

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 – 20
December 22, 2005

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OntarioWineReview: *WINERY REVIEW - 13th Street 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.

In the last 6 months OWR has visited 13th Street Winery 3 times. That's a lot, considering we usually visit each winery a minimum of once a year ... so three visits in such a short period of time is a rarity; but this winery kept luring us back with various events and a fabulous array of wines. We also wanted to make sure the wines weren't just some fluke of palate fatigue (after a long day of tasting) or some other such flaw in our collective tasting notes. We are happy to report that they are not some crazy blip on the radar; the reason for our frequent visits was that we actually liked the place and it's wines. 13th Street is a bastion for wine lovers. Don't be disillusioned when you pull up, there's nothing fancy looking about the place. Instead, it's the wines you'll find inside that make it so special. So let's take a trip to 13th Street together.

Located north-west of Creekside on a street surprisingly(?), if not appropriately, named '13th street' ... this winery is as small as they come. A parking lot out front accommodates about 5 cars snugly (but with ample room for more out back, to accommodate the overflow of cars during open houses and other events). What looks like a small white shed with a white door, turns out to be the main entrance to the tasting room ... and that's where it all begins.

You enter the small tasting room (about 20 x 30 feet) with a tasting bar on the right hand side and an old bedroom-style armoire in the far left hand corner that houses the wines for both tasting and sale. It's not a huge selection, maybe a dozen different kinds, but they hit all the varieties: whites, reds, roses and bubbly. *Everything* we tasted was of top-notch quality and taste. 13th Street has the feel of a cottage winery, and to that end they only produce about 2700 cases a year. Combining their small output of wine with their low profile setting, you wouldn't expect much hype, but a good number of articles, reviews and awards have been written about, and garnered by, 13th Street. You'll find them hanging on the walls of the tasting room. Many of these are for their wonderful reserve Gamays that sell out quickly each year, along with most of their other wines. So it is not surprising that during their new-release-open-houses (a twice a year event) the flock of followers of this winery can be seen streaming up the driveway, eager to taste, and buy, their latest offerings.

Open house events make the place look much bigger. Every door is open for exploration and browsing, from the production facility to the storage area. Parking is out back, beside the vineyards, and the entrance is at the back of the building by means of a large garage door. The production facility is cleared to accommodate the visitors and there are tasting tables set up around the perimeter; most of the wines are open for sampling, and are paired with an array of fun foods. The winter open house gets a little more crowded; if it's too cold, the garage door remains closed (as it was for their event on December third this year), but for those wanting to sample great wines, it's well worth the cramped quarters. When you visit, you'll probably also meet, or at least see, Jazz – their beautiful Golden Retriever cross ... at 10 years old he is a great host and quite friendly. In my opinion, small wineries should always have a friendly "greeter" dog because they make the place all the more memorable and homey.

"Limited production" translates into limited hours of operation. 13th Street is open most Saturdays and Sundays during the spring, summer and fall months – but is closed from January thru March. I would suggest checking

the website or calling to confirm times.

I highly recommend 13th Street for a number of reasons: there's the great wines and friendly atmosphere, the great wines and cottage winery feel, some great wines with limited production, and oh yeah, they have some great wines too! All this combines to make this a must visit ... as my mother used to say "you'll feel like you have found a find" – and that will make you feel very special indeed. When you do visit, keep this in mind: when you find the wine you like, buy lots ... "limited production" also means never again – and to miss out on some of your favourites would surely be a tragedy.



Grape Guy's Pick of the Bunch : *Gamay and a "Mulligan's Stew"*

Visit www.13thstreetwines.com for more details or to purchase these great wines.

13th Street Winery 2004 Erv's Burger Blend - \$16.00

Spicy, peppery, tannic, full bodied ... are the 4 main terms our panel used to describe this self-professed "Mulligan's Stew" of wine. Everything but the kitchen sink has been thrown into the mix: Cab Franc and Sauv, Merlot, Gamay, and Pinot Noir ... it's a little closed up right now but with a little mid-term cellaring it should open up nicely – a little decanting would also help. At present, it's got a lot of body and lots of bite ... there's even a hint of cherry on the palate. It pairs great with meat, and of course, burgers, as indicated.

13th Street Winery 2003 Sandstone Vineyard Estate Bottle Gamay Noir - \$20.00

After trying 3 unconventional blends (Noirs, Reds, Erv's) we were happy to see and taste something recognizable and yet completely different. 13th Street is known for their Gamay – the reserve wins medals year after year ... this is their "standard issue" and it is wonderful – we can see where the reserve gets its reputation and pedigree. Black cherry and dark fruit are most predominant on the nose. In the mouth it starts off bold but softens to become smooth and easy with a great lingering finish. Near the end I think I perceived a hint of bittersweet chocolate, which combined well with the subtlety of black raspberry that was also present. Delicious, delightful, succulent and lush – all great words to describe this fantastic offering.

These wines are only available at the winery or through their website.

We have also added a review of the newly released 13th Street Winery 'Noirs' to the website – so check it out.



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



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.

In this one instance the "Wow Factor" of 13th Street is the wine – usually we focus your attention onto something else within the winery (awards room/gift shop) or out-of-doors (the view/the property) – but this winery is situated in and amongst vineyards, which look surprising like vineyards. There's the quaintness of the

winery: the tasting room is small and plain; the awards and reviews, although impressive, cannot be seen from the road, nor can you drive around the property to see them. There is also nothing on the outside that will lure you in; in fact, if it weren't for the simple sign on the front lawn, you probably would whiz right on by, not even realizing that you have past one of the true hidden gems of the Niagara Wine Industry. Nope, this time it's the wine you stop for – try as many as you like, and buy as much as you can - these fabulous wines don't hang around long ... and one taste will tell you why. Most people have not heard of 13th Street Winery – and that truly is a shame, but for those of us who have found them, we keep coming back, and now you know why. Visit soon and join the ranks of those who make this worthwhile pilgrimage.



Wine Event Spotlight : *Icewine Passport Giveaway ... your chance to win*

OntarioWineReview has gotten our grape stained paws on something sweet, and we're willing to share. In our last newsletter we told you about the Niagara Icewine Festival, January 13 to 22. Our friends at the Niagara Grape and Wine Festival office have provided us with 5 pairs of touring passports so that you and someone special can taste the delights of Niagara's sweetness. Email your name and address, with postal code, to michael@ontariowinereview.com and put "I'd Love to Go" in the subject line (so your email does not go astray). We'll pick 5 lucky people, from all our entries, to get the passports and mail them out. Deadline is January 2nd, 2006 and winners will be announced in the January 5th edition. Good Luck. For more information about the Icewine Festival visit www.niagarawinefestival.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!

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