

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 – 28
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OntarioWineReview: *A Deceptive Eight*

I find that the sugar code can give people fits. Now I can give you the scientific explanation about residual sugar after fermentation has occurred and give you an example that ice wine is a 28 and that the Cabernet Merlot you're having for dinner tonight is a zero – but what about the numbers in between. While wine is subjective to taste, and smell, the sugar code, in some people's minds, is finite ... though you'll always find those that play with the scale, "well it's a one, but a low 1 ... like point 6 or something." There are also those that take the sugar code as gospel and will not drink anything above a one, not even giving the wine a chance. But there are some 'ones' that taste like a 'zero' and some 'zeros' that have 'one' qualities to them – I hope that makes sense to you. But let's not get hung up on the numbers, or get all worked up about sweet versus dry, instead let's look at some fine examples of what I'm talking about.

The idea for this article came at a few recent tastings of some "sweet" wine. The first, and original inspiration, was a [Colio Wines Late Harvest Cabernet Franc](#) when tasted – everybody agreed it was delicious, but there was disagreement as to how sweet it was. Some thought it was very sweet, somewhere in the mid-teens, while others thought it quite dry for a dessert wine, somewhere between a 3 and a 5. As it turned out, this Late Harvest Cab Franc was a very deceptive 8, at least according to the sugar code proudly printed on the label. A few evenings later, we pulled out a cute little bottle of [Late Harvest Scheurebe from Pelee Island](#). Again there was some debate across the table as to how sweet this wine was; but there was no doubt, in anyone's mind, that it was well over 10. To our surprise, the wine was only a four. Finally, at the recent Wine and Cheese Show in Toronto, we were poured a fruit wine made with cranberries and maple syrup called [Red Maple made by Muskoka Lakes Winery](#). This wine was sweet with hints of cinnamon spiciness (our favourite fruit wine of the show). We were told it was about a 13 according to "the code", although we thought it was less. As a rule, cranberries have a way of making things a little tart, but we were quite prepared to accept the 13 as given. When we were later told that the wine was actually an 18, we were, to say the least, shocked. Which just goes to show that numbers can be deceiving. The only true way to determine whether you like, or don't like, a wine is to taste it, and not condemn it right away based on "numbered-sweetness-code".

I know people that won't touch a wine above a 2, claiming it's "much too sweet for my taste" ... yet when those same people are given a chance to try a wine without knowing it's sweetness level, they make a better, much more unbiased decision about it, and usually end up enjoying it more. I have known people to think a late harvest too sweet (14), but they like icewine (24) or a raspberry dessert wine (16). Certainly, some people will tell you it's all about balancing the acidity with sugar and alcohol – but really it's all subjective to your taste ... just like every wine is.

So don't let the sugar code dissuade you from trying a wine just because it might be "too sweet", you might just be pleasantly surprised as to what you do like.



Grape Guy's Picks of the Bunch: *A couple of red sweeties*

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

This week's wine reviews look at sweet reds – for those of you who like a touch of sugar, or know some folks who need some sweetening up. With the approach of summer, stocking up on these patio/deck/boat sippers is a must ... because they can be chilled for added refreshment.

Pillitteri Estate Winery NV Chariot Dolce - \$10 (3)
www.pillitteri.com

It used to be that sweet reds were a dime a dozen, but these days our palates have become more accustomed to the drier stuff ... though sweetness seems to be coming back in style, as evidenced by the popularity of Yellow Tail wines and their ilk. This Pillitteri offering is part of this winery's international series, which is a combination of foreign and domestic grapes, blended into this sweet little number. Aromas of plums and sweet cherries are the first to accost the nose, while the taste is loaded with a plethora of fruit flavours like: byng cherries, plums, apples, apricots, sweet oranges ... a veritable fruit compote of tastes. And with a sweetness level at a 3, it's sure to please those who like smooth. The back of the bottle says "great base for Sangria", I would fully agree, but on its own it's also quite sippable. Be sure to chill for about an hour.

This wine has now been replaced by the 2005 'I baci' series and is called Rosso Dolce. Same great smoothness and array of flavours but with a new label. It's the first 2005 blend I've seen, and surprisingly, does not take full advantage of the new Ontario content rules (see newsletters [23](#) and [15](#)) – one third of the fruit is Chilean, while the rest (67%) is from Niagara.

Caroline Cellars 2004 Pinot-Cherry ... \$12.50 (2)
www.lakeitfarms.com

The popularity of fruit wine can be summed up in a few words "no thought necessary" – meaning strawberry wine tastes like strawberries, blueberry wine tastes like blueberries, the same can be said for raspberry, apple, pear, peach etc. The brain does not have to process and decipher a variety of tastes and smells after you've read the label ... the same can be said for this blend of both Cherry wine and pinot noir. It's as uncomplicated as a wine can get. The cherry dominates the blend both in smell and taste, while the Pinot adds depth and a slight earthiness to the mix. Beautiful colour in the glass ... this wine is straight-forward and can be chilled for added enjoyment. Relax and enjoy on its own as an after dinner sipper on the couch or a delicious day-sipper out on the patio during the summer months.

Both wines are only available at the winery.

Visit our website to see a review of another "red sweetie" from [Riverview Cellars](#) – a tantalizing Cab Sauv, Merlot and Baco blend called Fontana Dolce (3).



The Cellar ... [the OntarioWineReview Forum](#)

Grab a glass, come downstairs, pull up a chair, sit around the barrels and let's talk wine.



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

Getting Sidewaysed

Recently I was reminded of that now infamous wine-movie Sideways, by a winemaker friend of mine who had yet to see the movie. Most people relate to others through things they recognize and can identify with. For most people, wine and Sideways go together (like a horse and carriage), therefore it is expected that if you work in the wine industry you must have seen it. It becomes a hazard of the job that everywhere you go people ask if you've seen Sideways. It's like if you work in the stock market, people ask if you've seen Wall Street; or if you're a woman working in an un-unionized-textile mill, "have you seen Norma Rae": and there's usually one or two scenes people will always relate to. For Sideways, it's the "spit bucket" scene.

Don't get me wrong, I love the movie, in fact I have seen it about a half-dozen times, and I too was just as surprised as you, that anybody within the wine industry had not seen it (and believe me, there are plenty who haven't). This got me remembering just how enamored with the movie I was. Sideways, the movie, sparked

my interest to buy Sideways, the book, which in turn lead me to buy Sideways, the DVD, when it appeared on store shelves. Finally, I acquired Sideways, the CD soundtrack, and Sideways, the movie poster. I was even lucky enough to snag a few of the Sideways inspired California wine-touring maps at a California wine show I attended. I was officially “Sidewaysed” or “Sideways-afied”.

But before you start passing judgement on my addictive personality (I never denied it though), let me just say this: the poster hangs proudly on the wall just outside my wine cellar ... The CD played for quite some time in my player, and made for some great background music. The maps are neatly tucked away in a drawer, and as for the book, I enjoyed it immensely. It was, as most books are, more detailed than the movie delved more deeply into the psyche of the characters, fleshing them out more fully – allowing us as readers into their heads to hear their thoughts and feeling, and of course, it provided more fully fleshed out plot points – not just snippets or vignettes or incidents. From the book, we also learn the explanation for the term “sideways” (what you become when you’ve had too much to drink). I guess what I am getting at here is if you like the movie and felt like you needed a little more of a Sideways-fix, there’s plenty of ways to scratch that itch, and the book is a great place to start. It also gives you yet another reason to curl up with a good book and a glass of wine ... like we all need that excuse, for the wine anyway.



Wine Event Spotlight: Sante – The Bloor-Yorkville Wine Festival

Now in it's 8th year, Sante is Toronto's Springtime salute to the wines of the world. This downtown event takes place in the heart of the Toronto shopping district, the Bloor-Yorkville area, from May 3 to 7, and has tons of fantastic events that celebrate wine and food. Seminars, luncheons, dinners and, of course, tastings are the main features ... culminating in the Sip Savour and Shop which takes you through Bloor-Yorkville stores in search of great bargains and delicious wines. For more information and a list of events visit www.santewinefestival.net.

FREE PASS ALERT: As usual, OntarioWineReview has tickets to giveaway to most, if not all major Ontario wine-related events, and Sante is no different. For your chance to win a pair of Sip Savour and Shop passports (Saturday May 6), email me your name and full mailing address, including postal code; put “To Your Health” in the subject line and send to michael@ontariowinereview.com. Entries must be submitted on or before 11:59pm April 21st, 2006 – winners will be announced in our April 27th newsletter. As a bonus, these passports also get you into the newest Sante event “A Day of Wine and Rovers” Saturday April 29th ... details are also available at www.santewinefestival.net.

OntarioWineReview's bi-weekly newsletter is devoted to the love, enjoyment and promotion of 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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