

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 – 07

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In this Edition

- **Ontario Wine Review:** WINERY REVIEW – Wagner Estate Winery
- **Grape Guy's Pick of the Bunch:** Wagner Estate – Log House Red and Bridal Path
- **Beautiful Bottles:** Wagner – Basic and to the point
- **Wine Event Spotlight:** Summer Sounds Delicious



OntarioWineReview: WINERY REVIEW - Wagner Estate Winery

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.

OntarioWineReview hit the road in June to check out the wineries of Lake Erie North Shore (30 minutes south-east of Windsor). Seven wineries are in operation and the majority of them have a lot of excellent wines. In this review we'll look at one of those wineries in particular: Wagner Estate Winery.

Wagner opened in the fall of 2004 with 6 wines: 4 fruit, 2 grape - and a lot of promise. The wine store is an outbuilding attached to what appears to be some kind of market. A little sign beside the doorway is the only indication that this is the place. Stepping inside the store we saw a counter, a cash register and a small set of shelving (made from wooden crates) which held the wine. Behind the counter stood a giant of a man; and two young women appeared soon after our arrival ... our hosts were Harold, Janice (his wife) and Melissa (his daughter) Wagner – each one with a smile and a story to tell: whether it's Melissa with regards to the harvest and crush, or Janice about the more than 20 spayed and neutered farm cats that provide both companionship and pest control around the property. But the master storyteller of them all is Harold. Proudly telling about, not only the beginnings of the winery, but about Wagner's being the “most diverse farm in Ontario, if not Canada” – from apple, strawberry and pumpkin picking to raising turkeys, chickens and beef cattle. You'll also find a bakery with homemade pies and now a winery adds yet another feather in their cap. Listening to him talk, you soon learn that this hulk of a man is gentle, kind and very passionate about the wines he produces – yet humble about his place in Essex County. He's always ready to throw out a compliment about a fellow winemaker in the area, or deflect praise about his own wines (which were exceptional) by saying “we made some mistakes but next time it will be better”. His wines and his demeanor were unpretentious and friendly. Harold is truly passionate about wine, and it shines through as he talks about it.

This small cottage winery (with big plans for the future) had some very impressive wine. Mostly summer-style wines: light, fruity and flavourful – all would go well with a chill and a patio. The two dessert wines have the same qualities: all true to the fruit in taste and great for a late summer or fall “after dinner drink”. The iced apple, in particular, would also go great in front of the fire come wintertime. In our review section we'll focus on a couple of our favourites ... not to say that Harold made it easy on us – each wine we tasted was better than the last. The list we compiled was from the bottom up, and with each wine it became harder and harder to come up with our top selection. Thank goodness he had only six.

Wagner Estate was a great place to begin our Erie North Shore visit – his wines tasted wonderful and the people we met made all the difference. We had a feeling of warmth on the inside and felt welcome on the outside.

In closing: Wagner Estate will not change the way you look at wine – nor will it change the wine-world in which we live – but it sure does make it a better place. Visit and prepare to be impressed.



Grape Guy's Pick of the Bunch : Wagner Estate Winery Log House Red

With no website the only place to see or taste this wine is at the winery.

The most difficult part of our reviews is when a winery offers up so many good wines it's hard to pick which one to review. We decided to start off with this great quaffer: Wagner's only truly red wine. Harold called it his "meritage blend" – we called it delicious. With a blend of Baco Noir and other local grapes, it truly is a unique wine, one to hang out with friends pre-BBQ. There's a slight hint of tannin, but a slight chill on the wine mellowed that right out ... we slotted this one on the lighter side of medium bodied, with great fruit on the nose and on the palate. The bottom line on Wagner's red: an excellent value that's great on its own.

Bonus Pick : Wagner Estate Winery Bridal Path

Made with a blend of raspberries and vidal, along with a couple other varietals, this wine is an excellent summer afternoon patio sipper ... raspberry smells hit the nose and then follow through on the palate. It smells like it is going to be a sweet dessert wine, but instead finishes toned down and refreshing. The beautiful color of this wine adds to its charm – and so does the great price - this is an excellent value for a fruity summer sipper you'll find yourself relaxing on the patio with ... and with summer here, what could be better. Our panel came up with some rather interesting food combinations but a light summer salad was our number one choice. There was also talk around the table that this wine could be turned into a spritzer with some club soda and a sprig of mint.

Wagner Estate is located at: 1222 8th Concession Maidstone Ontario



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 : Wagner – Basic and to the point

Wagner's label is ... humble, basic, and to the point – much like the man himself. A horse head on the top draws your attention to the rustic nature of the winery – the house is representative of the house in which the Wagner's live, and is recognizable as such when you visit the winery. The color scheme is muted browns and beiges. All in all, I would say that Wagner lets the wine speak for itself ... the label just makes sure you have the right wine for whatever the occasion.



Wine Event Spotlight : Summer Sounds Delicious

If you're out that way see if you can't tie it in with a visit to one of Quai Du Vin's "Summer Sounds Delicious" events. Quai is located in St. Thomas – just outside of London. For details of what is to come this summer check out the website at <http://www.quaiduvin.com/events.html> - from free stargazing the whole family will enjoy to some hot Latin jazz music in the hot summer sun. Check out the dates and plan your get away.



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!