

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 – 127
February 18, 2010

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OntarioWineReview: *Who is Ontario's Sexiest Winemaker?*

This is for those who are still wondering what happened to the Sexy Winemaker "competition", and if all the personal questions and emails I'm getting is any indication, there are a lot of you.

The Beginning ... Back in August, I started a little experiment, just for fun. I asked you to nominate who you thought was Ontario's sexiest winemaker. I must admit the response was more than I expected. Every day, for a month, I received half a dozen emails nominating someone or another. By the end of the month I had quite a list of nominees. In some cases, there were wives nominating their husbands. Some of these devoted ladies went as far as to petition for their husbands' inclusion in the final 6. Other "significant other", I'm sorry to say, voted for other winemakers, with apologies I must add. On the women's side the six front-runners bubbled to the top quickly (there are far fewer women winemakers than men in Ontario). Once the nominations closed, we were ready to roll out the poll. It launched on October 1st with the top 6 winemakers in each category (male and female) listed.

The During ... What happened next was exciting yet at the same time deflating. Website numbers spiked, we had the poll mentioned on Facebook and Twitter accounts. There were a few blog entries and even Monique Beech of the St. Catharines Standard gave us a plug (though she got the website wrong and sent many people to an erroneous page over the course of a weekend). Then something else happened; there was something that my web-hoster called, "significant evidence of some shenanigans". Yes, even in the fun filled world of winemaking, there is a competitive spirit that had some over-zealous "fans" stuffing-the-ballot-box, so to speak. Then came the accusations from readers and wineries that there was "cheating" going on. One angry reader wrote: "This sexy winemaker contest is bogus. Votes are being generated somehow by cheating the system. You need to keep this in check, disqualify cheaters even if this is all in fun. Please address these issues otherwise I fear you will lose readership." So a month after the poll went up, it came down.

The Aftermath ... I sent an email to the 12 winemakers asking for their opinion on what to do. The best suggestion was a "taste off" between the top vote getters ... and so I determined this might be the best way to come up with a winner. I then asked each of the top two vote getters to select two wines (their best from any year) – and at the February 1st [Wine Writers Circle of Canada dinner](#), I would have the writers in attendance blindly judge the wines submitted. To his credit, Marc Bradshaw (Pillitteri) bowed out early. In a response to my email about folks crying foul, Marc wrote back admitting, reluctantly, "At first I was honoured and found it kind of fun, but as time wore on I thought it wasn't as sporting; I'd be more than happy to remove my name from the competition." I never saw his wine for the final round.

The Fall-Out ... After my letter requesting wine for the last phase of the competition and the [announcement had been made in the newsletter](#) of what that last phase would be, Lydia Tomek declared herself "sexy" on her Facebook page: "I will admit the sexiest winemaker poll was a cute idea in the beginning, but I feel that the way things turned out speak for itself and prove just how silly the whole thing really is. More importantly, it's something I don't want to be a part of ... Who really is to say what defines a sexy person or a sexy professional in any field? Is it up to a selected committee to judge [to] define someone by their product, their physical attributes or their personality? Or all of the above? ... My name is Lydia Tomek. I am [a] beautiful young lady

with a beautiful heart and mind and because of that... I am sexy.”

To their credit both Lyse LeBlanc and Serge Papineau sent their wine for judging.

The Outcome ... So who is Ontario's sexiest winemaker? Well folks, this time we'll never know – the competition fizzled out ... I guess it is up to you to decide who your personal “sexy” winemaker is. Is the sexiest winemaker based on looks, or on the wine they produce – it was my belief from the beginning that it was a combination of both skewed more towards the wines they make and not what the winemaker's looked like. “Sexy Winemakers” seek not the accolades from the press, instead, they use their customers, fans and their instincts as their guide. In other words, they make wine to please their palate as well as their customers'. It's not about how good you look in your yellow plastic coveralls and rubber boots (though some have claimed Sue Ann Staff makes that look good).

From my vantage, point I found the ones who didn't take the poll too seriously and had fun with it – they were the sexy ones. But if truth be told, all winemakers are sexy, because they make a product that is in itself sexy. One which helps us feel sexy and good about ourselves, our lives, our friends and our family – it's the ultimate social lubricant.

Maybe next time we'll get a winner, we'll fix possibility of “cheating”, push through with a calendar (it was originally proposed), and have a taste off. For now, for me, it's a lesson learned in trying something too new too quickly. I am buoyed by the fact that many of you liked the idea and have now followed it to it's conclusion, though, arguably, not the one you were hoping for. This might sound like sour grapes, and in a way it is, I had plans for this little bit of fun, to help promote the makers and wineries, but because something went amuck I had to dial it down and eventually shut it off. But have no fear dear readers, it just may resurface again in a few years (my web-hoster is working on Version 2.0 with some anti-cheating software) we may yet find out who is Ontario's Sexiest Winemaker.

The Reviews ...

Here are the wines submitted by Lyse Leblanc (Mastronardi) and Serge Papineau (Legends)

Mastronardi: [2006 Chardonnay](#) and [2002 Merlot](#)

Legends: [2008 Diva Semillon-Sauvignon Blanc](#) and [2007 Reserve Merlot](#)



Grape Guy's Picks of the Bunch: *A Pinot , a Franc and a Blend*

Ridgepoint 2007 Pinot Noir Reserve - \$25.25 (W)

www.ridgepointwines.com

Pinot Noirs in 2007 lost a little of their character due to the hot weather, that is unless you were very careful in the vineyard. Now I haven't asked Mauro Scarsellone about his vineyard management technique, nor have I consulted with Arthur Harder about his winemaking practice on this wine, all I know is that together, they did their respective jobs to craft a Pinot with classic nuances. The nose is red fruit dominant with raspberry, cherry and red currant along with some hints of smoke. The palate is a treat of black and sour cherry with wood derived spice and good tannin structure. Price: \$25.25 – Rating: ****

The Grange of Prince Edward County 2007 Northfield Cabernet Franc - \$35.00 (W)

www.thegrangewines.com

If you talk to most folks about wines from the County, you'll hear varietals like Chardonnay and Pinot Noir being bandied about; for my money, I'd be banking a bit more on Cabernet Franc out PEC-way. Not just because it's my favourite Ontario red grape, but because my most impressive flight during the Artevino judging (PEC wine competition) was the one composed of Cabernet Francs. The wine is just another example of the fine Francs being produced in the eastern part of the province. The nose has blackberry and cherry but also has the delicacy of some floral notes to bring it all together, scent-wise. In the mouth, you'll find juicy blackberries, cranberries and sour cherries with a stony minerality that adds an extra dimension to the wine. Wrapping it all up is the good acidity and long finish. Mark my words, watch the County for Cabernet Franc in the coming years. Price: \$35.00 – Rating: ****½

Coyote's Run 2007 Rare Vintage Cabernet-Merlot-Syrah - \$39.95 (W)

www.coyotesrunwinery.com

In celebration of the exceptional 2007 vintage, Coyote's Run decided to commemorate it by assembling a special wine, one which they plan to make only during "ideal vintages". This wine was assembled from a barrel of each varietal listed on the label and only 100 cases were made. The nose has smoky bacon, black raspberry, vanilla, herbs, spice with nice tannins and a spicy-smoky finish with big overall flavour. A smooth beginning with a big pop in the middle and a delicious finish. Price: \$39.95 – Rating: ****½

Winter Time Means Sweet Wine ... this week's selection is:

[Strewn 2008 Select Late Harvest Cabernet](#) – (W)

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



Weekly Wine Notes and More: *Stoney Ridge, Cattail, Some Road Work 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):

February 9, 2010 – Stoney Ridge 2006 Warren Classic Pinot Noir ([READ](#)) ([LISTEN](#))

February 15, 2010 – Cattail Creek 2007 Merlot Reserve ([READ](#)) ([LISTEN](#))

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

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

[Wine Writers' Circle of Canada Annual Dinner](#)

[Cuvee Media Preview Tasting](#)

[Pierre Andre Tasting \(Burgundy\)](#)

[Days of Wine and Chocolate \(NOTL\)](#)

[A Couple of Glasses with Eleanor Cosman](#)

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

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

[Lailey Vineyard 2002 Canadian Oak Pinot Noir](#)

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

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

[Thirty Bench Winemakers 2006 Small Lot Cabernet Franc](#)

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

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

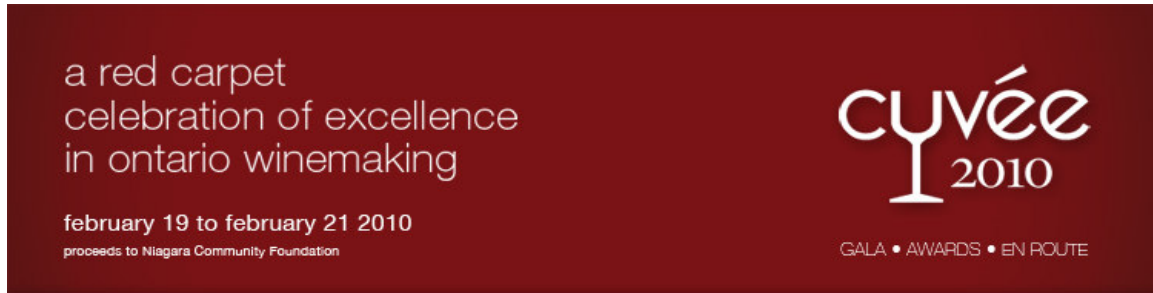
[8 New Reviews Added](#)

Including: Some BC disasters, a Gold Medal Wine, and a [Lailey Chardonnay](#)

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

[February 20, 2010 Release Report](#)

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

February 2010

Rumours were true ... Back in the fall I reported that former Peninsula Ridge winemaker, Jean-Pierre Colas, was on the prowl for a new gig. Many different projects had been reported to me, the one that seemed the most plausible and the most buzzed about, turned out to be true: he did in fact end up with 13th Street Winery. But another has now also proved itself to be true, he is working with Rancourt Winery in Niagara on the Lake. Having met Lionel Rancourt (before his untimely passing) I am sure he would be glad to know that his winery is now in good winemaking hands.

More Rumours ... Hidden Bench winery in Beamsville (Niagara area) is in search of a winemaker. Current winemaker JM Bouchard is leaving for the west coast for, according to Twittered rumours, "lifestyle reasons".

Tai-wan On ... I admit that I am not a Scotch drinker, even though my cousin keeps trying to bring me into the fold, so wouldn't he and many other Scotch/Whiskey drinkers be floored to learn that at a tasting of these liquors in Leith (north of Edinburgh), to commemorate Scotland's annual Burns' Night the winner was not a local, in fact it was an Asian brew from Taiwan, Kavalan brand. I think I would be stating the obvious if I said the Scots were shocked.

Here we just Call it Normal LCBO Markup ... "French wines are being sold in a Russian 'cartel' market at up to 25 times their original price, according to official sources in Moscow. Igor Artemiev, the director of the Russian anti-monopoly body FAS said that in some cases wines costing as little as €6 in France were being sold for up to €150 in Russia. He also expressed concern for the situation in the Russian wine market as a whole, which he said appears to be run like a cartel, with primitive elements of a monopoly. Vadim Dobriz, the head of the Russian Regional and Federal Alcohol Markets Studies Centre, told Russian news agency Novosti that French wines could regularly cost up to six times more than in France." (Taken from Decanter: <http://www.decanter.com/news/294398.html>)

Bubbly from England You Say ... Nyetimber's Classic Cuvée 2003 was crowned Champion of Worldwide Sparkling Wines in the 2nd annual "Bollicine Del Mondo". This competition included such well known sparkling houses such as Bollinger, Pommery and Louis Roederer. In all, 52 wines were tasted blind by a panel of oenologists, winemakers, sommeliers and journalists. The winery, whose vineyards in West Chiltington overlook the Sussex Downs in Southern England, is no stranger to success, having scooped the top bubbly prize in the International Wine & Spirit Competition just months ago.

Scottish Hooligans Drink Buckfast ... Looking for the cause of crime in Scotland, seems you don't have to comb through hours of music lyrics, graphic video games, or violence in movies or on TV; just find your local liquor store and buy a bottle of Buckfast Tonic Wine. Seems that this beverage was mentioned in 5,638 crime reports from 2006 to 2009, Strathclyde Police said. One in 10 of those offences were violent and the bottle was used as a weapon 114 times in that period. The monks at Buckfast, who make this wine, said "[As] deplorable as these are, it is hard to see how one product, with only a small percentage of the market [0.5%] can be held responsible for all the social ills of such an area." It's interesting to note that each bottle of Buckfast wine

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contains 281mg of caffeine - the same amount as eight cans of coke, and is made with imported wines. If we keep up the practice of blending this is the future of Cellared in Canada.

IWEG Prestige ... From an email I received on January 18, 2010: Today, the Independent Wine Education Guild (IWEG) is being awarded the "Lifetime Achievement Award" from WSET in London, England today! This award is rarely given, however IWEG is being honoured at the official Awards Ceremony today because of the role IWEG has played in bringing this most prestigious wine and spirit education programme to Canada 33 years ago.

Want a Job, Have a Job ... a new website has been launched for those looking to break into the wine business, www.jobsforwine.com.



Wine Event Spotlight: *Cuvee 2010*

Cuvee 2010 ... From Friday, February 19 to Sunday, February 21, wine lovers can enjoy tastings at a record 44 wineries participating in Cuvée en Route. Cuvée en Route is part of the much anticipated Cuvée Weekend, the industry's foremost wine and food celebration ... lovingly referred to as the Oscars of Ontario wine.

Cuvée en Route passport holders can travel the Wine Route enjoying complimentary rare tasting flights and nine different winery restaurant events. Each winery will offer a flight of complimentary wines within their chosen theme, such as winemaker's choice, limited editions, unique varietals, past Cuvée Award winners, and horizontal or vertical flights of distinctive varietals and Icewine.

And don't forget about the Gala happening February 19, 2010 ...for details of both these events check out www.cuvee.ca.

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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