

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 – 168
October 6, 2011

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OntarioWineReview: *Election Day Gas*

It's election day, and I don't want to take up a lot of your time on a day when you should be concentrating on who to vote for. Over the past few months I have given you food for thought from [Tim Hudak's vision](#) of the wine industry in Ontario to [Andrea Horwath's](#) working with the LCBO option, and I heard or received nothing about the reigning Liberal party's platform on the subject of the wine industry, I guess for them it will remain status quo. So I guess it's up to you to decided where your loyalties lie and who you chose to believe as to what difference they'll make, if any.

Also over the past few months I have received a bit of feedback from my articles and opinion pieces that I would like to share. One man asserts that corner-store-booze promises that help get people elected (whether they fulfill it or not); while an LCBO employee sees me as the spawn of Satan when it comes to her beloved employer. None of what follows should sway your vote one way or the other; and even as I sit here at six in the morning on election day, I am no closer to making a choice because I think I've come to the conclusion that no matter who's making the promises it's all just a bunch of hot air. Sigh.

Part of an email I received about election promises ...

"David Peterson campaigned on putting wine in corner stores in 1985 and he won -- twice!
Mike Harris campaigned on putting wine in corner stores in 1995 and he won -- twice! Where are those promises in this campaign [I need to know who to vote for]."
- John

Not sure how many of you saw this little tete-a-tete. It's a back-and-forth between a reader and myself, she decided to make her thoughts public on Facebook thru the [Ontario Wine Lovers group](#), here is our interesting, and intense, discussion ...

Reader ... "Is it NOT possible to read Michaels blog with out a senseles, utterly illogicals LCBO twist???" [sic]

Grape Guy ... "Really ... you find it illogical that the LCBO has their hands in everything booze related in Ontario ... you must work for them."

Reader ... "I can't help but wonder why you chose the name "Ontario wine lovers" when it seems every newsletter has a stubborn negative LCBO prejudice. Perhaps the renaming of the news letter to something more straightforward "Michael Pinkus despise of the LCBO" then we would have a clearer view of what you were communicating."

Grape Guy ... "Now you're just being mean ... People who love wine and live in Ontario know that the LCBO is a detriment to getting good wine into this province, getting decent prices and getting the really good ONTARIO stuff into the hands of the masses. I had one reader opt out of my letter because he said "the wines you review and recommend are not available to me, and I live in Ontario." Or how about those who live outside of Ontario and want to get Ontario wines. The LCBO has their good points, but wine lovers should also realize they have their bad points too and they keep this province in the stone-age. Talk to a few wineries outside of Canada and find out what it is like to deal with the LCBO - if you are not on their preferred list. Then we can talk."

All this because I suggested that Daniel Lenko's troubles were LCBO inspired. Now I have to tell you, do I really believe the LCBO gives one iota about Danny's little winery in Beamsville, and do I think his opinions are causing the LCBO sleepless nights? Not in the least. But to also blindly put your head in the sand and believe there is no way they could reach out and affect an individual winery on a whim is to not be realistic about what is going on here in Ontario.

The LCBO affects all wineries in Ontario, but truthfully it is not the sole fault of the liquor board, they are just following their mandate to make money for the government. Two days before the election, the Grape Growers of Ontario released this plea:

"Consumer access to the wines made from Ontario grapes is a keystone issue for the future success of the industry, and unless Queen's Park is willing to make substantive changes to the way it promotes and sells Ontario wines, the industry will continue to tread water ... The domestic market share of Ontario wines is stagnant at around 39% while other winemaking regions are flourishing in their own backyard, some with market shares in excess of 90% ... By making changes in the way the LCBO presents Ontario VQA wines on its shelves, how many Ontario VQA labels are available and how those wines get onto the LCBO list, accompanied by an increased, year-round promotional effort within the LCBO, the sales of Ontario's wines will grow."

They're not telling you who to vote for, but they are asking you to be mindful of your vote. But I think it's more to do with what happens after the election that counts, not the foreplay leading up to it. After the euphoria of victory has subsided we have to hold elected officials to what they promise, or pressure them to give us better and help our wineries, who are after all, tax payers themselves, yet work in a very restricted and restrictive environment. As a lover of Ontario wine you have to demand more. As the Grape Growers point out in that same plea: "We want to see provincial politicians who understand that marketing foreign wines in an agency owned by the province is like Foodland Ontario launching a promotion of Georgia peaches. It's just not right. We can no longer afford to just sit back and watch." Now that would be a nice change.

It's election day, and as you go to the polls think about what party or politician is going to help reform the arcane laws that keep Ontario wineries at a disadvantage in their own province. Sure it's a cliché, but only you can make a difference ... it would be nice if we could finally get some change around here.



Grape Guy's Picks of the Bunch: *Thanksgiving Compendium of Pinot and Chardonnay*

Colaneri 2008 'Virtuoso' Pinot Noir - \$34.00 (W)

www.colaneriwines.com

This is another Andrezej Lipinski creation for the new winery Colaneri. The 2008 vintage was not the greatest, so winemakers really had to work with the fruit to make good wine. Andrezej's a long timer here in Ontario, so he's seen his share of the good, the bad and the ugly. The nose is pretty with a good mix of fruit: strawberry, raspberry, sour cherry and rhubarb. The palate is just as interesting with sour cherry, cranberry, spice and a kiss of oak; surprising considering this wine was aged 13 months in the stuff. It all ends with an interesting red fruit and spiced finish. Price: \$34.00 - Rating: ****

Rosewood 2009 Pinot Noir Reserve - Natural Fermentation - \$36.00 (W)

www.rosewoodwine.com

Rosewood's Natalie Spytkowski is making a name for herself for mead (honey wine), the only winery in Niagara to be making it. But what she should also be touting on her resume are the natural ferment wines she is making in very small batches. For a small winery this is a big gamble, but a gamble that seems to be paying off. This Pinot is proof of that. Smells are very Pinot-esque with sour cherry, rhubarb and menthol; taste is also very interesting: sour red cherries and earthy with just the right amount of seasoning - thanks to the 10 months in a mix of newer and older French oak barrels. The acidity adds tension to the fruit, giving it a fine finish. Price: \$36.00 - Rating: ****+

Here's another from Rosewood: [Rosewood 2009 Chardonnay Reserve - Natural Ferment](#)

Featherstone 2009 Canadian Oak Chardonnay - \$21.95 (W)

[www.featherstonewinery.ca`](http://www.featherstonewinery.ca)

I suppose I should stop saying I'm against Chardonnay ... that's too broad a statement ... I'm against formulaic, run-of-the-mill Chardonnay - and so should you be. I came to this realization after sipping on, and asking for 2nds, of this Featherstone jobby. Far from formulaic it has 14 months in 3-4 year old Canadian oak barrels and uses a special Featherstone yeast (namely: wild yeast / natural) this gives the wine an excess amount of delicious fruit: pear, peach, a touch of melon and a little tangerine all wrapped in the delicate glove of vanilla. Wow, now that's memorable, tasty and definitely not run-of-the-mill. Price: \$21.95 - Rating: ****

Stoney Ridge 2009 Excellence Pinot Noir - \$35.00 (W)

www.stoneyridge.com

"They", the all knowing folks amongst us, say that 2009 was a great year for Pinot Noir in Ontario, and after sipping on quite a few examples over the past few months I would have to say I agree - some of the best Ontario Pinots are emerging from this vintage. Another one of those wines is this "Excellence" offering from Stoney Ridge: plenty of nice fruit and other Pinot characteristics on both the nose and palate - earthy, sour cherry, cranberry, cinnamon spice and good tannins along with really good balanced acidity helps take this one firmly into the home stretch. I would suggest a good five years of ageing for this one ... but at least 2 before drinking. Price: \$35.00 - Rating: ****+

Here's another from Stoney Ridge: [Stoney Ridge 2009 Excellence Chardonnay](#)

Flat Rock 2008 Chardonnay (Reserve) - \$35.00 (W)

www.flatrockcellars.com

The word Reserve never does appear on this bottle of wine, but owner Ed Madronich says he had to give it some kind of designation when he submitted it to the LCBO for consideration. The wine itself is aged 18 months in French oak and is a "best barrel" selection (3 barrels in total) and then is further bottle aged an additional year before release. The aromas are delicately buttery with a hint of peach. Plenty of mineral on the tongue with white fruit and a delicate buttered finish which also adds to its toasted butterscotch edge. Price: \$35.00 - Rating: ****+

[Closson Chase 2010 Sans Chene Chardonnay](#)

[Devils' Wishbone 2008 Chardonnay](#)

[Fielding 2009 Pinot Noir](#)

[Henry of Pelham 2008 Barrel Fermented Chardonnay](#)

[Karlo Estates 2009 Chardonnay](#)

[Keint-He Winery 2007 Pinot Noir](#)

[Pearl Morissette Estate Winery 2008 Chardonnay Cuvee Dix-Neuvieme](#)

[Pele Island 2009 Alvar Pinot Noir](#)

[Stanners 2009 Pinot Noir](#)

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



Bi-Weekly OWR Updates: *Ottawa Life Posts, On the Road and more*

Weekly Ottawa Life Blog Entries:

[A Visit to the County](#)

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

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

[Australia's First Families of Wine](#)
[Three Greek Estates Over One Lunch](#)
[The Riesling Experience 2011](#)

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

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

Nothing New This Week

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

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

Nothing New This Week

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

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

[4 New Posts Added](#)

including wines from New Zealand and the US

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

October 15, 2011 - coming soon

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October 15-16, 2011
Eight Wineries, Eight Events
All Crushing on One Deliciously Seductive Grape
<http://www.thepinotaffair.com/>

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OntarioWineReview: LCBO Mob Rules

Since we're eyeing up feedback today I thought I'd quickly take a peak at one of the polls today. The one that I launched just after the publication of [my conspiracy theory behind Daniel Lenko's troubles](#), asking your thoughts of the LCBO.

The question/statement is: "Some have likened the LCBO to the Mob, what do you think..."

The choices are as follows: 1) Absolutely; 2) I'd say yes but I'm afraid; 3) Not even close, they're worse; 4) Definitely not; 5) Those days are in the past; 6) All factious lies.

A whopping 52% said Absolutely ... while 12% of the vote must have been wine agents because they went for the "I'd say yes but I'm afraid" option. In all 86.4% said some form of yes.

Looks like Ontario is looking for their Eliot Ness

You can still vote your mind on the LCBO at www.ontariowinereview.com - see the bottom of the home page.



Wine Event Spotlight: *The Busyness of Fall Events*

Toronto's Ultimate Local Wine & Food Experience! ... **An Evening Dedicated to Ontario VQA Wines & Regional Cuisine - Wednesday, October 19, 2011** - 7:30 pm to 10:00 pm Steam Whistle Brewing, The Roundhouse. Featuring Ontario Wine Awards medal-winning VQA wines from more than 30 Ontario wineries will be joining forces with top Toronto area chefs who will be creating samples of regionally prepared cuisine to tantalize your taste buds. For details of the event and tickets visit: <http://www.sipandsavourontario.ca/tickets-events.php>

Taste the Season Touring Pass Event ... All weekends in November (5/6, 12/13, 19/20 & 26/27) The Taste the Season touring pass event is the "must-do" event of the season for many Niagara-on-the-Lake wine country visitors. Each touring pass entitles the holder to a VQA wine and food pairing at each of the 26 member wineries and is valid for one of the featured weekends. Touring passes are available for only \$44.25 (+HST) and can be purchased online or by phone. For details and to purchase visit: www.wineriesofniagaraonthelake.com or call 905-468-1950 (Niagara-on-the-Lake Chamber of Commerce)

Shows Galore ...

The Delicious Food Show ... October 20-23, 2011 - Better Living Centre, Toronto. <http://deliciousfoodshow.com>

Gourmet Food and Wine Expo ... November 17-20, 2011 Metro Toronto Convention Centre. <http://www.foodandwineexpo.ca>

Fusion, a Discovery of Local Food and Wine ... November 11-12, 2011 - RBC Centre, Sarnia. <http://www.discoverfusion.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,

www.ontariowinereview.com

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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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