

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 – 200
March 14, 2013

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OntarioWineReview: *The New Adventures of the Old Cuvee*

When I first heard what Cuvee proposed as a format change I was more than a little skeptical (Newsletter 191 – Changes to Cuvee Go Too Far) – not that I was such a huge fan of the previous Cuvee format. For starters I found the awards to be a downright fallacy, as the winning wines were sometimes laughable (Newsletter #176 – Cuvee, The Best Wines, Really?) – one year a Gewurztraminer-Riesling blend won as “Best Riesling”? Really? In speaking with many folks about Cuvee I (and they) felt that if Cuvee was going to survive it needed to undergo a change ... and what they proposed back in October 2012 was bold and downright radical. Eliminating the awards (bold, but good move) and instead allowing wineries to pick their “best” wine to pour for all in attendance ... one and only one wine per winery – that was it, that was all (this down from the usual three ... radical) – ‘bring your best’ is what Cuvee was saying, show what wine best represents your winery. This sent many a winery into a tizzy, and even prompted me to post a few on-line poll questions to take the pulse for the new face of Cuvee.

Question #1: Has Cuvee cut back too far in its new format? A full 85% thought the new format was too limiting and had overstepped the boundaries – how could Cuvee go from being a showcase for many wines to a showcase of only one? Which brings us to Question 2: How many wines should Cuvee allow each winery under its new format? 46% wanted three wines (the most of any of the numbers given), that number jumped significantly on either side: 2 & 3 equaled 66%, 3 & 4 was 60% and if you brought all three together a whopping 80.3% wanted to see between 2 & 4 wines at each table ... a far cry from the only 7% who thought only one wine was the proper way to go (probably all members of the Cuvee committee). There was also a fear of too much uniformity when it came to grape varieties – something Cuvee said they would try to get around with an expert panel, but then how could a winery call it their best if they had to opt for choice number 2 in their depth chart?

Well here we are two weeks after the event, with plenty of time to reflect on what transpired and you can now colour me surprised and shocked, as well as a convert, to the new format of Cuvee ... it actually worked and made for a better more relaxing and enjoyable evening. Forget about give-the-people-what-they-want (with 80% wanting more wines per table) – the Cuvee committee had a new/old vision and they stayed true to their course of action and, in my humble opinion, came out on top. Bring Cuvee back to its roots of attending wineries bringing their best, like they did 25 years ago.

I'm sure Cuvee wanted to see more wineries come out to the 25th Anniversary, rumours had the numbers pegged somewhere around 45; the actual number was 38 wineries (according to the brochure handed out), who took the gamble on the new format, including 2 from outside Niagara (Cooper's Hawk and Colio). “We said we would come if they got rid of the joke of a competition and

they did,” said one winery principal – so they showed up true to their word. Another winery principal, whose long held view of the event was “Screw Cuvee” also appeared and loved the event vowing to come back if the format were to live on after the 25th.

From a purely selfish point of view, with only 38 wineries in attendance, and only one wine per table, the room was much more manageable and I could actually taste every wine in the room – as I suspect many patrons did – even 50 or 60 wineries would have been more than doable, if not slightly formidable for your average consumer. One wine meant that you could go to a table, get a pouring, taste and talk a little then step aside, no sipping and holding your place in order to get pours of wines 2 and 3. Many wineries also found that they could engage with consumers more and better with only one wine to talk about. As for the fear of wine uniformity, the most poured wines were red blends (10), followed by Chardonnay (6), Riesling (5), Cabernet Franc and Pinot Noir (4) and Syrah (3) – five other varieties or blends also found their way onto tables including two Gewurztraminers. [To see a list of the wines poured click here – reviewed wines are linked back to OntarioWineReview.com.](#)

That all said, there were some miss-steps: the room was divided left side white and right side red, with balloons of those colours to indicate wine colour being poured. This did prove to be a bit of a logistical and traffic boondoggle, most people know to start with whites and then move onto reds – so the left side of the room took the brunt of consumers for the first two hours while the right side saw most of its action in the last two hours. I loved the balloon indicators though, now all organizers have to do is spread them out a little – you can still differentiate white from reds but scatter them in some way around the room to alleviate that traffic. Glassware was also an issue – as in previous years – they start with ISO glasses then move to balloon shaped POS glasses – I have to believe that someone could step up and contact one of the major glass makers to create a special, commemorative Cuvee glass – especially for the 25th Anniversary ... it’s embarrassing to see Ontario’s “best wines” poured into the world’s crappiest glassware – let’s fix this for 26. Finally, I have to single out one winery for their wine selection: Malivoire, who makes awesome Chardonnay, Pinot Noir and Gamay Noir – and yet they chose to showcase their 2012 LadyBug Rose ... seems marketing got hold of the memo instead of the winemaker ... it was not a 'new vintage' tasting it was a "best of" tasting.

All-in-all the event was a great success – and the after-Cuvee party, complete with live band and local brew (Silversmith, Niagara College and Oast) all Niagara-on-the-Lake based, was a welcome addition to all that wine. I look forward to next year’s 26th Edition of Cuvee as long as they keep this new format mostly intact – and hopefully they’ll get more of Ontario’s best to showcase their wines as well.



Grape Guy’s Picks of the Bunch: *Cuvee Selections*

Turns out many of the wines being poured at Cuvee I had tried over the past year ... though some wines were new to me, and so the 5 wines reviewed below as my “cuvee Selections” refer to wines I had previously not tasted.

Colaneri 2010 Insieme - \$34.95 (W)

www.colaneriwines.com

If it wasn’t for the Syrah in this wine it could be called a Meritage ... but at Colaneri that would be too pedestrian when it comes to naming a wine. Insieme is one of those dried fruit (appassimento) style wines and this time, being it a 2010, it has riper fruit to play with which delivers a fuller bodied wine. Aromas of smoky plum and chocolate seem simple enough; on the palate there’s rich red fruit, spiced plum all with a lovely coffee finish ... it’s still young and should develop quite nicely over the next 10 years, adding layers of aromas and flavours – so buy a few so you can hold onto some and taste its development for yourself. For those interested Insieme means together, and you should be

glad that these grapes got together. Price: \$34.95 – Rating: ****+

Ravine 2009 Chardonnay Reserve – Barrel Select, Unfiltered - \$40.00 (W)
www.ravinevineyard.com

This is a five barrel selection of Chardonnay that really has nothing else in mind besides being Chardonnay. What I mean by that is there are some Chardonnays that seem to be masquerading as unoaked, fruity or even lightly oaked numbers ... but this one is unabashedly old school Chardonnay with all its spiced caramel, apple cobbler, buttery-vanilla and spiced-pineapple on the finish ... it also has quite a bite, it's big, brashy wine with a long finish which doesn't shy away from its use of oak. Only 100 cases made. Price: \$40.00 – Rating: ****

Peninsula Ridge 2010 Merlot – Vintner's Private Reserve - \$29.95 (W)
www.peninsularidge.com

Last year I was singing the praises of Peninsula Ridge's straight on Merlot (Lepp Vineyard), and now the Vintner's Reserve proves that that wine was no fluke, winemaker Jamie Evans seems to know his way around the Merlot grape and in this version he has added a little something extra (all estate fruit). It starts off soft and juicy, adds blueberry and blackberry then finishes up with great spice delivering it all with a raspberry seam that runs right down the middle. Price: \$29.95 – Rating: ****+

Pillitteri 2010 Cabernet Franc – Exclamation Reserve - \$35.00 (W)
www.pillitteri.com

The last time I tried this wine it was the 2007 version, it was over-manipulated, over-barreled and over the hill, even before it had reached its third birthday ... in other words, it was a hot mess. Seems that the folks at Pillitteri have finally got a handle at what they were trying to accomplish – and proves their commitment to the Exclamation program and the Cabernet Franc grape. The palate and nose follow each other with tobacco, cherry, raspberry and smoke – the palate is also backed by spice, cigar ash and smoke, but all the while remains tasty and juicy. Price: \$35.00 – Rating: ****

Strewn 2011 Gewurztraminer - Terroir - \$17.95 (W)
www.strewnwinery.com

Most people who claim not to like Gewurztraminer says it's because it's too sweet ... the other 80% can't pronounce it and don't want to look foolish asking for it. But this Strewn number might help clean up the first complaint. The nose has got great Gewurzt-aromatics: lychee, tangerine, rose petal and a hint of pine nuts. On the palate it has a purity of fruit with rosy, lychee and spice notes – but it's true signature is its dry finish... which manages to hang out for an extra-long while – just to prove a point that not all Gewurzt is sweet. Price: \$17.95 – Rating: ****+

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



Bi-Weekly OWR Updates: *On the Road, International Wine Notes and more*

Coming in April ... the return of Weekly Wine Videos
Just as the name suggest ... every week I'll introduce you to another fabulous Ontario wine that you've just gotta try

www.ontariowinereview.com

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NEW – Ottawa Life – International Wine Selection(s) of the Week:

Check out the [Ottawa Life – Thirst Impressions](#) blog for my weekly selections

This week's posts:

[March Wines for All Weather Conditions!](#)
[California Chardonnay: Magic on the Palate!](#)
[Through All the Bad-Mouthing, Merlot Still Makes a Great Wine](#)

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

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

[A Pictorial Look at the Days of Wine and Chocolate](#)
[A Pictorial Look at Lunch at Trius](#)
[Caliber Wine Agent: Two Italian Houses](#)
[Lunch with Contessa Massimilla di Serego Alighieri](#)
[Wines of the Grandi Marchi Tasting](#)
[Lunch at Cucci in Oakville with Raffaele Boscaini](#)

[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

[Hillebrand 2009 Trius Sauvignon Blanc](#)

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

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

[Read the New Posts Added](#)

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

March 16, 2013 – unavailable
March 30, 2013 – coming soon

Where I'll Be



The Good Food & Drinks Festival – April 5-7, 2013

The festival has paired up with the now defunct Wine and Cheese Show to bring you something bigger and better ... and now in a new location – The Direct Energy Centre

Michael Pinkus – The Grape Guy will be giving a number of seminars from glassware demonstrations to Ontario themed seminars, click below to see how to get your tickets.

<http://www.goodfoodanddrinkfestival.com/events/121-schott-zwiesel-tasting-room-schedule-april-05-2013>

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Quick Sips: *News From Around the World of Wine – March 2013*

Canadian Wine and Grape Industry Contributes \$6.8 Billion in Economic Impact to Canadian Economy ... I think the headline says it all. I will have plenty more to say about it in an upcoming newsletter but you might as well get a head start by reading the finding. Get the website and all the goodies by [clicking here](#).

Gamay Competition. Really? ... I have to be honest with you – although I am a big fan of Gamay and think some of our wineries here in Ontario so a bang-up job with it, I was surprised to hear of the International Gamay Competition. Now you have. [For details click here](#).

Beaujolais in Jeopardy ... hot on the heels of finding out there is an International Gamay competition comes the news that many Beaujolais houses are in dire straits because of the poor harvest in their region. [More details can be found here](#).

Pink Wine Finally Getting Respect ... Aretha would be proud to learn that the also ran wine of rose is finally getting some much needed R-E-S-P-E-C-T, with no sign of slowing down. [Check out the deets here](#).

Jolie-Pitt Wines Coming to a Retailer Near You ... If you thought they were just good at adopting kids, think again Brad and Angelina have paired up with Perrin to bring you something to sit around your table. [Find out how you can adopt some](#).

Foreign Investment is Not Just for Niagara ... “A gated community of million-dollar homes surrounding a world-class golf course ... it could happen within three or four years if wealthy Chinese investors go ahead with a plan to spend more than \$100 million creating such a community near the Thousand Islands.” [Now read the whole story](#).



Wine Event Spotlight: *It's All About the Taste as we head into Spring*

BAAH! The Great Lamby Cook-Off 2013 ... Grapes for Humanity will present BAAH! The Great Lamby Cook-Off 2013 at Toronto's Premier Hotel, The Fairmont Royal York, The Imperial Room on Thursday, March 21st, 2013, 6 pm – 8:30 pm, featuring Toronto's leading chefs. Watch Toronto's leading chefs go head-to-head competing for the title of King/Queen of Ontario Lamb. Sample a dozen different lamb dishes, accompaniments 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. See if your palate is in sync with our team of sommeliers, who will determine the best wine matches. We can't live on lamb alone, so there will be other food to enjoy, including sweets. Tickets: \$150 per person. To purchase, call Annette Quitevis at 416-445-9920. More details can be found here: <http://www.grapesforhumanity.com/?p=576>

Discover the Flavours of the Kawarthas and Northumberland County ... Come celebrate the somewhereness of the Kawarthas and Northumberland County at the 2013 Flavour Festival. Nibble on gourmet cuisine prepared with local, fresh and seasonal ingredients, crafted by the hands of award winning and talented chefs, caterers and gourmards. Chefs will be using local ingredients to prepare and celebrate Canada's ethnic diversity, celebrating the flavours of Italy, France, China, Japan, India, Thailand and more! Also sip your way around the world, enjoying wines from Ontario, Italy, Spain, Germany, Chile, South Africa and Australia, to name but a few. And what would a Canadian celebration be without beer - quench your thirst by sampling Ontario artisan beers or discover some local spirits for the first time! It all happens Sunday, April 28, 2013 – visit <http://flavourfestival.net/> for details.

The Wine & Herb Touring Pass Event (Wine & Herb) ... returns this May 2013 and brings with it 27 unique VQA wine and food pairings created by the Wineries of Niagara-on-the-Lake. Wine & Herb takes place Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays in May 2013 (May 3/4/5, 10/11/12, 17/18/19, 24/25/26) from 11 am to 5 pm. Touring passes are \$43 per person (plus HST), entitling the holder to a VQA wine and food pairing at each winery, passports are valid for every weekend. Visit <http://wineriesofniagaraonthelake.com/wine-and-herb> for details.

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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