

## 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 – 56**  
**May 12, 2007**

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

I am very excited this week to announce a few more additions to the OntarioWineReview universe. As you all know, last time I told you that the [Weekly Wine Note](#) and [On the Road with the Grape Guy](#) had been given their own off-site blogs ... well, the Weekly Wine Note is now also a weekly [Podcast](#); you can listen to them at [www.ontariowinereview.libsyn.com](http://www.ontariowinereview.libsyn.com). Next month (June) I will launch a month-long poll to find out if you would prefer the Podcast be the same wine as the Weekly Wine Note or a different wine.

I also have a special sneak peak for all newsletter readers and subscribers. The Grape Guy is stepping out of the Ontario wine world on a bi-weekly basis to bring you my tips on the Vintages releases through the LCBO ... it won't be a section on the website until late next week (weekend of May 19), but I thought I would give you all a peak at it now (visit [www.grapeguyvintages.blogspot.com](http://www.grapeguyvintages.blogspot.com)). If you have any comments please email them to me at [michael@ontariowinereview.com](mailto:michael@ontariowinereview.com).

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**OntarioWineReview:** *Spring Fever in Wine Country*

May reminds me of that song Michael Buble sang to open up his album "It's Time": "It's a new dawn, it's a new day, it's a new life for me, and I'm feeling good"(Feeling Good); and I'm not just talking for those normal spring reasons. Sure the buds are breaking, the birds are singing, the grass has that nice green sheen about it, the sun shines brighter and warmer, playing hockey turns to baseball and golf, and baby animals are soon seen in ponds and backyards. Yes, it's a new springtime for sure. But May signifies even better things for wine lovers: new vintages. That's right, ladies and gentlemen; new wines are coming to market.

If you are signed up for as many winery email newsletters as I am your inbox is probably overflowing with announcements about new whites and reserve reds ... and I couldn't be any happier because a new favourite awaits discovery, a new find awaits to be found, and a new value priced gem is soon to be discovered. What a time to be a wine lover in Ontario, and a lover of Ontario wine ... the long winter is over, time to break out the glasses and try something brand spanking new.

May is also the doorway to June, and June means new vintage festivals. In Niagara, for two weeks in June, a festival is dedicated to the new wines of Spring. A similar festival, called "Terroir", is planned for Prince Edward County during the May long weekend – though with fewer wineries, theirs lasts one weekend, albeit the long weekend. Both festivals celebrate the arrival of new wines. Niagara-on-the-Lake holds its own spring wine festival throughout the month of May, called it the Wine and Herb Festival, but who's kidding who, the event is created to bring you down to wine country and check out what's new. Whether masquerading as a herb-event or a celebration of soil, it all falls under one banner: "New Wine is coming to town" ... it's like Christmas for the adult crowd.

Spring also signifies the re-opening of some wineries, which close for the winter and extending the hours at others. All-in-all there's just a greater buzz, beep and bling coming from my email inbox as wineries start having their open houses, inviting "insiders" to try the new arrivals, and get "sneak peaks" at what's new on the

shelves. The whole of wine country is revving up, and waking up, from its winter slumber. Wines in barrel see bottle, as do the ones resting in tank. You begin to see numbers like "2006" on the label, as well as "Reserve 2005"; and when you do, your heart should skip a beat and your brain should cry out "hey, that's new, gotta try that one!"

The wineries themselves, besides revving up to sell, are also casting their eyes outside at the weather; pruning was done earlier in the year and now they're expecting that great sign of life from the vines, bud break. But this is also the time when worry can set in; Canada being what is called 'a cool climate wine region' has to take full advantage of the weather, and it's at this time of year there's a lot of hoping, wishing and praying. Winter 2006 was mild, which means everything now depends on the heat of summer and a spell of lengthy good weather in the fall. Unfortunately, spring did not co-operate this year, winter still wanted to stick around, or at least the cooler temperatures did. This does not promote flowering and vine growth: "We're already two weeks behind," Ray Cornell of Fielding told me on April 14, "and the forecast is calling for more cooler temperatures next week. We're now hoping for a summer like '05 and an Indian Summer, or we're in trouble." And the worrying begins anew.

For now, enjoy the '06's and the reserve '05's and while you are cross your fingers for our vintners and growers – they need all the help they can get ... a prayer or two now and then wouldn't hurt either.



**Grape Guy's Picks of the Bunch:** *Fielding Sauv and Featherstone Ries*  
Visit the winery or their website for more details or to purchase these great wines.

Fielding Estate Winery 2005 Cabernet Sauvignon - \$18.00  
[www.fieldingwines.com](http://www.fieldingwines.com)

My number one selection from the April 2007 open house of new releases. Sure springtime is all about whites but this Cab Sauv almost talked to me from the glass, begging me to jump right in. Barrel fermented and then aged for 12 months in French oak, the nose shows signs of where it has come from and where it is going. Some toastyness and hits of sweet tobacco are from the barrel, but what is really exciting for your olfactory lobes is the strawberry, raspberry, cherry, blackberry, cassis and chocolate that emanates from the glass. Now you're ready to dive in (or more appropriately, it dives into you) ... in the mouth its mainly dark fruit with some cedar, vanilla, cinnamon and a touch of leather. Good mouthwatering acidity and late arriving tannins makes this a pure pleasure for the mouth – and the new screwcap makes it easy to get into. This one needs a little time on the shelf (start drinking July-September) but is showing well right now – the next 2-3 years should see some peaking and by next summer it could very well be your BBQ wine of choice; so buy more than one, cause it won't be around for purchase when you discover just how much you love it.

Featherstone Estate Winery & Vineyard 2006 Old Vines Riesling - \$16.00  
[www.featherstonewinery.ca](http://www.featherstonewinery.ca)

Did someone say sixteen bucks for an old vines Riesling? Better be snapping that one up quick before they realize they've made a pricing error. This is the first time Featherstone has separated the Riesling from their vineyard into age designation. Dave Johnson has created an elegant and finesse-laden Riesling from some of the oldest vines in Niagara, rivaling those from both Vineland and Cave Springs for the title (30 years). He still keeps a dollop of sweetness (1) and by all rights this wine should be selling for double the price it does here, as it does elsewhere. It's a true bargain. This racy and mineral driven wine has apple, orange blossom and lime in both the nose and taste. The good acidity keeps the mouth watering and you coming back for more. The best part is the lingering finish. While it sits in the glass it opens up even more on both the taste and the smell, revealing more tropical and further citrus notes. Snap it up, drink it up ... or lie it down, this one should also age beautifully.

**Hot Tip on a Hot Wine:** Now I don't want to raise a panic here but word on the street is this wine might just find its way off of shelves for a bit (both at the LCBO and the winery) so that 1) it can develop more in bottle, 2) it is way under-priced and 3) so that upon re-release the price can be raised. I'm talking about none other than the 2007 Cuvee Award winner for Best Cabernet Franc – [Vineland Estates Winery 2005 Cabernet Franc](#) ... at \$12.95 it is a real steal. Pick a bunch up today and taste as it grows up into tomorrow.

These wines are available at the winery only, while the Vineland Franc is also at the LCBO.



### Weekly Wine Notes and More

The Grape Guy presents the "Weekly Wine Note"! A savoury selection of Ontario wines to impress, enjoy, or just plain drink! A NEW Wine Selection is added to <http://ontariowinereviews.blogspot.com> every Tuesday or listen to the Podcast at [www.ontariowinereview.libsyn.com](http://www.ontariowinereview.libsyn.com)!

Here are the [Weekly Wine Notes](#) that were added to the Blog over the past two weeks:

Peninsula Ridge 2005 Syrah ([read](#)) ([listen](#)) and Thirty Bench Winemakers 2005 Triangle Riesling ([read](#)) ([listen](#))

Also look for these reports in the NEW [On the Road with the Grape Guy](#) section:

[Somewhereness](#)  
[Austrian Annual Wine Fair](#)  
[Vinexx Tasting](#)

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

For me two major events happen in April that really signifies the arrival of spring and the kick off of winery visiting season: The Fielding Insider Weekend and the opening of Featherstone ... this year they happened on the same weekend (could it be my birthday or something?). So down to Niagara I went to check out the new line up from these producers. Usually I would give you a full write up for each wine, but with 9 wines coming out for Fielding and another 7 coming out for Featherstone you might be reading all day ... instead let's look at some of the highlights from each.

Let me preface by saying that each winery's new additions to their respective portfolios are excellent and only enhance their reputations of quality winemaking. Fielding, under the veteran hand of their new winemaker, Ray Cornell (formerly of Hernder), showed he was a good choice as replacement for Andrzej Lipinski. Ray is someone willing to take a few risks while not messing with the traditions that had been laid out before him; although he did re-jigger one major wine to suit both his style and way of thinking (for the better I might add). As Curtis Fielding said, "his wines fall more into a classical tradition." While over at Featherstone, Dave Johnson showed signs that he is willing to take a few chances himself, expanding the line-up and range of wines, as well as fiddle with some of his own "classics".

**Fielding:** Top of the pops here (or should I say crackle of the Stelvin screwcap) was the [2005 Cabernet Sauvignon](#) (\$18), 12 months in French oak and barrel fermented. Lots of great flavours both for the nose to smell and the tongue to taste. On the innovation side, we see a [2006 Rose](#) (\$15) made from 4 different grape varieties: Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Pinot Noir, and Syrah. I do not have the percentage but I was told it was high in Pinot and low in Syrah. This is a nice dry rose with fantastic aromas of strawberry and raspberry with a tart citrus taste. Not a rose to be passing up on ... don't think sweet, no matter what the nose suggests. Rounding out my top three from Fielding is the much-debated [2006 Reserve Riesling](#) (\$22). The debate was about whether you liked the sweetness of the semi-dry (2) or the racy acidity of the Reserve (0). In my mind, the Reserve won out due to its sweet nose and clean dry finish. This is a change of style for Fielding, because, in past years, both Rieslings were a tad sweet ... Ray Cornell allowed the fruit to hang late in the season, picking it on November first, which allowed a touch of botrytis to develop, thus adding an extra dimension to both the nose and taste.

**Featherstone:** Elegance and finesse is the best way to describe my favourite from "The Stone". A new addition to their line-up is their [2006 Old Vine Riesling](#) (\$16) from vines as old as any in Niagara – planted in 1977 – this wine is something worth trying, and definitely worth picking up a few bottles. "The G Wine", as Louise Engel has dubbed it on the taste sheet handed out in the winery, [2006 Gewurztraminer](#) (\$18) takes second place, with some zestiness and spiciness along with its medium long finish. Finally, for third place, I had a toss up here between the "Savvy B" and "The Topaz". The winner is the Savvy, mainly because I am not allowed to reveal the blend in the Topaz on pain of death, so it's easier to describe the Blanc. The [2006 Sauvignon Blanc](#) (\$16) is dripping with citrus in the mouth and smells grassy and tropical. Next year, Featherstone will be one of my "watch for" wineries when it comes to Sauvignon Blancs, because winemaker David Johnson just spent 8 weeks down in New Zealand learning some tricks of the grape – 2007 should be very interesting indeed. I now urge you to go down to both wineries and make your own choice for favourites ... what could be more fun.



**Wine Event Spotlight:** *Ontario Wine Week – June 10-16 – two BIG events*

The multiple events format worked so well last time round that I thought I'd try it again; this time I have 2 events and a recommendation:

June 10-16 has been designated as Ontario Wine Week, and right in the heart of that week is the jewel in its crown, the Consumer Tasting Event for the Ontario Wine Awards winners, now called Sip Ontario. Tuesday June 12<sup>th</sup> from 7:00 to 9:30pm the historic distillery district will play host to over 25 award-winning wineries as they pour samples of their winning wines to eager consumers like yourself, all the while nibbling on specially prepared appetizers. Tickets are \$50 and all the details can be found at [www.ontariowineawards.ca](http://www.ontariowineawards.ca) on the right hand side, click on "Sip Ontario". This tasting has been a sellout for the past few years, book your tickets early so you don't miss out on this unique event.

June 9 thru 17 marks the 12<sup>th</sup> Niagara New Vintages Festival ... more than 25 participating wineries put on events to celebrate the new wines of spring. Tours, tastings and many other events take place throughout the Niagara region. For all the details of this year's events visit [www.niagarawinefestival.com](http://www.niagarawinefestival.com).

**Ticket Giveaway:** We have a few passports to giveaway to the New Vintages Festival ... so get your name, address (with postal code) and phone number to me before May 16 (11:59pm) and you'll be put in the hunt for a pair. Emails should be titled: "I Have the Fever for the Flavour of New Wine" and sent to me at [michael@ontariowinereview.com](mailto:michael@ontariowinereview.com). Good Luck.

As mentioned, we are getting into prime winery visiting season and if you're looking to experience the region in style, and learn a little something along the way check out Niagara Vintage Wine Tours at [www.nvwt.biz](http://www.nvwt.biz).

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**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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