

## 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 – 68**  
**October 25, 2007**

### In this Edition

- **News From Our Vine** ... Cabernet Franc Challenge Set and Ready to Go ... Are you in?
- **Ontario Wine Review:** *WINERY REVIEW – Royal DeMaria Wines*
- **Grape Guy's Picks of the Bunch:** *Icewine – Franc and Baco ... Challenge Preview*
- **Weekly Wine Notes and More:** *Thirty Bench Red, Tawse Echos Red, Vintages Release*
- **The Wow Factor:** *Besides the wine - check this out!*
- **Quick Sips:** *Gifts, Raining, Moving, Winning + Truth and Rumour*
- **Wine Event Spotlight:** *Taste – Franc and Food*



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

**Only 2 weeks away.** All the wines are assembled, the place is picked ([The Fine Wine Reserve](#)), the dates are set (November: 8 (Thursday), 14 (Wednesday), 20 (Tuesday), 27 (Tuesday) and December 6 (Thursday)) ... time to book your passage on the Cabernet Franc journey of a lifetime – [Ontario Wine Reviews Cabernet Franc Challenge](#). Our latest count has us at 62 wines and 38 wineries participating – plus if you book any three nights you'll get an exclusive invitation to the Icewine Tasting Evening; so don't miss out, [book today](#).



### OntarioWineReview: *WINERY REVIEW – Royal DeMaria Wines*

*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.*

Talk about having that lonely feeling; there's no lonelier feeling in Niagara than driving down Cherry Avenue in Beamsville, towards Lake Ontario, and realizing there are no cars in front and none behind. If you travel south on Cherry (that's away from the lake in these parts) there's [Lakeview](#), [Ridgepoint](#), Tawse and you'll even see the top of Willow Heights as you head up the hill; but north of King Street (that's the main wine route strip) on Cherry, there isn't much there; and it can seem like a very long, lonely drive ... one in which you'd swear you were lost. You might even stop to recheck your map. So why make that drive? To pay a visit to Royal DeMaria, one of Ontario's most unique wineries; a winery devoted strictly to what Ontario (Canada for that matter) is best known for ... icewine. At Royal DeMaria, it's icewine all the time - eighteen different grapes and 24 different varieties.

In 1991, Joseph DeMaria, a hairdresser by trade, tasted icewine for the first time first and was completely blown away. He decided right there and then that he just had to try his hand at making this golden nectar, and in 1998 he made his very first icewine. It is said that Joseph made, what he considered at the time, a costly error in the making of his first wine, but he somehow was able to save this batch and went on to win five international gold medals for that very first vintage. Ever since, he has continued to make that "costly error" on-purpose.

Now, in 2007, Royal DeMaria is open to the public so that you can see, and taste, what the world is raving about ... and yes I do mean the world. Royal DeMaria has continued year-after-year to win countless medals worldwide for their icewine creations. So what does this world record holding winery look like inside and outside? In two words: interesting and unfinished.

On your right hand side, as you drive north on Cherry, you'll come across a property with black gates in front which leads onto a long stone encrusted driveway and an orange house at the end. The house is quite peculiar. From first glance you'll notice it remains unfinished. The top floor (second level) has two balcony doors with no balcony to walk out onto ... I thought it rather funny – though maybe prophetic in a way, for had

this project not worked out Joseph could have taken a long walk off a very short balcony!

Below those top "balcony doors" are two sets of ground level doors – of which only the right side set is open (there's also a sign that states the hours of operation and that if the doors are locked during these hours to please ring the doorbell). We were greeted very professionally by a young lady who identified herself as Ashley. She asked us if we had ever been there before ... we replied "no", and with that she launched into the history of the winery, its proprietor and a tour of the cluttered award room and makeshift storage room. This is the first room you walk into and on the left side you'll see the awards while the right side is wine storage. Metals, trophies, plaques, cups and many other recognition awards hang from walls and line the tables ... if they win many more they'll have to build another room as the awards are starting to encroach on the storage side.

After that, it's on to the tasting room, which runs parallel to the trophy room, and is accessed through a doorway to the left of the entrance - it is the same size as the medal chamber with a small bar at the far end. Samples of many of their products are available. The price list behind the tasting bar is on a chalkboard and the prices listed range from \$64.95 to \$30,000 per 375ml bottle. A water cooler to the left of the tasting bar is there to help cleanse the palate of the sweetness you are about to partake in, and lining the walls, you'll see press clippings about Joseph, the winery and many of the "world-first" and "world-record" accomplishments they have achieved. Tastings are no more than a thimbleful of the lush liquids, so it's tough to really get an adequate taste, especially after your third or fourth sample; but the uniqueness of some of the varieties is what keeps you going; wondering what, say, a Baco Noir icewine will taste like or one made from Chenin or Sauvignon Blanc.

Royal DeMaria is truly "Canada's Icewine Specialists" as the brochures and website proclaim, accept no substitutes. The one word I continue to come back to in describing Royal DeMaria is "unique": one of Canada's most unique and specialized wineries. If you like icewine, or maybe you're just curious what a Shiraz icewine tastes like, this winery makes for a great visit and a sweet stop when you're out and about in Niagara.



**Grape Guy's Picks of the Bunch:** *Icewine – Franc and Baco ...* [Cab Franc Challenge Preview](#)  
For directions and more information visit [www.royaldemaria.com](http://www.royaldemaria.com)

Royal DeMaria Wines 2004 Cabernet Franc (sc 18.7) \$89.95

It seems like these days everybody and his dog is making Cab Franc icewine, and why not, it is perfect as a table wine, grows wonderfully well here in Ontario and we just do so well with it. The skin contact was minimized here to keep the colour a faint pink (hardly noticeable it was in my glass it was so light). Tons of berries, mainly raspberry and strawberry, with good acidity and a luscious finish.

Royal DeMaria Wines 2004 Baco Noir (sc 21.8) \$349.95

Here's something that might make the Kings of Baco (Henry of Pelham) brothers scratch their collective heads in wonderment as to why they didn't think of it. From someone who has tasted many Baco's of late, this wine was of great interest to me. The deep, dark red colour comes as no surprise considering the colour of the table wine Baco produces. The flavours are what you'd expect from Baco with the added bonus of kicked up sweetness: dark red berries, mainly black cherry with an earth intensity – peculiar at first because you aren't prepared for the sugar jolt, but wonderful results at the end. The finish is medium-short, but very tasty.

Here are three other Royal DeMaria Icewines I enjoyed:  
[2004 Riesling](#), [2004 Chardonnay](#), [2004 Sauvignon Blanc](#)

*All wines available at the winery only.*

**Cabernet Franc Preview:** With the [Cabernet Franc Challenge](#) right around the corner I thought it only fitting to give you a preview of one of the 62 wines that we'll be featuring at the event:

[Thirty Bench Wine Makers 2005 Cabernet Franc - \\$35.00](#)

Click on one of these two links to [book your tickets](#) for the Challenge or [get all the details](#)

*Thirty Bench wines are available from the winery and thru [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](http://www.ontariowinereview.libsyn.com)!

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

Thirty Bench Wine Makers 2005 Red ([read](#)) ([listen](#))

Tawse Winery 2006 Echos Red ([read](#)) ([listen](#))

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

The October 27<sup>th</sup> LCBO Vintages Release report is available here:

[Ontario "Vintages" Releases: Saturday October 27, 2007 Vintages Release](#)

---



### 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 Royal DeMaria, I could say it's the trophy room which is devoted too all the medals and awards this winery has accumulated; and there are many ... but truthfully I said "wow" more times looking at the grape varieties being used and the prices on the chalkboard behind the tasting bar. Imagine if you will, icewine made from Gamay, Sauvignon Blanc, Chenin Blanc, Pinot Blanc, Gris and Noir - and ones that will be "coming soon", like Petit Verdot and Malbec. Of course, the standard varietals are also here Vidal, Riesling, Cab Franc, Merlot and Cab Sauv.

My list of exotic icewines available could continue with Shiraz, Muscat and Baco Noir, something I'm surprised that Henry of Pelham hasn't tried, but I'll stop there (except maybe to give a quick shout out to the Meritage blend that's also available). But it's also the prices that will get your eyes-a-poppin': \$64.95 for a Vidal; \$74 for a Riesling; \$219 for a Cab Sauv; \$349 for a Baco Noir and \$450 for a Pinot Noir - not to mention the \$30,000 and \$50,000 'special edition' and 'limited quantity' bottles. I was informed that as supply dwindles, the price rises - hence the chalkboard. It's a risky proposition when all your grapes have to freeze, but in the end the wine is worth it ... because there's no substitute for real Canadian icewine, or real Canadian ingenuity. And don't think, even for a second, that other wineries can claim to have a monopoly on a certain type of icewine, if it grows in Ontario Joseph DeMaria is trying to make icewine out of it ... no one has "the only one"; except maybe him.

---



**Quick Sips:** *Occasionally interesting things cross my desk that I would like to pass on*

For October 2007

**Personalize the Gift of a Bottle of Wine** ... I met David Weinberg for the first time at the Ontario Wine Awards in the spring; he was promoting this interesting idea of how one could personalize the gift of bottle of wine, it's called Curiosk. Many of us have struggled with giving wine as a gift; it's just so ... impersonal; David had the answer. You take a bottle of wine up to his Curiosk machine, scan the bar code and the wine's information appears on the screen (tasting notes, food pairings, cellaring information, etc.). Then, and this is the neat part, you can create a personalized greeting card designed to fit over the neck of the bottle. Starts with themes such as Happy Birthday, Thanks for Dinner, I Love You, I'm Sorry, etc. and then add your own personal words to the card. For only \$2.95 you can print off your creation – along with the wine notes – and voila, you have your own personalized greeting card to go along with that "impersonal" bottle of wine. \$2.95 ... that's cheaper than most greeting cards these days, and this one says so much more than your standard Hallmark. The first ever Curiosk can be tried out at the Wine Rack, 77 Wellesley Street East, in downtown Toronto, with more rolling out by year's end. To see more go to [www.curiosk.com](http://www.curiosk.com).

**Into Everyone's Life, a Little Rain Must Fall** ... Rain Enterprises Inc., parent company of Rain Publishing, Rain Books and Rain Productions, has launched Rain Products. Their first product, Frozen-Vines, wine infused ice cream or sorbet using 100% natural ingredients is teamed with Legends Estates VQA wines. Rain Products plans to bring out a new 'limited reserve' line of these frozen desserts "every season". I see Cabernet Cream, Vidal Vanilla, Franc n' Fraise, and Bourgogne Bubble Gum in my future.

**13<sup>th</sup> Street on the Move** ... The little winery that could, is now the little winery that will ... grow bigger that is. 13<sup>th</sup> Street Winery, located at 13<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup>, is about to pick up shop and move to a new 25 acre site "around the corner" at 4<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup>. With a new infusion of partners: Doug Whitty, of Whitty Farms, and John Mann, grape grower and automotive retailer. The winery will more than double their established vinifera plantings (to over 50 acres), expand retail space and hours, expand production facilities, and upgrade equipment. The winery will also re-focus its endeavours, concentrating on the wines that have made them famous: Pinot and Gamay Noir, Riesling, Chardonnay and Sparkling. A possible culinary center could also see fruition if all goes well. Be prepared to see these changes take effect late summer 2008. Ken Douglas, CEO, promises, "our uncompromising wine making standards will be maintained." Here's wishing 13<sup>th</sup> Street the best luck in this new stage of their illustrious history. You can check out reviews of some their current wines: [2006 Funk Vineyard Riesling](#); [2006 June's Vineyard Riesling](#); [2005 Chardonnay Reserve](#); [2006 Chardonnay Musque](#); [2005 Gamay Sandstone Reserve](#); [2005 Riesling](#) and a re-taste of the [2004 Cabernet-Merlot](#).

**Ontario Bows to B.C. Again** ... The Canadian Wine Awards results have been announced and once again B.C. trounced our Ontario wineries, though there is much light in the tunnel. Ontario took nine of the 23 categories, some very convincingly: Sparkling (7 of 8 – 87.5%); Sauvignon Blanc (14/21 – 66.6%); Chardonnay no-oak (10/16 – 62.5%) and Dry Riesling (22/36 – 61%). A squeaker in Cabernet Franc – a category we usually dominate (8/15 – 53.3%); a shocker in Cabernet Sauvignon (10/15 – 66.6%); and no surprises in the Late Harvest (6/9 – 66.6%), Vidal Icewine (16/18 – 88.8%) and Other Icewine (11/18 – 61.1%). We also picked up a few golds in categories we didn't win: Chardonnay, oak (Tawse 2004 Beamsville Bench Reserve); Meritage Red (Magnotta 2003 Enotrium) and Fruit and Other Wines (Downey's Estate 2006 Framboise). Congratulations to all our winners, a complete list of which can be found [here](#); also check out the review for the gold medal winning [Hidden Bench Riesling](#).

#### **Truth and Rumour:**

(*Truth*) - Congratulation to Kevin Watson who was sworn in as Grape King during the Niagara Wine Festival.

(*Rumour*) - Liubomir Popovici in leaving Stoney Ridge and headed to take over winemaking duties at Vincor.

(*Truth*) - Steve Byfield jumps from assistant to head, as he takes over the wine maker's job at the new Thomas & Vaughan.



#### **Wine Event Spotlight:** *Taste – Franc and Food ... and our biggest giveaway ever*

Yes the [OntarioWineReview Cabernet Franc Challenge](#) is a go and all the details can be found below along with ticket details, a way to get into the exclusive Icewine Tasting and more. Just follow these links: [Get tickets](#). [About the Franc Challenge](#).

Also happening about town is the Toronto Gourmet Food and Wine Expo at the Metro Toronto Convention Centre November 15-18. This year's featured wine region is Chile. Get all the details at [www.foodandwineexpo.ca](http://www.foodandwineexpo.ca). Admission is \$15, but if you look hard enough on their site there's a \$3.00 off coupon.

Out of town – Taste the Season is back in Niagara on the Lake for the four full weekends in November 3/4, 10/11, 17/18, and 24/25 ... an event where 17 of the Lakes wineries pair up delicious goodies with their wines – this year's menu looks better than last year's. <http://www.wineriesofniagaraonthelake.com/events.php> will give you all the detail you'll need.

#### **Ticket Giveaway Instructions:**

When it rains it pours and I have quite a few tickets to give away. So let's get right down to it. Follow along class this might get complicated ... Send your name, address (with postal code), and phone number to [michael@ontariowinereview.com](mailto:michael@ontariowinereview.com) and put the corresponding subject line into each email you send – you can enter more than one contest, but each entry has to be a separate email. Entries must be received by Wednesday October 31 at 11:59pm. Good luck.

#### **The Giveaways:**

I have a pair of passports for [Taste the Season in Niagara on the Lake](#) for the weekend of November 17 and 18 only (*Subject Line: Taste NOTL*).

I also have 4 pairs of tickets for the upcoming [Gourmet Food and Wine Expo](#) (Nov. 15-18) at the Metro Toronto Convention Centre (*Subject Line: Gourmet TO*).

Finally, I'm offering up a pair of tickets to the [OntarioWineReview Cabernet Franc Challenge](#), one pair for each night – in your email please specify the date you would prefer to attend. (*Subject Line: Francly My Dear ...*)

---

**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](mailto:michael@ontariowinereview.com). We look forward to hearing from you!

© OntarioWineReview.com 2007. All rights reserved.  
You may use the content of this newsletter by including full credit to Michael Pinkus, Grape Guy and a link to [www.ontariowinereview.com](http://www.ontariowinereview.com)