

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 – 10
August 4, 2005

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OntarioWineReview: *A Note to our Wineries: Value is Key*

Judging from the people I talk to, and the email I receive, it would seem that the average wine consumer is interested in value for their wine dollar. Case-and-point: most people spend between 10 and 20 dollars on a bottle of wine, depending on the occasion. For example, an every day dinner wine costs between 10 and 13 dollars, while a romantic dinner for two sees the price inching closer to the 20 dollar mark.

Let's quickly switch gears here, I'll get back to my point in a minute ... Ontario wineries are springing up all over the place; it seems like there are 4 or 5 new ones in Niagara every year, Prince Edward County has grown to just shy of a dozen, and Lake Erie North Shore – which includes Pelee Island, easily has 6 good wineries with another 5 to 7 scheduled to open next year (strangely, the "official" wine map of Ontario for both regions shows only 2 or 3 wineries in each of these last two areas).

Stay with me now, things are starting to come together. While I consider a higher priced wine fun to try, it won't lure your average everyday wine drinker. That is why when we here at OntarioWineReview judge a winery, we look at the wines they are making below \$20, because that's the price range at which most consumers will be purchasing the majority of their bottles. A winery should have a good quality quaffer at \$15.00 or less because that speaks volumes to your average wine drinker. Value and quality at the lower end of the price scale means that when they go looking for that "extra special bottle" (the bottle that breaks the \$20 glass ceiling), they'll look towards your winery because they remember the quality you delivered within their usual price range. That is why I am not a big fan of the new "high-end wineries" that are popping up. Oh, I like their wines just fine, but you have got to show quality *and* value along with your high priced "show" wines – or the people will stay away in droves.

I find that wine consumers are some of the most loyal around – they may not always stick with Kleenex Brand tissue, consistently buy Crest toothpaste, and they do, on occasion, pick up the generic Aspirin; but they know the wines they like and buy them religiously ... because they know good value for their dollar when they taste it. And I'm sure I don't have to remind you, dear reader, that these days some of the best values are right here in Ontario at your local winery ... I just hope it stays that way.



Grape Guy's Pick of the Bunch : *2 Great Late Summer Sippers*

Visit the winery or their website for more details or to purchase this great wine.

Inniskillin - 2003 Late Autumn Riesling
www.inniskillin.com

This has always been one of my perennial favourites from Inniskillin. This year the label sadly declares that they did not use all Niagara grapes because the harsher than usual winter did a number on the Riesling vines ... but Inniskillin's winemaker has once again crafted a semi-dry patio sipper that would be good as both an aperitif or matched with poached or BBQ'ed white fish, or even some spicy Thai (or so I am told). Slight floral notes on the nose, a crisp clean taste and a medium long finish that leaves a pleasant after-taste. This wine is a sure crowd pleaser and a steal at \$11.25 – which means 1 for you and 1 for your guests.

www.ontariowinereview.com

Erie Shore 2004 Summer Sun Cabernet Rose
www.erieshore.ca

This wine came as quite a surprise – we chilled it right down, as you should with any good rose, popped the cork, poured and ... nothing. Faint smell of sweetness and very little taste - the long faces of everyone involved showed their disappointment. Then it was suggested we move on and try it after it warms a bit and voila - what a difference 20 minutes makes! Vibrant citrus nose with pronounced lime, while on the palate it delivered fresh grapefruit with a dusting of sugar. Moral of the story: chill but not too much. Refreshingly summerish. Forget the lemonade – sit on the patio, pop the cork, and enjoy the Summer Sun.

Also try this:

Summer Sun Salmon ... take a filet of salmon, put in shallow microwavable pie plate. Pour wine over top. Sprinkle with Onion Salt; Basil and Parsley on top. Cover with plastic wrap (poke holes in top) microwave on high for 5 minutes. Remove plastic wrap. Put under broiler for 2 and a half minutes. Serve. Now that's good eatin' ... sweet succulent Summer Sun Salmon in 10 minutes.

Both wines available now at the winery



The Grape Vine : Striking out for the Common Winery

Every so often we'll have a commentary like the one below - we ask you to "chime-in" and give us your opinion. Feedback will be printed in an upcoming edition.

Let me start by saying in no way do I advocate or wish a strike on anybody, but our near "scare" of the LCBO going on strike would have been great news for Ontario's wineries, and it was a shame it did not go through (if only for a week or two). Unlike Quebec, whose LCBO equivalent was on strike for "what seemed like 8 months" (says one insider – in actuality it lasted 12 weeks) – Ontario is self-sufficient in wines, due to the number of great wineries we have. I heard so many talking heads yammer about how bad an LCBO strike would be, and how devastating it would be to the province – but I could only see positives.

Wineries would have picked up the slack of the wine vacuum left by the closure of the LCBO (so would the beer store, bars and breweries). Many Ontarians would have been "forced" to sample the wines that are being offered by local wineries and, as you well know, some of Ontario's (and the world's) best wines are made in small batches which the LCBO never handles because of a volume issue (the LCBO has a minimum quantity requirement to stock all of their stores). A strike, of any length, would have caused an influx of visitors to wineries. More Ontarians would have discovered the great wine being made right in their own backyard and some of the stigma that still remains about Ontario wines would have been lifted, thereby creating a new segment of the market that would praise and buy Ontario wines in the future.

But the question is now moot, the LCBO strike was averted and all goes back to the status quo ... and all those would-be Ontario wine drinkers will never know what they're missing – pity.

What are your thoughts ... Contact us at michael@ontariowinereview.com



Uncorked and Decanted : Nifty gadgets and accessories that enhance wine enjoyment.

Double-Hinged Cork Screw or Pulltap ...

Miraculous is the word I would use for this two step waiter style corkscrew. You've probably seen this one as a giveaway hanging from the neck of some bottles at the LCBO ... but for how good this thing is the price should be for the corkscrew, and the wine should be the giveaway! Instead of one resting point for the bottle lip this one has two – which avoids the bending or breaking of the cork mid-way thru opening.

It works on a two step system: put the helix down the center of the cork as usual ... half way down the lifter is a step which you rest on the bottle lip and pull up ... when the cork gets high enough you raise the fulcrum up to the bottom step and slide the cork out the rest of the way – POP! This is probably one of the easiest corkscrews to use and should be mandatory for every wine drinker. You'll find this one will quickly become your favourite opener and you'll use it right up until all bottles become screw cap ... then you'll lament the passing of the cork.



Wine Event Spotlight : *Jazz and Blues at Hillebrand*

Saturday August 13th from 3pm to 7pm sit back, relax and enjoy as Hillebrand presents this annual event ... my brother went last year and says he had a blast. This year the line up includes: Fathead, Peter Boyd, Georgette Fry, and Kevin Mark Band. Tickets are just \$25. For more details go to www.hillebrand.com.



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!