

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.



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Note From the Grape Guy ... *What's in the works for Next Year:*

As this is the last newsletter of the year, I thought I would take a minute to update you on OntarioWineReview's plans for the New Year.

The Lost and Found is Open – a new blog is being set up to tell you about wines I have “lost” on my wine rack, together we'll find out if over time, these wines have deteriorated into trash or matured into treasures.

Play it Again Sam – a few years back, I started a two-year storing program with some of the better Ontario wines I had tasted, so see how they would age. As these mixed cases are now coming due it I have the opportunity to re-taste and review them in a recurring newsletter segment called “Taste it Again Grape Guy” ... these notes will also appear in the Wine Review Database.

New Features and Some Re-organization – over the holidays, I will be working at re-organizing some of the features and adding new ones to make OntarioWineReview the best it can be. Plus there will be a plethora of new (and sometimes controversial) articles and winery reviews.

A Final Wish – in closing, I would like to thank you for being a reader and making OntarioWineReview the success it is. Happy Holidays to all, talk to you all again in 2008.



OntarioWineReview: *WINERY REVIEW – Lailey Vineyard*

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.

The genesis of Lailey Vineyard winery (the way I heard it anyway) may not be of biblical proportion a la Cain and Abel, or as legendary as the Hatfields and McCoys, nor as epic as the Battle of Thermopylae (as depicted in the movie 300), but there is a sort of Dallas meets Dynasty feel to it, full of backstabbing, betrayal and deals gone bad; and is a story I will sum up as briefly as possible for you ... Donna and David Lailey grew grapes (still do) and would sell them to a variety of wineries in Niagara and other areas. One day, one of their buyers, a relatively new player on the wine scene, came to them and said, “I will buy all that you grow of [a particular grape] because my winemaker is making fabulous wine with it.” (or something like that). So Donna and David planted more of those particular grapes with the assurance that they have a buyer for them. Some years later, this buyer came along and said, “I will not be buying anymore of [that particular grape] because I can make a wine cheaper if I use Foch instead – sorry not buying that [particular grape] anymore.” Now Donna and David are stuck with a whole bunch of these little known grapes, so what do they do? There's an old saying that “need is the mother of invention” and they decided to establish their own winery so that they can use their own grapes. They lure away a young, talented, self-taught winemaker, fresh off a winemaker of the year honour,

and one known for making really good wines from “that particular grape”. The grape is Zweigelt, the winemaker is Derek Barnett, and the reneger of the deal will remain nameless ... suffice it to say that our deal breaker now goes around saying “I helped start Lailey Vineyard’s winery.” Talk about giving a misdeed some spin.

Thus, as folklore will have it, started Lailey Vineyard ... they built themselves a winery, a production facility, a barrel cellar (of which a newer underground cellar was just recently completed) and began making wine; not just from Zweigelt, but from all the grapes grown on their property – and it is a good thing they did, because Lailey makes some of the best, age-worthy wines in Niagara and is committed to making small batches of quality wines. Their winemaker continues his commitment to Canada, something he started during his Southbrook days, Derek Barnett is one of the few winemakers using Canadian oak extensively in his winemaking - Cabernet Franc, Chardonnay, Syrah all aged using Canuck wood, and proudly yet discretely displayed on their label.

Your visit to Lailey starts along the Niagara Parkway ... you’ll come across their new sign, which replaced their simplistic green and white sign that was indistinguishable from all the other similar signs seen along the Parkway – today Lailey has a very classy black with silver scripted lettering sign (something they have been waiting years to get approval on – its an even longer story than the genesis story above). Turn into the driveway and it’s a long drive to what looks like a simple wooden and glass box-like structure that houses the tasting room, events room, tank room / production area and the original barrel cellar. The tasting room, on the main floor, is glassed in (front and side) and the tasting bar is an elegant black as is the shelving behind it. To the left of the bar is small wooden shelving made into triangular cubbies, which hold the bottles of wine for sale.

Everything at Lailey seems pretty simple, straight lines, glass and wood, simple shelving ... that’s because Lailey isn’t about the flash and showmanship on the outside, it’s about what’s in the bottle that counts for them. Using the varieties best grown in Ontario and some trial plantings for fun, Lailey has built its name on quality wines at a variety of price points which seem to top out at \$39.95. But while the outside is simple, there is nothing simple about these wines. Derek Barnett has a philosophy and love based around wines with a potential for ageing, wines you can certainly enjoy now if you choose, but ones that will show even better over time and will reward your patience. Some to be opened in as little as 3-5 years, while others can age longer – a philosophy that is applied across the board for both reds and whites.

If you’re looking for that simple sipper to take home tonight and drink right away, sure Derek makes a BBQ-ready [Zweigelt](#) to die for, but for the long haul, nothing beats one of Barnett’s Beauty-of-a-Cabernet Franc that’s had time to mellow.

No matter what the impetus for their start up it’s a good thing they did, Lailey is a must stop for lovers of quality, age-worthy reds, Chardonnays and Rieslings ... and after all this, don’t forget to try the Zweigelt, you won’t be disappointed.



Grape Guy’s Picks of the Bunch: *A Fabulous Fume and a Real Fine SLH Riesling*

For directions and more information visit www.laileyvineyard.com

Lailey Vineyard 2006 Fume Blanc - \$24.95

I tried this wine a few months ago back when it was first released, it was nice, but not \$24.95 nice ... now, 5 months later, it is finally coming into its own and the 24.95 price tag seems like more of a deal. Fume Blanc is Sauvignon Blanc that has seen the inside of a barrel, in this case, 7 months in one-year-old used French oak, of which 3 of those months were on the lees (dead yeast cells – lees sounds so much better doesn’t it?). The nose is vanilla with a touch of citrus and asparagus, but it’s on the palate where this wine really shines. A bit grassy at first but then there is lots of butterscotch, apple, pears and other friendly fruit flavours. Give it another 5 months and that 24.95 will seem like a steal, and then we’ll be into spring and that’ll be the perfect time to pop the cork.

Lailey Vineyard 2006 Select Late Harvest Riesling - \$29.95 (375ml)

There are 2 ways to make Select Late Harvest wines: 1 way is to use the second pressing of juice from icewine grapes; the 2nd is to actually select a block(s) or row(s) of grapes to be picked later ... this is the way that winemaker Derek Barnett makes his late harvest wines. His feeling is that good wine is made as fore-thought, not as an after-thought; and that by choosing his late harvested grapes before hand he makes the best wines possible. If you’ve had opportunity to try this wine, you’ll know he just might have a point. The smell is the first thing that’ll lure you in: peaches, apricots, honey, apples, other sweet fruits and banana chips – all

clamour for your attention. The palate is just as lush, inviting and complex with wonderful flavours of dried fruits, apricots, bananas, wild flower honey, lilacs and yellow delicious apples. Succulent, smooth, a real taste treat ... this is everything icewine should be, but without the high sugar count – this one's only a 10; you'd swear it was higher. Two words remain to describe this wine: Absolutely and Gorgeous ... the order is up to you.

Here are some other Lailey wines you might enjoy (I did):

[2006 Vidal Select Late Harvest](#), [2006 Gewurztraminer](#),
[2006 Syrah](#) and [2006 Canadian Oak Syrah](#)

All wines available at the winery only.

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:

[Archibald's Spiced Winter Apple - \\$16.95 \(375ml\) ... \(W\)](#)
[Cattail Creek 2006 Barrel Fermented Vidal Icewine - \\$50.00 \(375ml\) ... \(W\)](#)
[Mountain Road 2002 Cabernet Franc Icewine - \\$80 \(375ml\) ... \(W\)](#)
[Pillitteri 2004 Select Late Harvest Cabernet Franc - \\$30 \(375ml\) ... \(W\)](#)
[Reif Estate Winery 2005 Vidal Icewine - \\$24.95 \(200ml\) ... \(W\)](#)
[The Ice House Northern Ice Vidal 2005 - \\$53.95 \(375ml\) ... \(W, L\)](#)

And for something different

[Riverview Cellars 2004 Fontana Dolce - \\$14.95 ... \(W\)](#)

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:

Stratus 2006 Red Icewine ([read](#)) ([listen](#))

Tawse Winery 2005 Echos White ([read](#)) ([listen](#))



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.

There isn't much more to Lailey than what you see from the outside ... during events they use the ground floor barrel room to their advantage, bringing guests through to the back left of the tasting bar, where they've set up a little tasting table amongst their barrels. But then there is the rarely used events room: behind and to the right of the tasting bar then up the stairs. Windows on both sides of this room give views of both the river to the north and the vineyard in the south ... quite an interesting room that gives you a sense of place.



Bubbling over with Excitement ... Celebrating With Ontario's Sparkling Wine

Sparkling wine everywhere and me without a straw ... not exactly the old saying you remember from childhood, but I thought I'd try to coin an adult version. But it does seem that sparkling wines really are everywhere, especially down in Niagara (and in the Lake Erie region). It used to be that only a handful of producers were making them, but now it's like everyone has either got one or is in the process of making one. I think it's the sign of a growing industry gaining confidence in itself. That small wineries like Palatine and Maleta can have traditional sparkling wine programs (devoting in some cases 3 years to their making) speaks volumes for our industry as a whole – proving that it's not just in the realm of the big boys anymore. Sure big names like Peller, Jackson-Triggs and Colio have their fuzzy wines ... but year after year, the smaller Henry of Pelham is ranked as the top bubbly in Ontario (or at least in the top two). This year many wineries popped the top on a sparkler, and not just the Chardonnay and Pinot Noir kinds – Riesling was the grape in vogue; it was definitely a year to celebrate. Now, as 2007 comes to a close, may I suggest setting the Champagne aside and adding a little local

flair to your New Year's celebration – untie the metal cage and release the cork on a bottle of Ontario Sparkling Wine, we have most definitely come a long way from our Baby Duck Days ... here's to bigger and better things in 2008.

Here is a list of Bubbliies that I would recommend to celebrate the season:

[Colio Estate Wines 2004 Lily Blanc de Noir – \\$14.95](#) (W, L, WTH)
[Fielding Estate Winery 2006 Sparkling Riesling - \\$29.00](#) (W)
[Henry of Pelham Cuvee Catharine Brut – \\$29.95](#) (W, L, WTH)
[Henry of Pelham Cuvee Catharine Rosé Brut – \\$29.95](#) (W, L, WTH)
[Magnotta 2006 Limited Edition Sparkling Vidal Icewine - \\$59.95](#) (W, L)
[Mastronardi Estate Winery a'Dorah - \\$15.00](#) (W)
[Maleta Winery 2005 Old Vines Brut Riesling – \\$25.00](#) – (W)
[Palatine Hills Estate Winery 2004 Blanc de Blancs – \\$49.95](#) (W)
[Peller Estates Ice Cuvee - \\$29.95](#) (W, L, WTH)
[Stoney Ridge Estate Winery 2005 Proprietor's Reserve Brut](#) (Sold Out)

Not exactly bubbly but something to look for in the Spring:

[Malivoire Wine Company 2006 Chardonnay Musque "Spritz"](#) (Sold Out)

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



Wine Event Spotlight: London Wine and Food Show – and a Grape Guy Appearance

It's back, the classiest wine show this side of Chatham. The [London Wine and Food Show](#) is taking place at the Western Fairgrounds in London, Ontario January 18-20, 2008. Last year I attended and was totally impressed by the show and it's atmosphere ([read report](#)); so impressed in fact, that I am going back. Not only that but I'll be presenting in prime time baby (7:30pm Saturday night), the always exciting and informative "Why Visit a Winery" – tasting and interactive seminar.

Tickets to Giveaway: I know tickets will sell out, but I have a few pairs to giveaway. Send me an email with "London Quench and Feed Me" in the subject line. Be sure to include your name, address (with postal code) and phone number to michael@ontariowinereview.com - entries must be received by 11:59pm December 31st to qualify. 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.



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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