

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 – 63
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OntarioWineReview: *We Could Use a New York State of Mind*

I look around this stunning building and think to myself "why don't we have anything like this in Niagara?" A center built for the enjoyment of food, the pleasure of wine and the possibility of learning ... it's a visitor's center, a school, a place to rest, relax, entertain, eat, drink – and heck just to be merry. I'm giddy just walking through the door. Located on the northern tip of Canandaigua Lake in the town of Canandaigua, and in the heart of New York's major wine region, the Finger Lakes, the New York Wine and Culinary Center acts as gateway to the Finger Lakes. The Center also opens the doorways to the other New York wine regions: Long Island, Hudson River, Lake Erie and Niagara Escarpment providing visitors with specific brochures and information; and, depending on the week, a glass of wine from any or all of regions. I ask again: "Why don't we have something like this in Niagara – Ontario's major wine region? Here's the real kicker: part of the center was inspired by a trip to Niagara. Susan Spence, Vice President of the New York Wine and Grape Foundation, told me, "We visited Strewn and saw they had a cooking school and said to ourselves 'we should have something like that'." The ideas took off from there.

Open about a year now, the place still has that "new car smell" and as I walk through I am left almost speechless as I gaze around in awe. It reminds me of a time when I took a friend to IKEA, she walked around in disbelief at the enormity of the store, "one could get lost in here – I feel overwhelmed," she said. I was not overwhelmed by the center, but I could see how one could get lost (in a good way). Just walking through the door is an eye-opening experience of what can be achieved when wine, food and education team up. What's more, all the rooms are sponsored by major contributors to its' development, for example:

The Eber Brothers Tasting Room – where wines from all over New York are available for tasting and purchase – 7 new wines rotate through on the tasting bar every week, and wines come in from all the regions – not just the Finger Lakes. "We don't want to replace the winery experience," Susan Spence told me, "we have limited stock on-hand. Our job is to guide and give people a taste of what the New York wine experience is all about; and hopefully, make them want to learn more and make their own trip to wherever sparks their interest."

The Viking Range Hands on Kitchen – a cooking school attendees dream: a fully stocked, outfitted and ready to go state of the art kitchen; video and audio enhanced so that the students don't have to be up at the front to see what the instructor is doing, all they have to do is look up at their monitor. All the ranges, double-walled ovens, char-grills, etc. were donated by Viking.

Wine Spectator Educational Theatre – a room that can accommodate 44 people seated at semi-circular tables, complete with cooking demonstration kitchen and audio/video set up: two big monitors bookend the staging area so that even those at the back can get a front row view.

Southern Wine and Spirits Dining Room – a real showpiece dining room where you can book and entertain private parties, functions or dignitaries that come through the area. The dining room seats up to 20 in a luxurious setting, complete with leather topped table and high back leather and wood chairs – you'll feel like one of the knights of the square table (rectangular table to be more specific); and a fully stocked wine library is right in the room with you. The table was set when I was there, the Riedel glassware sparkled in the sunlight coming in through the rear windows overlooking the lake.

There's also a gift shop (or boutique) and a walk-around, interactive know-your-New York room (Exhibit Hall)

with facts about New York's wine regions colourfully displayed on the wall. And of course, there's the restaurant upstairs (which takes up most of the second level, along with some office space) serving foods made from local produce and ingredients paired with New York wines and beers – recommendations are right there on the menu – or just order your drink of choice from the expansive wine and beer list ... all New York State produced.

Originally, this piece was written to be an On the Road with the Grape Guy article, then suddenly I realized this is a golden opportunity to raise the call for something much needed if we are to believe in ourselves as a truly world class wine industry. We have to stop thinking regionally and think of Ontario as a whole – entice those going to Niagara to visit Lake Erie North Shore and Prince Edward County – even check out the “[fringes](#)” of our glorious wine industry. Then again, we can't even get the LCBO to relinquish its monopoly power long enough to start discussing VQA-only stores like they have in British Columbia. The corner boutiques you see in grocery stores are in the hands of our two biggest players and even worse, they sell a lot of cheap 'cellared in Ontario' crap. We have a growing, homegrown wine industry – we need to show some pride in it. So come on Vincor/Constellation or Peller, step up to the plate, let's show some pride in the REAL wines we grow and make. Or maybe this is a government project, the Wine Council, anybody ... go down, check out the center and let's see what a little Canadian ingenuity and know how can do – after all, we did give them the idea for the place (sort of).

To take a cyber-look at the Center visit www.nywcc.com and prepare to dream about what Ontario could do.



Grape Guy's Picks of the Bunch: *Three reds from the LENS – and 5 others to check out*
Visit the winery or their website for more details or to purchase these great wines.

Colchester Ridge Estate Winery 2005 Cabernet Sauvignon - \$19.95
www.colchesterridge.com

Last year, when Colchester opened for business, they had two whites and a red on the shelf. The red was excellent and showed signs of what was to come from this winery. 2005 has brought about more reds from the crew at CREW and one of the better ones was this Cabernet Sauvignon. The nose is rich in smells like chocolate, cherries, cranberries, nutmeg and hints of oak (where it spent 10 months maturing). The palate is cherries and cranberries with nutmeg, vanilla and cinnamon, which flow smoothly through the mouth. I'd say this wine's good for another 3 years ... but why wait.

Here are reviews for their [2005 Merlot](#) and [2005 Cabernet Franc/Merlot](#)

Sprucewood Shores Estate Winery 2005 Cabernet Sauvignon Reserve - \$18.95
www.sprucewoodshores.com

Sprucewood Shores is finally open for business (as of November 2006). I met Gord Mitchell, owner and all-around handyman, at a Lake Erie North Shore Vintages tasting back in the summer of 2006. He spoke highly of his wines, the winemaker and the innovative wine blends they were experimenting with. I met him again in January 2007, at the London Wine Show in London, Ontario. At that time, he introduced me to his winemaker, daughter Tanya, who looks to me like she isn't old enough to drink in this province (then again maybe I'm just feeling old). But something tells me this young lady has an old winemaker's soul inside of her. The Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon shows a veteran's deft hand at winemaking that belies her age. 12 month in French oak has given this wine good body, rich tannins and elegant mouthfeel. Spicy black fruit, dark cherries, ripe plums and black pepper all mingle together on both the nose and taste, while the tannins have integrated well giving this wine some good ageing potential - my notes say a minimum three years, theirs say 7, so let's split the difference at 5 and I'll meet you for a glass in 2012.

Here is a review for their [2006 Rosé](#)

Viewpointe Estate Winery 2001 Cabernet-Merlot - \$17.15
www.viewpointewinery.com

2001 was a “suspect” year in Ontario – that's the year the bugs came to town. Many of the wines were tainted with “ladybug”, the more technical term being “pyrazine” ... those in the Lake Erie North Shore area cringe at that broad brush representation of the entire industry because they got tagged with that label too – though many of the producers making and selling wine at the time tell me they weren't affected at all. “Niagara is the bellwether for the whole province, and that's just not right,” a LENS producer once told me. This Cab-Merlot, from '01, is a blend of 50% Merlot and 25% equal parts Sauv and Franc. Herbaceous, dill, green veggie, spice and cedar are the predominant smells of this wine and the palate follows right along on its back. Another few

years might soften this one a little, or try now with a good hearty piece of meat.

Here are reviews for their [2005 "Ideal Pointe" Chardonnay](#) and [2002 Cab Sauv](#)

All 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:

[Creekside Estates Winery 2006 Cabernet Rosé - \\$12.95](#)
[Creekside Estates Winery 2006 Sauvignon Blanc - \\$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:

Willow Heights 2005 Unoaked Chardonnay ([read](#)) ([listen](#))
Calamus Estate Winery 2006 Unoaked Chardonnay ([read](#)) ([listen](#))

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

[Finger Lakes Wine Festival](#)
[Six Barrels for Six Chefs at Huff Estates](#)
[Twilight in the Vineyard at Jackson-Triggs](#)

The August 18th LCBO Vintages Release report is available here:
[Ontario "Vintages" Releases: Saturday August 18, 2007 Vintages Release](#)



Ask the Grape Guy ...

What is Bottle Shock?

Have you ever been to a winery and asked for a taste of something only to be told that the wine "may be a little off because it's going through some bottle shock"? What this seemingly bizarre statement means is that the wine has suffered through a sudden and traumatic displacement, the jarring effect of going from its sedentary state in tank or barrel to bottle, which in the short-term, effects the flavours of the wine (I am sure, if you were a wine, this would be traumatic ... think of it as birth). The [2006 Ridgepoint Gewurztraminer](#) gave me a perfect opportunity to test this theory. Is "bottle shock" B.S. or not?

On June 2nd, 2007 I wandered into Ridgepoint Wines (in Vineland) to taste the much touted and award winning 2006 Gewurztraminer (silver medallist at the 2007 Ontario Wine Awards), which had just been bottled that previous Tuesday (May 29 – 4 days in bottle). My notes read: nose of floral (rose petal), lychee and spice; clean, if somewhat soft acidity. The finish lingers after swallowing. The wine had a slight sweetness to it and tasted alright to me; I chocked it up to an easy drinking summer sipper; something to enjoy on a patio but without too much depth or complexity.

Fast-forward to August 5, 2007 – 2 months and 3 days later. I popped the cork on a different bottle of the same wine to see if two-months (and a week) in bottle had really made a big difference. The floral and rose petal were still there and there was a touch of typical Gewurztraminer spiciness that lingered from the initial tasting - but now there was a touch of peach and definite hints of melon on the nose. The mouth was completely different: the wine felt thick and oily (not soft and smooth) in the mouth ... the taste still had rose water and a touch of sweetness, but the melony flavours had a uniquely honeydew tartness (almost unripe) and there was an orange rind like finish ... not at all unpleasant. The finish was long, lingering and complex. The wine still came off as an easy-drinking patio sipper, but now much more food friendly, palate cleansing in a way that it would wash away spicy foods and ready the tongue for another battle with the carriers of heat.

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The conclusion is obvious ... bottle shock can turn a complex wine into something simplistic and turn a simple wine bland (but a bland wine is a bland wine no matter how long in bottle). Something to definitely be conscious of the next time a winery tells you: "this wine is going through some bottle shock at the moment." Though it's hard to dig deeper into a wine that is showing itself off as shallow due to the effects of bottle shock, know that it will develop and change over the short term (1-2 months). Winemakers would prefer not to release wine so soon after bottling, but sometimes simple economics dictates they do so. As one Niagara-on-the-Lake producer once told me, "I'd like to give this Riesling some bottle age, but my accountant says I have to release it now." Shock wears off pretty quickly but is most apparent in the first few weeks – within a month to six weeks, all should be relatively back to normal.



Wine Event Spotlight: *Get involved in "The Crush" ... and we have our winners*

This year many wineries are looking for your help, and offering a unique experience in the process: "Crush 2007" – happens between September and October. I have received quite a few emails in the past month detailing the happenings of these events but in a nutshell you help the winery harvest grapes in the field. Some wineries are offering lunch, a variety of shifts, whole day affairs, "get your name on the bottle" and even get a bottle of "your" wine (wine you helped produce) when the wine is finally finished and in bottle. There seems to be too many to mention as many wineries in each region are doing something – but get onto the website of your favourite or give them a call and see what they are doing for Crush 2007 ... believe me, it may seem like only the middle of August, but "The Crush" is just around the corner.

Our Winners – tickets to the Shores of Erie International Wine Festival: Being held September 6-9, 2007 – this is one fantastic event ([read my review from last year](#)). Once again this year Michael Pinkus – Grape Guy, is going to be speaking (Saturday September 8 at noon) and this time it's on a subject near and dear to my heart: Why Visit a Winery – What the LCBO isn't selling you. We had 5 pairs of 3-day wristbands to give away and a bunch of entrees ... so we tossed the entrants into a hat and these are my five names that came out: John Crawley (St. Catharines), Mary Lucier (Windsor), Brian Preston (Nepean), Tracie Gonneau (Windsor), and Tim Wilson (Burlington).

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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