

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 – 197
■ January 24, 2013

In this Edition

- ↓ **OntarioWineReview:** *Monopoly or Private? The Debate Renews*
 - Grape Guy's Picks of the Bunch:** *Not Necessarily Seasonal, but all dang good*
 - ↓ **Bi-Weekly OWR Updates:** *On the Road, International Wine Notes and more*
 - OntarioWineReview:** *A Funny Tale About Bad Advice*
 - ↓ **Wine Event Spotlight:** *Upcoming Niagara Events*
-



OntarioWineReview: *Monopoly or Private? The Debate Renews*

Where do you fall in the LCBO versus Private wine store debate? Seems to be what was on people's minds over the holidays. The Torys smelling an opening decided to launch a platform issue – or at least open the debate once again (giving us all hope for the future of privately owned wine stores here in Ontario). The Liberals, desperately wanting to cling to power and hoping to fool the populace into believing they're actually listening to our needs announced a pilot project wherein they will open LCBO outlets in grocery stores – totally mixing the metaphor of wanting privately run stores and the convenience of buying our booze in the same place we buy our meat, milk and eggs.

I know we all want to believe the LCBO is being all righteous in helping to give Ontarians what they want – but please – all you need to remember are what the first two letters in their name stands for LIQUOR CONTROL ... because in this post-prohibition era in which you and I live we can't be trusted to make good decisions on alcohol consumption – our Orwellian Big Brother has to guide us and show us the way. I thank God for the LCBO every single day of my life, they keep me from being a wine-guzzling, sloppy-faced drunk, they maintain the social conscience of Ontario, they are the responsible ones, they keep me on the straight and narrow – and I know I speak for all Ontarians when I say that.

Bullshit.

“The LCBO will decide which communities and grocery stores will host its new Express outlets over the next year ...” ([from a 680News report](#))

The LCBO is about money and profits – and about control. I know I will have people freaking out at me for saying this but I want you to ask yourself “why?” Why would the LCBO suddenly decide that grocery stores are the place to put locations? Doesn't sound all that smart to me – and not what we asked for. We asked for the right to pick up booze and bread in the same place – the government has said fine but you'll still have to visit two cashiers and wait in line. Heck, I could have gone across to the mall parking lot to the LCBO location, got a bigger selection than in that tiny kiosk they'll most likely rent and I still would have had to stand in line at a different cashier – where's the convenience?

Plus we already have Wine Rack and Wine Shoppe locations in grocery stores ... and therein lies the rub (as Shakespeare would say). The LCBO already knows those stores are profitable, the “pilot project” is done, there's no study needed, Vincor and Peller have already done the research (and if you don't think the LCBO has had a look at those numbers you've got another surprise coming) – this is just another way for the LCBO to compete with those two companies – and by extension, the wineries of Ontario. [Ed. Note: just in case you don't know Peller and Vincor hold the majority of

private liquor store licenses in the province – something they acquired before 1988 when free trade came in].

“... and will also create new VQA boutiques for Ontario wines inside five of its own stores.” ([same 680News report](#)). A novel idea? I don't think so. They have one in St. Catharines already (of all places), and what do you want to bet the LCBO will place these new “boutiques” where they are most needed like Niagara, Prince Edward County and Windsor where wineries already exist – no better way to compete with your competition than on their own turf.

I took a look at some on-line reaction to this “project” and found this confused soul who calls themselves “Horrors”: “You mean Toronto is finally going to move out of the stone ages and sell beer in grocery stores like so many other places, provinces, states, etc.” Obviously someone who doesn't get that the LCBO retains CONTROL – separate cashier, separate line, unfortunately you will not be able to stroll the beer aisle at Loblaws Horrors.

Here are some highlights I gleaned from a [Canadian Press article printed on the Huffington Post](#): “The Progressive Conservatives have said it's time to overhaul Ontario's antiquated liquor laws and allow more private sector sales, especially in convenience stores ... Duncan called the Tory proposal “boneheaded,” a description that PC finance critic Peter Shurman found amusing. “I take that as a compliment coming from the ‘bonehead-in-chief’ of the Liberal party, outgoing Finance Minister Dwight Duncan,” said Shurman. ... The Liberal plan does not give consumers more choice, which would be a benefit of the Conservatives' plan, and still has the government running the largest liquor retailing business in the country, added Shurman.”

The Huffington Post received much more feedback and some insightful comments, including a dialogue between “Usee Tizzone” and “ballznaked”:

William Muller – “Perhaps this century will see Canadians being treated like adults and let them buy alcohol in grocery stores like most western nations without the abusive government control but that's very doubtful.”

Usee Tizzone - The prices will be controlled by the LCBO - so no competition to lower prices. [We'll] have to go to the LCBO counter in the supermarket and not the supermarket cashier - how convenient.

ballznaked - The LCBO had a profit of \$1.1 Billion last year (that's one point one billion). That money goes into the provinces general revenues, regardless of who is in the Premier's seat. If you want to cut that revenue stream, what would you replace it with? If you don't want to replace that revenue stream, which services will you to give up?

Usee Tizzone - The Ontario government would still make a \$billion a year or perhaps more on privatized liquor and wine sales if they did not have all that real estate, management and labour costs associated with their involvement in running this monopoly business.

Now there is something to be said for the anonymity of the internet – plus I doubt there is someone in the world whose real name is “ballznaked” (though you never know) – but the points are valid. Sure the LCBO is great at telling us what they brought in (money-wise), but you rarely hear their spending reports on things like rent (shopping centre stores) or what they paid for a building (ie: King and Spadina) or what they keep from private enterprise (ie: ads for Food & Drink magazine). Food and Drink magazine is one of those things that boggles my mind – it keeps ad dollars away from privately owned magazines – what people fail to understand is that Food & Drink competes against its own populace trying to make a living from publishing, selling magazines and yes ad revenue (more on this topic at a later date).

Conservative Peter Shurman gets it and made comment about it on [The Agenda with Steve Paikin](#) (TVO): “This is not the Ontario of 1927, that's how far back the LCBO goes,” he said “The only think bone-headed is coming out 2 weeks later and saying we are going to do this [because of social responsibility]. Social responsibility? The social responsibility shown by this current government [in

allowing] its LCBO to publish 500,000 copies of a glossy magazine every year to show us how to pour Blue Curacao in a glass and have a summer cocktail when they're the only guys who sell Blue Curacao."

But back to the topic at hand ... a poll from My WineShop.ca revealed that:
76% of Ontarians agree with the idea of privately-owned wine shops provided they're licensed by government and follow the same rules as bars and restaurants when it comes to sale of alcohol.
65% of Ontarians agree that it's time for Ontario to follow the lead of other provinces who allow privately-owned wine shops that offer consumers additional wines not provided by their liquor board.

Sounds like the Tory's might be finally barking up the right tree ... now it's time to have your say have your say on the new OWR on-line poll.



Grape Guy's Picks of the Bunch: *Not Necessarily Seasonal, but all dang good*

Cave Spring 2011 Riesling - \$14.95 (W)

www.cavespringcellars.com

My wife is the Riesling fan of the two of us – sure I like Riesling, but I drink all kinds of wine, my wife is almost exclusively Riesling ... or at least it's her first choice, when given a choice. I guess that makes my wife a perpetual summer. But it also means we're always on the hunt for her next Riesling-fix ... and this 2011 Cave Spring number is it. Nose is apple, pear and tropical fruited while the palate doles out plenty of fruit of its own, with just a touch of sweetness, plus there's nice acid and a mild mineral character added into the mix. For not a lot of dough this is a great way to get your own Riesling-fix, summer or not. Price: \$14.95 – Rating: ****

Coyote's Run 2009 Sparkling Pinot Noir Rosé - \$29.95 (W)

www.coyotesrunwinery.com

Coyote's Run has left nothing to chance in the naming of their first ever sparkling wine – this producer, known for their Black Paw / Red Paw split of Chardonnay and Pinot Noir, tells us right up front this is Pinot Noir. What you don't know is that it is made in the traditional method with 2.5 years on lees and that for the inaugural production they made only 1000 bottles. The nose is raspberry, strawberry and apple aroma-ed, while in the mouth all three show up right to the mid-palate then it's green apple and rhubarb to the finish ... it's definitely drier than the nose let's on and the initial fruity nature seems to amalgamate a nice POM juice flavour before the finish kicks in. Price: \$29.95 – Rating: ****

Malivoire 2012 Musque Spritz - \$19.95 (W)

www.malivoire.com

If you take away the nouveaux that appeared in Novembers, this is the first wine to emerge from the (historic?) 2012 vintage. Now, those waiting for the big reds to appear will have to keep their vigil up for a year or more – but those looking to get a jump on patio season can start right now with this Moscato knock-off. A nose full of lovely bosc pear, peach, apple and orange blossom aromas; the palate follows those up with pineapple and exotic fruit while keeping the pear, peach and blossom in the mix. Finishing it off is a touch of acidity and a casual spritz. Price: \$19.95 – Rating: *** ½+

Tawse 2011 Gamay Noir - \$18.95 – (W)

www.tawsewinery.ca

The news here is that another serious producer decided to get into bed with the Gamay grape ... and that's a good thing. Multi-award winning winery (and 3 time winery of the year) Tawse puts their reputation on the line producing a serious Gamay from the 2011 vintage. Nice red berries

(especially cherry) on the nose with hints of white pepper and just the right amount of sour cherry reigning it all in ... These aromas find their way to the palate making for a quaffable (and chillable) red. Nice to see Tawse (a serious Pinot / Chardonnay producer) in the Gamay game. With a very good opening volley. Price: \$18.95 – Rating: ****

Availability legend: W (Winery) – L (LCBO/Vintages) - OL (On-Line).



Bi-Weekly OWR Updates: *On the Road, International Wine Notes and more*

NEW – Ottawa Life – International Wine Selection(s) of the Week:

Check out the [Ottawa Life Blog – Thirst Impressions](#) for my weekly selections

This week's posts:

[Masi's Flagship Wines](#)

[A Hidden Chilean Gem](#)

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

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

[Masi Dinner](#)

[Wrapped Up In the Valley 2012](#)

[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

[New Posts Added](#)

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

February 2, 2013 Report

Words of Wisdom

One afternoon at Cheers, Cliff Clavin was explaining the Buffalo Theory to his buddy Norm. Here's how it went:

"Well ya see, Norm, it's like this. A herd of buffalo can only move as fast as the slowest buffalo. And when the herd is hunted, it is the slowest and weakest ones at the back that are killed first. This natural selection is good for the herd as a whole, because the general speed and health of the whole group keeps improving by the regular killing of the weakest members. In much the same way, the human brain can only operate as fast as the slowest brain cells. Excessive intake of alcohol, as we know, kills brain cells. But naturally, it attacks the slowest and weakest brain cells first. In this way, regular consumption of beer eliminates the weaker brain cells, making the brain a faster and more efficient machine. That's why you always feel smarter after a few beers."

Words of Wisdom



This is one of those filler pieces you've heard talk about ... but in it you'll learn a little about the proper storage of wine – so maybe not as much filler as you think. I was going to protect the name of the innocent here, but in the end I will be providing reviews of their wine so it might not be so protected after all – but what the heck, I'll give it a go.

I received an email over the course of the summer requesting my presence at a pre-release of wines (before they are released to the public in early-2013). My schedule did not permit me to attend but the rep of the winery insisted that I had to try these wines and so asked if he could swing by my house and taste them with me. He arrived on a Thursday mid-afternoon with his sample bag in hand, and for the sake of this story let's call the rep Larry. I welcomed him at the door and commented that he looked like a door-to-door wine salesman (now this is an interesting concept – has anyone actually tried this?)

Anyway, out from his case came five wines, all part of the winery's Reserve series of big single varietal reds meant for the cellar: Pinot Noir, Cabernet Franc, Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and Meritage all from the 2010 vintage.

Larry poured me the first wine, the 2010 Pinot Noir (\$24.00) a rarity in this winery's portfolio, if memory serves it is only the second time they have made one. It was grippy with tannins; pretty ballsy, but had absolutely zero fruit ... Larry talked about how it needed time and was pretty aggressive now. I nodded my agreement and said that I agreed with his assessment ... though secretly wondered if it really would mellow with all that fight and bite in the glass.

Next, out came the 2010 Cabernet Franc, I tasted it and really tried to find the good in the glass – but there was none. Before I gave my thoughts I asked Larry for his, "My favourite," he gushed, "I know how much you like Franc so I figured you'd like this one; at the pre-release this is the one I bought the most of." I looked at my guest and said, "Larry, did it taste anything like this?" I passed him my glass and he gave the wine a try. His face contorted in a way that told me that this was not the wine he thought it was ... it was off. I did the same with the next two wines, and each time Larry's look of disgust told me that the wines I was trying were not the wines he was proud to show. And here's why ...

9 times out of 10, when Larry comes over he opens a new bottle for me – but I noticed that these were not, in fact, in some cases they had a third to half of the wine missing. If Larry does bring over opened bottles they've been gassed and put in the fridge – and usually for no more than a day. The gas covers the wine so it will not oxidize, the added measure of putting it in the fridge arrests the ageing in its tracks – it is the same reason we put milk in the fridge or meat in the freezer. Larry admitted to me that the wines had been opened Monday, gassed, and then on advice from the winemaker, left out of the fridge. Needless to say that will be the last time Larry handles his wines in this method.

This cautionary tale gives a few vital lessons: if something works for you don't go changing just because someone else thinks they have a better idea – or knows better. When it comes to wine your opinion counts – especially if you're the next one that's going to be drinking it. Don't be afraid to throw wine into the fridge, even reds, they can always warm up once you take them out, it is a crime, punishable by law to put an ice cube into a glass of wine to chill it down. Finally, never pour a wine writer a wine that's even slightly off ... you might end up the subject of his next column. Thanks Larry.

As for the freshly opened bottles, which Larry brought over the next day, here are the notes of the wines you'll want to investigate.

[Calamus 2010 Cabernet Franc](#)

[Calamus 2010 Cabernet Sauvignon](#)

[Calamus 2010 Merlot](#)
[Calamus 2010 Meritage](#)



Wine Event Spotlight: *Upcoming Niagara Events*

Days of Wine & Chocolate ... Explore the decadently sweet and savoury art of wine and chocolate pairing. Visit the wineries of Niagara-on-the-Lake to taste up to 28 VQA wines matched with chocolate-infused dishes – from classically sweet flavour combinations to unexpected surprises. Notice the “chocolate infused dishes” - that finally sounds like something worth attending – kudos to the wineries of NOTL. Weekends in February. [Visit here for details and to get tickets.](#)

The New Cuvee ... March 1, 2013 - <http://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.



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!

© OntarioWineReview.com 2013. All rights reserved.

You may use the content of this newsletter by including full credit to Michael Pinkus, Grape Guy and a link to www.ontariowinereview.com