

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 – 14
September 29, 2005

In this Edition

- **Ontario Wine Review:** *WINERY REVIEW – Creekside Estate Winery*
 - **Grape Guy's Pick of the Bunch:** *A Couple of Great Ageable Reds*
 - **The WOW Factor:** *Check out this Barrel Cellar*
 - **Wine Event Spotlight:** *A Toronto Winery has a Party*
-



OntarioWineReview: *WINERY REVIEW - Creekside 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.

When you talk about a “cute little winery” Creekside should come to mind. We visited in the late spring during the Niagara New Vintages Festival and had a grand time looking around the property and seeing one of the most unique barrel cellars in the area.

Creekside is a quaint and cozy kind of winery with an inviting walkway with steps at the end leading up to the front door. Before stepping into the tasting room, our noses were accosted by the smells of a pre-summer BBQ coming from the patio immediately to our right. A handful of tables were set up under an awning that stretched out from the side of the brown wood building housing the tasting room. The menu posted on the board outside the patio entrance promised a wide variety of foods: from quiche and salad to venison, chicken, salmon and elk. Fruit plates and a daily dessert round out the menu. We observed the patrons, with broad smiles on their faces, enjoying their lunch with a glass of wine in one hand, a delicious (looking) lunch in front of them, on a beautiful spring afternoon, what more could one ask for ... except of course more wine. We opened and walked through the tasting room door.

Entering Creekside's wine store is like walking into a moderately-sized master bedroom of a house (bigger than the other rooms, an en-suite washroom and a few pieces of furniture, but still bedroom size). On the right side, is a tasting bar approximately 12 feet in length; on the left side, a much smaller elevated cash desk. The shelves are jam-packed with wine and a variety of awards hang from the walls and necks of bottles. If you need it, the aforementioned washroom is at the back of the store in a narrow hallway opposite the wrought-iron racks of icewines and late harvests.

Creekside has the definite feel of a “cottage winery” and what's more the wines are superb and the staff is both friendly and knowledgeable about their surroundings and the wines they pour. The seeming smallness of it all gives Creekside a very homey atmosphere. Our server, Helen, seemed to take us into her confidence when describing the wines, talking about the property, and the winemaker – and in doing so made us feel like one of the family. Voices are also kept on the low side so as not to disturb other conversation going on (I would guess this comes from being in such close proximity to everyone else in the room). Had there been more than 25 people in the room, I would have called it cramped. As it was, there were about a dozen of us and we were comfortable. (Ed. note: the “smallness” of Creekside is in look alone, because they have teamed up with one of the biggest names in golf, Mike Weir, to help him start his own winery and make his wine. Creekside also has expansion plans of their own for the coming year ... proving the old adage that looks can be deceiving).

Creekside is definitely a must place to visit on your next wine trek through the Niagara region ... it's cozy, cute, quaint quality makes it ideal for the enjoyment of their wines. We were poured some excellent reds that were drinking quite well now but will also benefit from ageing for many years to come. The relaxed atmosphere only further enhances your visit. Now, what about that barrel cellar you ask ... that's the “wow factor”.



Grape Guy's Pick of the Bunch : **A Couple of Great Ageable Reds**
Visit www.creeksidewine.com for more details or to purchase these great wines.

Creekside 2001 Laura's Blend (Meritage) – \$17.95

It's young but definitely ageable if you have the patience to wait that is ... otherwise drink up and enjoy it right now because it is wonderful. Hints of new leather-coat hit the nose hinting at, even before the first sip, a full-bodied blend. The tannins are the next thing to grab you, what many would consider in your face – but this just enhances my thoughts about age-worthiness. Finally, when you get past the original leather smell and the tannin grip the fruit begins to show through ... as the wine warms in the glass it's the fruitiness that really shines through while the persistent tannins grab at the back palate. By the end of the bottle we were chewing on sediment, which made the wine bitter, so I would definitely recommend decanting it to avoid the unpleasant end to a excellent bottle of wine ... if drinking now, decanting will also aid in smoothing out those firm tannins; otherwise, might I suggest buying a few bottles to test how this one will smooth out over time. Kudos to Creekside for a stellar drinking red for now and for the future, at a very reasonable price to quality ratio.

Creekside 2003 Shiraz - \$15.95

Back in early-June, we sampled this potent beauty when she was first bottled ... during the Niagara New Vintages Festival. Creekside had it on for limited sale until it was ready for release later in the summer. Back then, it still showed some greenness and rustic tannins – but with great mid-term cellaring potential – and the fruit was just beginning to peak around the corner and start to show it's face. Three months later we are happy to report the bottle-shock is over and she has shaped up to be one heck of a great wine, with potential to only get better. The nose has definite aromas of black cherry and black pepper, we also picked up very faint whiffs of red and green pepper, which should disappear over the next few months. On the tastebuds hearty cherries and raspberries with a medium finish - it starts out smooth in the mouth and ends with a tannic grip at the end. Reactions ranged from "I really like it" to "Fantastic" to "I gotta get me more of this!" – and at the great price of 15.95 so should you.

Both wines are available at the winery or on-line at www.creeksidewine.com



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!**

Details about the inaugural Crystal Cork Awards will be on the website soon.

Contact us at michael@ontariowinereview.com



The WOW Factor :

Every winery has a uniqueness to it ... be it the tasting bar, the barrel cellar, the gift shop ... something besides just the wine – it is here where we highlight another reason you should visit.

It's not just for the cozy relaxed atmosphere of Creekside. While there, see if you can't sneak a peak at the barrel cellar. During our festival visit, they were sampling wine and cheese pairings in the confines of the cellar. As previously mentioned the tasting room would feel very cramped with the festival-sized crowds ... and on the hot late-spring day, the cellar offered relief from the heat, it was cool and roomy. Our guide took us around the side of the building, across a little path to some large maroon wooden doors that opened into the belly of what seemed to be a hillside (turns out it is a man-made grassy knoll). The doors opened and we walked down a sloped cement hallway deeper into the belly of the hill. The hallway led into a large room with arced-columns that reach the ceiling, the light is provided by an old-fashioned chandelier with candle-style lighting, and barrels line the walls three to four high. Off the main room are little ante-rooms that house more barrel stacks ... if you allow your mind to wander you could imagine yourself in the catacombs of some ancient monastery. For your information, the cellar's capacity is around 600 barrels. Quite a cool little place both literally and figuratively ... when we emerged from the cellar, back into the light and stifling June heat, you realize why, at that moment, you would prefer to be a cask of wine – they get to rest comfortably in the cool cellar below!



Wine Event Spotlight : A Toronto Winery has a Party – Sunday October 2, 1 to 5 pm

Southbrook Winery has been around since 1991, located just north of Toronto in Richmond Hill. Many people over the years have perceived them mainly as a fruit winery due to their excellent award-winning Framboise, and other fruit wines. May I suggest heading to their open house to help change your perception. On October 2nd (from 1 to 5 pm), Southbrook celebrates 10 years of “Triomphe” wine excellence ... 10 years? 1991? ... 10 years is how long their signature series of wines “Triomphe” (reserve) have been around. Cooking and barrel-making demonstrations; food and wine pairings, tours, tastings and plenty more to see and do. And how much does one pay for this great day out at the winery? Nothing ... let the celebration begin. For more information or directions visit www.southbrook.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!

© OntarioWineReview.com 2005. All rights reserved.