

## 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 – 146**  
**November 11, 2010**

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**OntarioWineReview:** *Hmm, Ontario VQA Wine Stores ...*

Where have I heard that plea before? Back in March of 2008 I wrote an article entitled "[Vincor Fallout](#)" ([Newsletter #78](#)), which prompted the then Vice President of Industry and Media Relations for Vincor, Bruce Walker, to reach out and touch someone, namely me. He wanted to talk about why VQA stores were nothing but a pipe dream. In my article I suggested that Vincor (because they were now owned by a foreign entity) give up some of their stores so they could be changed into VQA-only stores (a la BC) for the greater good of the Ontario wine industry. Over our bacon and eggs breakfast meeting Bruce told me that it was a dead issue: Vincor had floated that balloon previously and the other wineries poo-pooed the idea: wineries are in favour of having stores to sell their wines, but not willing to pay for their running, Walker said. I believe the number Bruce put forth was approximately \$1,000,000 per store, and no winery was willing to foot the bill. True, I am sure there are very few wineries with deep enough pockets to front that kind of cash, but together I'm sure a number of wineries would gladly share in the cost of running a few of these stores, if it meant other outlets for their wines.

So why am I bringing up this 'dead issue' conversation with Mr. Bruce Walker? (Which, by the way, led to the bigger issue of Cellared in Canada and Esprit wines - and we all know how that turned out) Because this is not such a dead issue after all. A couple of weeks ago the Government of Ontario announced the opening of an all-VQA wine store in China (in the city of Zhengzhou, the capital of Henan Province). Oh happy day - now the Chinese can drink (and copy) all the Ontario icewine they want ... but this begs the question: why should the Chinese have an advantage that we Ontarian do not? Do the Chinese drink more Ontario wine? Why is it so important that China get the opportunity to drink Ontario wines that folks in Thunder Bay, Sault Ste. Marie and Sudbury can not?

I have nothing against the Chinese getting their hands on our wine; I'm glad to see a country embrace our wines as so many of us have embraced their food. But seriously, why should folks living in China have more and better access to Ontario wines than those of us living in the actual province. When I first heard the news, all I could say was an incredulous, "Seriously?" Has Ontario really become, as wine writer Dean Tudor puts it, every time he mentions Ontario, "a have not province"? When it comes to our own wine industry it keeps getting more and more "have not" and won't get.

As I sit in my living room writing this piece, I look across the room at the wine racks in the dining room and see all the VQA labels staring back at me, each one a reminder and a testament to a trip taken to wine country (I buy all my VQA-Ontario straight from the source). Unfortunately, some don't have that luxury, they don't get down to wine country regularly; wouldn't it be nice if wine country came to them? Sure it would. But how could that happen? It's easy, I feel almost foolish to suggest

it: VQA wine stores in key areas of the province.

It was about a year ago (or so) that the LCBO was touted as being so forward thinking as to open the most comprehensive Ontario wine stocked store. A great idea for sure, but I question where they decided to open it, in St. Catharines, the heart of wine country; and their motives? Was it really forward thinking or was it a case of meeting your competition head-on? The LCBO's greatest, and only, competition is from the wineries, so they opened a store in the heart of where their competition is, a store that offers everything they have ever put on the shelf with the word "Ontario" on it, in one central location? This store would have been better placed in Toronto, London, Ottawa, Kingston, Sudbury or countless other cities with large populations and/or limited access to Ontario wine country.

Before I continue, we must briefly discuss what is bound to be the biggest argument about Ontario-VQA-Only stores: I know I am going to hear some belly aching and gnashing of teeth about free trade. But why is it that only Ontario is following the Free Trade agreement to the letter, while B.C flies directly in the face of it? They have BC-VQA only stores. If we're not ready to give new licenses for these kinds of stores, might I state, or suggest again, as I did back in March of '08: Why not take a few back, Vincor, afterall, is no longer a Canadian owned company and does not deserve the perks and protection we give Canadian-owned, operated and controlled companies. Why should they get the benefits of stand alone stores while countless other 100% Ontario wineries do not? Why not take a dozen or two back from them? I'm not worried that the LCBO or the AGCO (Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario) doesn't have the power to do it; they could do it at the drop of a dime - but do they have the stones to do it? That is the real question. Besides how many people in Arkansas are gonna be angry that Ontario wine is being sold in a store where their is no choice of Arkansinian wines? Would California really care if they did not dominate in 12 wines stores? They already have 600+ other opportunities to flog their product to the Ontario consumer. Besides, has anybody been into a US wine store and seen how prominently US wines dominate their selection? Forget finding Ontario or even Canadian wines, try finding Chile, Argentina or Australia. **(see '... part 2', cont'd below)**



### **Grape Guy's Picks of the Bunch: *Three Great Reds***

#### **Malivoire 2009 M2 Gamay - Small Lot - \$17.95 (W)**

[www.malivoire.com](http://www.malivoire.com)

This is the first bottling under the M2 label - which stands for "Malivoire" (owner's name) and "Mottiar" (winemaker's name). It only stands to reason that Gamay should be the lead off wine in this line. An why not, Gamay has traditionally been the bell-weather of the vintage, the canary in a coal mine of what is to come. M2 is a selection of the best and/or most unique barrels of Gamay from the vintage, and it really does stand out from [the Malivoire straight '09 Gamay](#). The nose is a more pronounced with all-spice and the fruit is a dark, almost black, cherry. 45% of the wine is oaked for 6 months, while the other 55% sees stainless steel. There's a spiced black cherry flavour with hints of vanilla and nutmeg thru the mouth; the finish is long and loaded with black cherry and spice. A lovely and special inaugural M2 and a great bell-weather of things to come in this line. I'm really glad to see Malivoire kept the price the same as their regular Gamay. Price: \$17.95 - Rating:

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#### **Bonus Review: [Malivoire 2009 Gamay - \\$17.95](#)**

#### **Foreign Affair Winery 2008 "The Conspiracy" - \$18.95 (W)**

[www.foreignaffairwine.com](http://www.foreignaffairwine.com)

The Conspiracy is the second wine of Foreign Affair Winery (FA). The FA winery has patterned their wines after those being made in the Veneto region of Italy. In truth, I think they're missing a Valpolicella style wine, but with the addition of "The Conspiracy" they're more than halfway there. This wine is the Ripasso to their Amarone, and it was just a matter of time before they decided to try

[www.ontariowinereview.com](http://www.ontariowinereview.com)

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making it. It is a 2008 Cabernet Sauvignon repressed over the skins of Cabernet Franc grapes, thus starting a secondary fermentation. The result is a wine with added complexity, something needed in a wine from the light '08 vintage. Sweet red fruit, chocolate, sweet tobacco and cherry notes - lovely in the mouth. Now, here's the real conspiracy: trying to get a bottle. This is considered a 'Licensee (restaurants) Only Wine' - you have to go the winery and beg and plead for a bottle and I'm told you "really have to state your case" - but I think for this wine you can make one, and should. Price: \$18.95 - Rating: \*\*\*\* 1/2

**Peller Estates 2007 Private Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon - \$19.95 (W)**

[www.peller.com](http://www.peller.com)

Another beauty from the Peller 2007 Private Reserve line. The nose is red raspberries and cherries – lots of good sweet red fruit that lures you in to take a sip as soon as possible. The palate shows great complexity with subtlety of chocolate interwoven with black cherry; if there is such a thing as a juicy smell then this wine has it; and it tastes the same way. There's also very nice tannins that round out the structure of this wine. As for the finish, it ends with delicious black fruit and spice ... I'd recommend enjoying it now or have some fun with it and lie it down for 5+ years – don't worry, it can easily handle it. The real question is, can you resist reaching into your cellar for the extra bottles. Price: \$19.95 – Rating: \*\*\*\*½

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



**Weekly Wine Notes and More: Pelee, Cave Spring and 2 new interviews**

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):

**October 29, 2010** – [Cave Spring Cellars 2008 CSV Riesling \( LISTEN \)](#)

**November 5, 2010** – [Pelee Island 2008 Alvar Pinot Noir \( LISTEN \)](#)

**Listen to Interviews from** – [October 7, 2010](#) and [October 14, 2010](#)

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

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

[Annual Wine Writers Bubbly Tasting](#)

[Wines of Chile 2010](#)

[Dinner at Bb33 with Caparzo](#)

[Meeting with Sam Neill](#)

[Sonoma in the City](#)

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

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

[Fielding Estates Winery 2007 Cabernet Franc](#)

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

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

**Nothing this week – more coming soon**

**[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: a Rosemount Show Reserve and a Frescabaldi

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

[November 13<sup>th</sup> Release](#) and [November 27<sup>th</sup> Release](#)

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The logo for the Gourmet Food & Wine Expo. The word "gourmet" is in a dark red, lowercase serif font. The word "food" is in a dark red, lowercase sans-serif font. A large, stylized ampersand (&) is positioned to the left of the word "wine". The word "wine" is in a dark red, lowercase sans-serif font. The word "expo" is in a dark red, lowercase sans-serif font.

<http://www.foodandwineexpo.ca/sitepages/>

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### Ontario Wine Review: ... part 2

It's time to take the notion of where to best put Ontario-centric wine stores out of the hands of the LCBO and a handful of self-serving large wine companies. What is this province afraid of? Is big daddy Dalton worried we'll all become a bunch of stark raving drunks because we have greater access to local wines? Even if we do, the good news it's all Ontario grown and made: more drunks on local wines means more jobs for local wineries - that's win-win in my book.

Are the folks at the LCBO worried because Ontario-only stores will cut into their already healthy bottom line? Sure they are, and yes it would happen, but honestly, folks up in Northern Ontario have better access to Yellow Tail (Australia), Gato Negro (Chile) and Arrogant Frog (France) than they do to Flat Rock, Fielding and Featherstone or Cave Spring, Calamus and Cattail Creek (ed. note: if you are a Northerner those are all Ontario wineries from Niagara). Why should countries that are thousands of miles away have better coverage of the Ontario market than those making the product in Ontario proper. Seems kinda silly and sad, don't it? The LCBO will bemoan the loss of tax revenue, but wineries pay tax and they put the same tax on wine that the LCBO does - they just keep a bigger percentage of the profit which they reinvest back into their business> I see that as win-win too.

As for the Chinese, good for them to get OUR government to change a policy that they couldn't get their own Chinese government to change: free market enterprise ... now maybe we can do the same, because when it comes to wine sales in Ontario we're all standing in front of the tank at Tiananmen Square too. So far with the same results.

It'll be a proud day for us here in Ontario to know that the Chinese can speak with greater authority about our wines than a majority of the populace living north of Barrie. I know the usual philosophy of people is 'not in my backyard' and it was nice of Dalton and the boys and girls of the Liberal party to think that way on our behalf; but in this case I think I speak for all wineries and the people of this province when I say, "I'd like to see Ontario-VQA stores in my backyard", in fact in any Ontario neighbourhood would be fine thank you very much. I don't find it too funny to think of visiting China one day, meet a local and having a conversation about Ontario wine and having to say "I haven't tried that one."

We saw some success with the changes to Cellared in Canada ... not great but some. We had little success in changing the placement of those same wines within the LCBO. But here's something we should all get behind and demand change for right now. When it seems that everything in the world is made outside our borders wouldn't it be nice to be able to buy true 100% Ontario product from somewhere other than direct from the manufacturer. Yup, it's time for VQA-Ontario store, here in

Ontario ... it works in British Columbia and there they are crazy for their local fermented grape juice - it would be nice to see that kind of fanaticism here and that kind of support. It starts with greater visibility and greater access for all Ontarians ... and that means Ontario-VQA stores. The time is right and the time is now, if the Chinese get it why can't we?

**Have your say:** Do the Chinese deserve better than Ontario? Your Ontario government thinks so, what do you think? Speak out on [Twitter](#) or [Facebook](#) ...



**Wine Event Spotlight:** *There's still lots of things to do*

**Mastonardi is murdering again ...** This time they are hosting "The Holidays ... are Murder!", December 10, 2010 with a Champagne Reception, Dinner and, a murder, all starting at 6:30pm - for reservations call 519-733-9463 or to find out more visit [www.mastronardiwines.com](http://www.mastronardiwines.com).

**This year "Wassailing in the County" covers three weekends: November 20 - December 5 ...** Wassailing is an age-old tradition of singing and toasting the harvest's end, while travelling farm to farm, soliciting food and grog from the local land owners. Tickets are \$20 per person and can be booked through either PEC Wine and Culinary tours 613 393-8988 or Sandbanks Vacations at 613-476-7378, or contact Richard Johnston at 613 399 5129 – web-o-philes look at [www.thecountywines.com](http://www.thecountywines.com).

**Jamie Oliver is coming to town (Toronto that is) ...** The Art of Cooking event in Toronto November 18th. Here's your chance to see Jaime and save some money in the process - save \$10 on General & VIP tickets, and \$20 per ticket on groups of 5 or more by using promo code JN29 or by clicking on the following link: <https://www.theartofcooking.ca/register?promo=JN29>. More information can be found at <http://www.theartofcooking.ca/pdf/The-Art-of-Cooking-Conference-Toronto-2010.pdf>

Join the 20 Valley Wineries for two weekends of exceptional wine and food pairings: **Wrapped up in the Valley** is back ... Single-weekend passport costs \$30 and are available by calling the Twenty Valley office at 905-563-1780. You can also get details of this event at [www.twentyvalley.ca](http://www.twentyvalley.ca).

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**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](mailto:michael@ontariowinereview.com). We look forward to hearing from you!

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