

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 – 67
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News ... *The Cab Franc Challenge is ready to roll:*

The dates and their categories are set, we've got a location, we've got the wine, we've even got a new ticket price – **now all we need is you** ... The Cabernet Franc Challenge is set and ready to go. Due to some confusion over ticket prices and discount rates we've decided should be all one price (\$40) and include a bonus for all those who attend 3 nights or more. Get all the details below in the 'event spotlight' section or visit the special website set up for this event: <http://owrcabfranchallenge.blogspot.com/>.



OntarioWineReview: *Beer and Pretzel Logic or Why I'm taking my Bottles Back*

On July 5th, my father called me on the phone, "Have you seen this morning's National Post?" he asked before I got a chance to finish my hello. "There's an article about that bottle return policy and how it's failing." I asked him to hold the article for me and I'd look at it later. As it turned out, it was part of the City Diary section on page A12, and was written by Kelly McParland. I read it through three or four times, and each time I thought, "What a stupid load of hooey this guy's spoutin'" (though in all fairness Kelly could also be a woman ... I just took he/she to be a man because the article written had to do with The Beer Store – my sexism shows through again – dang! And I thought I was worldlier than that). Anyway, it had to be some of the worst logic for why the system won't work I've ever heard and I've heard lots of reasons. So, as a public service, I've decided to pick apart the article right here and right now – and thank the National Post in the process for giving me fodder for an article of my own.

We'll start at the top, where Kelly is at the beer store on a Saturday morning, and shock of all shocks, it's busy ... hmmm. Saturday, middle of summer, beer store busy ... now that's a novelty (please read with dripping sarcasm). The problem: the line up to return empties is "enormous". Again shocking – going to the beer store equals bringing back empties, be it beer, wine or liquor bottles these days – and again, it's the weekend, go figure.

Here we get a respite from complaints about long lines for a brief overview of the McGuinty government's policy of "slapping a 20 cent tax on bottles". I hasten to point out to Kelly that it is not a "tax" – it's a "deposit", which means if you return the bottle, you get it back. Same thing applies to 18L water bottles, any rental equipment, or security deposits on apartments, just to name a few – do we call those taxes? But because the government does it, some have decided to label it a "tax" (I'm neither pro- nor anti-McGuinty here I'm just saying ...). Come to think about it, does anyone consider the 10 cents per beer bottle a tax? I didn't think so.

Now we get to the meat of Kelly's column - why the 20-cent levy does not work. I'll quote the article here and make my comments as I go – just like I did in my head the first three times I read it through – see round brackets: "People save up their bottles for weeks on end." (just like they do with beer bottles) "It's too much trouble to bring them in one at a time, and firing up the SUV to return a couple of empties at 20 cents a pop hardly makes sense in time used, emissions spewed or refund gained." (as we all know and do; who the heck returns their beer bottles one at a time for the 10 cent deposit – again, hello, you save those up too) "Everyone ... [referring only to wine bottle savers here] stores them up in the mud room or hall or garage until they start

getting in the way. Then they load them in the trunk and rattle off to the beer store.” (still sounds like the way many return their beer bottles ... I'm still not convinced this is the reason the wine and liquor bottle return program is going to fail). Then, of course there's the gripe about everyone doing it on Saturday – easy fix here, pick a different day or even a week night ... this is not rocket science.

Finally, we have the conclusion: “... this won't last long. People will decide it's not worth their effort for a measly 20 cents and will start chucking the bottle back into the blue box.” (but it's so worth it for the 10 cents per beer bottle, right Kelly?). According to this scenario, we'll all stop taking bottles back, but “we're still paying extra for each bottle of wine.” which Kelly insinuates, is the reason they instilled “the tax” in the first place.

There are so many holes in this “logic” that I have already pointed out that it seems unfair for me to continue ... but indulge me and let me drive the point home here. No one in his right mind returns only one beer bottle to the beer store, the same goes for wine / liquor bottles – you save them up until it makes sense to return them, when it's worth your while. 48 beer bottles (2 cases) will garner you \$4.80, but 48 wine bottles (4 cases) will net you \$9.60 ... and you can bring up to 10 cases back (120 bottles), that's 24 bucks, same amount of beer bottles is only \$12 – and yet no one complains when “that guy” shows up at the Brewers Retail. Is Kelly a beer snob who doesn't like those artsy fartsy wine drinkers on his/her turf? That seems to be the more likely answer.

The reason that the bottle return policy may not succeed is *not* the line-ups in the beer store return line on a Saturday morning. The reasons for failure (if that is the case) are two-fold: 1) Yahoo's, like you know who, want it to fail and will keep telling you what a pain it is to make the trek, stand in line and lug all those heavy bottles back, etc. etc. etc. But here's the real reason it might fail, and the second of my “folds”: Wine drinker's don't usually frequent the beer store, and therefore have to make a special trip to get their money back on those bottles. They have to determine, in their own minds, whether its worth the side-trip or not; and some I've talked to just won't.

Now take into consideration that wine drinkers are outnumbering beer drinkers these days ... and if each wine drinker did decide to return those bottles – those Saturday morning lines would be even bigger. Could this be the real reason beer drinkers poo-poo the new bottle deposit on wine and liquor bottles? That again seems a more plausible explanation to me.

Don't worry Kelly, many wine drinkers wouldn't be caught dead in the beer store, but if that ever changes, watch out; I think now more than ever, after reading the July 5th article in the Post, I'm even more determined to do my part – but I'll skip the Saturday line-ups and go on a Wednesday night instead. The other thing I can thank Kelly for is the warning about going on weekends.



Grape Guy's Picks of the Bunch: *Canadian Chard and Vinedresser Shiraz*

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

Muscedere Vineyards 2005 Canadian Oaked Chardonnay - \$20.00

www.muscederevineyards.com

Of late I have been talking to winemakers who are having dalliances with a variety of wood – that might sound dirty but what I'm talking about is oak. Hungarian seems to be popular, “Eastern European” is another popular answer and Bulgarian is starting to crop up along with the usual French and American barrels; but very little is ever mentioned about our own homegrown Canadian oak. So I have to hand it to the boys with the Italian roots for staying close to home for a barrel or two of Chardonnay. Aged only 4 months in new Canadian oak, the wine shows some real finesse, both on the nose and in the mouth – tropical fruit, vanilla, a hint of oak and some surprising coconut, which makes this wine very appealing on the palate. A little pricey, but it's made “in Canada” (grapes and wood) – ya gotta pay a little more for the home-grown stuff.

Pelee Island Winery 2005 Vinedressers Shiraz - \$18.95

www.peleeisland.com

In my family, August is a big month – there are at least 2 birthdays and three anniversaries to contend with; that's why somewhere in the middle of the month, we have “the family BBQ” to celebrate everything all at once. At this event, we sit around on the patio and everybody catches up, shoots the breeze and inevitably wine questions get thrown my way. Unfortunately, this year the outdoor part was rained out, but the wine questions flew fast and furious. One from my brother seemed well timed (as I had just returned from a Vintage Tasting in the Lake Erie North Shore region where I tasted this wine). He asked, “if I've had a good Ontario Shiraz?” I have tried quite a few, but none seems more true to the peppery-spiciness of this grape than this Pelee Island

offering. The wine is aged 20 months in 5000L Hungarian raw oak barrels (no toasting/charring on the inside of the barrel) and hand harvested from the southern most grape growing point in Ontario – Pelee Island. The nose is all peppery and spicy – the taste kept the spicy aspect along with rich tannin-filled black fruit ... there's good ageability in this bottle and it's limited to only 900 cases. It's worth putting your hands on one or more of the 10,800 bottles available exclusively through the winery – it might sound like a lot but at \$18.95 it's a steal and should go quickly.

These wines are available at the winery only.

Keeping Summer in the Pink: Summer is officially over, but with this beautiful weather we've been having you wouldn't believe it. So without further ado, and while the weather is hot, I will list off a few of my favourite pink wines that passed my lips this summer – and can bring that that fun in the sun feeling any time of year.

[By Chadsey's Cairn NV County Rosé - \\$16.00 \(W\)](#)
[Cattail Creek Estate Winery 2006 Serendipity Rosé - \\$14.00 \(W\)](#)
[Niagara College Teaching Winery 2005 College Rosé - \\$14.95 \(W, L, WTH\)](#)
[Reif Estate 2006 Gamay Rosé - \\$10.95 \(W, L, WTH\)](#)
[Vineland Estates Winery 2006 Pinot Meunier Rosé - \\$12.95 \(W, L\)](#)
And something a little different for good measure:
[Konzelmann 2006 Peachwine - \\$10.95 \(W\)](#)

Availability legend: W (Winery) – L (LCBO/Vintages) – WTH (Winery to Home)



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:

Mastronardi Estate Winery NV a'Dorah ([read](#)) ([listen](#))
Pillitteri 2006 Fusion: Gewurztraminer-Riesling ([read](#)) ([listen](#))

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

[Australian Wine Tasting – Regional Heroes](#)
[Niagara Wine Festival – passport program](#)
[Taste! in Prince Edward County](#)

The October 13th LCBO Vintages Release report is available here:
[Ontario "Vintages" Releases: Saturday October 13, 2007 Vintages Release](#)



In the Cellar: with Tim Reilly ... passing the reigns

I originally had a plan to do an "In the Cellar" feature with the owner of Coyote's Run Estate Winery Jeff Aubry last spring. We went into the barrel cellar, sampled a whole bunch of different wines from different oak barrels, talked about blending, growing, aging and winemaking ... but when I went to transcribe my notes I couldn't make heads or tails out of them. My apologies to Jeff, who has some exciting wines kicking around in barrel soon to be released, I look forward to trying all of them. But here at Colio I took more detailed and understandable notes.

I have long been a fan of Carlo Negri's work – master winemaker for Colio Estate Wines – but after more than 25 years at the helm, Carlo is stepping down and handing the reigns over to his successor, Tim Reilly. I joined Tim in Colio's cellar to taste what he's concocting, how he's handling some of Carlo's signature wines, his plans for future releases and how he plans to put his own fingerprint on Colio's long history of winemaking.

We started the tasting with the 2004 Lily Sparkling Blanc de Noir (\$14.95) a touch of sweetness lifts this wine on the palate and makes for a great aperitif. The deeper than usual colour (not exactly pink, but not white either) comes from 6 hours of skin contact, with light-to-no pressing – basically this is a lot of free run juice.

We moved on to a couple of standout 2006 whites: the bone dry 2006 CEV Sauvignon Blanc (\$14.50) and the delightfully fruity Colio Estate 2006 Riesling (\$10.29). We finished the sit-down bottled wine tasting with the

newly released 2005 CEV Barrel Aged Cabernet Sauvignon (\$21.95). This is a combined effort between Tim and Carlo and the first of the 2005 barrel aged wines from the CEV series to come out. This one has lots of bright red fruit, cinnamon and vanilla on the nose; the palate was still heavily oak influenced, but there was an awesome cherry chocolate finish. The 2005 needs a little more time in bottle to come into its own, say by Christmas 2007, and the good news is that it will be kicking around for another 7 plus years. I really liked the Cabernet Sauvignon and Tim hinted to me that the Merlot and Cab Franc are even better. So off we went to check on the progress of those.

2006 is all Tim's work – delicately balanced between keeping true to Carlo's way of winemaking and bringing his own winemaking style into play, "I wanted to stay true to Carlo's way of making wine," Tim told me, "he's been doing it for so long and people expect good quality and good value from Colio because of it." With that said, we tasted some of Carlo's work from the great 2002 vintage, namely the CEV Cabernet Franc (\$19.95), which is still showing wonderfully well; and the CEV Merlot (\$24.95) which is also a remarkable wine, and still getting better.

Then with wine glass in one hand, "wine-thief" in the other, Tim led me over to where the soon to be bottled 2005 CEV Merlot and CEV Cabernet Franc still rested in barrel. The Merlot was aged in an 80/20 blend of French and American oak and showed signs of spicy black fruit, rich tannins and some cedary-cinnamon notes. The Franc was a powerhouse. Foregoing American oak altogether, the Franc rested in a combination of French, Yugoslavian and Hungarian oaks; rich black fruit, vanilla, cherry, good tannin integration, full mouthfeel – heavy on the cherry and vanilla as it coursed through the mouth. I can't wait till this one's bottled; it's gonna age beautifully and taste even better when sitting on my table in a few years.

Then it was off to the most recent vintage wines. The 2006 Meritage is blended and now rests quietly in its oak home; a 30/30/40 mix of Sauv, Franc and Merlot. It has toasty flavours of red and black fruit (heavier on the black) with robust tannins. Only 6 months in, it's looking very good. But this wine is about staying true to the house style Carlo created. "Carlo has set the bar pretty high for quality wine." Tim said and he knows he has to live up to, and follow, in the master's footsteps. But Tim is not just playing copycat, he has been given free reign to put his own thumbprint on a wine, namely the new 2006 CEV Shiraz, which still resides in barrel. This is Colio's first effort at a reserve Shiraz (or any Shiraz) and Tim has no blueprint to follow. "I love Shiraz, I'm on my own with this one, which should be really exciting." His normally low-key manner now brims with excitement and his eyes begin to twinkle as he discusses this endeavour. After only 6 months in European oak, this wine already exhibits white and black pepper notes on the nose, lots of tart wood tannins in the mid-palate and a great fruity driven finish ... once all these flavours and smells integrate, this should be one blockbuster of a wine. Tim feels it'll be another year before it's even close to being ready to come out of barrel, "maybe longer".

You would think that there would be a certain amount of butterflies in one's stomach knowing that you are taking over from such an Ontario winemaking icon like Carlo Negri – but Tim keeps a level head about it and has perspective on it: "I think early on, I felt a little intimidated by Carlo and his many achievements ... I know I have huge footsteps to follow in, but Carlo has instilled confidence in me ... I will work hard, use the influences, ideas and make sure that Carlo can take some pride in that fact I'm a product of his years of winemaking." And so far that confidence is showing itself in the bottle.



Wine Event Spotlight: *OntarioWineReview Cabernet Franc Challenge – missing details*

Here are the details about the [Cab Franc Challenge](#) that we didn't have two weeks ago:

The categories for each night are as follows: Nov. 8 – Regular Cabernet Franc ... Night 1; Nov. 14 – Regular Cabernet Franc ... Night 2; Nov. 20 – Cabernet Franc Blends; Nov. 27 – Cabernet Franc Reserve ... Night 1; Dec. 6 – Cabernet Franc Reserve ... Night 2.

Ticket price is \$40 per night – if you book 3 or more nights you'll get an invitation to the exclusive Cabernet Franc Icewine evening.

The rest:

Location – The Fine Wine Reserve on King Street in downtown Toronto (between Spadina and Bathurst)

Time – 7:00pm Reception ... 7:30pm Tasting ... 9:00pm After Party

For Tickets – Tickets can be purchased by phone (416-346-2223) or online ([Purchasing Tickets](#)).

All the details about the event can be found at this specially set up website ([OntarioWineReview Cabernet Franc Challenge](#))

Participating Wineries – Angels Gate; Black Prince; Caroline Cellars; Chateau des Charmes; Colchester Ridge; Colio Estate; Coyote's Run; D'Angelo Estate; EastDell Estates; Erie Shore Vineyard; Frog Pond Farm; Henry of Pelham; Hernder; Hillebrand; Huff Estates; Joseph's Estate; Lailey Vineyard; Lakeview Cellars; Legends Estates; Mountain Road; Niagara Vintners (20 Bees); Oak Heights; Pelee Island; Pillitteri Estates; Puddicombe Estates; Reif Estate; Riverview Cellars; Rosehall Run; Sandbanks Winery; Sprucewood Shores; Thirty Bench; Viewpointe Estate; Vineland; Willow Heights; Willow Springs and Wayne Gretzky Winery.

OntarioWineReview's bi-weekly newsletter is devoted to the love, enjoyment and promotion of the wines of Ontario and the wineries that make them.



What can the Grape Guy do for you ... Michael Pinkus (Grape Guy) provides a variety of wine related services that you might be interested in taking advantage of: he gives lectures, leads seminars, conducts tastings, sets up tours; consults, selects and judges. He also gives interviews, broadcasts, podcasts and writes. [Contact the Grape Guy if you require any of these services or have any questions.](#)



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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