

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 – 62
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OntarioWineReview: *Three in the County*

I would love to give you a rundown of three of the most exciting wineries in Prince Edward County; heck I'd like to describe them in detail, and in fact, one of them I have ([newsletter # 44](#)); but these guys are so busy making wine that there isn't much to see when it comes to their wineries. One has a beautiful balcony that overlooks the vineyard. Climb the stairs and voila, grapes as far as the eye can see ... but once inside the small tasting room, the whole operation is laid out before you - the office, "the hallway", the tasting bar, and over the railing, the cramped quarters of the barrel cellar and production area (tanks and fermenters included). Another looks nice from the outside, but the inside is similar to the one above - except this one is all on the same level. The barrel cellar is no great mystery, you can see from the tasting bar; to your right, there are the tanks, fermenters and bottling line all squashed together with only a body-width separating them.

The three wineries I am describing are Long Dog Winery (which actually does have a wine store separate from its production area, although the production area and barrel cellar aren't much more than a shack on the outskirts of the vineyard); Rosehall Run and Norman Hardy Wines. What makes these wineries so special are the wines that are coming out of those tiny and cramped production areas. In France, these gentlemen James Lahti (Long Dog), Dan Sullivan (Rosehall Run) and Norm Hardy (Norman Hardy Wines) would all be called "garagistes", winemakers making wine out of their back barns or garages; and the quality matches the French term, although with that moniker, you would expect otherwise. Garagistes are making some of the best quality and most interesting wines available on the French landscape. I'd like to say "market" but these wines rarely get to market and are usually sold (and sold out) right from the garage door. It's the reason we never get to see them over here. They make their wines in such small quantity and through word of mouth their wines become well known in the underground wine scene. They also sell out very quickly ... and these wines are not cheap.

Probably the closest thing to an actual garagiste that Prince Edward County has is James Lahti of [Long Dog Winery](#); currently he has an '05 Pinot Noir that is a stunner. James claims he barely had to touch it, "it literally made itself" he says; he claims all he did was put it in new French oak for nine months. The nose is riddled with cherries, strawberries, raspberries and a touch of earthiness; while the mouth is the recipient of some of the same flavors: cherry, raspberry, red licorice, chocolate and some fine tannins, and of course there's the lingering finish. This wine will be drinking well 'til at least 2010 and sells for \$45.00 a bottle.

Over at Rosehall Run, owned and operated by Dan Sullivan and his wife Lynn, they have wines that start at \$14.95 and top out at \$37.95 (also a Pinot Noir). The really good ones, like the [Top Barrique Chardonnay](#), [RRV Chardonnay](#), [Cold Creek Cabernet Franc](#) and [St. Cindy Pinot Noir](#) are all priced \$20.00 a bottle – but man, are they worth it! Even his lower-priced wines are worth a taste and purchase. Dan and Lynn are doing the winery business right: good wines at all price-points; but as you go up in price the price jump is justified. They have an everyday white priced at \$14.95 and an everyday red for \$15.95 ... something special will cost you \$24, \$29 or \$37 – a good choice of wines in between. Most are made from all county fruit – which is so important and a point of pride to many of the winemakers, growers and producers of the area.

The last of our "garagistes" is Norman Hardy; a well-traveled winemaker who has been through harvests on all winemaking continents. A trip through his barrel cellar winery during Terroir weekend (May 19), showed he had no less than seven new wines to be released over the next six months. Norm flies in the face of the conventional wisdom of the County and uses both Niagara and County fruit for his wines – and he is committed to this over the long haul. The seven wines being released are a mix of County and non-County: two

Chardonnays ([one County](#), one Niagara); two Pinot Noir (one county, one Niagara); a Chardonnay sur lee (a new offering); a Riesling; and a completely new and different wine for Ontario: Melon de Bourgogne (still pending VQA approval – “they have no idea what an Ontario Melon should taste like, that’s the delay,” explains Norm). Each wine showed grace, poise and finesse; and while describing them, Norm got that nutty professor gleam in his eyes as he walked us around his “lab”. Once again, most of these wines will sell for north of \$25.00 and are made in very limited lots. Will Norm make some “everyday” wines (editors note: everyday equals under \$20)? Time will tell, [last year’s Riesling](#) was under \$20 and was one of my favourite Ontario Rieslings. No word on a red partner at, or near, the same price.

So why did I want you to know about these wineries, and why do I insist, if you’re making a pilgrimage down to the County, that you stop in to see what these guys are up to? Because it is through these winemakers that the future of the County rests. Yes, there are a dozen or so wineries, with more on the way – but these guys are on the cutting edge, leading the way using county fruit to its fullest potential. And while you’re out in the County check, out these three other wineries: Huff, The Grange and Sandbanks, they should help round out your visit quite nicely giving you a good picture of what is happening in the County. Though with 12 wineries in total the County can easily be done in a weekend. 4 years ago, I would have told you to wait to visit the county, that they received too much hype too soon ...well now the time is right for a visit. Bring your palate, and your wallet, the County is coming of age as a viable wine region; and their new DVA (Designated Viticultural Area) status suggests that the regulatory body believes it to be true too. Cheers.



Grape Guy’s Picks of the Bunch: *Checking out some “fruit” wines*

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

Munro’s Meadery Raspberry Melomel - \$ 14.20

www.munrohoney.com

Mead is wine made from honey – probably one of the oldest alcohol-based drinks in the world, according to John Bryans, owner and mead maker of Munro’s Meadery in Alvinston, Ontario (west of London between Hwys 401 and 402 in Southwest Middlesex county). John has not only won a few awards for his mead (at the International Mead Festival held annually in Denver, Colorado), but he has researched the product quite extensively, so he knows of what he speaks. “Melomel” is the term given to Mead that has been flavoured with fruit, in this case raspberries. So what does a raspberry wine concocted from honey taste like? That unfortunately is a little harder to describe, but let’s start with the nose. Believe it or not, the nose is quite delectable, with aromas of cherries, chocolate and of course raspberries. The taste is semi-sweet with soft raspberries, hints of lilac (floral notes – maybe from the honey it was made from) and a dry maple syrup-like finish. It’s a wonderful sipping wine for anytime and would accompany salads and fresh fruit quite well.

Wagner Estates Winery Firehouse Red - \$12.00

www.wagnerorchards.com

From the Lake Erie North Shore’s only fruit winery comes this little gem that has a decidedly deceptive name. Firehouse Red, to many, might invoke ideas of a spicy or smoky red wine - but that description would not apply to this wine. In fact, the color looks more like a deep rosé rather than a red wine (I’d say candy apple red). Sticking your nose in the glass elicits smells faintly reminiscent of strawberries and sour cherries ... then as the wine warms up in the glass, the cherry flavors come out more vibrantly ... and that’s a good thing considering this wine is made up of 100 percent cherries and is probably one of the best cherry wines I’ve ever had. Best of all, the finish just won’t quit. With each year, John Wagner (owner and winemaker) gets more adept at making his fruit wines - I just can’t wait to taste what he’s come up with next.

Both 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 – click on the link below to read this week’s pick:

[By Chadsey’s Cairn 2006 Riesling - \\$21.00](#)

[Rosehall Run 2006 Sullyzwicker - \\$14.95](#)

[The Grange of Prince Edward County 2006 Trumpour’s Mill Rosé - \\$12.95](#)

All currently available from the winery only



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:

Scotch Block Country Winery Sweet Scarlett ([read](#)) ([listen](#))
Norman Hardie Winery 2006 County Chardonnay ([read](#)) ([listen](#))

There are some new report in the [On the Road with the Grape Guy](#) section:

[The Outer Limits of Ontario Wine](#)
[Finger Lakes Winery Tour](#)

The August 4th LCBO Vintages Release report is available here:

[Ontario "Vintages" Releases: Saturday August 4, 2007 Vintages Release](#)



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

Book Review:

Red, White, and Drunk All Over: A wine-soaked journey from grape to glass
By Natalie MacLean

I'm a self-admitted slow reader when it comes to books. It's not that I don't like to read, in fact, it's just the opposite – but I like to read every word. I have friends who are speed-readers, they can finish a good-sized book in an evening, but they always go back and re-read certain books and their explanation is, "each time through I get more out of it." I of course have the same thought each and every time I hear this: 'If they had read it "properly" in the first place that would not be an issue,' in my opinion anyway. I am also an opportunistic reader. When I was younger, I used to read every chance I got: the bus, school hall, before bed, you name it (I've even been known to read on the treadmill at the gym). But these days I find myself busier than I was when I was 15 (go figure), so I read when opportunity allows – and that is usually in the smallest room of the house (it has the best lighting don'tcha know?).

Having said all that, I just finished reading Natalie MacLean's book "Red, White and Drunk All Over" (Natalie, if you are reading this, sorry it took me 6 months – guess my comments won't make the book's jacket). And let me say what a wonderful, engrossing read it was. There were times I found myself nodding in agreement, and other times, I had a "you-know-it" smile going on. Somewhere in the first dozen or so pages, I found myself jealous of her husband, Andrew, because he had found this wonderful wine-maven before I did. Her stories are ones we can all relate to (nervous at a first encounter; job stress); yet all with an insider's flair (cellar tours in Burgundy, interviewing Jay McInerney over dinner, a night of roll playing - sommelier). She covers all the major bases from bubbly to glassware, dinner parties to wine stores, sommeliers to harvesting ... and many in-between and out-between (I'm trying to coin a new phrase here). Her everyday-woman-on-a-wine-journey-speak did not get bogged down in wine mumbo-jumbo or technobabble ... she kept everything concise and on an every-persons level (meaning you don't have to be a wine geek to appreciate her stories). And each chapter starts afresh with a new adventure.

I'm sure by now everyone has a copy of this book on their bedside table, on their book shelf, or at the very least, on the shelf behind the porcelain; but for those of you who don't, do yourself a favour and pick up a copy – share in the fantasy of being alongside Natalie.



Wine Event Spotlight: *Shores of Erie Wine Festival – Grape Guy Appearance – Tickets Giveaway*

The 3rd Annual Shores of Erie International Wine Festival is just around the corner – September 6-9, 2007 ... this year the festival has been expanded to four days starting with the kick off evening on September 6th with the Cowboy Junkies and Ron Sexsmith appearing. The festival will feature local area wineries, breweries,

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eateries and shoperies. As always there some great entertainment: bands all day long, cooking demonstrations and of course seminars. Once again yours truly, Michael Pinkus – Grape Guy, will be conducting a seminar on Saturday September 8th at noon. Last year my seminar on “Cellaring Your Wine” was a huge success, this year I’ll be talking about “Why You Should Visit a Winery: What the LCBO isn’t Selling You”. Tickets to the Wine Festival are \$10 for a day pass or \$20 for a three-day weekend extravaganza. Need more convincing or just want to know more visit www.soewinefestival.com or call 519-730-1001 for information and to get your tickets.

Ticket Giveaway: Here’s your chance to see the Grape Guy, Michael Pinkus, live and in person, talking about something he knows barrels about “Why Visit a Winery” ... you’ll also want to check out the rest of the Shores of Erie International Wine Festival. Here’s what you have to do to make yourself eligible to win a pair of tickets to the Festival: email me your name, address (with postal code) and phone number to michael@ontariowinereview.com - put “The Grape Guy Cometh” in the subject line and answer this easy skill testing question: What was the topic of the Grape Guy’s seminar last year? (for the answer see above). Good Luck.

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 Mimico your uncle in Uxbridge, your great aunt in Grand Bend or 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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