

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 – 142
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OntarioWineReview: *Advice for the Shores of Erie Wine Festival*

Now, before I'm accused of sour-grapes, allow me to state a few facts: 1) I did not attend this year's Shores of Erie Wine Festival; 2) I did not do my usual presentation(s) / wine seminar(s) because I was not invited and 3) had I been invited this year I would have had to decline because I got married the weekend before – and I don't know too many people who get married in Niagara and honeymoon in Windsor; it's usually the other way around. But I did attend the [Lake Erie North Shore Vintage Tasting at Muscedere](#) in early August and spoke with a few of the folks who had some things to say about this year's annual event.

If you were to go over to the Shore of Erie Wine Festival (SOEWF) website you would notice something odd about the seminars being delivered this year – 9 of the 13 seminars are on the topic of food, there are very few wine related presentation. The word "wine" appears in the name of the event and yet fewer than half of the seminars are on the topic of wine. "We have been relegated to merely participants instead of the focus," one winery owner told me, "actually we are more like a vendor, we're to be there and sell wine to the masses - but then they tie our hands as to the amount of wine we can sell." If that is indeed the feeling of the SOEWF then they should change the name of the Shores of Erie Culinary Festival ... there certainly are less restrictions to put on a culinary event than a wine event.

As alluded to, there have also been rules set out this year that were not in place about selling wine. Amongst them is a limit on the number of sample tickets you can buy at one time, thus longer lines. One real complaint is the cap on number of entrance tickets being made available (less than in previous years) – I have been told that they hit their limit on a couple of days before the event began and will not be selling more at the door. "A lot of people come over the border for the event," my source informed me, "many plan to buy their tickets on-site, this new policy will infuriate them and make them re-think a return trip next year or even back to the region at all. We need the tourism dollars and we shouldn't be going out of our way to piss people off."

The SOEWF has been a popular event since its inception in 2006 and it continues to grow every year. It is held at Fort Malden in Amherstburg, Ontario – but this year the festival is feeling those growing pains as it settles into its fifth year. They have to figure out new directions because there is simply no where left to grow on the fairgrounds – the venue has become too small for their needs ... and this festival has got to spread its wings or die.

Which brings me to an idea they should be looking at: expand the festival's reach outside the Fort and create a buzz for a longer period of time. As many of you are painfully aware, at any Ontario festival you can not purchase bottles of wine to take home. At the SOEWF wine purchased by the bottle must be consumed on premises. Sure wineries see an immediate benefit and profit from those sales, but wouldn't it be even better to be able to send John and Paula Consumer home with a mixed case of their favourite Lake Erie Wines, instead of having them get loaded at the festival; that hangover will last a day, the case of wine will last at least 12.

It's time the SOEWF looks beyond the grounds where they grew up and takes a page out of the Niagara Wine Festival's book as an example.

The Niagara Wine Festival is held in September every year in St. Catharines Montebello Park, there wineries congregate in a special area, along with local restaurants, to serve food and wine (by the glass or by the bottle). But there's another element to the Festival, the passport. A program where other events happen outside the confines of the main park venue, at the wineries themselves: be it a special tasting, dinner, food pairing, etc. Passport holders, who purchase these (for a fee), are entitled to partake in these "extras", and this program can extend a festival from a one weekend affair to a week long celebratory event, or even through an entire month. Plus it helps drive traffic to the individual wineries, where customers can taste more and buy more, but this time they can take it home to enjoy. Plus a passport gets the people who don't like the idea of spending their day in the midst of a crowd out into the area; and, as a bonus, if the day they wanted to attend the festival is sold out they can instead promenade the wine route and still enjoy a wine soaked afternoon.

Twice in the festivals five-year history I have presented a seminar called "Why Visit a Winery" where I extolled the virtues of getting out of the LCBO rut, taking the time to actually visit where the wine was made, taste and or course, purchase the wines you enjoyed. The SOEWF is almost there – they have them in the neighbourhood, now it's time to point them in the right direction and get them to the actual places. It's interesting to note, and a little sad to say, that a festival that grew internally has never looked externally towards the very properties that made them grow: the wineries – and now it seems to be turning its back on them as they move towards a more culinary focus ... I hope this trend does not continue. You have to feel for the wineries, as they are relegated to second class businesses – but then that has been the way of Ontario for many many years, why should a festival originally devoted to promoting them be any different. Lovers of Lake Erie wines should be concerned.

Maybe it's time to lobby the Shores of Erie Wine Festival into looking outside their Fort-Malden-box to see the bigger picture and the benefits of expanding the festival ... we're too late for this year's edition, but there's always next year – that is until it's too late. Don't let that happen.

If you were there I'd love to hear your feedback about the 2010 edition of the Shores of Erie Wine Festival. Email me at michael@ontariowinereview.com or make your comments public on the [Ontario Wine Lovers Facebook page](#).



Grape Guy's Picks of the Bunch: Merlot, Bubbly and Chardonnay + two more

Mastronardi 2008 Brianje Riesling - \$15.00 (W)

www.mastronardiwines.com

For those of you who picked up the 2007 version of this wine a few months ago at the LCBO I hope you won't hold that against the '08. The '07 was tired by the time it hit the board's shelves; it was 3 years old and from a hot vintage that was not kind to Rieslings (especially with any age on them). On the other hand, the '08 should find a way into your cellar and you should feel free to hold it for the next 5+ years or so. Great fruit and acidity lead the charge with lemon, peach, green apple and a touch of Bartlett pear. Price: \$15.00 - Rating: ****

Colchester Ridge 2007 Meritage - \$20.00 (W)

www.colchesterridge.com

I like what Bernard Gorski (owner / winemaker) is doing at Colchester Ridge - small lots of wine at more than fair prices; he's also got the gumption to try new stuff to see if it works - he's taking it slow and building his brand. Something Bernie has always been able to do is make good reds year after year, and this year's Meritage is no exception. A blend of 62% Cabernet Sauvignon, 26% Merlot and 12% Cabernet Franc aged 14 months in oak (20% new). There's good heft to the wine in the mouth, delicious spice, vanilla, cinnamon-toastiness with a good spicy finish and a hint of licorice root ... for \$20 this is a delicious value and worthy of 5+ years of ageing i your cellar, if you want to see it improve even further. Price: \$20.00 - Rating: ****1/2

Sprucewood Shores 2009 Chardonnay - \$14.95 (W)

www.sprucewoodshores.com

When I find a Chardonnay that I like I like to sing it from the roof tops - now I don't have easy access to my roof and I am sure my neighbours wouldn't enjoy hearing me sing up there about a Chardonnay so I hope you will indulge me. Winemaker Tanya Mitchell has found a little lightning to put in this bottle - it has so much going for

it, and at a price that's a real bargain. The nose is lovely and alluring with lemon, mineral and grapefruit cocktail. The palate doles out vanilla, apple and a touch of delicious bosc pear for added complexity ... but what would all this be without a long finish ... **have no fear, it's got that too.** Price: \$14.95 - Rating: ****1/2

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



Weekly Wine Notes and More: *Unoaked Chard, Pinot Grigio, Grape King Announced*
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):

September 6, 2010 – Pondview 2009 Unoaked Chardonnay ([LISTEN](#))

September 13, 2010 – Pillitteri 2009 Pinot Grigio ([LISTEN](#))

On the Road with the Grape Guy:

Trips, tours and tastings – join me as I review the highs, and sometimes, the lows
[Inaugural Grape King Breakfast](#)

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
[Stoney Ridge 2005 Proprietor's Reserve Brut Sparkling](#)

What I'm drinking Tonight (blog)

When it's not an Ontario wine, here's what I'm pulling out of the cellar
[9 New Posts added over the last two weeks](#)
Including: a Lailey Old Vines and Other Ontario beauties, a Geysler Zin and Something by Beck

Vintages Release (blog)

[Next Release Report will be for October 30](#)

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OntarioWineReview: Does Price Matter?

That's a question that has plagued every reviewer since the dawning of time. Some will say they never look at the price that it's "all about the wine" - then why do they give you "value picks"? Or talk about a wine being a "great bargain"? Price plays a big part in our perception of a wine, a higher priced wine just has to taste better, right? That's why a great tasting 'cheap' wine can be "surprising" and a lousy tasting expensive wine is considered a "disappointment".

This summer I had the opportunity to try 3 Gewurztraminers from three very different wineries, which I tried at three different times. Each wine merited a review from me because I enjoyed it and thought you would too, but I did not know the price at the time of sampling the wine, I judged it solely on it's merit as a wine just to prove to myself that price does not matter. But in the end, when I found out the price I found, as you should, that price does not matter - it's all about taste: the most expensive wine rated lowest, the mid-price the highest and the least expensive took the middle spot.

Now, when I do my [Vintages reports](#) (sorry for being lax about those lately, summer got away from me a little), I am looking for those value wines that you can age and that you can feel good about buying without breaking the bank. I have also been known to slap a few wrists in Ontario for high priced wines because it is my belief that the consumer wants good wine at a good price. A winery should not come out of the gate at a price point they have not earned - new wineries that price their wines above what the market will already bear will pay the price at the cellar door. In recent memory, two wineries that showed restraint when opening their doors were Calamus and Pondview - I'm sure you could name the few high priced wineries without my help. Now, don't get me wrong, Ontarians are starting to show that they are willing to pay (upwards of \$30 a bottle) to stay local, but Ontarians also have a colour barrier: white wines at that price will languish on shelves while a red at the same price will be snapped up.

We all still enjoy our 15-20 dollar bottles, but some producers are finding a way to make a decent quality VQA product for less (Union, Fresh, Flourish) but these are mainly made by the big wineries who can afford to pump out lower priced product, their key to success here is volume. Your smaller wineries can't afford to put wines out at a buck above cost - they make too few bottles for that type of margin. I don't have the time nor the space here to get into the politics of winemaking (and breaking) in Ontario - I have written about it many times, and I am sure I will again - but suffice it to say it's a tough slog for the little guy; ask any small winery owner and prepare to spend the day, he/she'll have a lot to say.

As for those Gewurztraminers I tried, check out the reviews below:

[Hidden Bench 2009 Felseck Vineyard Gewurztraminer](#)
[Riverview 2009 Gewurztraminer](#)
[Tawse 2009 Quarry Road Gewurztraminer](#)



Wine Event Spotlight: Taste Ontario in many ways from Stratford to Toronto

Taste Ontario is Back ... Celebrate what Ontario does best: this event showcases wines that are award winning and sure to win you over. It returns to the AGO where you can sample over 90 wines and meet the passionate and talented people behind them. The Where & When: September 21, 2010 - Art Gallery of Ontario, Baillie Court, 3rd Floor - 317 Dundas Street West. The What: Walk-around Tasting: 6:30pm-9:00pm. The Bottom Line: \$55 per person. To order tickets call 416-365-5767 or 1-800-266-4764 and for details visit www.vintages.com.

Savour Stratford - and yes you'll want to ... Savour Stratford-Perth County, September 18-26 - nine days of food and fun – Garlic Festival, Farm Tours and Culinary events leading up to a two-day festival with The Savour Stratford Tasting, Street Carnivale, Farmers and Artisans Market, Outdoor Concerts and local BBQs in the Park. There's also the Sunday wine and food pairing, [which was really awesome last year](#) and this year looks to be even better: Over thirty of Stratford's best chefs and culinary talents have each been partnered with one of the area's finest food producers or artisans. For details go to www.savourstratford.com

Taste the Season ... Don't miss out as the 22 Wineries of Niagara-on-the-Lake get set for another wine and food extravaganza. Hailed as the 'go-to' event of the season (*ed. note: I think I said that*), this popular touring

and tasting program showcases the unique VQA wines and Niagara-on-the-Lake Wine Country cuisine available in the region. It is also a great time to explore the different wine and gift selections available at each winery and stock up for your holiday entertaining. Visit www.wineriesofniagaraonthelake.com for a complete list of all of the 22 wine and food pairings.

Fallstock at Calamus is happening Sept. 18 ... this annual party at the vineyard celebrates the upcoming harvest. The event runs from 1:00 to 6:00 with the music starting at 2:00. Admission is **free** and tickets will be sold for food and wine. Musical entertainment this year is *LEVEL CROSSING* a Toronto based band playing classic rock and original material (*ed. note: what, no Larry and the Hornettes this year?*). Niagara Gourmet will be cooking up some great eats such as pulled pork, venison sausages and a vegetarian creation (*ed. note: it's the pulled pork getting me out of the house*). Also available starting this weekend the newly released 2008 Vinemount Ridge Riesling.

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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