

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 – 44
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News ... *We start this newsletter off with some news about OntarioWineReview and our website:*

The Crystal Cork Awards Nominees have been announced and the voting is officially on. That's right, after a year and a half of promising you something unique we have delivered in spades. The People's Choice Awards of Wine Awards ... you have your say in who wins. By going to the [Crystal Cork Awards](#) section of the website you can view the nominees in the 4 categories (Best Red, Best White, Best Sweet, Best Fruit), which were selected by the amount of interest that was generated by views of the review (which means you, our readers, had your say there too).

Newsletter subscribers received their ballot with this edition of the OntarioWineReview Newsletter ... all others can visit the website and follow the instructions provided. It's real easy so I encourage you all to vote. Ballots will be accepted up to December 31, 2006 at 11:59pm – then the votes are tabulated and winners announced in the January 18th edition of the OntarioWineReview newsletter – and on the website. So have fun ... vote for your favourite wine – and may the best wine win.

Our goal is to deliver the information you are most interested in, so let us know how we're doing by answering our poll question at the [bottom of the home page](#).



OntarioWineReview: WINERY REVIEW - Long Dog Winery

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.

Yup, Long Dog Winery is one of those wineries; you know the kind where you pull into the parking lot, scratch your head and wonder if you're really in the right place. You look around and see row upon row of immaculately kept vines, yet you still wonder where to find the winery store. You continue to scan your surroundings and see what looks like a small shack not more than a stone's throw away and you surmise that that might be the wine store, although it could also be located in the bigger ramshackle building to your right. You spy wooden fencing and upended wine barrels on either side of an overgrown, foot trodden path, and you convince yourself to take this path to the newer looking “shack” on the left. Meanwhile, you tell yourself over and over again “this must be the place.” Long Dog Winery is one of those wineries alright. The kind that keeps you wondering and guessing ... but once you get to the door of that “shack” and open it; you're left with no doubts. This is the place.

Inside is a small tasting room, sparsely furnished with a few wine racks made from wooden crates, some tables for brochures and information leaflets and a tasting bar directly in front of you, which is the focal point of the room. Because PEC has had tough winters over the past few years, and because Long Dog is dedicated to making wines from 100% County-grapes, the selection is limited and their production is limited too. The first time I visited a Chardonnay and Pinot Noir were all that graced the shelves and were available for tasting. The Pinot Gris had just recently sold out. The second time I popped my head through the door, 3 months later,

another wine had materialized on the shelf, but one of the previous two was sold out ... so there were still only 2 kinds of wine from which to choose.

Owner, viticulturist and winemaker, James Lahti, took me into his rather small, but quaint, barrel cellar, which is located across and down the road a small piece, in the vineyard. A barrel sample of the 2005 Pinot Noir that he is working on is succulent and delicious (available December 2006), while his non-vintage Tumbling Stone (a blend of 80% Gamay and 20% Pinot – now available) is light bodied and wonderful (read the pick of the bunch for fuller description). James is seriously committed to 100% County-only grape wines and some see him as fanatical about it; but as he says “if we’re gonna make a name for ourselves down here we have to learn to stand on our own two feet [and not use other regions’ grapes].” And he’s right. The VQA will not designate the Prince Edward County a DVA (Designated Viticulture Area) region until they consistently harvest 250 tonnes of grapes, and according to Laurie Macdonald of VQA Ontario that time isn’t far off, “we should see it in a year, two at the most.” The advantage will be to see ‘VQA Prince Edward County’ on the label instead of the current ‘VQA Ontario’ – so you will know exactly where the grapes have come from. The DVA gives Prince Edward County authentic, bona fide grape-growing-region status – making them distinct from all others. That’s something James Lahti knows already.

Long Dog Winery, in my estimation, is one of the jewels in the Prince Edward County crown: a dedicated winemaker who is dedicated to the region and is dedicated to making the best wines from only the best estate grown fruit. In fact, James has sold some of his grapes off to other wineries when he has felt the quality just wasn’t up to his exacting standards, “and they won an award using my Gamay,” he told me – which should tell you that his standards must be pretty high.

Just so you don’t think he’s some “lone nut” in this venture, you’ll most likely meet Victoria Rose, James’ wife, who looks after the wine store. She chides him good naturedly about his standards and his dates of release (which change if he believes the wine is not yet ready – “I tell people summer, but James’ dates are always changing, so don’t quote me on that”) ... but she also loves her wine, loves the occupation and loves to talk about the winery venture they have undertaken together. And for conversation there is nobody better in the County, they have an opinion on everything from the LCBO to field hands. James is adamant about his workers, “no migrant workers,” he told me, “I like local people, put money back into the local economy ... there’s not many of us, but there’s enough and we get the job done.”

Getting the job done is right ... and Long Dog should be on your list of must-places when visiting Prince Edward County. It might take you a little time, and you might be confuse about whether you’re in the right place ... but you’ll know when you get there and you’ll be so glad you did.



Grape Guy’s Picks of the Bunch: *Look out for Tumbling Stones*
Visit www.longdog.ca for more details or to purchase these great wines.

Long Dog Winery NV Tumbling Stone - \$16.00
www.longdog.ca

I have tasted James’ 2005 all county Pinot Noir and I will admit it’s good, very good ... but at the time of this review it had yet to be bottled – and the price point was going to be too rich for my blood (~ \$45 a bottle) – worth it, but not within my budget. On the other hand, this little beauty is well in my wheel house (at \$16) and delicious to boot. It too is all county fruit, but not from the same year, which is what makes it non-vintage. A blend of 80% Gamay Noir and 20% Pinot Noir, it comes off as just a few shades darker than your usual blush wine, and it’s made in a light Beaujolais-style – and yet the influence of both grapes shows through. First, because the colour and body are so light the wine should, by all rights, be chilled, so don’t be afraid to do so. Then there’s the delicious nose of strawberries, raspberries and earth. Finally, there’s the taste. Very much a fruit driven wine with slight undertones of earthiness and a hint of white pepper at the forefront. Mid-palate is where you’ll find it’s fruitiness, and the finish is dry and earthy. All-in-all, a great little pizza or pasta night wine with a lot of vibrance in the glass. I’m looking forward to more wines like this from Long Dog Winery – where the fun on the label matches the fun in the bottle. Cheers!

This wine is available only 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.

The Grape Guy presents "Weekly Wine Notes"! A savory 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](#)":
[Mountain Road Wine Company Winter Wine Blend #4](#) and [Pelee Island 2005 Cabernet Franc](#)*

This week also sees the Grape Guy reviewing the [6th Annual Taste of the Season](#) in Niagara-on-the-Lake. Check out the [On the Road with the Grape Guy](#) section of the forum and find out why you should plan to go.



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.

Looking for something to be "wowed" about Long Dog stumped me ... with very little to see, except for the immaculate vineyards, and little to do, except try the wine – there is very little I can comment about in the wow factor this time round. The grounds are rustic; the pathway leading up to the store is not so much cut as tamped down from the feet of folks walking in; the building that houses the tasting room is newer inside than out. But as I sit here and reflect two things come to my mind ... one, the two barrels that lie on either side of the path leading to the wine store make for a great picture opportunity; and two, their cute logo: the wired-haired dachshunds. I have yet to see the little beasties on my visit, but something tells me they'd be cute to come across. Come to think of it, the story about the winery's humble beginnings and the way they came up with their name is displayed on the counter and makes for an interesting read. So from nothing much to three ... not bad what a little thought can bring to mind.



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

Wine Atlas of Canada By Tony Aspler

If you're still looking for that perfect gift for the wine lover on your list, then look no further than one of Canada's most renowned wine writers, Tony Aspler, to help make your gift giving easier. Tony, with the help of photographer Steven Elphick, has compiled the [The Wine Atlas of Canada](#), a 287-page tour-de-force through all the wineries of Canada, that's attractive and very well laid out. The entries are broken down by region and alphabetically within those regions for easy accessibility. There are also sections on founders, vineyards and other sidebars that make looking through this book a different experience every time you thumb through it. Take for example the article on "Frank Gehry's Futuristic Winery" Le Clos Jordanne or the spotlight on "Canada's Wine Ambassador Donald Ziraldo" - both insightful, comprehensive and easy to read.

Wanna know which wineries are in Quebec, or what they're doing in Nova Scotia? How about checking out that multitude of much heard about B.C. wineries or those wineries on the opposite coast ... they're all here, or at least all the ones at press time. That would be the only downside to this wonderful book: with the ever-changing nature of this industry, the explosion in popularity of wine, and the tendencies for a winery to open up quickly and quietly, this book was "out-of-date" the moment it hit the shelves. Ziraldo announced his retirement in Ottawa a few weeks ago, Vincor was sold to Constellation Brands back in the summer (which for one put Le Clos Jordanne on shaky ground), and at least two wineries have opened in Ontario alone (Calamus and Rancourt). But let's not focus on its shortcomings when we really do have such a wonderful treasure to look at. It's a great snapshot for right now, and further editions will expand on an already great foundation. If Canadian wine, all wine for that matter, is based on terroir, then Tony Aspler has laid some great groundwork for the current and future wine lovers of Canada.

If you're a Canadian wine fan, aficionado or just plain love wine this is the book for you or for someone you know. It remains on my shelf as a required reference right alongside Konrad Ejbich's Wines of Ontario. Put it on your wish list or gift list. Currently the best deal can be found at Costco, retailing at \$29.99, otherwise Amazon.ca is selling it for \$39.60 – both well below the suggested retail of sixty dollars ... and well worth the price of admission for all this great wine information.



Wine Event Spotlight: *Wrapped Up in the Valley – Nov. 24-26*

Join the wineries of the Twenty Valley as they celebrate the season Friday November 24 to Sunday November 26 for the 1st (and hopefully annual) “Wrapped Up in the Valley”. 14 area wineries have pooled together their usual open house season for this passport event. Each winery is offering something special ... and each passport holder is eligible to get a free stone-coaster (up to four in total) – great for yourself or as a unique gift.

Participating wineries are Angels Gate; Birchwood; Creekside; EastDell; Featherstone; Fielding; Flat Rock; Harbour; Lakeview; Legends; Mountain Road; Stoney Ridge; Vineland and Willow Heights. Passports are \$20 and available by calling 905-562-3636 or at participating wineries. To see the schedule of events [check it out here](#). So get out there and join them for festive cheer, holiday specials, tasty treats and of course, great wine.

Winner: You have one more weekend left to take advantage of Taste of the Season ... and one lucky reader will be going he is: Kemp Watson (Richmond Hill) – to get tickets for yourself or find out more about this event visit www.wineriesofniagaraonthelake.com on the web ... and if you miss it this year – mark it on your calendar to go next year, it’s an event well worth going to.

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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