

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 – 05
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OntarioWineReview: *WINERY REVIEW – Inniskillin*

Our winery reviews are done blindly – the wineries have no prior knowledge of our visit and are not made aware until just before we leave their premises that they have been “spot-checked” – this ensures that we get the same level of service that anybody walking off the street would get.

For our very first winery review we dropped by Inniskillin in Niagara-on-the-Lake during the hectic and busy Herb and Wine Festival.

Inniskillin is located at the corner of Line 3 and the Niagara Parkway, and is very easy to find due to the well-marked Ontario Wine Route signs. As you approach the winery from the south along Line 3 you notice the stunning beauty of your surroundings – the vineyards on your right, and a line of trees fronting the lake straight ahead. You make a right hand turn through the white stone gates of Inniskillin and proceed down the long driveway with the vineyards on your right and the winery buildings on your left. During May, when we visited, there were no leaves or grapes on the vines, just the sparseness of the vineyard, but with the sunshine beating down through the wisps of clouds it gave one a sense of new hope for the growing season ahead. At the end of the driveway, you turn left and are in the ample parking lot with the winery itself in front of you. At first glance it looks like an old rustic house or barn – warm and inviting. A look to your left and you notice shiny silver tanks and other wine making apparatus in front of a long building which adds a certain amount of ambiance but also seems a little out of place in such a rustic environment. There is a self-guided tour you can take before entering the winery store. We opted not to do it this time but in the past, it was a fun way to learn about the wine making process.

The tasting rooms were split into three distinct places ... an ice wine tasting bar, a still wine tasting bar, and the event room located upstairs which was for Herb and Wine Festival passport holders. We began our visit upstairs with mushroom caps paired with a wonderful value-priced Merlot (the review of which appears below); not being a mushroom fan, I passed on the appetizer, though I am told they were wonderful.

We then made our way downstairs to the main tasting room – a long bar staffed with 4 or 5 easily identifiable Inniskillin staff members – one in our party even commented on the neat t-shirts they were wearing. Because of the busy Herb and Wine Festival, the tasting room seemed frantic but when we finally belled up to the bar the chaos seemed to dissipate behind us and we focused on the wine. Here I must give credit where credit is due: our server Candis was wonderful; she did not rush us, she was helpful, she answered all questions, and she remained focused on us – we later found out she had been with the winery for only 2 weeks. Kudos.

The highlights were a fabulous Late Autumn Riesling, which at \$11.25 was a steal for summer patio sipping; a Cab Merlot that was tasty as well as reasonably priced (see review below); and a founder's Pinot Noir that was quite luscious. A black label Riesling was also poured and showed some very dry grapefruit and citrus notes that none of our panel seemed to enjoy. The downside was only six wines were on for tasting (3 white, 3 red), with a few others you could try if they happened to be already open. And one of the banes of my existence, you had to pay for the tastings ... which in truth is not a bad idea for someone who is coming in to get a buzz on; but for those of us purchasing it would be nice if the price of the tastings were taken off your purchase. (look for this article next edition)

Finally, we moved on to the ice wine bar ... what tweaked our interest was the Sparkling Ice Wine. We all

salivated at the thought of ending our tour with a sample, and it did not disappoint. Sweet but not syrupy – “it’s a 20 on the sugar code,” the pourer assured me, but the carbon dioxide infusion (the bubbles) makes it very refreshing on the palate – extraordinary.

We visited close to a dozen wineries on this day and all agreed that Inniskillin was definitely the highlight of this trip – excellent service, knowledgeable staff, friendly disposition of all the employees who were willing to impart their knowledge about the wines, and of course, there was the wine itself. Highly Recommended.



Grape Guy's Pick of the Bunch : *Inniskillin 2001 Cabernet Merlot – Black Label*
Visit www.inniskillin.com for more details or to purchase this great wine.

At first we were just going to review the 2002 Black Label Merlot but then the panel tasted this one and we decided that we would be doing a disservice if we did not do both. This Cabernet Merlot has a lovely smell of sweet fruit on the nose – then on second sniff you pick up the slight whiff of green pepper – keep smelling as it warms and you’ll pick up hints of other things too – use your imagination. Upon tasting the nose does not lie – a light green pepper taste mingles with mild tannins – this wine went great with the burgers we decided to BBQ that night (both chicken and beef). This wine is drinking well right now, but has enough tannins that it will age well on the shelf for the next year or two, so buy yourself a case and enjoy.

Bonus Pick : Inniskillin 2002 Merlot – Black Label

This wine can be summed up in one word – smooth ... what a surprise based on many of the Ontario Merlots we have tried in the past. Truth is our panel is not a fan of Ontario Merlot, young Ontario Merlots especially: although we keep trying they’re usually too harsh, too tannic or too something else. That’s why this wine took us by surprise. Smooth, supple, easy drinking, low tannins – everything you don’t expect from an Ontario Merlot – opinions were definitely changed. Our hats come off to the folks at Inniskillin for this one ... and our shoes and socks too, cuz we all put our feet up to enjoy another bottle!



The Grape Vine : *Submit your opinion and become a part of the OWR tasters circle.*
Should this wine be a candidate for our OntarioWineReview Crystal Cork Awards? Chime In!

Contact us at michael@ontariowinereview.com



Beautiful Bottles : *Inniskillin: What's Behind the Label*

Inniskillin’s bottle design is nothing to write home about – you have seen it a thousand times before, nor would we consider their label design anything above the ordinary – it has a classy marble like finish with a nice pen-and-ink rendering of the winery and a stylized scripted Inniskillin above it – though attractive enough to put right out on the table. But it is the colour of the label that distinguishes these bottles: black, pearl, silver and gold – each label determines the wine’s origin and process ... check the website for details or ask the friendly staff to explain the gradation of grapes used.



Wine Event Spotlight : *Ontario Wine Awards Consumer Wine Tasting*

Wanna taste Ontario’s award winning wines? Get your tickets for the 10th Anniversary of the Ontario Wine Awards being held in the Distillery District at 55 Mill Street in Toronto. By the time you receive this newsletter, tickets will be \$50 for the event, but there seems to be coupons in select wineries for \$5 off admission (email me for more details about these if you are having trouble finding them).
Visit www.ontariowineawards.com for more information.



Contact Michael Pinkus Grape Guy

OntarioWineReview's Newsletter is designed to enhance the appreciation of wine, in particular Ontario's wines and wineries and to develop a better understanding about how best to enjoy both.

Please feel free to pass this newsletter on to other wine lovers!

To contact us with feedback, article ideas, comments, concerns or questions – email michael@ontariowinereview.com We look forward to hearing from you!