

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.



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OntarioWineReview: *Lake Erie North Shore – What's The Deal?*

Here is a question that has been rolling around in my head since May ... how in the world has the Lake Erie North Shore region of Ontario's wine country gone un-noticed for so long?

These days, in Ontario anyway, we've been hearing about Prince Edward County this and Prince Edward County that. Now I'm all for new wine regions opening up (gives me more places to visit), and growers taking chances in places nobody thought grapes could be grown. I welcome them with open arms and encourage them whole-heartedly (heck, I envy their moxie); I've even heard rumour about a winery opening up in 2006 in Oxford Station south of Ottawa. But I feel in the minority because I find myself bucking the current trend of Prince Edward County being the "must" place to visit. On a personal note, my visit in May 2004, for the most part, was quite unpleasant – mind you this will not deter me from going back because some new wineries have opened that have some great promise, and hopefully friendlier people manning them. At this time take my advice, for both superb value-oriented wines and great wineries to visit, I would prefer to take my money and drive three hours south-west of Toronto and 30 minutes east of Windsor to the Lake Erie North Shore (LENS) region.

Currently the home to seven wineries, with at least 6 more on the way; including a stunning and expansive undertaking by John Fancsy called Viewpoint Estate – which will definitely make LENS a destination spot, and not just an after-thought to Niagara. The countryside is as beautiful as any you'll see driving through wine country: lush green fields, beautiful vistas, vineyards galore, and wonderful lake front properties with views to die for. But it's not just the places to come, or the scenery, that you will admire here; nor should it be. But before I get to the main reason you should visit, let's take a minute to look at the winemakers of the region who should truly be lauded for their efforts.

The winemakers we met were all passionate about their wines, their surroundings and even other winemakers – their skills really show through in the glass. No matter which winery we visited each winemaker had something nice to say about the others. They spoke of how they had worked in conjunction with one another, or are currently working together on a project. In conversation after conversation it was painfully obvious that they know they lie in the shadow of Niagara, and now PEC, and they have to work together to build up tourism in the area. As one winemaker/owner pointed out to me: "we have approximately 3 million people who live within an hours' drive of here, and most of them live in the US, so that's where we concentrate our advertising efforts. They love our stuff up here." And why shouldn't they. Our tasting experiences were fantastic!

The U.S. knows about it and it's in our own backyard ... now it's time for you to discover this part of the province - and why you may ask? To paraphrase an answer once given about why the young like rock n' roll music: the wine, the wine, the wine. The wines being made here, both reds and whites, are as good as, and in some cases better than, their Niagara counterparts, and heads and tails above most of what PEC is producing now. And the fruit is all grown locally, not shipped in from Niagara.

Don't be fooled by the hype – the newest thing isn't always the best thing. In this writer's opinion, I'll let PEC mellow and age over the next few years (like any fine wine should) and focus more attention on one of the brighter stars in the Ontario wine making firmament: the Lake Erie North Shore wineries. I'm going to keep looking south-west for great wine values and recommend that you do the same. The sooner you start paying attention to that area of the province, the more thankful your palate will be.

As an aside: I'm hoping that more LENS wines will start showing up on LCBO shelves sooner than later, because only then will more people from the east want to journey west to check out the other great wines this region has to offer. Then again, maybe you should just go on your own, because you might be waiting an awfully long time and miss out on some really great wine.



Grape Guy's Pick of the Bunch : 2 from our featured region

Visit the winery or their website for more details or to purchase these great wines.

Pelee Island Winery 2002 Late Harvest Scheurebe - \$9.00 - 375ml (half bottle)

www.peleeisland.com

Let's start with the question most of you are asking ... what the heck is a Scheurebe? It is a cross between a Silvaner and Riesling that has been growing on Pelee Island since 1984 ... and it makes a wonderful, non-standard dessert wine that tastes amazing and will start plenty of conversation. With great apple and melon aromas, we thought this one was going to be a real sweetie – but at a 4 on the sugar code it surprised us as being not too much so – in fact it was just right. On the palate we found honeydew melon and pear that awakened our tastebuds, leading up to a great crisp clean non-lingering finish. With a good chill on it we found this one light and refreshing. This is a very nice wine to serve after dinner or before bed to help you get a good night's sleep with very pleasant dreams. Interestingly enough, this is one of the few Pelee Island offerings that is not available through the LCBO. This Scheurebe is a winery exclusive ... and well worth the trip.

Available at the winery or online through the winery (minimum 6 bottle requirement)

Erie Shore Vineyard 2003 Vidal - \$9.95

www.erieshore.ca

This is another great little semi-sweetie that tastes sweeter than it actually is. This Vidal has the saving grace of having great citrus tones which pull it back from the edge of being overly sweet. Great citrus and floral nose, mild citrus on the palate along with apple, Bartlett pear, kiwi and a pleasant medium-long finish that lingers just long enough until you take your next sip. A fine patio sipper that allows you to while away the hours during the peaceful late summer and early fall. Let the kids go back to school then around mid-afternoon pour yourself a glass and relax ... cause the kids'll be back soon and so will the hectic times they bring with them. So enjoy this mellow moment while it lasts.

Available at the winery



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



Savory Sounds : *Music to set the mood*

Babyface "Grown & Sexy"

This winter Coldplay's album will help you mellow out by the fire with a glass of port or icewine, but this summer my CD player saw lots of action from Babyface's "Grown and Sexy". I have not liked a Babyface album this much since 1993's "For the Cool in You" (which was full of naïve but catchy love songs); then he went off and tried appealing to the younger generation with rap and hip-hop that did not quite hit the mark. 'Face has returned to his forte with the catchy relationship songs of yore, but this time there's a more grown up quality to them, and they have lost much of their naivete, especially in songs like 'Goin' Outta Business' (about breaking up), 'Drama, Love & 'Lationships' (about what we all go through when we're together), and the title track which does it's best to explain why you'll dig this new Babyface album, and why it is the companion to "Cool". You'll find lots to enjoy on this album, which benefits greatly from repeated plays.

An album this good deserves a wine to match its title, "Grown & Sexy", try the Chateau des Charmes 1999 Cabernet Merlot (recommended in newsletter 2) to pass the night away. And you'll find some tracks might just provoke you to get up and dance with your glass held high ... don't be shy we know you've done it before.



Wine Event Spotlight : 4th Annual Harvest Hoedown

Bluegrass music and dancing ... what more could you want ... well wine of course. Colio Estates has fun for the whole family with free admission to the 4th Annual Harvest Hoedown. Food will also be available for purchase, which will surely go well with your glass of choice. Visit www.colio.com for further details.



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!

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