

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 – 16
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In this Edition

- **Ontario Wine Review:** *WINERY REVIEW – Colio Estate Wines*
 - **Grape Guy's Pick of the Bunch:** *One white and one red – both wonderful*
 - **The Wow Factor:** *Besides the wine check this out!*
 - **Wine Event Spotlight:** *Taste of the Season*
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OntarioWineReview: *WINERY REVIEW - Colio Estate Wines*

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.

This year at the Ontario Wine Awards, Carlo Negri was honoured with the winemaker of the year award – and why not, he's been honouring us with fantastic wines since Colio's very first crush back in 1980 – that's 25 years of winemaking here in Canada, because, not surprisingly Colio has been making excellent wines from the get go when Carlo came over from Italy where he already had garnered his master winemaker credentials. We decided to check out the wines of this master at arguably one of the longest continuously running wineries in Ontario ... but first things first – we had to find it ...

“Colio ... Colio ... now where is it?” I said to my passenger as I cruised on by the entrance.

“I think you just passed it.” She informed me as I slammed on the brakes. “Was anybody behind you?” She asked.

“I hope not.” I answered checking my rearview mirror. Thankfully no one was.

Thus began our visit to Colio Estate with me u-turning in the middle of a side street in order to get back to Colio. It's not that Colio is hidden away, nor is it a small place, you just have to be paying close attention because Colio blends right into it's surroundings.

Pulling into the parking lot the first thing we noticed were the vineyards and the beautiful gazebo to our right – this must be where they hold events and weddings ... right there smack dab in the middle of the vineyard – very rustic, very beautiful, a wine lovers nirvana. We then made our way to the front door, which was framed on both sides by flowering plants and a colourful plaque on the right hand side that proclaimed, subtly, that you were indeed at the right place (if your destination was Colio Estate Wines that is).

When you first walk in you are confronted by a sign proclaiming Colio is “The Pride of Lake Erie North Shore”, right there in the foyer; there's also a choice to be made between two-rooms. The room on the right houses mostly the white wines with a small office in the right hand corner of the room. The room on the left seems to be the home to most of their reds, the cash register and the tasting bar ... we chose the room with the tasting bar. As we looked around the store, as we customarily do before settling in for a tasting, we checked out the various wines being offered, and saw plenty we wanted to try; more than I am sure we were legally allowed, there were definitely some tough decisions ahead.

As we bellied up to the bar to request our selections, a blackboard behind the bar caught our eye. Written along the top was “fare du jour” and chalked in below were the wines that were open for sampling ... and there was plenty to chose from – including our respective selections. As we sat sampling and savouring the wines, we were told that “Carlo loves his Merlots” and they certainly were delicious; from the non-VQA to the VQA CEV Signature series ... all with differences in taste and mouth feel, but all very lush and drinkable. We were even treated to a CEV Signature Series 2002 Cabernet Sauvignon which had a sweet yellow pepper smell and firm tannin grip on the palate. This one is a cellar dweller for sure, we recommend a minimum of 5 years before

cracking this baby - but there are definitely hints of what's to come. This wine is going to get better and better as the years role by and is definitely a good investment for a special occasion down the road (see our wine section of the website for the full review). We had an array of other tastings from dry Chardonnays and Rieslings to Cabernet Francs and Meritage blends. We finished with a flourish of great value and delicious tasting late harvests including Vidal, Riesling and a very deceptive Cab Franc (the smell of a 14, the finish of a 2 – rated an 8) all for under \$20 (see the review of the Cab Franc Late Harvest in our wine review section of the website).

The staff was pleasant on this Sunday afternoon and the store was rather quiet. In fact, we were the only two people in the place (we were informed that late Sunday afternoon was not a particularly busy time) so we received lots of attention and information about the wines we tasted. Our hostess was a month into her tour of duty and had to refer to her notes a fair bit, but she was pleasant about it and un-necessarily apologized for checking her facts when answering our questions; we always prefer to get the right information then not (by now I'm sure she's a pro).

All-in-all we were impressed with Colio ... the staff was nice, the wines were excellent, the ambiance comfortable and with an abundance of wines to chose from there is something for everyone's palate and budget.



Grape Guy's Pick of the Bunch : One white and one red – both wonderful
Visit www.colio.com for more details or to purchase these great wines.

Colio 2002 CEV Unoaked Chardonnay - \$13.95

In this seemingly all oak all the time wine-world in which we live it's good to see someone bucking the trend and moving forward with an unoaked product, namely this lovely offering from Colio. Starting off with the look: a beautiful light yellow colour in the glass; follow that with a quick swirl and sniff that brings out the citrus tones, lemon, sweet pink grapefruit and a mild mineral aroma. On the palate the same flavours follow: splashes of lemon and grapefruit. The wine itself does not hide behind heavy oak, it's fruit forward, elegant, lush in the mouth and pairs well with lighter fare such as salads or buttered potato. The suppression of alcohol in the taste with an abundance of fruitiness makes for a great lunch-time wine with a medium finish.

Colio 2002 CEV Gamay Noir – Barrel Fermented - 13.95

Gamay has long been one of those grapes I love, so I was eager to try this offering from Colio. Just released onto the LCBO's Vintage shelves our timing could not be better to bring it to your attention. This Gamay is a surprising treat to those expecting something light and playful because you'll soon find our this Gamay is more full-bodied than most. Aromas of black cherry and oak are the first things to accost the nose. On the palate the oakiness follows through carrying with it hints of cinnamon, cardamom and some mild tannins with a pleasant long finish. This is not your typical Gamay ... then again Colio is not your typical winery.

Both wines are available at the winery, on-line, at the LCBO and in "Wine Region of Colio Estate" stores – see www.colio.com for details and locations.



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!

In our last edition we offered free tickets to the upcoming Gourmet Food and Wine Expo (Nov. 18-20), our two winners of a pair of tickets each were Paul Cortright of London and Mary Ferguson of Oakville ... congratulations.

We have been able to get our hands on another couple pairs of tickets – that's 4 in total – another two winners will be announced next newsletter. This one is open to all readers of the website. Simply email me at the address below with your name and address and we'll select winners at random – it's just that easy.

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.

The wow factor at Colio happens before the wine is even tasted ... before you see the two rooms loaded with a variety of wines and awards ... even before you walk through the front door. Colio's wow factor happens on the driveway and in the parking lot. Imagine: you're driving in small town Ontario, you make a series of rights and lefts to find yourself in what seems to be a residential part of town (explains why I whizzed by); the trees and shrubbery seem to envelope Colio into their surroundings, making it part of the landscape instead of the show piece it is. It's unobtrusive architecture blends in quite well with the area – a credit to the developers and planners of the winery. When finally you turn into the long driveway your expectations have been muted to thinking of a little winery; but as you drive further along into the grounds Colio opens up to you. The large building on your right proves itself to be even more expansive on the inside. The vineyards straight ahead of you are lush and green, yielding some of the best fruit in Ontario (which, in turn, gets coaxed into some of the best wine Ontario has to offer) and the gazebo slightly to your right, surrounded by those very same vineyards, is a stunning sight to see. When you get out of the car and look around the word most used is "wow". "Cool" is a close second.



Wine Event Spotlight : Taste of the Season – November weekends in Niagara-on-the-Lake

Shifting focus from the lake Erie north shore back to Niagara-on-the-Lake where we see that the Taste of the Season is fast approaching. Weekends in November (12/13; 19/20; 26/27) wineries in NOTL are matching appetizers with some of their best. Passports to the event are \$30 and there is always a little keepsake to pick up at the end of your day. Call Second Harvest at 416-408-2594 for details and to buy your passport. You can also check out www.wineriesofniagaraonthelake.com/ to see what is being offered.

Second Harvest picks up and delivers high quality, fresh food to social service programs in Toronto. They currently provide meals to some 13,000 people: children's breakfast programs, senior's on fixed incomes; women fleeing domestic abuse; the homeless and others who have fallen on hard times. Go to www.secondharvest.ca for more 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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