

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 – 23
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In this Edition

- **Ontario Wine Review:** *Glassware Gasbag*
- **Grape Guy's Pick of the Bunch:** *A couple of Southbrook originals*
- **Ask the Grape Guy:** *We lay rest to some of those half-truths and answer those nagging questions*
- **Wine Event Spotlight:** *Valentine's Day is coming – some suggestions*
- **A Special Giveaway:** *Something Special from Southbrook*



OntarioWineReview: *Glassware Gasbag*

It has been a few years since I attended my first Spiegelau glassware tasting at Southbrook Winery, north of Toronto. Owner Bill Redelmeier was touting the glasses and conducting the 30 minute seminar using 4 or 5 different glasses and, of course, Southbrook wine. I remember piling a few like-minded skeptics into the car and making the drive up. On the way we talked about how "glassware does not matter"; "it's the wine in the glass not the vessel" and then somebody remarked that "Bill must have gotten himself a pretty good deal and is now trying to unload this crystal on unsuspecting saps like us." Heck, we were going just to prove him wrong – and stick him with a load of glasses in the process. An hour later we were all singing a different tune ... Bill Redelmeier and his Spiegelau glassware had proven their point and we were converts.

The theory behind this pricey stemware goes something like this: Each glass is appropriately shaped for a specific varietal. The shape not only allows for proper aeration of the wine, but, when drinking, deposits the wine onto the right part of the palate so that the flavours can best be received by the tastebuds; thereby getting the full taste experience required for *that particular wine*. For example: the Cabernet (young red) glass, is tall, large and basically cylindrical shaped; while the Pinot Noir (older red), glass is shorter and more bulbous shaped at the bottom. The young red glass mellows and softens those harsh young tannins and acids, while the older red glass enhances the fading tannins and acids. I'm sure I'm not explaining it as eloquently as Bill did, afterall I'm not selling them, but I do understand the theory, and, having seen, and tasted, it in action, I can definitely say Bill proved his point. I swear I am not schilling glassware, nor do I get any commission, but if you have any kind of wine cellar or enjoy the taste of your wine the way it was meant to taste – then you owe it to yourself to invest in this kind of glassware. I urge you to attend at least one of these types of tastings in your lifetime and I will guarantee you that you'll be a convert too. Think of it as an investment in a lifetime enjoyment of wine, or just a treat for your tastebuds.

On the subject of wine glasses, I'm often asked for my opinion on "the best ones to buy". My standard answer is "whatever you can afford" but that doesn't always fly with those who ask. There are also some people who don't like to buy crystal because they're afraid of breaking them: their personal cost to breakage ratio is just too high. So if you don't want to fork over the cash, or fear breakage, for a nice set of Riedels's or Spiegelau's, may I suggest this alternative. The best "full time" deal on glassware I have found: IKEA Svelka wine glasses – classic shape, great for all occasions, they look good and the price 4.99 for 6, great for red wine. For you breakage-aphobes, pick up an extra 6 just in case, at that price it's very affordable. For a couple of bucks more, you can pick up the tulip shaped glass for white wines and blushes ... still a steal at 6.99 for a set of six. I use them as my everyday glass and for the company that wouldn't appreciate the Spiegelau (you know who I am talking about).



Grape Guy's Pick of the Bunch : *A couple of Southbrook originals*

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

In honour of Bill Redelmeier and his Southbrook Winery, we have reviewed a few of their wines, including the delicious 2002 Gold Medal winning Cabernet Merlot which appears on the website, and will soon be available on the LCBO's general list (Spring 2006).

Southbrook Winery 2004 Southbrook White - \$9.95

www.southbrook.com

Vidals... they're a dime-a-dozen in Ontario, from table wines to semi-sweets, late harvests to our luscious icewine, everybody's making one in some form or another – but finding one that really stands out is a challenge. Enter Southbrook's 2004 Southbrook White (a bronze medal winner at the Canadian Wine Awards). The '04 was made entirely from Vidal grapes, and yielded some fantastic results. Winemaker Steve Byfield has crafted this beauty as an anytime sipper. Tropical fruits on the nose with a mild hint of citrus; the palate has pineapple, kiwi, apricots and candied fruit. Crisp, easy drinking, with just the merest hint of sweetness, coming in at a one on the sugar scale. Delicious, especially at the price.

As an aside, I recently served this wine at a party, to welcome my first niece into the world, and it was a huge hit (both the baby and the wine) ... of the four wines served, these were the first two bottles to be emptied!

Southbrook Winery 2004 Barrel Fermented Chardonnay - \$14.95

www.southbrook.com

Southbrook has always been known for their award winning Triomphe (Reserve) line of Chardonnays, but this little barrel-fermented beauty shows they are making great Chardonnay at both ends of the spectrum. With the wine making team of Steve Byfield and Ann Sperling and an imminent move to Niagara scheduled for early 2007, we're expecting even greater things from this winery. But considering that Miss Sperling joined at the end of 2005 – this Chardonnay is a pure Byfield original. Notes of Pineapple hit the nose with hints of buttered popcorn in the background. On the palate it's a completely different story – tart citrus on the front palate makes your first sip refreshing, while in the back palate "something sweet just hit me" ... banana. Pleasant and wonderfully easy to drink. This is going to be a great summer patio sipper come the hot weather, which is just around the time this wine will be released. Expect to see it on the store's shelf Spring 2006.

Both wines are only available at the winery.



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



Ask the Grape Guy ...

On occasion I get asked questions when I attend events, visit wineries, or through email. Other times I overhear things in liquor stores, at dinner tables, or at the odd festival that just don't ring true. It's at these times I like to step in, so that wrong information and rumours don't get started and spread. Herewithin we lay rest to some of those half-truths and answer those nagging questions.

Overheard at a winery recently ... and many times since (in one form or another):

"So I guess with the new regulations we won't be seeing many 100% Ontario wines."

Many people who work at wineries, in wine stores, and at the LCBO are being inundated with this question about the proposed, and passed, one-year regulations for "Cellared in Ontario" wine. The misconception is that **all** Ontario wine will be a blend of offshore grapes with only 1% Ontario grape content, even bottles bearing the VQA symbol. **Nothing could be further from the truth** ... the new regulations are for "cellared in" or "blended in" Ontario wine ONLY. Let me try to explain more concisely.

With our major short-crop this season (more than 50% less grapes harvested than usual), many wineries will have to find ways to fill their barrels with wine, and their soon to be dwindling coffers with much needed capital. To that end, some wineries will buy offshore juice/grapes from Australia, Chile, California, or other parts of the world that have a more stable growing season and a surplus of grapes. They will then take that juice/grapes and blend it with the, newly-legislated, 1% Ontario product ... put it in barrels, age it ... then release it as "Cellared in Ontario" or "Blended in Ontario" wine. This wine was not grown here – but the final product is

produced here - hence the "cellared in" and "blended in" moniker. **There will be NO VQA symbol on these bottles.** The LCBO has also promised to make a special section in their stores to differentiate the VQA (100% Ontario product) from their "blended and cellared" counterparts. **The VQA symbol will still mean 100% Ontario grown and made.**

What does this mean to consumers like you and me? Well, you might be paying a little more for your bottle of VQA wine ... but, keep this in mind: although we did have a short-crop this season, the combination of wonderful temperatures during the spring and summer months, translated into an early harvest and excellent quality in the grapes that did grow ... so those 2005's should be well worth it.

To quell or confirm rumours, half-truths or misnomers – or to ask your question, email me at grapeguy@ontariowinereview.com



Wine Event Spotlight : Valentine's Day is coming – some suggestions

We are 12 days away from Valentine's Day – have you made plans for you and your sweetheart? Many wineries are having special Valentine's Day dinners complete with delectable desserts, appealing appetizers, marvelous mains and of course, wine ... check your favourite winery's website for what events they are having. Here are a couple of suggestions for dinner: Cox Creek Cellars and Angels Gate.

Still stuck for something special check out Harbour Estates for "Romance Her in February" – www.hewwine.com see the Events section.



Something Special from Southbrook ...

Keeping with our Southbrook theme, we have something very special to give away. Southbrook winery has been generous enough to provide a guided tour and tasting certificate for up to 16 people (that's you and 15 of your friends) to visit, tour and taste some of Southbrook's award winning wines; and at the end of the day, you'll get a commemorative tasting glass to take home with you.

Email me at michael@ontariowinereview.com, putting "Southbrook Tour" in the subject line ... we'll pick one lucky winner from all the entries we receive by 11:59pm, February 12 ... and announce the winner in our February 16 newsletter. Good luck.

OntarioWineReview's bi-weekly newsletter is devoted to the love, enjoyment and promotion of wine – not just any wine, the wines of Ontario and the wineries that make them.



Psst, Pass It On ... keep the good wine flowing. Send this newsletter to a friend, family member, loved one, the woman in the next cubicle, your buddy from Bobcaygeon ... you get the picture.

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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