

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 – 41
October 12, 2006

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News ... *We start this newsletter off with some news about OntarioWineReview and our website:*

Grape Gear is here ... I am pleased to announce that OntarioWineReview has launched our very own line of clothing (hey, who isn't doing it these days); t-shirts, hats, aprons, even mugs – you name it, we've got it. New designs are being added every few weeks by our creative team so check back often and buy lots (it's the best way to keep this website free). And in the new year, look for our line of fragrances too – Mystique Merlot, Sensual Syrah and Craving Ewe Cabernet. Really, I'm kidding about the fragrances but I'm serious about the clothing ... check it out here: www.cafepress.com/owrgrapegear



OntarioWineReview: *Ontario's Grape*

These days, everybody is specializing. It used to be that being a-Jack-of all-trades, or everything-to-anybody was the best way to go. But, if New Zealand has shown us anything about the wine world, it's that specializing is definitely in vogue, or at least, the way to make a name for yourself. New Zealand has taken the wine world by storm with Sauvignon Blanc; taking a previously blasé grape (grown all over the world), dressing it up, giving it some zing and making it their own. Ask any white wine drinker, (one who likes Sauvignon Blanc) and New Zealand is the first place that'll come to their lips for making high-quality, drinkable and delicious Sauvignon Blanc. Follow that up with a question about who's Sauvignon Blanc they drank before New Zealand Sauv Blanc and they'll probably be hard pressed to come up with an answer. That might be alright for white wine drinkers, but even staunch red wine drinkers know that if they need a bottle of Sauvignon Blanc (for guests or to impress), they should investigate the New Zealand section of their local wine store. The biggest benefit to New Zealand is the recognition. Now that they have made a name for themselves (worldwide) with Sauvignon Blanc, they can branch out and make other wines ... and they'll sell. Today, you'll see Pinot Noirs, Merlots, Cabernets, and other wines sold right alongside those bottles of superb Sauvignon Blanc; and wine drinkers (both red and white) are willing to give them a shot, because they know New Zealand has a good name in wine (or at least in Sauvignon Blanc), so the Kiwis must make other great stuff, right? New Zealand is not the inventor of this idea, just the latest country to be market-savvy enough to take advantage of it. In fact, it is this kind of consumer mindset that has worked for many other wine growing/making countries around the world.

The same model of one-grape-done-well-leads-to-market-dominance has been done most recently by the Australians, at this time the world's favourite country for wine. And how did they do it? Instead of being everything-to-everybody, Australia made a name for themselves on the back of Shiraz. Today, everything Australian is snapped up the moment it hits store shelves: their Cabs, their Merlots, their Chards, their blends, their sweets – all fly off the shelves, because they are now the "go to" country for many wine drinkers, no matter what the varietal. But that being said, when most people think of Australia, they still think Shiraz, because the Aussies made it their "signature grape", and they continue to dominate it's production, even though most winemaking countries in the world are growing and making good quality Shiraz.

In other parts of the world, all major wine regions are finding their own signature grape and putting their unique stamp on it. California has always had their Zinfandel; South Africa has their Pinotage and Argentina has found favour with Malbec. Chile started out by trying to make their statement with friendly ready-to-drink Merlots, or

so they thought, but they soon learned they were mixing in *their* soon to be signature grape, the Merlot look alike, Carmenere. It would seem that everyone has got a grape to call their own, even if it's a grape widely grown the world over. Therefore, I think it's high time that Ontario made a statement to the world with a grape we can call our own, and from which we make great wines. It's time we proclaim Ontario's signature grape.

As you probably expect I read wine magazines like crazy. In a recent edition of Vines Magazine I read an article about Riesling being Ontario's signature grape (May/June 2006). While I agree that Ontario makes some great Rieslings, I believe that Germany seems to have that market pretty much locked down. Both wine drinkers, and non-wine drinkers alike, think of Germany before any other country when they think Rieslings. For example: my father is a non-wine drinker, but he knows that if he wants a Riesling, he goes to the Germany section of the LCBO; I'm pretty sure he has no idea Ontario even makes Riesling. But there is something we do differently, and better, than any one else. I am speaking of none other than that Bordeaux-blending workhorse, Cabernet Franc. Cabernet Franc is used all over the world, mainly as a blending grape in Cabernet-Merlot or Bordeaux blends, while it's son Cabernet Sauvignon, gets all the credit for some of the most lush and age-worthy wines in the world (Cabernet Sauvignon, after all, is a cross of Cabernet Franc and Sauvignon Blanc). Ontario has been making quality, single-varietal, age-worthy Cabernet Franc for years. And it just seems, that year-after-year, our Francs get better as we get more experience making wines from it. Cabernet Franc flourishes here in Ontario and many of our wineries have seen great success with their Francs. Walk into any winery in Ontario, and you will see at least one kind of straight Cabernet Franc on the shelf, and plenty of other wines with Franc, as the major component, blended in. It's time Ontario winemakers and consumers started to recognize what we have here in Cabernet Franc (though I believe many winemakers already do) and it's time for us to start pushing our version of Cabernet franc on the rest of the world, much in the same way the Australians did with Shiraz, and New Zealand did with Sauvignon Blanc. Time to start exporting and marketing our Cabernet Franc as Ontario's signature wine; and, if necessary, through the same channels that made our icewine famous. It's time to show the world that Ontario is not a one-trick cold-weather icewine pony. Our wines are matching up to, and winning awards, right next to some of the perceived "best" wines on the planet. Its time to put our best grape forward and, in my opinion, that grape is Cabernet Franc ... who's with me?

While you're thinking on that point, check out some of these outstanding examples of Cabernet Franc made in the past few years: [Peninsula Ridge 2002](#); [Sandbanks 2005](#); [Lakeview Cellars 2002](#); [13th Street 2004](#); [Hillebrand Trius 2002](#); [Coyote's Run 2004](#); [Ridgepoint 2002](#). For more examples go to the [wine review section](#) of the website and type in "Cabernet Franc" in the search box, you'll see plenty more Francs and Franc-blends. (This list does not include the wonderful Mountain Road Wine Company's delicious 2002 Cabernet Franc, which will be reviewed in the next newsletter along with a review of the winery itself). You'll see from these reviews, that Ontario makes some great Cabernet Franc. I trust you already have, or at least will, go out and try a few to form your own opinion; and after you do, I know you'll all get behind me on for this push. Now go out and buy yourself some Cabernet Franc, taste it with friends, take it to other countries when you visit friends or family, let's get this "vineroots" movement off the ground. Now I'm off to pour myself a glass of '02 Southbrook Cabernet Franc (which will appear in next Tuesday's [Weekly Wine Notes](#)) ... Cheers!



Grape Guy's Picks of the Bunch: *Our Star Grape ... one dry, one iced*

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

Colio Estate Wines 2002 CEV Barrel Aged Cabernet Franc - \$21.95

www.coliowines.com

A perfect expression of what Cabernet Franc can be. From the wonderful 2002 vintage (are you tired of hearing that yet?) which saw a short spring, long summer growing season and optimal conditions for grapes (perfect temps, excellent ripening). All these factors came together in one beautiful vintage, culminating in a wonderful wine. The nose has lots to offer: oak, green pepper, raspberry, cinnamon, nutmeg, smoke and plenty of ripe red fruit. The taste is also big and powerful with cedar, spice, vanilla, dark berries and plenty of mouth drying tannins, there's also some cracked pepper on the finish. The bold tannins means there's ageability in this bottle – let's say a good five years (drink now to 2011), maybe more (my mind is saying longer but I'd rather err on the side of caution). Medium finish, mid-weight wine that is a perfect expression of what Ontario can do with this grape. Kudos go out to Carlo Negri, who has been making wine in Ontario longer than anyone, for showing us, once again, how great wine is made.

Pilliteri Estates Winery 2004 Cabernet Franc Icewine - \$35 (200ml only)

www.pilliteri.com

www.ontariowinereview.com

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Cabernet Franc is going to be the next big icewine grape. Ontario has been making great dry Franc for a long time, and it's about time we realized that it can also be made into a great Icewine. Over the past couple of years, I have tried two that have changed the way I see Franc's potential in this area ([read about the first](#)). This Pilliteri Cabernet Franc Icewine is the second. Pilliteri has been making Cabernet Franc icewine since 1998, and a whopping 55% of their production is devoted to making icewine, so if any winery is going to do it right, they will. This 2004 version is loaded with sweet chocolate strawberry, wildflower honey and candied peach – there's also some rhubarb and sweet red pepper jelly on the nose. In the mouth it's thick and lush with an amazing sweet strawberries and cherries dipped in milk chocolate taste, awesomely delicious. Jaime Slingerland, director of viticulture, told me it's "very troublesome to make", but the end results make it all worthwhile. The price may seem a little steep (375ml - \$60; 200ml - \$35), but Pilliteri had to take a few extra precautions this year to beat the counterfeiters (yes, they counterfeit wine). I'm told that 50% of the "Pilliteri" labeled icewine sold in the Orient is actually bogus wine. Their new bottle is now embossed in gold and has "cartouche" lettering, allowing consumers to distinguish the genuine stuff from the fakery. My advice: head to the winery to get the good stuff.

Many people ask me what you pair this wine with and I'll say, "it's a dessert unto itself" so drink it "all by it's lonesome," as mom used to say.

All of the above wines are available at the winery.



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

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

I know, I know ... it's Ontario-Wine-Review, the stress is on Ontario, but sometimes we go abroad to check out what the worldwide "competition" is up to ... so check out my reports from the ["Uncover Australia"](#) and the [Chilean Wine Fair](#), both held in Toronto

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"](#): [Kacaba Vineyards 2001 Gypsy Red](#) and [Birchwood Estate Wines 2003 Gamay Noir](#)



Oops, They Did It Again: *Looking at past reviewed wineries and their new vintages.*

Colio Estate Wines

www.coliowines.com

I'm a big fan of smaller wineries (as many of my reviews will attest) because they seem to take great care in the making of their wine and they're a little more selective about what they make and when it's released. However, sometimes those caring, small wineries get usurped by the "big guys" experience. On a recent trip to Lake Erie North Shore, while I was enthralled by some of the new wineries popping up, I found myself sucked in, once again, by Colio and the exceptional work of master winemaker Carlo Negri. After 25 years of making wine in Ontario Carlo has himself an apprentice, and potential heir to the throne, as he prepares to step down. Tim Reilly will be taking over full time winemaking duties sometime in the next year (or so), but right now he's in charge of the whites. Before we get to that let's start this second look at Colio with some of Carlo's work. His [2002 CEV Reserve Cabernet Franc](#) is a masterpiece: delicious, spicy, fruity and well balanced; a great vintage year and a master winemaker working harmoniously together to make a great wine, (see Pick of the Bunch above) I also know from speaking with Carlo that he is a big fan of this grape. So what about Tim Reilly's work? Tim's [2005 Gewurztraminer](#) has different nuances from Carlo's '02 ... Tim says the difference is the yeast. Side-by-side, they make for an interesting comparison in winemaking tastes and styles. Two other wines of note are the [2005 Riesling](#) and [2004 Cabernet Sauvignon](#); both are lush, fruit forward affairs. Finally, if your looking for something truly fun and palate cleansing, try the [2004 Lily Sparkling Wine](#), made entirely from Chardonnay grapes – a hint of sweetness helps this one go down all that much better. After this re-visit, Colio remains a fixture on my Lake Erie North Shore visits.



Wine Event Spotlight: *Ottawa Wine and Food Show ... Ticket Giveaway ... and a Drop Stop*

I have a buddy who now lives in Ottawa, though he grew up in Toronto – actually right next door to me – he went off to University in Ottawa and never really left. In speaking with him, he praised the Ottawa Wine and Food Show to the hilt, yet he has never attended the event ... thus is the reputation of this show – everybody knows about it, everybody loves it, everybody knows somebody who has been to it, and some just never get around to it though they've heard all about it. This year marks the Black Jack anniversary of this event (21st Annual) and the organizers say "There's something for everyone. With 200 booths presenting wines and foods to tempt your palate" and there are countless others presenting gift items to tempt your pocketbook; making this show, as always, a "taster's tour around the world". This year, the highlight region is California; they'll be great wines being poured and fun foods to sample. The show runs Friday November 3 to Sunday November 5 at the Ottawa Congress Centre ... tickets are \$15 per person (19 years of age or older) and are available at the event or through Ticketmaster. For more information, and there's lots to be had, [click here](#).

FREE PASSES: And yes, you can be one of the lucky ones to go to the show. The usual rules apply: send your name, address (with postal code) and phone number to michael@ontariowinereview.com - be sure to put "Wining in the Nation's Capital" in the subject line. Entries must be received by 11:59pm – October 19th, 2006 ... passes will be mailed out to the winners, whose names will be announced in the next newsletter. Good luck.

Finally, in the last newsletter I promised a Limited Edition **OntarioWineReview** DropStop to anyone who guessed what I thought Ontario's signature grape should be. Many of you agreed with Vine Magazine and guessed Riesling ... so I threw all those guesses into the hopper and picked out one to receive a DropStop – even though he guessed it wrong too. Bob DeVeer of Kingsville your DropStop is in the mail; and to all you other Riesling lovers out there, of which I am one, I admire you pluck and spunk but I have to disagree, but only slightly. Cheers.

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. Forward this newsletter to your mom in Milton, your son in Smith Falls, any other family member or loved one that you know needs good wine advice.

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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