pinot Noir - \\$21.95](#) (PEC)
[Smith & Wilson 2010 Sauvignon Blanc - \\$14.00](#) (LENS)
[Southbrook 2008 Triomphe Cabernet Franc - \\$21.95](#) (NIAG)
[Sprucewood Shores 2008 "Lady in Red" - \\$14.95](#) (LENS)
[Strewn 2010 'Terroir' Riesling-Gewurztraminer - \\$17.15](#) (NIAG)

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



Bi-Weekly OWR Updates: *On the Road reviews, Vintages and more*

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

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

[Cuvee 2012 - and the Winners are ...](#)
[Lunching with Mike Reynolds of Hall Winery](#)
[Vina Ventisquero Wines](#)

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

Wines that got "lost" in my cellar - some are Treasures others Trash ... Find out what happened

[Konzelmann 2006 Red Moose](#)

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

Find out what has happened to some of my favourites over the years

See *Taste it Again* article below for reviews of the wines I tried in the last couple of weeks
highlights include:

Creekside Estate 2005 Laura's Blend Red
Colio Estate 2005 CEV Cabernet Sauvignon
Creekside Estate 2002 Cabernet
Southbrook 2001/2002 Triomphe Cabernet Franc, side-by-side
Lakeview 2005 Cabernet Sauvignon
Mastronardi NV a'Dorah

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

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

[Many New Posts Added](#)

including Lailey Cab-Merlot, J-T Okanagan Merlot, and more

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

[Vintages Shop On-Line March 22, 2012](#)

[Vintages release: March 31, 2012](#)

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Kawartha International Wine & Food Festival



The Event ... Kawartha International Wine & Food Festival ... April 15, 2012

On Sunday, April 15, 2012 At The Venue, 286 George Street North in Peterborough, Ontario from Noon until 8:00 p.m. my good friend and colleague, Shari Darling and the Kawartha Entertainment Group, are bring the first ever Kawartha International Wine & Food festival the festival promises to be a one of a kind event that will draw global wine, artisan local beer, spirit and food lovers from all over the Kawarthas and beyond. The Kawartha International Wine & Food Festival's goal is to put superb wines from around the globe alongside some of Peterborough's finest fare...Global wine, local food is the mantra! Cost is a mere \$12.00 per person and includes 1 Food and Wine Pairing Wine Wheel (retail value \$10). Visit the website: www.kawarthainternationalwineandfoodfestival.com for all the details.

The Contest ... Ticket Giveaway

Unfortunately I won't be able to attend the first ever Kawartha show but here's your chance to be the first through the door to experience this soon to be must attend annual event. Through my good friend and colleague I was able to attain 2 pairs of tickets to this event (because who likes going alone?) Answer the easy skill testing question below and you'll be entered to win ...

Skill testing question: What's the name of the venue where the Kawartha International Wine & Food festival is taking place?

Email yours answers to me at michael@ontariowinereview.com- we will draw three winners from the correct answers received before 11:59pm March 22, 2012. Please be sure to include your name, address (with postal code) and phone number to be eligible.

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Taste it Again: Does Ontario Wine Age ... Well?

The all knowing folks at They-Weekly say we drink our reds too warm, our whites too cold and our wines too young. While it's true that some wines are meant to be drank young and fresh, there are others that benefit from a little aging because as a wine ages it doesn't just get old it becomes more interesting; so the big question for wine consumers is between the two extremes: Young and Fresh or Old and Interesting. For the last few years I have been maintaining a blog called "Taste It Again Grape Guy" where I re-taste wines I have previously reviewed, to see how they are coming along - and over the past few weeks I have come across a number of these wines in boxes I have laid down. I thought it'd be fun to highlight some of these wines (below). For those looking for more there is always the Taste It Again blog and the re-tasted wines will now also be appearing on the main OntarioWineReview website right beside their originals.

Creekside Estate 2005 Laura's Blend Red

"... Bottled in late 2007, the back label proclaimed 2008-2013 as a perfect window in which to drink the wine - so here we are tucking ourselves neatly into the latter part of that time period ..." ([read full review](#)).

Colio Estate 2005 CEV Cabernet Sauvignon

"... The wine shows little of the 7 years it has under its belt (from vintage date) and 5 years from

release ..." ([read full review](#))

Creekside Estate 2002 Cabernet

"... First, I was shocked and appalled to see a plastic cork, but then around that time period Creekside was using the inferior closure ..." ([read full review](#))

Southbrook 2001/2002 Triomphe Cabernet Franc, side-by-side

"... 2002 was the first "great" vintage of the 2000's ... 2001 had that possibility in its pedigree, but "the lady bug" incident in Ontario spoiled many bottles, therefore the 2001 vintage will forever have an asterisks beside it. Thankfully that was not the case from either of these wines ..." ([read full review](#))

Lakeview 2005 Cabernet Sauvignon

"... I am anti plastic cork. For the most part I find them an inferior closure that is only good for "drink now" wines - if you are unfortunate enough to find yourself face to face with an over 5 year old wine sealed with plastic [that bottle is] most likely a goner ..." ([read full review](#))

Mastronardi NV a'Dorah

"... A light, fruit driven sparkler in its youth (and meant to be drunk that way) it has become something quite different and exotic now that it has a few years under its belt ..." ([read full review](#))

Tawse 2006 Echos Bistro Red

"... What a difference 6 years can make. I just read over my review from October 23, 2007 about this wine, and boy was I crowing about it ... but in hindsight I should have seen this coming a mile away ..." ([read full review](#))

Chateau des Charmes 2005 St. David's Bench Cabernet Sauvignon

"... A half hour later the wine was smelling of spices, cherry, clove and cinnamon, quite alluring; while the palate was blackberry, clove and lots of wood spice ..." ([read full review](#))

Here's one from the Lost & Found blog ...

Konzelmann 2006 Red Moose

"... it seems I have never written a single word about it ... and that surprises me - I guess the review got lost in the wash, or my dog ate it, or I left it in my other pants, or whatever other excuse I can give you as to why I have no record of trying this wine in the past ..." ([read full review](#))



Wine Event Spotlight: *Something New in the Kawartha's, Toronto Gets RAW*

Kawartha International Wine and Food Festival ... On Sunday, April 15, 2012 At The Venue, 286 George Street North in Peterborough, Ontario from Noon until 8:00 p.m. my good friend and colleague, Shari Darling and the Kawartha Entertainment Group, are bring the first ever Kawartha International Wine & Food festival the festival promises to be a one of a kind event that will draw global wine, artisan local beer, spirit and food lovers from all over the Kawarthas and beyond. The Kawartha International Wine & Food Festival's goal is to put superb wines from around the globe alongside some of Peterborough's finest fare...Global wine, local food is the mantra! Cost is a mere \$12.00 per person and includes 1 Food and Wine Pairing Wine Wheel. Visit the website: www.kawarthainternationalwineandfoodfestival.com for all the details.

Raw, the Great Toronto Tartare-Off ... is being held Thursday, March 29th, 2012 at Toronto's Premier Hotel, The Fairmont Royal York, in The Imperial Room from 6pm – 8.30pm. Watch Toronto's leading chefs go head-to-head competing for the title of King/Queen of Tartare whether their major ingredient is meat, seafood or vegetable. Sample a dozen different tartares and the wines to match. Vote on your favourites and see if they are in line with our panel of culinary experts

and celebrity judges. All in support of Grapes for Humanity. Competing chefs include: Brook Cavanagh - La Palette, Mark Cutrara - Cowbell, Jason Bangerter - Luma, Jamie Kennedy - Gilead, Didier Leroy - Didier, Lorenzo Loseto - George, Patrick McMurray - Starfish, Tim Palmer - Fairmont Royal York, Albert Ponzio - Le Select ... plus an array of Amateur chefs including Martin Malivoire - Malivoire Winery, Paul Pender - Tawse, Sue Ann Staff - Staff Winery, and Harald Theil - Hidden Bench ... Tickets: \$125 per person To Purchase, call Annette at: 416-445-9920

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.



Socially Speaking ...

Follow Michael Pinkus, the Grape Guy's (almost) daily **Tweets** at <http://twitter.com/TheGrapeGuy>. You can become a friend on **facebook**: <http://www.facebook.com/?ref=home#!/mepinkus>.

"Linked In" folks can find Michael at <http://ca.linkedin.com/pub/michael-pinkus/14/704/4b8>

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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