

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 – 13
September 15, 2005

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OntarioWineReview: *Looks at Fruit Wineries*

Have you ever tried fruit wine? I know, I hear you saying it – grapes are fruit, therefore, yes I have tried fruit wine. But grape wine is not fruit wine. Fruit wine is considered to be made with anything but grapes ... strawberries, raspberries, pears, apples, cranberries, peaches – and a wide variety of other fruits ... so I ask again: have you ever tried fruit wine?

Everybody seems to have a story to share about some derelict relative who used to make blueberry wine, dandelion wine, or some other form of funky wine from vaguely exotic or sketchy sources, like pumpkin, banana or tree bark. From there, most people will tell you that it was some of the most “interesting” stuff they ever tasted, or the foulest, most potent booze they have ever had in their lives. Most people will say, “I’ll never forget it”. Today, fruit wines have come a long way from your uncle in his garage. They have gone more mainstream, and in some cases, fruit winemakers are making some of the most innovative and interesting wines you’ll ever try at some of the most remote wineries you’ll ever visit.

Unlike Niagara, or any of the other 3 major wine regions of Ontario (which have a heavy concentration of wineries within a short driving distance of one another), fruit wineries are scattered throughout Ontario: Guelph, St. Thomas, Brampton, Markham, London, Alvinston, Woodstock, Aylmer ... just to name a handful, and others are popping up all over the place. Each one specializes in something they’re sure you’ve never tasted before. Cox Creek has an Iced Spiced Apple; Downey’s an Iced Cranberry; Muskoka Lakes does Cranberry like no other and Archibald’s is famous for everything apple. That’s the key in the fruit wine business. Make something unique to entice visitors, or fold. Their signature product might bring you in, but all these wineries make other amazing wines, both grape and fruit, that are very interesting. Who would’ve thought you’d find a delicious late harvest Gewurtz in Guelph; or an intriguing Merlot in Brampton, at of all places, a fruit winery! But forget the grape variety wines for a moment – it’s the amazing fruit wines you’ll sample that’ll really make you stand up and take notice.

The unfortunate part is that fruit wineries struggle with both identity, as well as getting customers. One owner informed me “Fruit wineries need something else to draw people to stay afloat. If not for our market store, we would have gone under long ago. The way we have it set up is that the people flow from the store to the winery out of curiosity having never tried a fruit wine. If we had set it up across the parking lot, in it’s own building, like we originally thought of doing, we would have blown our brains out.” He concluded by saying, “most people are thrilled with the wines, once they’ve tasted them. Some like them better than grape wine.”

From what I can figure, one of the reasons people love fruit wine is that it takes the guessing game out of wine. Pick up a late harvest Vidal and smell apples, pears, mangos, honey, and apricots ... a Cabernet Franc elicits green peppers and spice ... Cab Sauv, mocha and vanilla ... and a Sauv Blanc will get you sniffing at grass clippings, citrus and (sniff, sniff) what is that smell? And of course, tastes will run you all over the map. On the other hand, when you get a strawberry wine in your glass it smells exactly like ... strawberries; the same holds true with peach, blueberry, cherry, kiwi, and other fruit wines. And, surprisingly, it also tastes that way.

Still wondering why you should try fruit wine ... let’s try this one: fruit wines are a great way to get your non-wine drinking friends to start trying, and drinking wine. Many non-wine drinkers are that way due to the heavy tannins and bitter taste in wines they have tasted in the past; this is usually the main reason why they were turned off the fermented grape in the first place. Fruit wines rarely, if ever, have heavy tannins, if any tannin at

all. Your non-wine buddies may find themselves drinking fruit wines and enjoying them. Believe it or not, that's only a few steps away from joining you on the back porch, in front of the Bar-B-Q, with a Sauv and a steak. Fruit wines are that important first step to the enjoyment of all wine.

Visit your local fruit winery or take a day-trek down the highways and bi-ways of Ontario to search them out. More information can be found at www.fruitwinesofontario.com. You'll be amazed at the exceptional values, great tastes, innovative products and, above all, an exciting experience for your tastebuds. Fruit wineries want you to come visit them – and they are well worth the trip.



Grape Guy's Pick of the Bunch : *A Mixed Fruit Basket and a Red Currant*
Visit the winery or their website for more details or to purchase this great wine.

Applewood Farm Winery 2004 Elora's Harvest - \$9.95
www.applewoodfarmwinery.com

Talk about innovative ... winemaker and owner Matthew Passafiume named this secret blend after one of his two daughters (there's another called Eden – and she too has a wine named after her). There seems to be a little of everything in this wine, including some previous vintages of Elora's Harvest. Matthew has been making this blend since 1999 ... the same way each year – and every year he adds new ingredients to the mix ... that way he can always claim "there's a little bit in here from my very first batch". This year's harvest includes: strawberries, apples, peaches, pears, cranberries, wild blueberries, Niagara grapes, cherries, raspberries, and honey ... and it is a blend not to be missed. It's like drinking a really good spiked fruit punch or putting your nose into a freshly harvested basket of fruit. Enjoy both the flavour sensations on your tongue and the scents in your nostrils, as you try to pick out all ten ingredients. This is a great wine to play guessing games with your friends: See who can name the most fruits used in the mix – the best here at OntarioWineReview was 8 of 10.

Available at the winery

Downey's Estate Winery Red Currant - \$14.95
www.downeysfarm.on.ca

Is it a red? Is it a white? Maybe a rose? Nope, this is Red Currant wine and it's something unique to Downey's. I had never tasted a red currant in my life, so I had no idea what to expect from this wine, nor had most of the tasting circle. Great colour leads this one off – it shimmers in the glass and in the bottle – it has the colour of raw salmon. A touch of sweetness on the palate makes this an ideal match with all kinds of interesting dishes. One of the comments made: "You think it's going to be tart like cranberry but it surprises you." The light flavour matches the colour and is very easy sipping. As to the question of what a red currant wine smells like? Like red currants obviously – although none of us would have been able to pick that one out blind. If you're looking for a great fruit wine that will match with so many dishes without being over-powering – red currant is your answer. Instead of grabbing your typical rose try this change from the ordinary to the extraordinary. Cheers.

Available at the winery



The Grape Vine : *Submit your opinion and become a part of the OWR tasters circle.*
We love feedback so Chime In!

Thank you to Art Miller of Detroit, fellow Ontario wine lover, who sent us a wonderful note following our Lake Erie North Shore article ... here's an excerpt:

"[My wife Dianne and I] discovered the Lake Erie North Shore wine region one day when out for a ride in the beautiful SW Ontario countryside and have since fallen in love with the wineries of the area ... Our wine cellar includes a special section devoted to LENS wines ... Thank you for shinning the spotlight on the Lake Erie North Shore wine region. We visit Beamsville, Jordan and the Niagara Peninsula often and enjoy their wines but the LENS is still our favorite ... place to visit."

Contact us at michael@ontariowinereview.com



Beautiful Bottles : ... or should I say Tetra-Paks

With all this talk about fruit wines it might make you think of fruit juice, which in turn brings to mind juice boxes or Tetra-Paks. While wondering thru the liquor store a few weeks back, I saw a huge colourful display for something called French Rabbit. As I got closer I noticed it was wine in a juice-style container – minus the straw (pity). Very colourful packaging, to say the least (lots of oranges, purples, greens and reds); and in three yummy flavours (Chardonnay, Merlot, Cab Sauv). I also noticed the same kind of packaging in the California section by a company called Vendage, and from what I hear the Three Thieves are coming soon. Here's where you, dear reader, get to say your piece and in the process get a fun home-work assignment (after-all it is back to school time). I have yet to sample the wares from these tetra-paks, but if you have, please drop me an email and let me know what you think of the product inside. Happy tasting.



Wine Event Spotlight : Toronto's Gourmet Food and Wine Expo 2005

That time of year is upon us: Toronto's Gourmet Food & Wine Expo 2005 is just around the corner. It happens at the Metro Toronto Convention Centre South Building, 222 Bremner Blvd. Admission is \$15 and sampling tickets are just 50 cents each. There will be 250 exhibitors from 12 countries pouring wines, beers, and spirits from around the world ... and of course food, food, and more food. Toronto's "Best Party" runs Nov. 17-20. Visit www.foodandwineshow.ca ... there's also a \$3 off coupon on the site if you look for it.



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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