

## 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 – 71**  
**December 6, 2007**

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#### **Ontario Wine Review:** *Where would you like to buy your wine? – A farmer's dream*

A few months back I received some startling news, Scotch Block Fruit Winery was/is up for sale. A real estate agent contacted me and said that a fruit and wine farm was up for sale and if I knew anyone interested in buying such a place. After looking at the accompanying pictures, I recognized Scotch Block. A few days later, an email from Bert Andrews (owner of Scotch Block – for now) arrived to clarify his situation about wanting to finally retire and see the world. He concluded his explanation with, "... the best idea seems to be to sell at the top of our game." Accordingly, this would make Bert, the John Elway of the Ontario wine scene. Within the same email, he switched gears and talked about an issue that's near and dear to his heart: selling fruit wine at farmers' markets.

Bert is hoping to pressure the government through petitions and by citing examples from the U.S. – showing how selling local fruit wines at farmers' markets helps the economy and brings added and needed exposure to these wineries. There are plenty of examples of farmers' market and fruit wineries interacting together; I could cite you half a dozen examples of wineries on fruit market property – but they are not in the "same building", nor are the wines side-by-side with the produce and products being sold. Bert believed we should push for this as a "minor election issue". My thoughts on the matter – with some additions to the email I sent back to him – are below:

"As much as I believe and advocate for more access to Ontario wines - see my article in the mid-September newsletter making a case for it ([Newsletter #65](#)) - I do not see this being an election issue, big or small. Somehow, we still live in a puritanical society that fears sex and booze ... more booze than sex from the look of our advertising these days; although our neighbours to the south still fear the nipple (the Janet Jackson / Justin Timberlake "nipplegate" at the Super Bowl was recently rated as the #1 celebrity scandal – Entertainment Weekly #951 - August 31, 2007). They have better liquor laws and regulations which allow for the sale of wine and spirits at markets and at events ... a concept we Ontarians know very little about or are allowed access to; but something we should get behind. As much as people make noise that they want booze in corner stores, it never comes to pass because the LCBO is not about to relinquish its power or control. Sure the government will always get its share, but the LCBO comes along and fear mongers to the point where people believe babies' bottles will be filled with alcohol instead of milk because of the "easy access" to alcohol and school children will be washing down their cigarettes with a pint of Jack (Daniels). I am taking this a bit far but you get the point - until we are able to poke a few holes in these arguments and make people more comfortable with alcohol (as they seem to be with sex), we will not be selling alcohol anywhere but in the LCBO and at our wineries. Trust me, I would love to grab a bottle of fruit wine at a farmers' market along with my pie and veggies (and ring it up all on the same bill) ... one stop shopping – that's what makes America great."

Believe me, there's nothing I'd like more than to have the LCBO loosen its grip and allow free market enterprise when it comes to booze (wine especially): better selection, better quality ... or at least permit VQA-only corner-style stores like they have in British Columbia. The rise and continued popularity of B.C. wine, within its own borders, owes much to these stores; it's all about ease of access (plus it has been embraced by restaurants and event venues). It is a fierce following to the point of jingoism for the populace of that province ([see Newsletter #17](#)) ... all residents, no matter where they live, can get their hands on a bottle of premium BC-VQA wine without having to reside in, or close to, the Okanagan Valley. The LCBO treats our wineries like competition, thus bringing in the plonk-quality wines (read: cellared in Ontario wine) and for years hiding them

and passing them off as product of Ontario. This thankfully has changed, with better signage at the store level, but more change is needed – and laxing a few laws and loosening a grip on where we can buy VQA-Ontario wine would be a good start. But unfortunately until we all stand up and say, “we want/need change to our system; want better access to quality VQA-wines and need a free market enterprise, we will not be seeing change anytime soon ... heck, I think 1 out of 3 would be a start ... but I’ll leave that fight to [Larry Paterson](#). For now, I guess, we’ll have to keep working within the system and keep trying to poke those initial holes.

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**Grape Guy's Picks of the Bunch: *Nice Red – Big Red***

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

NCT Winery 2005 Cabernet Sauvignon - \$18.95 (W, WTH)

[www.nctwinery.com](http://www.nctwinery.com)

Not sure why I was so shocked and surprised by this wine, it's not like the Niagara College Teaching Winery hasn't been making award winning wines since their inception in 2002; I guess I just wasn't expecting this tasty little number to be as good as it was when I walked in during the Taste the Season event in late November. I wasn't prepared for the spicy black pepper and red fruit nose, nor was I ready for the red fruit loaded palate with plenty of strawberries and its peppery elegance in the mouth. It won my “best wine” honour for the Taste the Season event – and it had some very stiff competition. From a teaching winery, go figure – they're teachin' 'em good stuff over there.

Chateau des Charmes 2005 'Equuleus' - \$40.00 (W, WTH)

[www.chateaudescharmes.com](http://www.chateaudescharmes.com)

The horse is back, bigger, stronger and better than ever. Chateau des Charmes' Equuleus is made from grapes harvested across the road at the Paul Bosc Vineyard and it is only made in the best years. The last time it surfaced was in 2002. This wine is a full on balls-to-the-wall red with a mixture of black and red fruit, strawberry, raspberry and cassis. The taste does not disappoint from the promise of the nose, following through with the dark fruits that include blackberries and black cherries. The tannins are smooth and supple, while the acidity keeps everything in check. What does this all mean to you? A wine that'll age 10 years or more and get better with age ... with all the elegance and finesse you'd expect from a wine bearing the Chateau des Charmes name “Equuleus”.

**Holiday Sweeties – checking in with the newest sweet stuff:**

As we get closer to the holidays, our thoughts turn to sweet wines and luscious desserts – here are a few suggestions to make your holidays that much sweeter:

[Lailey Vineyard 2006 Vidal Select Late Harvest - \\$19.95](#) (W, WTH)

[Magnotta 2005 Passito Vidal - \\$16.95](#) (W)

[Mountain Road Wine Company 2003 Special Select Late Harvest Vidal - \\$18.05](#) (W)

And for something different, check out ...

[Mill Street Brewing Company Barley Wine - \\$3.95 \(500ml\)](#) ([Brewery Only](#))

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

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**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:

Palatine Hills Meritage Comparison ([read](#)) ([listen](#))

Peller Estates 2006 Private Reserve Sauvignon Blanc ([read](#)) ([listen](#))

NEW Reports in the [On the Road with the Grape Guy](#) section:

[Toronto Gourmet Food and Wine Show](#)

[Featherstone Open House – A Sherry Tasting](#)

[Taste the Season in Niagara on the Lake](#)

[Foster's Holiday Tasting](#)

[Lailey Vineyard's Come to Toronto](#)

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### **Holiday Gift Giving Guide ... Ideas for What to Get those Wine Lovers on Your List**

It's the holidays, time to think about those you love and those you want to suck up to ... especially the wine lovers on those lists. Many people have come up to me and have asked what I want for the holidays. What they are really asking is what they should get for the wine lovers on their lists (I am under no illusions that my cousins are going to actually get me something this year). I always start with the same thing, "Well, there's always a good bottle of wine," but I find that people are afraid to pull just any old bottle off the LCBO shelf and bring it to their wine loving friends, because they feel intimidated – that bottle of Yellow Tail Shiraz you're enamored with may not be to the liking (or the standards) of your recipient. To that end, I provide you with a few ideas for you wine loving giftees this holiday season ... to see more you can check out my LCBO gift giving guides [Part 1](#) and [Part 2](#) launched earlier in November:

**Glassware ...** Seems silly to say but the vessel makes the wine ... you might not be part of that school of thought, but many wine lovers are, and one can never have too many good pieces of stemware. That's why Spiegelau and Riedel stay in business. They know that good stems make all the difference. If you're going this route, find out what your friends drink and I'll guarantee you'll find a glass specific to their grape of choice (I'm not kidding) ... or you can just go for a more general-style red or white glass. I recommend heading over to [Rosehill Cellars](#) or the [Wine Establishment](#) for these purchases. Their staff will help you make the right choice – and while there you might wanna pick up a little something for yourself ... best part of holiday shopping is picking up stuff for yourself along the way.

**Movie Buffs ...** There are plenty of movies about wine, with wine central to the story line or just something educational. For those looking to be entertained there's the old standby Sideways (but it seems everybody has seen that one) or you can go for the much maligned but to me highly entertaining A Good Year starring Russell Crowe and directed by Ridley Scott – I don't care what anybody says, it was fun, entertaining and in the right mood, will bring a tear to your eye, a smile to your face or both. The education minded amongst you might enjoy Mondovino, about the homogenization of the wine industry, another movie that may bring a tear to your eye if you buy into its premise. Or you can take a lighter look at wine with John Cleese's Wine for the Confused ... all the above are now available on DVD.

**Educating Wino ...** One can never know too much about wine, and it's always good to get a Canadian perspective on things. That's why a gift subscription to one of Canada's 3 wine magazines (Wine Access, Tidings, Vines) is such a great gift idea that just keeps on giving month after month after month ... and you won't be forking over a lot of dough. Of course there are the U.S. based mags too (Food & Wine, Spectator, etc.), but those just make me salivate over wines we'll never see on this side of the border (in Ontario anyway). Hey, why not a subscription to the very newsletter you're reading now – the price is right and they'll get 26 issues a year.

**Gadgets and Gizmos ...** There are so many to choose from and so many on the market that it is hard to decide. Just remember, it's best to get something practical, unless your recipient really does have it all; that battery powered corkscrew will probably sit on the table and gather dust till the next time you come over and ask how they like using it. A good decanter is always a safe bet, so is a Rabbit-style corkscrew.

**Books Books and more Books ...** There are so many books on the subject I don't know where to begin. Let's stay with the one's that focus on Ontario or have a Canadian slant. There's the new Tony Aspler, Gurth Pretty book "The Definitive Canadian Wine and Cheese Cookbook"; or you can get Tony on his own with the "Wine Atlas of Canada", both great reads depending on your mood, from a knowledgeable authority on the subject. Konrad Ejbich's "Pocket Guide to Ontario Wines, Wineries and Vineyards" is a little dated now (I know he is working on an updated version) but useful and helpful as both a reference and reading guide (I use mine as fact checker). Feel like reading up on the west coast then check out "The Wineries of British Columbia" by John Schreiner. Or if an escape is required, get the book that started the wave of Pinot-loving, Rex Pickett's "Sideways" – more fun than the movie believe it or not.

Well, I hope I got your brain a churning and hopefully on the right track to tackle the problem of what to get those wine loving friends of yours, all I can say now is good luck, have fun and happy holiday shopping.

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### **Wine Event Spotlight:** *Plenty of Open Houses to attend*

It's that time of year, when wineries open their doors, put out food-stuffs and let the wine flow freely ... it's the holidays and that means it's time for an open house. Many wineries put on some kind of festive event to bring you to and through their door, reminding you that local wines make an awesome gift – and I for one I could not agree more. Be it a bottle from Niagara, the Lake Erie North Shore, or Prince Edward County – there is not better time than the holidays to remind those we love that we live in a fine wine making province; prove it to them by buying them something they can enjoy for the holidays or for special events to come. Check with your favourite winery to see what kind of event they are having –and while you're there searching for that perfect gift for Aunt Jean, Cousin Bobby and Uncle Joe don't forget to pick up a little something nice for yourself.

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**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!

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