

## 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 – 24**  
**February 16, 2006**

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#### OntarioWineReview: *WINERY REVIEW - Ridgepoint 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.*

The sign says: “tours by chance”, and truthfully, the first time we were there we had no chance and no luck. We pulled up mid-week in early November and the man on the tractor told us he could not make the time for us, fields to plow and no help – he was very apologetic and asked us to come back another time. A week later, on a beautiful mid-November Saturday, we did. And very glad that we remade the trip.

Mauro Scarsellone was that man on the tractor, and he is the owner and winemaker of Ridgepoint Wines. A big man with a friendly round face and jovial attitude that is contagious. We told Mauro our story about meeting him on the tractor and he replied with “That’s the beauty of running a family business.” The phone rings beside him, somebody in another room answers it. A young boy brings a portable phone into the tasting room and tosses the phone onto the bar, “phones for you” he says as he runs away. Mauro smiles at us apologetically, “and you don’t get any more family run than this,” he says to us – calling out to the back of the retreating boy, he says, “Don’t throw the phone.”

Mauro loves his wines, you can see it in the passionate way he talks about them. He loves his wife and family, you can see by the twinkle in his eye when he talks about them; and here at Ridgepoint, you’ll see an array of family members working hard to make this winery a success.

Just off the main tasting room, and to the right of the door as you walk in, a new restaurant is being opened called La Cantena. Mauro informed us of its pending opening and staffing situation. Initially, his mom and wife, Lucy, will be pulling duties in there on weekends, in the hopes of turning it into a full time operation as the days get longer, sometime this summer. (editor’s note: La Cantena is now open on weekends).

Mauro pours wine with a smile, a laugh, a chuckle, a few words about the wine, his personal life, everything to make you feel more comfortable and at home. It’s not contrived, it’s a true, genuine love for what he is doing. He tells us about his crop of Sangiovese “in the corner of the vineyards” that has been wiped out due to the harsh winters. “I don’t go back there,” he says, “the vines are all withered, it makes me cry.” The pain shows on his face but he laughs through it. On the other hand, he did have some luck with another foreign, exotic grape variety: Ontario’s first ever VQA Nebiolo ... a hearty full-bodied wine which Mauro is quite proud of. His other wines are also very impressive, including the 2001 and 2002 Cabernet Sauvignons that are as different as night and day in taste. The ’01 has a huge herbaceousness with asparagus and green pepper, while with the ’02 “we fought to keep it out of there” Mauro reports. And they succeeded admirably with a softer fruitier wine.

Don’t just take my word for it. Any trip into the Niagara area should include Ridgepoint Wines ... cross your fingers when you pull up the drive that nothing has taken Mauro away from the tasting counter – ‘cuz this is one winery not to be missed, and he is one winemaker you’ll definitely want to meet.

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**Grape Guy's Pick of the Bunch :** *A nice white and a really nice red*  
Visit [www.ridgepointwines.com](http://www.ridgepointwines.com) for more details or to purchase these great wines.

Ridgepoint Wines 2002 Cabernet Franc - \$19.95 ... 13%

Sometimes you take a sniff of a wine and get a familiar scent that you can't quite put your finger on ... this is one of those wines. The nose is complex with lots of varied smells, it's like a party in a glass. Starting off, there's a boat load of peppers that show up – red, green, yellow and orange ... sniff again and you'll get some sweet raspberries with hints of blue and black berries that start intermingling ... finally there's some bittersweet chocolate hiding itself, like a wallflower, in the back corner. The taste doesn't make things any clearer: sweet green pepper with a little spicy white pepper and some plums – mild on the tannins and seemingly sweet in the mouth, yet dry with a finish that lingers long after you swallow. This smooth easy drinking cab is not taxing on the senses; it's delicious and ready to drink now, and it truly is an original. Don't try to find all the smells and tastes, just sit back and enjoy ... between the nose and the taste, it truly is a wine to savour.

Ridgepoint Wines 2004 Medium Dry Riesling - \$14.95 ... 11.5%

Sometimes you take a sniff of a wine and get a familiar scent that you can't quite put your finger on ... well, that isn't the case here. This wine is predominantly apple, yellow Delicious I would say, with hints of lime tartness. On the taste, more apples, this time a Spartan – because while it does have apple sweetness, there is a bit of a tangy zing, so it's not too sweet. Finally, there's a lingering apple finish, which is reminiscent of Granny Smith ... so this one is apple from start to finish. It also has a remarkable sparkling taste, without the fizz, that can best be described as refreshing, crisp, easy drinking and very delicious.

These wines are available at the winery and through their 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 OntarioWineReview Crystal Cork Awards? Chime In!**

Contact us at [michael@ontariowinereview.com](mailto: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.*

Ridgepoint is situated right in the middle of the vineyard – yes you heard me right – the laneway cuts right into the heart of the vineyard with grape vines growing all around you. As you get to the middle, the area opens up and two buildings appear – one is an old garage that was converted into their very first wine store (now it stands as a modern yet abandoned building); the other now houses the new wine store and restaurant. It is neat to see a small operation like this growing into itself ... truth be told, it's the family aspect of the place that is its charm. Lucy, Mauro and everybody you meet is so welcoming and friendly ... just look out for flying phones\*.

\*No person or persons were harmed in the phone-tossing incident ... the phone recovered relatively unscathed.



**Wine Event Spotlight :** *Cuvee is Coming and we have Something to Giveaway*

With Cuvee weekend just around the corner there's lots going on out Niagara way. Cuvee, as we all know, is the Ontario wine awards doled out by winemakers to winemakers (peer awards). This is the weekend where they all celebrate their bread and butter (so to speak) – wine.

First there's Cuvee En Route (runs March 3 – 5) – a winery by winery tour, made possible through a \$20 passport ... where each winery puts their wines into various flights – be it vertical, horizontal or a winemaker's pick. The weekend ends with the gala dinner on Sunday night where the awards will be handed out. More information can be found here: [www.cuvee.ca](http://www.cuvee.ca).



Here at OntarioWineReview we have once again got our grape stained paws on a few pairs of passes. You know the drill by now: send me an email ([michael@ontariowinereview.com](mailto:michael@ontariowinereview.com)) containing your name, address, phone number and "Cuvee Weekend" in the subject line. Please note that we will be sharing winner's info with Cuvee. All emails must be received by Friday, February 24 – winners will be announced in our next newsletter.

Added Bonus: To celebrate the weekend the Niagara chapter of the Ontario Wine Society is hosting a "You be the Judge" event, where you'll get to sample past winners and runners up of cuvee 2005. Deadline for registration is Feb. 16 – see their website for details [www.ontariowinesociety.com](http://www.ontariowinesociety.com).



**Ask the Grape Guy ...** To quell or confirm rumours, half-truths or misnomers – or to ask your question, email me at [grapeguy@ontariowinereview.com](mailto:grapeguy@ontariowinereview.com)

**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](mailto:michael@ontariowinereview.com) We look forward to hearing from you!

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