

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 – 15
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OntarioWineReview: *New Regulations*

It's late in the evening and I'm sitting here staring at my wine racks, paying special attention to all the VQA initials on capsules scattered throughout the rack – and I think to myself "I like VQA wine ... I like Ontario wine." Not a revelation that should come as any surprise considering my website is devoted to the enjoyment of Ontario wine, but Ontario wine has been on my mind over the past few weeks because of our grape crop and it's predicted shortfall this year.

As many of you know Ontario was hit with another harsh winter last year and many vines suffered losses and in some cases were killed completely, the loss was to such a degree that this year's crop is going to be somewhere in the vicinity of ~18,000 tons, instead of the usual ~52,000 tons. Combine that with the absolutely perfect grape growing weather, offered up to us by the grape Gods this spring and summer, and you have the makings of an incredibly interesting vintage - many fantastic wines will surely come out of it. But the shortfall is going to leave some of our wineries without the capacity to make those moneymaking wine blends – "cellared in Ontario" wines - (which do not require 100% Ontario grape content) while the pricier, and in my opinion, better, VQA stuff ages to perfection in barrel. To further clarify, by law, these blends are usually made from 30% Ontario grapes, the balance comes from off-shore grapes (Chile, Australia, Italy, etc) – of course this is an over-simplification but you understand the math. Because of this year's shortfall, the Wine Council and the Grape Growers petitioned the government to lower requirements for percentage of Ontario grapes in "cellared in Ontario" wines. Recognizing the situation as dire, the government has granted a lowering of the percentage from 30% to 1% for this year only. A silly, arbitrary number to be sure, but 1% it is. That way those great Ontario VQA's that I am looking at on my wine racks can still be made from 100% Ontario grapes ... in limited quantities to be sure, but still 100% Ontario goodness.

Another upside is going to be the changes at the LCBO. Currently the signage at the liquor store does not differentiate between VQA wines and cellared in Ontario wines (which are those blends we discussed earlier). Most people never make the differentiation between the two – if it's in the Ontario section of the store then it's Ontario wine: Ontario made wine - yes, Ontario cellared wine -yes, but not 100% Ontario grapes. Now the LCBO is being asked to, and will comply with, regulations that will make it clear to consumers the wines born and bred in Ontario as compared to, for lack of a better term "mixed breed" wines – so now when you go to the LCBO you'll be able to differentiate between "cellared in" and 100% Ontario grown VQA wine. And truthfully that is the best thing to come out of these two rulings. The 1% Ontario grape inclusion does not matter, because it is an arbitrary and menial number just to keep "some" Ontario content ... but it's high-time the LCBO made it easier for people to know where their "Ontario" wine is really coming from.



Grape Guy's Pick of the Bunch : 2 to Remember Summer

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

Sad but true, summer is now most definitely behind us, and that means it's time to start thinking about pulling out those cockle-warming reds we all know and love as "winter-reds". But as a tribute to this past summer we offer up these two great, reminiscent of summer sippers:

Stoney Ridge 2004 Muscat Ottonel – 14.95 ... 11.5 %

www.stoneyridge.com

This wine yielded some very interesting results during our tastings. At a recent dinner celebrating Stoney Ridge's 20th Anniversary, this wine lead off the evening with appetizers of artisan cheeses, crackers, bread, and fresh fruit ... it was the perfect companion for this beautiful late-summer evening patio get together. Hints of sweet honeydew melon and floral aromas ... followed with luscious apples, pears, honey and melon on the palate. Of course this delightful tasting vino prompted us to buy a few bottles to bring back to "the lab". Here's where we learned the interesting bits about this Jeckyl and Hyde wine. Chilling the bottle brought out a heavy citrus taste with muted melon flavours; but as the wine warmed in the glass (i.e.: the glass started to sweat) the citrus subsided and the sweet apples, pears, honeydew and cantaloupe melons returned to the taste buds ... a great experiment to try at home with this delicious wine, and see what side of this Muscat you enjoy.

Available at the winery or on-line at the winery's website.

Featherstone 2004 Topaz - \$12.00 ... 12%

www.featherstonewinery.ca

Take a so-so day (one where the first few wineries don't seem to be cutting it); sprinkle in an unscheduled stop; add a friendly little dog named Bocci that greets you as you come up the drive and leads you to the tasting room; plus a winery that looks like it's run out of the back of someone's house, and you've got the makings of how we found this little gem. Featherstone's Topaz (a Gerwurztraminer / Riesling combo) is a satisfying sipper with layers of smells on the nose and a clean crisp refreshing mouth feel. Start off with a citrus nose that also has floral notes and definite granny smith apple aromas. Two of these smells actually follow through on the palate as both the granny smith apple (all the taste without the mouth-puckering tartness) and a sweet citrus taste dance around on the tongue. Talk about a fun wine to drink with friends, family or even a friendly little dog – this is most definitely it!

Available at the winery or on-line at the winery's website.



The Grape Vine : *Submit your opinion and become a part of the OWR tasters circle.*

Should either of these wines be a candidate for our Ontario Wine Review Crystal Cork Awards? Chime In!

Contact us at michael@ontariowinereview.com



Raise your Spirits : *Advice about things we "wine" about: like stains and hangovers.*

Gum, Mints, Mouthwash a-go-go ...

While visiting a winery recently a gentleman bellied up to the bar beside me and asked for a tasting ... then he realized he was chewing gum and that his tasting potential was limited, he ended up foregoing the tasting altogether. Now I know while driving I enjoy chewing on a stick of Trident, or popping a Tic-Tac into my mouth; and have, on occasion, rinsed with Scope too close to the time of a winery tour and tasting (not wanting to offend other patrons with morning breath or other nauseating mouth odors). But there are a number of ways to get rid of that minty fresh taste before it ruins what could potentially be the wine experience of a lifetime.

Some wineries provide crackers or bread for between tastings – it would be a good idea to eat a few *before* you taste. Water is "the universal solvent" - one of the few things I remember from High School science class, and in this case it will help wash away that unwanted flavour (if not work to sufficiently mute it). Of course some

wineries don't have either, so the next best thing is to rinse with wine. Ask for a little extra in your glass (or get a second helping), slosh a bit around in your mouth and either spit or swallow it when you are done; make no judgment about the wine ... 9 times out of 10 it will taste awful. Then try the wine again, but this time use a little more panache – paying attention to what you're trying.



Wine Event Spotlight : *Gourmet Food & Wine Expo – tutors your taste buds ... and a chance to win*

Back in the September 15th edition of the newsletter we mentioned that you should mark you calendar for the 11th Annual Gourmet Food and Wine Expo November 17 – 20 in Toronto. As we continued to research this expo we found much more to do than just go to the show. They will also be presenting the largest wine appreciation program in Canada. Highlights include: Real Wines for Real People; The Ultimate Woman's Guide to Wine; The War of the Noirs; Shirazzamatazz; Clueless about Wine and about 35 other seminars devoted to the appreciation of the fermented grape. Go to www.foodandwineshow.ca and click on the large "Tutored Tasting" box halfway down the page for more details.

OntarioWineReview has gotten our grape-stained hands on a couple of pairs of passes to the show that we'd like to giveaway. Send us an email telling us your favourite Ontario wine and why; we'll randomly select two winners from all entries received. Winners' names will be published in our October 27th newsletter. Entries must be received no later than 11:59pm October 21, 2005. Type "I Want Those Passes" in the subject line and don't forget to give us your complete mailing address so we can mail you your spoils.



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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