

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 – 59
June 21, 2007

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OntarioWineReview: *WINERY REVIEW – Huff Estates 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.

Driving along Highway One through The County, there really isn't that much to see if you're city folk like me – no neon signs or moving billboards, nothing to grab the attention, just lots of farms, fields and the occasional house. Then like the monolith in the movie 2001, rising in the distance, it's there, Huff Estates Winery ... I can hear the music now.

The winery itself is a concrete, glass and metal structure that seems to rise up out of the landscape and would appear to be a little out of place in the quaint surroundings and the cozy country atmosphere of Prince Edward County. You'll find your thoughts running along one of 2 lines: either it sticks out like a sore thumb, or its unique for the area. My pick would be the latter, because although it doesn't seem to fit in with its rural surroundings, the uniqueness factor far out weighs its “thumbiness”.

Huff opened its doors for business in 2004, with winemaker Frederic Picard at the helm. Frederic once worked for Peninsula Ridge under the tutelage and watchful eye of award winning winemaker Jean-Pierre Colas. The time spent with J.P. has benefited Frederic immensely, because Picard is putting out some of the county's friendliest, as well as affordably priced, wines. But let's get back to the structure itself. There are two main parts of Huff Estates, the winery and the inn. The inn looks peaceful and tranquil from the outside; the brochure I glanced through, showed beautiful rooms, exquisite grounds and an array of packages; from honeymoon to girls' getaways (I suspect that's for when the divorce is finalized), corporate to golfers (plenty of places to play “whack-fudge” in the area), and of course there's the wine lovers package. But we didn't stop by to stay, just to look around; maybe one day a stay will be in order.

So let's start back at the very beginning, coming in off Highway 1. The Huff Estates property driveway is sandwiched between two stone entrance walls, the property itself is not walled in, but these two small walls bookend the long driveway. As you drive down towards the buildings you are given the choice between the inn and the winery ... on this visit, we will take the left hand choice (the winery). You'll find yourself in a circular parking lot, with plenty of angled spaces, into which the cars crowd around a particular location, in order to get as close as possible to the pathway which leads to the main winery building. I parked in one of the further spots – tacking on a mere 15 seconds to my walk toward the path.

There is much to enjoy here at Huff and by just walking around you can pretty much see it all: the pathway leads to the wine store, a glass garage door on your left within the store leads to the patio; the patio is surrounded by a small man-made river with the water supplying the river coming from a stone face (gargoyle) on the wall which splashes down into the waiting pond below, all on your right. Crossing over and above the pond is a set of metal stairs that take you up to an observation balcony – this balcony runs the length of the wine store below. Back down the stairs to the patio, you'll see where there are a number of tables and chairs placed about; here, you can sit for a light lunch: soup and salad, a variety of sandwiches, quiche and a ploughman's special - all reasonably priced and of course, you can pair everything with a glass of wine.

Back through the garage door into the wine store the horseshoe shaped tasting bar juts out from the back wall and tasters can belly-up on all three sides. The walls are neatly designed in a glass and wood motif, with

shelves and square bunks. Some bottles stand upright for display, while others lie down in the bunks above. A variety of glassware and decanters from Riedel, Ravenscroft and other fine crystal and glass manufacturers is available for purchase. Because one of the walls is completely glass (the one with the garage door), the store is bathed in natural light and it feels warm and inviting. On this bright sunny day in May, the patio door is wide open, allowing the fresh air to breeze through. The patio lies invitingly on the other side of the wide open door with its tables and chairs, calling out to you to sit down and take a load off. Take some time to enjoy a glass of wine and a snack ... and what a beautiful day to do so ... the peacefulness of the running water and the openness of the landscape before you, it's a nice place to while away at least part of your day.



Grape Guy's Picks of the Bunch: *The best Rose and an off-dry Riesling*
For directions and more information visit www.huffestates.com

Huff Estates 2006 South Bay Rosé - \$14.95

If I told you this wine was a zero on the sugar code you'd never believe me. If I told you it was made from red grapes you'd scoff. And if I told you there's not a drop of Sauvignon Blanc in it you'd call me a liar. But all three of these statements are true. The grapes for this wine come from the highly touted South Bay Vineyard, which is located in the south-east corner of the County. The grapes in question are Cabernet Franc (60%) and Cabernet Sauvignon (40%), and winemaker Frederic Picard stresses to all who will listen, that skin contact was limited to 3-5 hours before pressing to give it that nice pink hue and lively taste. There are plenty of adjectives to describe this wine: fresh, clean, refreshing, lovely – but it truly is a wine to be experienced. The nose is full of citrus and lime, grapefruit is very distinctive, some floral notes are also present with just a hint of sweet strawberry that shows up as the wine warms-up in the glass. But wait, the palate doesn't disappoint either, and here's where the similarity to Sauvignon Blanc really take hold. Lovely notes of grapefruit and other citrus flavours grab your tastebuds, while a faint hint of grassiness runs down the center of your tongue. A nice clean seam of acidity finishes this one off dry, with some apparent sweetness in the mouth – but this one's dry, zero dry. Describing it is one thing, tasting it is quite another, so don't wait ... summer's here, and this wine was made for summer – a match made in heaven ... or at least in South Bay, by a French guy.

Huff Estates 2006 Riesling off-dry - \$14.95

A few years back, I tried the Huff 2004 off-dry Riesling and it was one of the first county wines I could say I truly enjoyed, without using the reservation "it's from the county" or "for a county wine". The 2005 version was also tasty and followed up on the success of the '04. Now here comes the '06, and another winner ... Huff's winemaking team seems to have this wine down pat. The nose is a fun little frolic of pineapple with a light-toasted caramel-peach cobbler; the taste flows through on the palate with mouth-cleansing acidity, good fruit and a lovely peach finish which dries as it hits the back palate ... quite the refreshing glass of wine – yum!

These wines are available at the winery only.

Summer Selection: Every newsletter throughout the summer, I will recommend a great summer-sipper to make the most of your patio, cottage or boat – this week's pick:

[Henry of Pelham 2006 Sauvignon Blanc - \\$15](#)



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!

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

Lailey Vineyard 2005 Zeigelt ([read](#)) ([listen](#))

Lakeview Cellars 2005 Merlot ([read](#)) ([listen](#))

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

[Sip Ontario](#)

[Niagara New Vintages – Discovery Pass Tour](#)

[New Vintages Grille](#)

The June 23rd LCBO Vintages Release report is available here:

<http://grapeguyvintages.blogspot.com/>

www.ontariowinereview.com



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.

At Huff, with the size of the buildings and the land it sits on, you would expect the wine store to be the centerpiece of the operation, but it's not. The wine store is small compared to many of the things that surround it: the patio is larger, the walkway is longer, heck even the balcony is bigger than the wine store ... so what makes this the "wow factor", you may be asking yourself? Because here the focus is on winemaking, not wine selling (although I am sure they want you to buy the wine too). When you first pull into the driveway, you see a big metal structure (it is attached to the wine boutique), and as you walk down the pathway towards the door of the wine store, you expect to be overwhelmed by a huge monstrosity of a store. But, instead, it's a small room that focuses on wine and wine paraphernalia, and does not overwhelm in anyway. It just fits in nicely with the ambiance of the property. The true "impress-factor" would be on the patio, with its river-running-around-it, or the balcony, with it's view of the property. At Huff the wow is that it's not just all about the wine, it's a place made to be experienced.



Wine Event Spotlight: *Fiesta Buckhorn – Saturday July 21, 2007*

Fiesta Buckhorn turns 11 this year and those in the know know why it has lasted this long, and will last for many, many more years to come. Fiesta Buckhorn is a day in the country that is unlike any other. Imagine a beautiful park like setting with outbuildings that house food and wine. Picnic tables and benches on which to rest, nibble and sip. Live music, seminars, beer, wine and some of the best food you'll ever taste. Don't delay get your tickets and plan your day, a fun time will be had by all. Check out all the details about who is going to be there at www.fiestabuckhorn.com.

Recent Winners: We have our winners for the Finger Lakes Wine Festival – congratulations to Pamela Beale (King City). To find out more information about the Fingers Lakes Wine Festival www.flwinefest.com.

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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