

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 – 117
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News ... *The Great Gewurztraminer Challenge Dates Set*

You picked the grape, now it's time to pick the wine ... It's time once again for an OntarioWineReview Grape Challenge and that means it's time for you to choose Ontario's best. In the past, we've done Baco, Cabernet Franc and Pinot Noir, now we're gonna go all Gewurztraminer on you, with the OntarioWineReview Great Gewurztraminer Challenge. Tickets go on sale Monday September 21, 2009. The dates for the Challenge are November 9, 12 and 18 and once again it'll be held at Campbell House in downtown Toronto (NW corner Queen and University). Tickets are \$40. [Details can be found on the OWR website](#) or email the Grape Guy at michael@ontariowinereview.com. Have your say in the OntarioWineReview Great Gewurztraminer Challenge this November.

The Sexiness Continues ... Don't forget nominations for Ontario's sexiest winemaker (male and female) continue through to September 30, 2009. Our poll with the top nominees for both will start October 1, 2009.

Slight Changes to the Newsletter ... The observant amongst you will notice that the Weekly Wine Note section has gone through a bit of a makeover to make it easier to navigate through – hope you like it.



OntarioWineReview: *What I did for my Summer Vacation*

With thousands of children going back to school last week, many will be writing a very similar essay to this one, "What I did for my summer vacation". I remember writing a few during my grade school days and probably, so do you. It has been years since I have been in school, in fact, it was pointed out to me recently that I am getting very close (if not already there), to the point where I have been out of school longer than I was in it – makes me feel kinda old actually ... but I'm young and feisty at heart, and I can give plenty of examples. On a related thought, it has been awhile since Labour Day meant anything to me (ie: going back to school), other than a day off. So without further ado, I am going to relive my youth, and let you know what I did this summer (which also answers the question of why I have not been as regular with my Vintages reports). Now remember, this 'essay' was always read out loud in front of the class ...

"What I did for my summer vacation, by Michael Pinkus, Grape Guy."

"One of the most memorable parts of my summer was the planning and eventual road trip to [Michigan](#). I learned that the state where my girlfriend currently resides has 64 wineries, and counting. I raised quite a few eyebrows with that statistic and also when I talked with fellow wine lovers. Now I don't think Michigan is going to be a powerhouse state like New York, Oregon, Washington, California or even Texas when it come to wine, but they are making some very good stuff, if the 26 (or so) wineries I visited are any indication; especially Riesling, Cabernet Franc and Pinot Blanc. The Pinot Blanc just might be their breakout varietal.

"Of course it wasn't all trips to the U.S. The Wine Writers Circle took their first sojourn into [Prince Edward](#)

[County](#), where over the course of a weekend, we tasted through many of the wines being offered in that part of Ontario. Particularly impressive were the [Closson Chase Chardonnay](#) and the [Rosehall Run Cold Creek Cabernet Franc](#).

“The VQA finally decided to get on-board the promotional bandwagon and took two dozen writers from across Canada down to Niagara on the very first [Sub-Appellation Terroir Tour](#). I’m not sure they accomplished what they set out to do, but I think they did alert the rest of Canada that Ontario is still a force to be reckoned with in the Canadian winemaking firmament, and that it’s not just B.C. that should be on everybody’s radar.

“I made my annual two trips (minimum) to the lake Erie North Shore, once for their [New Vintages Tasting](#) and the other for the Shores of Erie Festival, where I delivered a rather heated talk about the difference between VQA and Cellared in Canada (CIC) product. We tasted the wines side by side, thanks to both Colio and Pelee Island who were supportive enough to let me pour, and mock, their off-shore plonk. Though as one person pointed out to me, even armed with the knowledge of how to spot 100% Ontario wine, you will not stop, or even slow down, the sales of the CIC wines. Consumer apathy, even within the room, is so high in Ontario – we seem to be all about the cheap-drunk, not the quality-local-drunk. If only we could find a happy medium without selling out to the off-shore devil.

“As you can see, the Cellared in Canada problem has not waned one little bit, in fact, this summer I watched the debate intensify. I even saw the train wreck known as Hillary Dawson, president of the Wine Council of Ontario, defend the practice as “[allowing] Ontario growers and winemakers to compete with low-priced foreign wines”. I really do wonder about this woman sometimes, she says some pretty asinine things and you’d better believe I’m keeping her press clipping cause you can always count on at least one, juicy piece of inanity. The more she opens her mouth, the further she sticks her foot into it. Many have wondered out loud whether she is just a lackey (or mouthpiece) for the larger wineries, those that currently make Cellared product. Hillary, if I could have given you any advice this summer, it would have been to take a vacation, put away the pens, don’t write another word to a newspaper and for God’s sake don’t give another interview. If the topic of Cellared wine comes up, run the other way. Her vacation mate should be my favourite whipping boy Bruce Walker of Vincer. He was at it again, blaming the lack of a winery home for grapes, both this year and last on the growers (“I would suggest less grapes be grown in Canada ...”) and not on the thousands of litres his company brings in to make Cellared in Canada CRAP (Cheap Readily Available Plonk).

“I also found myself embroiled in the [Buckhorn debate](#), as organizers try to figure out the direction of the festival for next year. Something tells me I’ve probably given my last seminar at Buckhorn, unless they want me to talk about VQA. They should talk to the Shores of Erie organizers about that one. But hopefully, finding their focus will make the festival better in the long run.

“This summer, if you can call it that, I watched with horror as the sun and hot weather played peak-a-boo ... here’s one for you: what do you call a summer with no heat? 2009. Which is fine by me cause I’m not a fan of our hot, humid summer weather, but I am a fan of good wine and they need the heat units to ripen, so I endure it for the grape’s sake. At last report, we were 10 days behind where we should be, all being well, this beautiful September will continue well into October.

“And finally, this summer will be the summer some will consider as the summer I lost my mind. I decided to stop living the bachelor lifestyle, seems that Ms. Right Now turned out to be Ms. Right aftreall ... I got engaged. Wedding date is set for September 5, 2010; which should make next year’s “What I did for my Summer Vacation” essay even more interesting than this year’s.”



Grape Guy’s Picks of the Bunch: *Doling out 10 stars on 2 wines*

Thirty Bench 2007 Red - \$24.00 (W, L)
www.thirtybench.com

You’ve heard about the 2007 vintage in Ontario, so I won’t inundate you with all the accolades like “wow”, “best ever”, and “blockbuster” ... but I will tell you that I have found another for you. This Thirty Bench is a blend of Cabernet Sauvignon (40%), Cabernet Franc (55%) and Merlot (5%) aged one year in both French and American oak. Now that we have the technical details out of the way, we can focus on the important part of this wine – the taste. Hold it, before we rush to the taste, bear with me for a moment, let’s give it the old sniff test: blackberry, licorice, cranberry, black cherry, raspberry and vanilla oak – now that really does sound inviting, so let’s dive right in. Supple and smooth with plum, blackberry, cassis, chocolate, lovely fruit flavours with tasty vanilla notes ... it’s a wine that keeps you coming back for sip after sip after sip. It’ll also makes you wonder

how many bottles you can get through in one sitting, if you pace yourself correctly I mean. Another awesome '07. Price: \$24.00 – Rating: *****

Fielding Estate 2008 Riesling - \$16.00 (W)

www.fieldingwines.com

Back in 2004, Fielding came roaring out of the gate with a fantastic Riesling that surely would have garnered 5-stars (had I been giving out stars at the time). Well, it has taken five years, but Fielding has done it again with this fantastic 2008 offering. It seems that each week I try another '08 Riesling that has a great combination of aromatics and delicious flavours, 2008 just seems to have been a beauty of a vintage for the whites. The jury is still out on the reds, but so far I have heard good things from a number of sources. Speaking of good thing, winemaker Richie Roberts has brought Fielding back to their former Riesling glory. This wine absolutely explodes in the nasal passages with aromatics like honeydew, pear, guava and jolly rancher green apple candy. That candied aroma follows on the tongue along with melon, mineral (wet-stone-like), and great fruit flavour, but still has a nice tart aspect to it, doling out lovely balancing acidity that keeps you going back to the well, colloquially known as 'the glass' for more. This one's tart yet fruity and has everything you're looking for in a great Riesling, including a long finish and great bottom line. Price: \$16.00 – Rating: *****

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



Weekly Wine Notes and More: Baco, Riesling plus Michigan and Niagara tours

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 two weeks):

September 8, 2009 – Aleksander Estate 2007 Baco Noir ([read](#)) ([listen](#))

September 15, 2009 – Pelee Island 2008 Riesling ([read](#)) ([listen](#))

On the Road with the Grape Guy:

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

VQA Terroir Tour

[Day 1](#) – [Day 2](#)

Michigan Winery Tour (Traverse City area)

[Day 1](#) – [Day 2](#) – [Day 3](#) – [Day 4](#)

Lost and Found (blog)

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

Nothing new this week – keep checking back

Taste it Again Grape Guy (blog)

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

[Ridgepoint Wines 2003 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

[7 New Reviews Added](#)

Including: an Old Yellow Tail, Cream Sherry and a Nightmare Evening

Vintages Release (blog)

Next release report Saturday October 10, 2009

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Quick Sips: *Occasionally interesting things cross my desk that I would like to pass on*

Quick Sips – September 2009

Truth and Rumour around the Industry ... I have now heard this one from a few sources, so maybe it's more truth than rumour, but questions have been swirling around as to what Jean-Pierre Colas, former winemaker for Peninsula Ridge, is up to. I have it on good authority that he has set up shop at 13th Street for the harvest, hoping to take over the eventual role of winemaker from the hoping-to-retire Herb Jacobson. As my source told me, "put that in your barrel and smoke it".

Good Day for Rosehall ... Last week the results of the [ArteVino](#) wine competition (Prince Edward County wine awards) were announced and Rosehall Run cleaned up. Not only did they take Winery of the Year honours but they won 11 medals (3 Gold, 1 Silver, and 7 Bronze) almost doubling their closest competitor. Rounding out the top five medal winners Sandbanks with 6, The Grange and Black Prince, with 4 each, and Huff with 3. In total 14 wineries took home medals.

Be Offended, Be Very Offended ... I love seeing that our struggle with Cellared in Canada wines is finally getting international recognition, but why the Economist (a British tabloid) has to call our wines "plonk" is what I found quite offensive. In a September 10 article called 'Outsourcing Terroir' they say: "The idea of Canadian wine invites disbelief in those who think of the country as being a frozen wilderness. In fact, British Columbia's Okanagan Valley, blessed with a Mediterranean microclimate, is home to some respectable vintages and southern Ontario, on the same latitude as France's Languedoc, produces passable plonk ..." I am sure I have a few nasty things to say about the Queen, but I'll keep them to myself ... all I can say is the comment was not cool.

Coals to Newcastle ... Talk about being offended, the LCBO has moved one of their new giant stores into St. Catharines with a massive VQA wine section, featuring all the Ontario wines carried by their stores representing 83 wineries. A good idea who's day should have come years ago, but why St. Catharines? That's right on the doorstep of Ontario's largest winery concentration. Could this be the LCBO's way of competing directly with the wineries in their own backyard, or am I just being skeptical of the LCBO's motives?

No Tucking Tail Here ... Casella Wines, producer of [Yellow Tail], is going to court to protect the brackets in their name. Seems that Bronco Wine Company, out of California, makers of 2-Buck Chuck, have started an Aussie brand called [Down Under]. The wine retails for \$2.99 a bottle and is an attempt to bring Aussie wines back in line with where they should be, or so says Fred Franzia, CEO. Casella says the brackets are trademarked and therefore cannot be used on another bottle of wine – especially one from Australia.

\$1.12 Million for a Book ... Publisher Karen Opus is planning on releasing a million dollar wine book called "The Wine Opus". The 850-page book will list the 100 best wineries in the world and come with six bottles of wine from each winery listed. Only 100 books are to be published.

Screwcap Light ... The average weight of a wine bottle is approximately 500g, but in the UK they are readying the launch of the lightest screwcap bottle ever made, it weighs in at 300g and will contain the entry level wine of

retail giant Tesco.

France is on Top Again ... Last year it was reported that Italy had taken from France the moniker of World's Biggest Wine producer; well the French have come roaring back this year producing 4.8 million liters to Italy's 4.7.

What's Your Wine-Anality? ... Researchers are studying people's personalities based on the kind of wine they drink. To date the only trait linked with wine (over) consumption is the ability to be a total a-hole, but researchers say that you can now tell something about a person based on what style of wine they are drinking. Sweet wine drinkers are more likely to be impulsive while those who prefer dry varieties have a greater openness ... according to the report, "No other personality trait was significantly different between the two groups". Well at least it's a start.



Wine Event Spotlight: *A Plethora of Events*

If you thought summer was busy check out what's happening in the fall. There's the [Wine Festival in Niagara](#), and [Taste in Prince Edward County](#). Plus, events at all the wineries – including harvest and crush happenings. Check you favourite Winery's website to find out what's going on where.

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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