

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 – 151
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OntarioWineReview: *A Look at the 2010 CWA*

The 10th Annual Wine Access Canadian Wine Awards (CWA) were published last month (Dec. 2010 / Jan 2011 edition) and as usual I spent my January evenings pouring over the results to see how Ontario fared against the rest of Canada (most notably B.C.) - and I have to say, once again, we ended up on the short end of the awards stick; with some notable exceptions.

First, a round of applause and a hearty congratulations goes out to Tawse Winery. For the first time in the CWA's 10 year history, an Ontario winery walked away with top honours as the Winery of the Year. Last year we split the 20 places in the category down the middle, this year we lost three spots, but the bright spot is we finished in the 1 - 2 position (Tawse and Inniskillin), the rest of our winery winners clumped themselves in the 13 to 17 slots (Henry of Pelham, Hillebrand, Flat Rock, Vineland and Hidden Bench). So at least we have bragging rights to top honours for a year. The same can not be said for Red Wine of the Year honours, of which we took only 3 of the top 10 spots, our highest ranked wine being the [Peller Estates 2007 Signature Series Cabernet Sauvignon](#) (4th), a favourite of mine.

Good news can be found in the White Wine of the Year category, we, as a province, snapped up 8 of the 10 spots including the top 4, which were gobbled up by Tawse and Hidden Bench grabbing one rounded out the top 5 ... also in there were Inniskillin, Henry of Pelham and Flat Rock. We also kicked some serious booty with the Sweet Wine of the Year awards, taking 4 of 5, Inniskillin captured three of those four with Reif taking the final Ontario spot.

Twenty-five medals were handed out for Sparkling wine, we took home 12 of those ... that's only 48%, but the silver lining in that category is that we took 1 of the 2 golds handed out (Hillebrand NV Trius Brut) and 5 of the 6 silvers ... so that is a bright spot for our bubbly makers indeed. In the same vein, we took 16 of 43 Oaked Chardonnay medals, a paltry 37%, but if you consider we took 75% of the golds and 50% of the silvers handed out we don't look half bad, makes you think that [Bill Redelmeier and his Cool Chardonnay initiative](#) might be onto something ... that is until you look at the Riesling results.

In the Riesling category we took almost 61% of the medals, made even more impressive when you consider Ontario took all three golds (Tawse x2 and Flat Rock) and 11 of 12 silvers - that's 93% of the top two medals handed out. It's as if they handed out bronze so the rest of the country could participate.

I found myself wallowing in doubt when it came to the red categories especially with our disappointing showing in the Cabernet Franc standings - a grape variety we have dominated in the

past. We took home 7 of 17 medals, granted we took the two highest positions (Thirty Bench and Inniskillin), but that was still only silver. Wine Access wrote, "But with no golds and only half the entries of Merlot, does [Cabernet Franc] have long term future viability as a single varietal?" I know I still think of it as Ontario's red grape (Pinot Noir buffs hold your water, we're getting to you). Let's see how we do next year before we write the obit on Cabernet Franc.

We did better in the Cabernet Sauvignon category, taking 40% of the medals (8 of 20) thanks to the 2007 reserves (6 of our 8) of which half were over \$30. Merlot we did much worse, 5 measly medals, all bronze, though not very surprising, this truly is B.C.'s grape and has been for years. For those interested, our 5 medals represented 12% of all medals given out in this category.

I told you we'd get to Pinot Noir, and here it is. For a grape many tout as "Ontario's Red" we got firmly and soundly beaten. The top red of the year was a Pinot from BC (Howling Bluff) and we took only 14 of 44 medals (~32%). We picked up one gold (Tawse) out of 4 and one silver (Hidden Bench) out of 15. Yikes.

Finally, we triumphed in the Icewine category, taking 33 of 46 (72%), of which Inniskillin took all three golds handed out, proving they've still got the touch that Karl Kaiser and Donald Ziraldo started many years ago. Bottom line: we still own icewine, even it nobody's buying it in these tough economic times.

So once again we ask ourselves why does Ontario pale in comparison to our brethren to the west. Some winemakers cry sour grapes, that the awards are fixed because the magazine itself is a western publication (out of Alberta). In fact, I know a few winemakers who refuse to enter based on this notion. But a look at the judging panel shows a fairly even split of east to west.

There is also the notion that Westerners are more proud of their wines and have an easier time spotting them; while we here in the east, especially Toronto palates, are more open to other tastes than just our own ... which is why Ontario wines are so sparse on Toronto restaurant wine lists (a real problem which shall be addressed in coming newsletters).

But I think it boils down to climate. Ontario is true cool climate, no matter what the 2005, 2007 and 2010 vintages say. In the end we'll make better Riesling than Cabernet Sauvignon 9 out of 10 vintages. On the other hand, B.C.'s main region is a desert: the Okanagan Valley, and thus by definition a warm climate region. Comparing the two is like comparing apples with oranges and thus the awards have an inherent flaw ... one we can do nothing about it but gripe. Gripe that B.C. gets better support from its restaurants and consumers for their wines than Ontario. Gripe that they have marginally better access to market with VQA stores and semi-privatization. But there is one thing we here in Ontario have that BC doesn't, the Winery of the Year ... and they can't take that away till next year, when the awards will be handed out all over again.



Grape Guy's Picks of the Bunch: *A Pinot and Two Merlots*

Lailey Vineyard 2009 Pinot Noir Niagara Peninsula - \$25.00 (W)

www.laileyvineayrd.com

From all accounts, 2009 was the year for Pinot Noir ... speak with winemakers in Niagara and all will agree that Pinot was a fabulous grape to grow and make wine from in that vintage year. Derek Barnett loves making Chardonnays and Pinot Noirs, he would have been right at home in Burgundy (or maybe even Prince Edward County, if he didn't want to leave the country). This is the first, of what I am sure will be a long list of Pinots coming out of Lailey with 2009 on the vintage line. This is the one with Niagara Peninsula as its desination. The nose is rich with violets, black cherry and cranberry cocktail aromas. The palate has the current flavour profile of cinnamon and sour black cherry, but its also tight with tannin grip, this one needs about a year to mellow - I would recommend

www.ontariowinereview.com

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giving it lots of breathing room. Price: \$25.00 - Rating: ****

Cattail Creek 2009 Merlot - \$18.95 (W)

www.cattailcreek.ca

I love getting a sneak peak at a soon-to-be-released wine (makes you feel like an insider), but the problem with a sneak peak is that you have to be careful. Some wineries are looking for input so they can "finish" the wine, while others are just waiting for labels; it boils down to the difference between a barrel sample and a bottled sample. This wine was a bottle sample from the 2009 vintage, I was so impressed, because you hear such horror stories about '09, that I had to ask the owner the barrel or bottle question. The nose is decent with wood spice and peppery nuances masking most of the fruit, but the palate comes alive with spiced cherry, red berries (like strawberries) and nice tannins, all leading to a nice blueberry finish. Only 180 cases made. Not a long timer, but a good timer, drink over the next 2-3 years. Price: \$18.95 - Rating: ****+

Rosewood 2008 Reserve Natural Ferment Merlot - \$36.00 (W)

www.rosewoodwine.com

I am very interested in Natural Ferment (aka: Wild Ferment) wines, these are wines that are not inoculated with man-made yeast but instead rely on what lies in the vineyard to get them going. They may take longer, they may be slower, they not be controlled, they made not ferment dry, but for better or worst they do make some interesting wines. This Rosewood is very enticing with blackberry and cassis on the nose, which follows pleasantly in the mouth with spice and good acidity that bites back at the tongue. The finish really brings it all together with raspberry, black cherry and spice - good fruit, good balance, good job. By-pass the cellar and drink over the next 2-3 years. Price: \$36.00 - Rating: ****+

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



Weekly Wine Notes and More: *Rubanesque, Bordeaux and Rhone*

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):

January 24, 2011 - [Lailey Vineyard 2009 Sauvignon Blanc \(LISTEN\)](#)

January 31, 2011 – [By Chadsey's Cairn 2009 Rubanesque \(LISTEN\)](#)

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

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

[Discover Bordeaux](#)

[Rhone Valley Tasting and Lunch](#)

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

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

Nothing To Report This Week

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

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

[Fielding Estate Winery 2006 Gewurztraminer](#)

[Vineland 2006 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

[6 New Reviews Added](#)

Including: Wines from California, France, Argentina and Germany

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

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

February 2011

Bottling Just Got Better ... Peninsula Ridge Estates Winery has picked up a federal loan of over \$97,000 to buy and set up a "state of the art" bottling and labelling line which it says will allow it to double its daily production capacity. [Full story click here ...](#)

Now, If Only They Can Accomplish Something ... The second conference on Wine Law in British Columbia is set for Tuesday March 29, 2011 in Vancouver, prior to the commencement of the Vancouver Playhouse Wine Festival Trade Days events on Wednesday. There is a great line-up of topics covering the economics of wine production in BC, inter-provincial shipping laws, business partner relationships, tied house reform, host liability, social media and issues related to starting or operating a winery. [Details click here ...](#)

No More Decanting Required ... A Spanish Michelin three-star chef has developed a new kind of wine bottle that he claims will revolutionize the world of wine by rendering decanting unnecessary. Actually, this story makes me sad because I love my decanters, even though I don't use them enough. [Click here for the full story ...](#)

Did Noah Really Get Drunk After the Flood? ... Actual proof of early vintners comes from a cave near a remote Armenian village, which, perhaps not coincidentally, is within 60 miles of Mount Ararat. Scientists have unearthed a surprisingly advanced winemaking operation, surrounded by storage jars, and say it dates back 6,000 years, making it the earliest known site in the world for wine-making with grapes, by far. [Interested? Click here to learn more...](#)

Sipping and Skating ... According to the Edmonton Sun, the newest trend in Ontario vineyards is the addition of a skating rink. Ravine, Flat Rock and Hidden Bench are all offering a way to drink wine and fall flat on your face before you get drunk. [See the article here ...](#)

"Don't Count the Cork Out Just Yet" ... Chateau des Charmes Paul Bosc Jr. once said that very

line to me and it looks like he was very prophetic in his analysis of the cork vs screwcap situation: "Among the top 100 selling brands, the number of wines using cork rose by 10.4% to 74 brands during the 52 week-period ended Jan. 8, 2011, compared to the same period a year ago. Moreover, wines with cork posted an average annual sales increase of 10.3%, compared to 3.5% for alternative closures, which include plastic stoppers and metal screw-caps." [Read the full article here ...](#)



Wine Event Spotlight: *Two Biggies*

It's February, and that means Wine and Chocolate ... no better way to get your fill than with the Wineries of **Niagara-on-the-Lake's Days of Wine and Chocolate**, happening each weekend in February. See www.wineriesofniagaraonthelake.com for details.

Cuvee is coming around again ... known as the Ontario wine Oscars, where winemakers judge each others work and dole out the hardware. But it's the wine buying public that gets the real prize, in the form of the Cuvee Gala (March 4) and the EnRoute event (March 4 - 6) ... for details visit www.cuvee.ca.

Giveaway ... I'm not finish yet. Cuvee has kindly donated 2 pairs of passports for the Cuvee EnRoute Winery Tour (weekend of March 5) ... so now we just have to figure out how to give these away. How about you tell me which high profile awards event Cuvee is compared to? Hint: it has to do with the movies. Send your answer in to michael@ontariowinereview.com along with your name, address and phone number, please don't forget the postal code ... deadline for entries is 11:59pm February 15, 2011. Good luck.

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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