

## 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 – 45**  
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#### OntarioWineReview: *The Best Gift I Ever Got*

I wasn't always into wine – I knew about it from an early age and my parents weren't prudish about it. If you were having dinner at home, then you could have a glass (even if it was only one of those "kid-size" glasses). Growing up, I was into movies and records (remember those?) and stuff like that. Gift giving was easy for anybody who knew me – a gift certificate from Sam's (remember?); the latest album by a favourite artist; or the most recent Disney movie (like Fantasia – thanks mom). People knew what to get me, or I would tell them, and voila it would appear (many thanks to my brother for the Elton John and Rod Stewart box sets ... on tape!).

Nowadays, everyone knows I'm into wine, thus, wine related stuff became the mode-du-jour. Nobody asks me what I want anymore, they just take it upon themselves to pick out something wine-related. At first, it started as a bottle of wine from here and a bottle from there, but as my knowledge increased and I brought better and better bottles of wine over for dinner – friends and family became intimidated about buying wine for "the wine-writer". They just assumed I would hate their choice cause they "didn't know much about wine". They think it won't be to my liking, or my taste, or even, heaven forbid, I would know the price and that might make them look cheap. So the new thing now is to get me wine-kitsch: you know, that paraphernalia related to wine.

At first I liked getting the wine cooler bags (I now have 3); the wine carriers (4) the picnic knap-sacs (3); the corkscrews (21+); the cheese/wine combos (2); books about regions (11); glasses (28+); decanters (9), you name it and I've probably got it. But I have to hand it to my sister-in-law – through all the wine-kitsch friends and family have given me for birthdays, Christmas, or thank yous, I must say she finally hit the nail on the head with the most unique gift of all – "wine cups". Pottery wine cups, what I lovingly call "Jesus Juice Glasses". Let me try to describe them: they're about 4 and ¾ inches high and about three inches wide at the mouth (shaped like a Riedel "O" glass), made of light lacquered pottery outside (thicker lacquer around the rim for drinking comfort), a small grape leaf protrudes about an eighth of an inch off the cup face, and inside they remain unfinished. The parchment that accompanied them explained that these "earthenware cups", which were the preferred drinking vessel of yore, absorbed acid from wine and leached out the tannins, making the wine "ever-so-much smoother and significantly more savoury". A likely story, but one I was willing to try – what the heck? And how pleasantly surprised I was. Not only did the cups fit comfortably in my hand, but comparing the wine in a glass to the wine in the cup, there was a marked difference in tannins and smoothness – mind over matter? Suggestive selling? I'm not really sure; but it made for an interesting and enjoyable experiment. These cups would also look right at home with a mammoth turkey leg in one hand and cup in the other.

As far as unique gifts that I have been given go, the cups are the pinnacle of uniqueness (I just wish I remembered to use them more often). To be able to sift through all the kitsch and come up with a gem like this makes all those wine-related gifts worthwhile, so keep them coming, and maybe, one day, you'll dethrone my sister-in-law. Meanwhile, does anybody need a wine cooler or a corkscrew, cheap?

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#### Grape Guy's Picks of the Bunch: *One Blend and One new wineries Riesling*

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

Coyote's Run Estate Winery 2005 Cabernet - \$17.00  
[www.coyotesrunwinery.com](http://www.coyotesrunwinery.com)

Because of the short crop in the 2005 vintage, we are going to be seeing a lot of blends. At many wineries, the grape quantities weren't high enough to make it viable for them to make single varietals, unless of course they were going for limited quantity production. We've already caught a glimpse of this at Carmela Estates in Prince Edward County with their three grape white [2005 Terroir Twist](#). And in Niagara, we see it at Coyote's Run with their red blend, Cabernet. 2005 is going to showcase a winemaker's talent to blend, although 2005 was a good growing season and the grapes they are working with are of excellent quality – there's just fewer of them. The first thing Coyote's Run fans will notice is the Stelvin Screwcap ... Coyote's Run has made the leap to all Stelvin bottling from here on in. So, after all this banter and explanation, how's the wine? Very good if I do say so myself. This 50/50 blend of Cabernet Franc and Cabernet Sauvignon has hints of dark fruit and raspberries on the nose, there's also some prominent oaky smells. The palate is ripe with a firm tannin backbone, suggesting some age-worthiness. Tastes of cassis, blackberry and spicy black pepper in the mouth, with a finish of oak, cinnamon and anise. This would be a great wine to enjoy with a hearty steak or you can set it aside for a few years and allow those dusty tannins to mellow out a bit.

Calamus Estate Winery 2005 Riesling - \$12.00  
[www.calamuswines.com](http://www.calamuswines.com)

One of Niagara's newest wineries, Calamus, is actually a shed at the end of one of the region's prettiest drives. Located near Ball's Falls, Calamus is a winery in its infancy. A reasonably priced wine list (nothing over \$22 – most wines under \$15) and some tasty offerings could also make them Niagara's best value winery. If you remember, a few newsletters ago I nominated Featherstone as Niagara's smallest tasting room, but Calamus has wrestled the mantle away with a tasting room a quarter of the size Featherstone's. But enough about that, let's look at their \$12.00 Riesling, which is a steal for a wine of this caliber. A wine with a very subtle nose of citrus, not much to go on, but still quite inviting. Then we get to the taste and that's when you realize the bargain you've just acquired. A sweet beginning, a creamy peach-like middle and a tart lemon finish, with the barest hint of cinnamon. A very pleasant first go around for this young winery, at a very attractive price.

Read about another Calamus white – the [2005 Pinot Gris](#) on the website.

All of the above wines are available at the winery.

**Hot Tip on a Hot Wine:** The quickly disappearing, multi-award winning [2005 Riesling from Flat Rock Cellars](#) is a stunner – I have finally put the review on the website ... get it while it's still available, it's going fast.



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

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

*This is the time of year for festivals and events and in the Forum you'll find two very different events reviewed [The Gourmet Food and Wine Expo](#) and the [1<sup>st</sup> Annual Wrapped up in the Valley](#).*

*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](#)": [Lailey Vineyard 2005 Riesling](#) and [Norman Hardie Winery 2005 County Cabernet Franc](#)*



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

Ridgepoint continues to be a love/hate winery for me – I love their wine, I love drinking their wine, I love their atmosphere, attention to detail, philosophy of wine making, and did I mention the wines. I hate the fact that when I go I always walk out with a minimum 4 bottle purchase – even on those days when I promise myself I'm going in just for a taste. So I hate them because they make me spend money – but it's on good wine, so that is on the plus side ... as you can see I am in conflict. They continue to impress me with their small winery status while continuing to provide great tasting, affordable, quality wines. This time I tasted three new releases (and a re-release) all are sure to impress and bring more people on board to my way of thinking. The 2005 Rieslings ([dry](#) and [medium-dry](#)) are delicious, with similar aromas and tastes, but enough difference that a side-by-side

comparison is possible ... and if you're like me, you'll like them both because each has their place at the table or in the living room. If you were lucky enough to put your hands on a bottle of their [2002 Cabernet Sauvignon](#), now sadly, and recently, sold out, you'll know it follows in the same vein as many wines from '02 – big, bold, brawny and tannic, a great cellar candidate ... although it is starting to open up a little right now, you could lie this one down for 5-plus years and end up with a wine that tastes miles away from its \$19.95 price tag. Speaking of cellar candidates, get your hands on the re-release of the 2002 Nebiolo. Ridgepoint is the only winery currently experimenting with this grape and the '02 is not only powerful but ageable ... this one could keep for another 10 years, so it is an investment at \$39.95.



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

### Marilyn Merlot and the Naked Grape

By Peter F. May

As a big fan of oddities, fun facts and irreverent topics Peter F. May's book [Marilyn Merlot and the Naked Grape](#) is right up my alley. Peter, a collector of curious and fun wine labels, and a wine enthusiast in his own right, has for years been posting his label collection at [www.winelabels.org](http://www.winelabels.org), but has now put it in book form for those of us who like our wine kitsch in a more portable (or is that potable) format. Mr. May's collection is quite vast and worldly – some of the labels I recognize from seeing them on our shelves here in Canada, while others I wished I had seen or purchased over time, wine like the Australian Ball Buster Red; California's Big Ass Red; Italy's the Full Montepulciano; Spain's Scraping the Barrel; Sex from Michigan; an Old Fart from France; some Cleavage Creek from California and many others, making for a fun read that will, in places, make you laugh out loud, smile knowingly, or sometimes just scratch your head. These labels have one thing in common, they all have a story to tell and Peter May brings it all together nicely with delightful short and concise re-tellings. Not only do you get the origin and stories behind some of the funniest and wittiest labels in the world, but the book also acts as a resource for these wineries, with contact information for all the wineries featured in the book contained in a glossary at the end. There is another glossary of terms that are used throughout the book, and finally a section on at least three ways to properly remove a label. Finally, a bonus section of "Odd Facts" at the end: two pages of oddities about some of the wines that appear in the book – like a red wine from California made up of 16 different grapes along with 1% Miscellaneous and 1% Mixed red ... talk about throwing in the kitchen sink.

[Marilyn Merlot and the Naked Grape](#) is a great little gift for the wine lover in your family, anybody who likes smart and witty puns/bon mots/take offs etc. – or heck just pick it up for yourself to enjoy. Hate to admit this – and I hope Peter is not offended when I say that the book makes for great bathroom reading too.



**Wine Event Spotlight:** *A Plethora of Open Houses*

This time of year we see a lot of wineries holding open houses. Inviting you out to the winery to sample the wines and local foods, buying wine related items for those wine lovers in your family: books, glassware, openers, cooler bags, etc. Check your favourite winery's website to see what they have on for the month of December – here are five that have come to my attention: [Coyote's Run](#) (NOTL); [Fielding](#) (Beamsville); [Cox Creek](#) (Guelph); [Calamus](#) (Jordan) and [Erie Shore](#) (Lake Erie North Shore). Keep your eye on the website, next week I'll be releasing my "Last minute gift ideas that won't break the bank".

**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](mailto:michael@ontariowinereview.com) We look forward to hearing from you!

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