

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 – 25
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In this Edition

- **Ontario Wine Review:** *Picking Your Friends*
 - **Grape Guy's Pick of the Bunch:** *Somethings for Dessert*
 - **Uncorked and Decanted:** *Nifty gadgets and accessories that enhance wine enjoyment*
 - **Wine Event Spotlight:** *Toronto Gets Cheesy*
 - **FREE PASS ALERT** – *Are you going to the show?*
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OntarioWineReview: *Picking Your Friends*

Many wine lovers are always looking for ways to learn more about wine, then there are others who are just looking to drink more (I'm not talking to you right now). Today I'm talking to those who want to broaden their horizons and expand their knowledge. The "brave" ones go to seminars, take classes, buy books, scan the LCBO educational guide, and countless other things; and if necessary, alone. The rest of us hunker down with a glass of our favourite and let our fears and insecurities stop us from taking part in these readily available learning experiences. Trust me when I tell you, there are a lot more folks that *think* that wine is a snooty, snobby cliquy type drink – then there are people like that. In fact, it is that very perceived attitude that deters people from trying, or even liking wine. But if you are interested in learning about wine, even in the slightest, I recommend you try a wine club. While, I am told, that there are a few of *those* kind of clubs around, the vast majority of wine club members don't know the difference between a Syrah and a Shiraz, or a Pinot Noir and a Gamay Noir – but they all share a love of wine ... a willingness to learn, and the adventurous spirit to try something new.

Most clubs meet once a month under the auspice of a theme, like "New Kids on the Block: exploring new wineries through their wine" or "Tasting the Past: library selections from the '99 Vintage". In actual fact, it's a bunch of people who get together, shmooze about whatever, who want to meet new like-minded people (or hang with friends they've already made) over a glass, or four, of wine. Consider it as a "A Night out with Adults". So leave your fears at the door, and get out there and join one of the many clubs or societies available to you – try them out, they always allow non-members to come out and audit the events. How will you know if you want to join if you can't try it out. It's a social gathering, and you just might learn a little something along the way. Don't be afraid because, believe it or not, *some know even less than you think you do*. For your convenience, a listing of wine clubs and societies that have a component of Ontario wine to their tasting get togethers, can be found in our new "Clubs and Societies" section of the website. If you know of others, or are part of one, please do let us know ... we like to keep our lists as current as possible.

Speaking of wine clubs ... I am a member of the Ontario Wine Society. In mid-January, they held a Bordeaux vs. Canada tasting event. These tastings have been held on a number of occasions and, in Ontario they are usually put together by Larry "little fat wino" Patterson (www.littlefatwino.com) – who is their biggest proponent. Canadian "Bordeaux-style" varietals are compared to actual French Bordeaux, in a blind tasting, and are then rated best to worst. Not surprisingly, in tasting after tasting, Canadian wines are besting their Bordeaux brethren. This time was no different.. 140 people (writers, sommeliers, and lay people alike) attended the event, and in democratic fashion each voted on their worst to first. In the end, Canadian wine took 5 of the top 6 spots, with the "best" of the Bordeaux's taking 7th place. On the other hand, the New Zealand "ringer" took top honours.

Look what those Californians started, way back in 1976. At that time, they took on the kings of wine and bested them ... today we're taking on the king and beating him at his own game too. Is it a case of how far the mighty have fallen or one of the student reaching the level of learning to best the master? You be the judge of that. If ever you get a chance, attend a Canada vs. Bordeaux tasting. I'm sure other chances will arise. Put your palate to the test, you might be pleasantly surprised by what your own country can do. For the results of this tasting, and others impressions of it, visit <http://www.littlefatwino.com/ows060116.html#results>



Grape Guy's Pick of the Bunch: *Some things for Dessert*

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

Jackson Triggs 2004 Late Harvest Riesling - \$18.95

www.jacksontriggswinery.com

A well made late harvest, or, as I like to call them, "poor man's icewine", is one of life's great pleasures, and this one ranks right up there with some of the best I have ever had. A great nose with aromas of apple, apricot, peach and honey. On the palate a multitude of fruit flavours like apples, honeydew and kiwi; blended with spices such as nutmeg and cinnamon. As it warms in the glass the fruit flavours strengthen for even more pleasure in the mouth. Not overwhelming in sweetness (9), it has wonderful balance between sweetness and acidity. A pleasantly long, lingering finish makes for a spectacular dessert wine, to be enjoyed and savoured.

Sunnybrook Farms Estate Winery Spiced Apple - \$ 15.85

www.sunnybrookfarmwinery.com

It's been awhile since I reviewed a fruit wine, so I decided to storm back with a vengeance with this one. Sunnybrook, Canada's first fruit winery established in 1993 – has had a few years to perfect a variety of wonderful fruit wines – but none as delicious as this multi-temperature wine. Let me explain: first the smell, wonderful aromas of baked apple with rhubarb and strawberry hit the nose. Then the taste grabs your buds with the baked apple and a spicy cinnamon, finishing on a tart note. So what's with the temperature comment? This wine could be served hot or cold depending on you mood: hot, as in a toddy with a cinnamon stick; or chilled, as a perfect end to an evening meal ... give it a try – it will not disappoint.

Both wines are available only at the winery or through on-line ordering.



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



Uncorked and Decanted : *Nifty gadgets and accessories that enhance wine enjoyment.*

Review: Cellar! – looking for a way to manage your wine more efficiently?

One of my New Year's resolutions was to get my wine cellar in order. So I played around with both Microsoft Access and Excel trying to construct the perfect database. Each time I thought that I had all the categories required, a new one would raise its ugly head and I would have to start over. Finally, after about an hour of struggling, I decided to look on-line to see if anybody had put together a useful tool for us oenophiles and wine collectors.

Truthfully, I was looking for something inexpensive (read: free) and serviceable. Three programs caught my eye - alas, none met my first criterion, but all seemed serviceable and so I started to compare them. First I read their websites ... then about half an hour later, I made the determination to download the demo version of Cellar! - take it out for a test drive, so to speak. Their demo allowed me a 25 bottle maximum and limited my on-line access to their database; but in every other way it was a fully functioning program. Within an hour I had inputted my quota of 25 bottles and I was impressed by what I saw. I then turned off my computer, figuring to sleep on the major decision of whether or not to purchase the software for the \$49.95 U.S. (\$59.57 CDN – which as we know is 59.57 more than I had budgeted). By 7:00am the next morning I realized it really was a no-brainer – I became a full-fledged member of Cellar!

What impressed me most was its functionality, user friendliness and ease of use. The tutorial was very helpful for initial set-up, but what I found even more useful was playing around with the program and discovering things for myself. After a couple of hours of monkeying around, I had two questions that stymied me. I sent an email to Cellar! and also downloaded the help booklet, to find out which would answer my question first. I skimmed

through the booklet and found the answer to one of my questions. The other was answered by the Cellar! staff, who emailed me back, within 36 hours of my initial inquiry, along with an apology for taking so long.

It took me a couple of hours to feel comfortable with the basics, and within a week, I fully understood what I needed and what I could ignore, for my purposes anyway. The software allows you to set up your database as simple and basic, or as advanced and specific, as your requirements dictate, and you always have the option to add more as needed.

The on-board and on-line database of wineries makes it easy to input the proper information, even on hard to decipher labels. Best of all Cellar! is not just for keeping track of the wines you have, it can also be used for wines you have tried. You can keep a zero balance in inventory, have tasting notes, reminders to buy more, or compare the same wine from the same producer from vintage to vintage, and plenty more.

I will admit that sometimes it does get a little confusing when you're looking for an already entered wine (the program breaks things down not only by country but regions, sub-regions and appellations) ... but thankfully there's a 'Find' feature that should make this job easier - I have yet to master its use, but I am still in the process of inputting bottles, so I will learn that a little later.

Cellar! gets my highest rating, and the more I learn about it, the better it gets ... and trust me when I tell you, it can get quite addictive. Whether you have just a few bottles or a major cellar; a book containing a plethora of tasting notes or a few simple notations on a napkin ... Cellar! is here to help.

Go to www.cellarwinesoftware.com to learn more for yourself



Wine Event Spotlight: *Toronto Wine and Cheese Show*

The 23rd annual Toronto Wine and Cheese Show is less than a month away ... taking place Friday March 24th through Sunday the 26th at the International Centre, located on Airport Road in Mississauga. An outstanding line-up of foods – especially cheese – and other gourmet foods and, of course, wines: both those in current release at the LCBO, and upcoming vintages. Admission is \$18.00 and parking is free, so get out there and enjoy ... more info can be found at www.towineandcheeseshow.com.



FREE PASS ALERT: OntarioWineReview never misses an opportunity to get our readers out of the house to enjoy Ontario's wine shows and events – and we shall not disappoint this time. **Here is your chance to win a pair of passes to the Toronto Wine and Cheese Show** – the drill is as follows: send me an email (michael@ontariowinereview.com) with your name, mailing address and "Cheese Me" in the subject line. We'll pick 4 lucky winners from all entries we receive between now and March 11th – winners will be announced in our March 16th newsletter. Best of luck.

Speaking of winners here are the folks going to Cuvee en Route (happening this weekend March 3-5 in Niagara) courtesy of OntarioWineReview and Cuvee ... Peter Willetts of Beamsville, and Kemp Watson of Richmond Hill.



Ask the Grape Guy ... To quell or confirm rumours, half-truths or misnomers – or to ask your question, email me at 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 We look forward to hearing from you!

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