

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 – 192
November 1, 2012

In this Edition

- ↓ **OntarioWineReview:** *In Praise of Older Wines – The Vineland Experience*
 - ↓ **Grape Guy's Picks of the Bunch:** *10 Wines from "The County" + 2 Strati*
 - ↓ **Bi-Weekly OWR Updates:** *Video Wines of the Week – plus much more*
 - ↓ **OntarioWineReview:** *Visit to Casa Toscana in Grimsby*
 - ↓ **Wine Event Spotlight:** *The Two Main Events in Niagara this November*
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OntarioWineReview: *In Praise of Older Wines – The Vineland Experience*

Every so often I like to remind people to age their wines ... Now it's true not all wines are meant for ageing, but I'm not always talking about long term ageing – even a short term can drastically improve the taste of your wine. The old adage is that here in North America we drink our whites too cold and our reds too warm – we also drink our wines far too young. Studies have shown that most wine (90%) is drunk within 24 hours of purchase and 95% within 48 hours – so if you are one of the lucky ones with a wine cellar, you make up the rare 5% of the population that hold wine for longer than a mere 48 hours. But that's still not enough. When I talk about ageing a wine I mean for a year or more. I have a lie-down program here at the house (where I am currently writing this article) where I take favourite wines and lie them down for 2+ years to see where they end up – of course I am a little behind my intended schedule of two years, currently I am working on an average hold time of 4 years. These rules that I have set for myself do not solely apply to Ontario wine, but also international wines as well, but it's the Ontario stuff I find the most fascinating, which is why I started my Taste it Again blog and the Lost & Found blog – to highlight older Ontario wines. As you can see older vintage wine is a hobby as well as a passion, so when the opportunity comes along to try older vintage wines I jump at it ... thus was the case in August when a number of my colleagues from the Wine Writers' Circle of Canada were invited down to Vineland Estates to talk and taste older Rieslings with the head honcho himself, Brian Schmidt.

We kicked things off with the 1989 Semi-Dry Riesling made from, at the time, 10 year old vines. The wine may have the moniker "semi-dry" on the label but the wine was anything but: a nose of beeswax, honey and floral led us to believe the wine had maintained its sweetness, but the palate betrayed the nose ... though kept great acidity and led to a rather dry finish with lavender and beeswax nuances. Only 18 bottles of this more than interesting wine remain.

Our next foray into the world of aged Riesling was a 1993 Semi-Dry, Brian seemed to remember the vintage like it was yesterday (that's how well he prepared for this encounter). A cold winter, reaching temps of -29C led to a lot of vineyard damage which took some 10 years for the vineyard to fully recover. The nose showed signs of floral and beeswax like the previous wine, but this one also showed an intense kerosene note. The palate had an interesting spiced character with a big acid component and kerosene flavours ... the vintage may have been memorable but this wine, in its current state, was not.

Speaking of forgettable wines, by moving ahead just 2 years, to 1995, another Semi-Dry, we find ourselves in a hot year, which is never beneficial for Riesling ... this Riesling was fat, flabby and showed more like a Sherry or Madeira rather than a table wine. Not sure why Brian decided to follow up a hot year with another hot year, but out came a 2002 St. Urban Riesling – the last year

Vineland was to ferment their Rieslings dry ... petrol wafted from the glass along with baked peach ... the palate tasted oddly fresh for a hot vintage wine, showing petrol notes, lemon pith and all with a bracing acidity, making for a mouth-puckering finish. Ah, so that's why. He was showing us that in the ensuing 7 years since 1995 he'd learned a little something about making hot vintage Riesling.

Brian then tells us a little inside info as we get poured the 2004 Reserve ... seems that prior to the 2004 harvest Brian visits Hermann Weis in Germany and learns some tips and tricks of the old world Riesling trade, like picking for acidity and keeping natural residual sugars: "alcohol is not our focus anymore, we're allowing the vines to give us natural sugars ... I really wish I could take credit for this revelation but they've been doing this in the Mosel for over 2000 years." The Reserve is a real beauty with a subtle nose of mac apple and floral notes and a palate of pear, delicious apple, floral-like sweetness and a lovely medium-long finish ... this was also a wine that was held back 5 years before releasing to show the age-ability of Riesling. We finished our tasting with the 2008 Elevation Riesling, which is balanced and quite tasty: peach, pear, lime and the right amount of sweetness to enhance the wine.

So where does this leave us in the world of ageing wines? Right back where we started from. If you are lucky enough to be ageing wines – or know someone who is – you are one of the real fortunate ones, you get to experience the beauty and sometimes beastly nature of aged wine ... but above all, it's a learning experience that you should always take when available; and to learn more about wine from your own region is doubly so.

Bonus Review: the unveiling of the new [2011 St. Urban Elevation Riesling](#)
[To see pictures of our Vineland vineyard tasting click here.](#)



Grape Guy's Picks of the Bunch: *10 Wines from 'The County' + 2 Strati*

Exultet 2010 'Cru X' Pinot Noir - \$29.95 (W)

www.exultet.ca

This is the more approachable Pinot from Exultet, yet still needs a few years. Winemaker Gerard Spinosa loves new oak, though he admits he has to do something with those 2nd year barrels – so another wine might be in the pipeline ... for now, this wine spends 18 months in French oak. The wine is light in colour with nice cranberry, floral, mineral and spice notes along with nice balancing acidity. The aromas lure, the flavours keep you sipping and the elegance shows through on every level. Drink now thru 2017. Price: \$29.95 – Rating: ****

BONUS: [Exultet 2010 'The Beloved' Pinot Noir - \\$45.00](#)

BONUS: [Exultet 2010 'The Blessed' Chardonnay - \\$35.00](#)

BONUS: [Exultet 2009 Pinot Noir - \\$55.00](#)

Keint-he Winery 2009 Foxtail Pinot Meunier - \$35.00 (W)

www.keint-he.ca

Keint-he Winery seems to have turned a corner with wines that are more customer driven than wine-snob driven ... but they still keep you guessing. Meunier is not an often seen stand along grape – it is usually a blender grape for Champagne and sparkling wine, but here it really shows its stuff. Aged 18 months in French oak the nose shows a light raspberry with hints of earth; the palate is easy drinking mixing the sweet and sour fruit with good acidity, making it a food friendly choice for all sorts of taste sensations. Get to know this grape I see good things coming from it here in Ontario. Price: \$35.00 – Rating: *** ½+

BONUS: [Keint-he 2009 Foxtail Pinot Noir - \\$40.00](#)

Stanners 2010 Cabernet Franc - \$25.00 (W)

www.stannersvineyard.ca

Sometimes you get that unexpected jolt from a wine that brings a warm smile to your face. Such was the case with this Cabernet Franc. I went to the winery to taste (again) their unique Pinot Gris (sold out) and instead got a taste of this wonderful Cabernet Franc. Smells of raspberry, strawberry, vanilla, white pepper and cigar box really lure you in for the taste – than ... bang ... a smooth alluring texture with creamy blackberry-vanilla notes along with spice and black pepper backing it up and giving it lift. Then there's the strawberry finish and black cherry linger all brought together with mouth cleansing acidity. This is a real winner. Price: \$25.00 – Rating: ****+

More wines from the County ...

[Lift Haus 2009 Pinot Noir](#) - \$21.80

[Lacey Estates 2011 Reserve Gewurztraminer](#) - \$25.00

[Lighthall Vineyards 2011 Gewurztraminer](#) - \$25.00

Stratus 2009 Gamay - \$29.00 (W)

www.stratuswines.com

Stratus is really not known for its Gamay, nor are they known for value pricing, but this is one time you might not mind paying the big bucks. Cropped at 1.3 tons to the acre (and if you are wondering, that's pretty low) this wine spent time in 2nd fill French oak barrels ... the resulting wine has cherry, raspberry and just some of the prettiest red fruit aromas you'll smell this side of the berry patch. The palate is loaded with fresh lively red berries and a touch of spice that really livens up the wine. A wonderful example of a grape we should be doing even more with in Ontario. Price: \$29.00 – Rating: ****+

BONUS: [Stratus 2008 Stratus Red](#) - \$44.00

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



Bi-Weekly OWR Updates: *Video Wines of the Week – A Rant Against Plastic Cork*

NEW - Video Wine of the Week:

WineFox.ca and the Grape Guy have teamed up to bring you the Ontario Wine of the Week

This week's videos:

[Henry of Pelham 2010 Baco Noir](#)

[Coffin Ridge 2011 Sparkling Pear](#)

On the Road with the Grape Guy:

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

[The Stem Tasting](#)

[B & W Wines Australian Trade Event](#)

[Casa Toscana – with pictures](#)

[Rosewood Estates Comes to the Big City](#)

Lost and Found (blog)

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

Nothing New This Week

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

Find out what has happened to some of my favourites over the years
[Daniel Lenko 2006 Riesling Reserve](#)

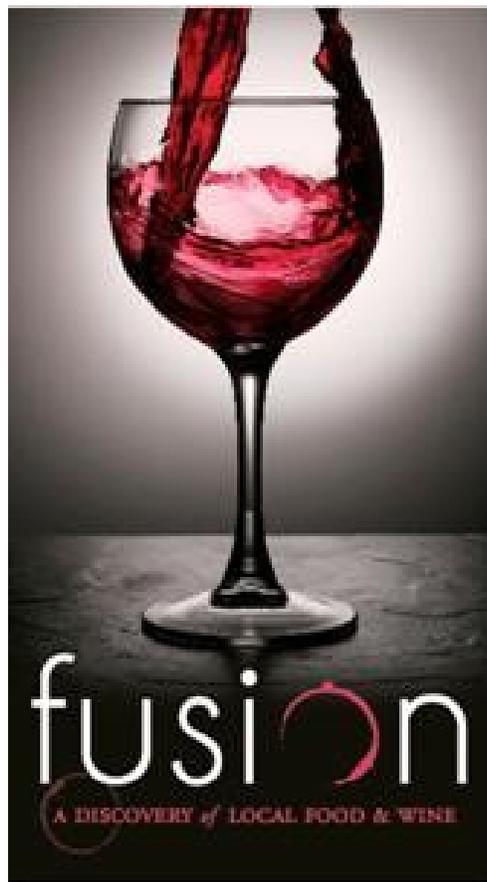
[What I'm drinking Tonight \(blog\)](#)

When it's not an Ontario wine, here's what I'm pulling out of the cellar
[New Posts Added](#)

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

[Vintages Report for November 10, 2012](#)
[Shop Online for November 1, 2012](#)

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Where I'll Be ...

Fusion - A discovery of Local Food and Wine: Friday November 9 at 7pm

"Join Ontario Wine Review's Grape Guy, Michael Pinkus, as he takes you on a journey through the Lake Erie region of Ontario wine country, letting you taste some of the wines only available at the wineries of this great, yet often overlooked, wine making region. Along your tasting journey you'll learn why the best wines of Ontario are sold only thru the cellar door and why you won't be seeing them at a liquor store near you any time soon." www.discoverfusion.ca

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www.ontariowinereview.com

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OntarioWineReview: *Visit to Casa Toscana in Grimsby*

What an incredible experience, definitely not something I expected to find in the little town of Grimsby, Ontario; Toronto sure, but not in this little hamlet in the Niagara region. Allow me to back up a minute and let me to explain what exactly I am talking about and give you some background as to why I am so impressed.

A number of years ago I found myself in downtown Toronto at an Italian Trade Commission event tasting a variety of Italian foods and drinks, including a booth that allowed you to taste through a number of olive oils, it was the first time I realized that not all olive oils are the same. From that day on whenever the subject of olive oil came up I were refer back to this impromptu tasting and tell people that there is a difference in olive oils like there are differences in wines and if ever you get a chance to do an olive oil tasting to do it (I'll be honest, the topic doesn't come up that often and if it does it is usually with my wife).

Fast forward a few years and I find myself in Italy (Veneto) tasting Amarones, Ripassos and Valpolicellas ... at each winery fresh bread, meats, olives and olive oil find their way to the table - at some of these places the olive oil is just to die for, like I mean they're all good but some are like nothing you have tried in your life. It is at times like this that I spend a few extra minutes in an attempt to persuade the proprietor to sell me a bottle of their homemade private-stock olive oil to take home to my wife, who, as a foodie, would consider these special treats, and to try and make my point about the difference in olive oil flavours. On my last trip I was able to bring three bottles homes and she has been using them sparingly because they're "not like that bottled stuff you get at No Frills" - we use these olive oils like some people use their "guest towels".

But now here we are on a Saturday morning in downtown Grimsby, Ontario (16A Main Street West) in a little shop called Casa Toscana with Luca Vitali as our host (he is also owner and partner of the shop). Casa Toscana imports (in bulk) three styles of olive oil made in Tuscany by Luca's brother from his own trees, his mother's trees and their neighbour's trees. And half an hour with Luca I can definitely tell you that not all olive oils are made the same. We taste thru these oils as Luca explains why they are so different (it has to do with the time of harvest) each one tasting just as good or better than the next - depending on your palate (we end up preferring the two more flavourful – fruity and peppery).

Then he proceeds to give us a balsamic vinegar lesson and tasting - something else they import in bulk directly from Tuscany. As we dip the fresh bread into the different kinds of balsamic (4 in total) Luca explains the difference between mass-produced balsamic (addition of sugar and caramel) and real, authentic balsamic from Tuscany (all grapes, 100%, and lots of time in wooden casks) ... I'm not going to steal Luca's show here because to learn you've gotta to visit. We tried 1 year old, 3 year old, 5 year old and 9 year old balsamics - each batch got thicker, richer and more flavourful as we went. Our preference here was the three year old, which kept its acidity and robust flavour the best ... but we also opted for a balsamic glaze for those dishes that needed that little bit extra.

But the Tuscan show and tell did not end there ... Luca also imports Tuscan cheeses including Pecorino and real Buffalo Mozzarella, which should have my mother jumping up and down with glee cause she can't stop talking about how great that cheese is since her trip to Italy 5+ years ago, and how she can't seem to find a good one in Toronto. We taste thru a few cheeses like a 2 month old Pecorino, one aged in hay and a first grade Parmesan - plain and then a piece with a dollop of balsamic glaze on-top (this was the coup to gras that made us want to buy a bottle) ... everything just made us want more, or better yet, to go to Tuscany – and if that's your fancy Luca and his partners have planned excursions to their home twice a year for small groups.

Luca tells us of his plans to expand the shop, just a little - to give customers more elbow room and an even more in-depth downtown-Grimsby-based Tuscan-experience; this would include a few tables where you could sit and taste cheese, oil, balsamic and Luca's brother's award winning wines straight from Tuscany (that brother is a one man industry). But these plans are a year or two in the future, but are definitely something to look forward to; especially that chance to taste some of those wines, which has been rated in the top 100 in all of Italy.

For now it truly is a great experience to taste what makes Tuscany one of the world's great Mecca's for food ... I'm not going to lie and tell you it's a cheap visit - you'll definitely walk out with an arm load of goods to take home - but dinners and special occasions will be so much more the better when you use these special ingredients. Now if you'll excuse me, I see a Margherita pizza with fresh basil (from our garden), Buffalo Mozzarella with a drizzle of balsamic and a little Caprese salad on the size waiting for me on the dining room table ... which can only mean it's time for lunch. As Luca said to my wife as we left, "Ciao Bella hope to see you again" – we'll be back and I recommend you go too.

Where: Casa Toscana - 16a Main Street West, Grimsby, Ontario - www.casatoscana.ca



Wine Event Spotlight: *The Two Main Events in Niagara this November*

Taste the Season – Food and wine pairings all month long in November put on by the Wineries of Niagara on the Lake: <http://wineriesofniagaraonthelake.com/taste-the-season>

Wrapped Up in the Valley – Food and wine pairings put on by the wineries of Twenty Valley, and walk away with a collection of savoury cheese shortbreads, find out all the details: http://www.20valley.ca/events/48/wrapped_up_in_the_valley

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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