

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 – 39
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OntarioWineReview: *A trip through The County (part 2)*

Day 2 in The County saw almost as many stops at wineries as it did to other related, and non-related, places. Stationing myself in Picton, at [Caruso's](#) (which I made my home-base for the weekend), helped divide the county into two fairly equal parts: west of Picton and east of Picton.

First stop of the day was [Glenora Springs Brewery](#) (9 km from Picton along highway 33) – a picturesque drive along the shoreline. Glenora Springs has some delicious beers, for those who like their suds. Both their Triple Chin Irish Dark and Red Coat Ale are available at the LCBO and of course at the brewery itself; if you're lucky enough, they'll also have some White Cap (their premium lager) to sample or buy, which is available exclusively at the brewery ("it's in such demand we can't keep up" I was told). They also have a seasonal cherry porter they call Black Scarf – which is brewed during the fall and winter months.

Next on the trail, [The County Cider Company](#), which specializes in apple cider; they also have a few table wines. Their table wines were nothing to write home about, but their ciders were refreshing and a definite change from the ordinary. They span the gamut from dry apple cider (1) to sweet [apple peach cider](#) (6), a delicious blend that goes especially well with orange juice ... a pseudo fuzzy-navel.

After leaving there, I discovered yet another instance of wineries congregated together. Just down the road, a literal stone's throw away, is [Waupoos Winery](#). Waupoos has the distinction of being Prince Edward County's first, and hence, oldest winery (vineyard planted in 1993, winery opened 2001). Two years ago, they couldn't sell me a single bottle, even though they had a vast line-up. My last time through I tried everything, in a vain attempt to like something ... anything. This year, there were a number of bottles that caught both my eye and my tastebuds. The ['05 Geisenheim](#) and the ['03 Riesling](#) were made from local fruit and so was the ['05 Baco Noir](#). Now regular readers of my newsletter will know that Baco is on my short list of "do not touch" wines – but this one was surprisingly lighter and smoother than the usual Baco tastes of foxy, dirty and harsh (I would not be surprised if sugar is added to sweeten the taste or smooth out the wine). There was also a [Cabernet-Gamay](#) blend that was quite good, although it, like so many PEC wines, used Niagara fruit ... but it was well made and easy drinking. There were a lot of things about this winery that were "secrets", like the grapes used in certain blends – so I can only surmise as to what is in certain wines like the Baco.

Now for a quick respite from wine as I went in search of the [Black River Cheese Company](#), I was also told their soft serve ice cream was to die for, but I was more interested in their cheese. The County's only remaining cheese factory, they boast rennet-free cheese in a full array of flavours and styles from Skim Milk Mozzarella to 3-year-old Cheddar; you'll also find Colby, Brick and flavoured cheeses, all reasonably priced and delicious. A sampling tray, with cubed cheese pieces greets you as you walk in. The cheese plate causes many patrons to congregate and graze at the door – but has the desired affect of coaxing them into buying a plethora of cheeses, myself included ... and believe me, if you're a cheese fan, this is the place to be. By the way, the ice cream is delicious too.

Finally, it was time to hunt down what turned out to be one of the crown-jewels of the Prince Edward County wineries – [Long Dog Winery](#) – tucked out of the way in the south-east corner of the island. Long Dog has immaculately planted vineyards and uses only 100% County fruit in their wines ... it's the only winery in all of PEC to boast that. If it's not made of County fruit, they will not make it; if the grapes are not up to their high-

standards, then no wine is made (sometimes they'll even sell them off). Currently on the shelves are an '04 Chardonnay, an '04 Pinot Noir and a '05 Pinot Gris. But the really impressive stuff is still behind closed doors, or more aptly, across the road, currently in barrels. The NV Tumbling Stone, a blend of 80% Gamay and 20% Pinot is light and fruity, with soft raspberry tones. It should hit their shelves in the next couple of months (by Fall 2006). The '05 Chardonnay is buttery and not too oaky; and it too should be seeing shelves around the same time as the Tumbling Stone. Finally, there's an '05 Pinot Noir that is going to be the real ace-in-the-hole here ... a nose of red licorice, anise, and black cherry with some earth and oak mixed in for good measure ... a stellar wine that you could sit and sniff all day, and the taste ... it's a wine you could drink all night - it's going to be fabulous. Last I heard, the plan was to have a special limited supply for the Fall ... then release it to the general public at Christmastime. I think this one will be ageable for 5 years, or more and the price tag, in the mid-30's, will be well worth every penny.

My return trip into Picton had me stopping for lunch at the much hyped "hot dog" emporium, [Buddha Dogs](#). A Buddha Dog is actually a mini-pepperette served on these cute little buns garnished with local, and Buddha invented, sauces (like smokey-ketchup, tomato-basil balsamic, and sweet red pepper jelly) and local Black River Cheese. Each creation costs a \$1.50 and makes for an inexpensive lunch for those adventurous or curious enough to try them; but look out, overeat, or make the wrong sauce choice combination, and it's time wasted on the porcelain alter.

Finally (Day 3, or departure day), I visited the two wineries that had been closed on the Friday (arrival day). [Rosehall Run](#), which has a wonderful all-county [Pinot Noir](#) and a tasty little Riesling-cross with a funny name called [Sullyzwicker](#), that is 94% county-fruit. On the opposite side of the street (almost literally), there's [Norman Hardie Winery](#): Norm deals in wine on a super-premium level (no bottle under \$18), with award winning Pinot Noir, Chardonnay and a stellar [Riesling](#). But while Rosehall is using mostly their own homegrown fruit, Norm is packing his wines with Niagara fruit. To his credit, he is growing Pinot Noir, Chardonnay and Pinot Gris on his property, but he's just waiting for the '05's to mature and be good enough to release. The previous bad winters have not helped his cause; but again '05 and '06 should be a different story. Although he won't give up on the Niagara-fruit based wines, he'll also have a line of all county-fruit wines too. Whatever Norm's using, I have to applaud his winemaking skills and look forward to his all-county wines to compare them to the Niagara ones.

I have to say that the future of Prince Edward County wines lies with wineries like Long Dog and Rosehall Run, wineries committed to quality 100% fruit-from-the-county wines ... not with the ones whose entire portfolio consists of bastard-blends using mostly-Niagara fruit. Talented winemakers will always flock to where there are grapes – and PEC has a good mix of young and older, very talented winemakers on the island. But what will put PEC on the map, is their own wines, made from their own grapes, in their own style; these wines will slowly start to hit shelves now, and over the next few years ... look for the '05's (within the year) and '06's (when available).

What a trip – a variety of places to visit from cheese shops to hot dog joints, a dozen or so wineries and some pretty impressive wines ... now I can legitimately say "It's time to get out there and visit "The County"", and I see next year being even better. Of course, if you check out the events spotlight section you'll find a chance to win passes for a visit this October to the Taste! Festival ... giving yourself a head start.



Grape Guy's Picks of the Bunch: *An awesome Pinot Noir*

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

Rosehall Run 2004 Pinot Noir - \$ 24.95

www.rosehallrun.com

For a few years now, people have been talking about Prince Edward County's ability to make Burgundian style Pinot Noir, but due to the short crops and bad winters, we have not seen much of that promise fulfilled. After my latest visit, I would have to say I just might be a believer in what's to come from The County: two Pinots that, put simply, changed my point of view*. One of these Pinots is this one from Rosehall Run and their all-County fruit. A wonderful nose of cherries and earth with tastes of cedar, oak, earth and strawberry made me a believer of what could be possible in Prince Edward County. I also got a chance to barrel sample some of the 2005 vintage, and let me tell you, if this is the Pinot that is to come from the County, then count me in.

Available at the winery only.

*the second Pinot Noir (2005 Pinot Noir from Long Dog Winery) was not available for review, or purchase, at press time – expect a review to be done once the wine is released.



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

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

The Grape Guy presents "Weekly Wine Notes"! A savoury selection of Ontario wines to impress, enjoy, or just plain drink! A NEW Wine Selection is added into the [OWR Cellar](#) every Tuesday!

Be sure to check out the wines added in the past two weeks "[Weekly Wine Notes](#)".



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.

What's Icewine?

In speaking with an American friend of mine, I kept mentioning icewine ... finally she interrupted me and said "what's this icewine you keep referring to?" As a Canadian, and as a wine-writer, I forget sometimes that icewine isn't universally known, even though it is our national treasure. I sometimes forget that the wine we are most noted for, is not as well-known as I sometimes assume. So for all those who are going to get this question, (What's Icewine?) I provide you with this brief answer. Icewine is made from grapes naturally frozen on the vine and are harvested by hand usually during the night, and usually during the months of December and/or January – because temperatures have to dip to, or below, the rather frigid –8 C (18 F). The grapes are then pressed while still frozen solid, usually outdoors, that way, the natural sugars remain intensely concentrated. This process creates a very intensely flavoured, sweet wine.

There are some things in life you have to actually try to fully understand them, and icewine is one of those things ... that's why the best way to answer this question would be to pour a glass for your asker – but who can afford to have a chilled bottle of icewine in their back pocket all the times. You'll just have to direct them where to get it.

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



Wine Event Spotlight: 5th Annual TASTE! Event in PEC ... and TICKETS to give away

It's time to visit "The County", a region that is finally starting to come into it's own. This event, now in it's fifth year, pairs regional cuisine with local wines, beers and ciders – for a Taste! sensation you won't find anywhere else. Admission is \$12.50 and tickets are limited in quantity (2000 only) so getting your hands on them early is beneficial. Sampling tickets are 50 cents each and samples range from 1-6 tickets. So head on down to "The County" this Thanksgiving weekend (October 7th) to the historic Crystal Palace at the Picton Fairgrounds. For more information, or to purchase your tickets visit www.taste.thecounty.ca; call 1-866-845-6644; or, if still available tickets can be purchased at the door.

FREE PASS GIVEAWAY – You can win your tickets right here. Send your name, phone number, and address (with postal code) to me at michael@ontariowinereview.com, putting "Tasty, Taste Taste Taste!" in the subject line. Submissions must be in by 11:59pm September 21, 2006.

Also a quick shout out to Nicholas Russon, who pointed out that none of the entries for the Niagara Wine Festival should be valid, because the deadline date was August 7th, 2006 (the newsletter went out August 31) – Nicolas, a Limited Edition OntarioWineReview Drop Stop is in the mail to you as we speak. Speaking of the winners for the [Niagara Wine Festival](#) – I accepted the entries anyway – and our winners, of 2 passports for the upcoming event, are: Fred Couch (Beamsville); Michelle Dumond and Andrew Lauzon (Ottawa); Barry & Angie Wylie (Oakville); and Wayne Green (Ottawa).

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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