

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 – 34
July 6, 2006

In this Edition

- **Ontario Wine Review:** *WINERY REVIEW – Stonechurch Vineyards*
 - **Grape Guy's Picks of the Bunch:** *A Pinot and a Sauv ... and another Hot Tip*
 - **The Wow Factor:** *Besides the wine, check this out!*
 - **Wine Event Spotlight:** *Shakespeare in the Vineyard ... and a Chance at Buckhorn Passes*
-



OntarioWineReview: *WINERY REVIEW - Stonechurch Vineyards*

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.

This is a make-up review. Let me explain: it was recently brought to my attention that a few months back I interrupted my regular schedule of winery reviews to write an article based on a crisis (perceived or otherwise) in the province of Ontario, [our liquor board vs. our wineries and how we could help as consumers](#). About a week prior to publishing that article I received a very no-nonsense email from a winemaker in Niagara asking me simply: “How do I go about getting some of my wines reviewed?” Well, I looked at my review rack and found 2 bottles of that particular winery's 2004 reds, a bottle of 2004 Gewurtraminer, and some notes from my visit. And that's basically how this winery review came together. How do you get your wines reviewed? I guess it's just a matter of timing, luck, some prodding and whether I've already written something about you (that's just lying about). So let's take a trip down to Niagara and check out Stonechurch Vineyards, shall we ...

If there is such a thing as an open concept winery Stonechurch is it, but let me back up a minute. Stonechurch is a beautiful winery in the spring, summer, and fall – but pretty barren in the winter. That's because this winery's look is based around things growing. From the trellised entrance walkway, with it's hanging vines to the flowering gardens out front and the vineyards that surround the building ... Stonechurch depends on growth. There's even a self-guided vineyard walk-through tour, “The Stonechurch Trail”(see the “wow factor”), which loses its appeal during the cold winter months. During those winter months, the outside is barren and raw – a stark contrast to summertime, and also to the inside of Stonechurch where it's always warm and inviting. As you enter the wide open space of the tasting room/wine store, there is a fireplace just to your right with some very comfy overstuffed leather chairs. So, if it's been a long day of tasting, winter, spring, summer, or fall – Stonechurch makes for a great respite.

As mentioned, the tasting room/wine store is an open concept, meaning that when you enter, you are in a wide open square room with high ceilings, which gives the feeling of being more spacious. You can see everything with a quick look around, from the wine bar to the check out counter to the gifts and nic-nacs throughout the store. Nothing hides around a nook or a cranny – everything is visible at a glance; and that glance reveals a place that is stylish and homey.

For those of you who have not been to Stonechurch yet this season, but have been in the past, you're in for a treat ... a new look Stonechurch. A little more classy, a little more modern – a definite improvement for the better; and yet it still hasn't lost any of its charm. The tasting bar is now located at the right side of the room, and the check-out counter is in front of you as you walk in (on the left side). The wines themselves lie in bunks at 35-degree angles for easy label reading. The counter, bar, and bunks are now stylishly finished in dark brown wood, there's a frosted-glass counter-top on the tasting bar with “Stonechurch” etched into the glass from the underside. The tasting bar itself is now much bigger – 5 sides of an octagon – and can accommodate many more people at once than the previous incarnation (a six foot beaten up black-topped table). There are still plenty of wine nic-nacs available, from napkins to glasses, jams, jellies, candles, oils and chocolates which are now placed throughout the store on shelves in 3 of the four corners. Against the wall, sitting on the bar is a small upright glass-doored black fridge, where they keep the whites cold, and from which I once sampled some of the best Rosenbourg blue cheese soaked in olive oil (I have never been a big fan of blue cheese, so for me

to say that it must've been something special. Sometimes they have it in stock or for tasting – indulge!). Behind the smoked-glass back wall is an events room, which is another open-concept square room, about the same dimensions as the one you just came from, furnished with barrels, tables and some tasting stations along the walls, ideal for your next special event. While I was there, they were setting up for a wedding and the staff was buzzing around a number of tables. Finally, there's another room immediately to your left, as you walk in the front door – a smaller anteroom where they welcome patrons there for a tour or for passport tastings during wine festivals. A small tasting bar, hanging glasses and the leather couch, which matched the chairs by the fireplace, adorn the room. There are also some cabinets and shelves around the walls with various awards and plaques.

On our first visit, which was during the late winter month of February ... the staff member seemed thrilled to see us (slow days have that advantage). She spoke knowledgeably about the wine and the winemaking philosophy of both the winery (as part of it's history) and the winemaker. She also let us sample some very interesting wines, both from current and past vintages. On the follow up visit, to check out the renovations (in early June), Mike and Lee were incredibly friendly and accommodating, showing not only the renewed look of Stonechurch, but a renewed commitment to quality wine and customer service. The visit(s) were a rousing success – we enjoyed the staff member's attention and recommendations, and, of course walked out with a few bottles of some very fine wine, without the "fine wine" prices. Stonechurch might be a little out of the way in comparison to other Niagara-on-the-Lake wineries ... but it's definitely worth the visit, even more so since the face lift. So be sure to check it out.



Grape Guy's Picks of the Bunch: A Pinot and a Sauv ... and another Hot Tip

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

Stonechurch Vineyard 2004 Reserve Pinot Noir - \$17.95

Of all the wines I've tasted at Stonechurch, this was my favourite ... some would say it's because I have expensive taste (as it was the most expensive of the wines tasted) – but I'd say it's because it's just that good. At first, this wine had a strong strawberry smell, then with a little aeration out came raspberries, cherries and some earthiness – all typical for Pinot Noir. In the mouth, it was smooth and easy ... flavours of plum, cinnamon, vanilla and cedar – delicious. Everything just seemed to come together with this wine – give a bottle a spin and see if you don't agree. An excellent value for an excellent wine.

Stonechurch Vineyards 2004 Cabernet Sauvignon - \$15.95

When you think of Cabernet Sauvignon you probably think full bodied, ageability and on the tannic side (especially when young). Well, with this 2004 version, Stonechurch has made a light to medium-bodied version (probably due to the growing condition of that year in Ontario). Starting with the nose there's red pepper, white pepper and black currants. The white pepper continues through on the palate with sweet black cherries and a dry, medium-lengthed finish. It's easy going and ready to drink right now. And, as an added bonus, will soon be featured in the Vintages section of the LCBO.

These wines are only available at the winery and, where indicated, at the LCBO.
Check out two more Stonechurch wines on the website: [2004 Gewurztraminer](#) & [2004 Cabernet-Merlot](#)

Hot Tip on a Hot Wine: [Peninsula Ridge won best Ontario Merlot](#) at this year's Cuvee awards. We went down to the winery to get a few bottles, only to find that they were sold-out. We were then told the LCBO had a few left in Vintages, if you looked hard enough. So, this is your last chance to get some.



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

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



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.

Stonechurch has something for all of you whose green thumb leans towards grape growing, or for those who

think a walk through the vineyard is romantic. "The Stonechurch Trail" is a fifteen minute walk through, and around, a 5 acre piece of land growing Chardonnay grapes. Along the walk 8 sign posts guide your way and give you information about the grape growing procedure, the winery, it's history, and a variety of other educational information – meanwhile the grape vines grow all around and for as far as the eye can see. Wearing sturdy shoes is a must, because the trek will take you along a gravel road and also through some uneven vineyard ground; but if you have a sense of adventure, a flair for the romantic, or a taste for the grape – this little self-guided tour is definitely for you.

Advertisement

Canadian customers can now order DropStop® pouring discs printed to their specifications with photographic images, special events, logos, or graphic designs. These flexible wine pouring discs make creative, promotional tools and will be used and re-used for years to come by your clients and customers. They will enhance wine products, advertise events and are sure to become an integral part of your promotional repertoire. Use them as: business cards, corporate gifts, trade show & convention hand-outs, wedding reception mementos, wine & food pairing add-ons, tournament sponsorship cards ... wherever an important hand-out is needed. C  rde Enterprises is proud to be the Canadian distributor for the Official Promotional DropStop® and we are pleased to announce that it has just won the Luigi Veronelli Award (Milan – Italy) as The Most Innovative Table Object - 2006! Visit us at www.dropstop.ca.



Wine Event Spotlight: *Shakespeare in the Vineyard ... and a Chance at Buckhorn Passes*

How about something cultural, other than a wine and cheese show? Henry of Pelham presents Shakespeare in the Vineyard put on by the Fire Hall Theatre, this year doing *The Comedy of Errors* with a twist. Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights from July 13 to July 22, 2006. Enjoy a glass of wine while you watch the show on one of their chairs or bring one of your own lounging chairs. Tickets are \$25 ... more info can be found at www.henryofpelham.com or to purchase tickets online www.arts.brocku.ca.

FREE PASS GIVEAWAY: I got quite a bit of feedback from my last newsletter – most of which centered on the passes to [Fiesta Buckhorn](#) that were up for grabs: "I'd love to go, but I think it's a little soon to be looking at doing something so late in July." "A little too early for me to be making plans that far ahead, I'd hate the passes to go to waste." "I don't know what I'm doing tomorrow let alone mid- to late- July." So in all fairness to everyone I'm putting the [Fiesta Buckhorn](#) passes up for grabs again. Send your name, address with postal code, and phone number to michael@ontariowinereview.com - entries must be received no later than 11:59pm July 13th. Don't forget to put "Fiesta Forever" in the subject line.

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!

   OntarioWineReview.com 2006. All rights reserved.

You may use the content of this newsletter by including full credit to Michael Pinkus, Grape Guy and a link to www.ontariowinereview.com