

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 – 73
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Ontario Wine Review: *Commentary: ISO Glasses*

Ah-so, the ISO glass – you've all seen it, you've probably all used one, heck, if you've been to any wine show, you probably have one or two in your collection; but I'll bet dollars to doughnuts you probably don't use them very often, if at all. I have a bunch of them, in fact, I probably own more ISO glasses than all other glasses combined. I pull them out when I have company over, when I'm serving dessert wines, Ports, Sherries, things like that; but rarely do I use them when I bring out a nice bottle or during my home tastings for reviews. Truth be known, I can't stand the ISO glass - the International Standards Organization glass sucks. Pardon my language. This opinion became crystal clear to me when I hosted my most recent wine challenge and tallied the scores. Wines I had thought were going to show well, didn't some that did show well were ones I had thought would be nearer to the bottom. Fruity, easy drinking wines showed well in the ISO, while those needing time were left lagging behind. During one of the evenings, we took the same wine – after it had received quite a few poor marks - and put it into a Riedel red wine glass ... everybody agreed that it was much better and that they would have scored it higher had it appeared in the Riedel the first time around.

So why on earth do we use such a glass for tasting? As one attendee pointed out, "ISO glasses are meant to show the faults in a wine." Why are we torturing ourselves with these glasses? I don't get it. Who drinks wine to taste, and/or smell, the faults? When 99.9% of us drink for the pleasure, the aromas, the tastes -who wants to taste faults?

It's for this reason that many wineries are moving away from the ISO glass at their tasting bar and investing in pretty much anything else - from IKEA stemware (box of six Svelka red wine glasses regular \$4.99 -\$2.99 on sale) to Riedel and Spiegelau (\$10.00 a stem and or more). They realize that drinking out of an ISO glass is, one, not helping them to sell their wine, and two, it's not what the customer is going to be using once they get the wine home. So why show the wine in an unfavorable light (glass) to the consumer? On the other hand, if you are not going to step up with better glasses, don't step down to an even more inferior glass. Plastic medicine cups won't do, and some of those fake ISOs are horrible – best to stick with the ISO glass then kill your wine this way. Please understand this is not a "slap on the wrist" article – I'm not naming names. It's about what wineries, festivals, shows and tastings are doing, not only to their wines, but to the customers when they insist on showcasing the wines in an ISO glass.

When you, as a consumer, open a bottle of wine, you probably have a glass you like to pour the wine into, maybe even ones for different occasions: if you're being romantic or having guests over or just having a glass with dinner. Even after the most traumatic experiences and we "need a drink" (I'm talking a break-up, death, etc.) we don't reach for the ISO, we grab a big glass, something that'll make the pain go away (granted that's the alcohol's job), but we also want something that will make it taste better going down. Some folks decant their wines, others open them ahead of time to "let them breathe" while still others are of the open and pour frame of mind ... but never do we grab an ISO glass for these moments. So why on earth do we see them in tasting rooms, at wine events and shows? They make the wine taste funny, awkward and in some cases unappealing. Don't make me bring my own glassware to your tasting room - I wanna taste the wine as you meant it to taste, not its faults (though keep in mind - some wines are just faulty and that can't be helped, no matter what style of glass you use). I know one writer who carries his own glasses everywhere he goes ... but they're ISO glasses - I don't get it. When I travel I also bring my own glassware, a set of Spiegelau, so I can enjoy my wine as I relax at the end of the day. When I know I'll be visiting a place or person often, I'll get them a set of good

glasses, mainly for selfish reasons - I want to know I can have a proper glass of wine when I get there.

I have been to few events where they got the glassware issue right: those that stick out are the Lake Erie Vintage Tasting North Shore (both [Viewpointe, 2006](#), and [Erie Shore, 2007](#)) and the wineries that brought us the "[Somewhereness](#)" show (they provided etched commemorative Riedel glasses). The Somewhereness folks knew that their wines were not going to show well enough in an ISO glass to command the price they were asking per bottle. An ISO-style glass is detrimental to good wine, especially if you want to show it off in the best light. Ditch the ISO, invest in something that'll help sell your wine ... We are making some beauties, and they are being served at tasting bars in the crappiest vessels; this practice makes me shake my head; why are we doing this? As for my next tasting challenge, I will be conferring with glassware manufacturers/distributors to see if we can get a better glass to showcase Ontario's best - all our wines/your wines deserve it.



Grape Guy's Picks of the Bunch: *A Broken Shiraz and One Half of a Pinot*

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

Creekside Estate Winery 2005 Broken Press Shiraz - \$32.95 (W, WTH)

www.creeksidewine.com

A few years ago, Creekside's winemaking team had a dilemma - their basket press broke while pressing some Vionier. So instead of panicking, they had the brilliant idea of putting what juice they were able to salvage into their premium Shiraz ... and voila Broken Press Shiraz was born, with just a touch (3-5 %) of Viognier added for fruitiness and aromatics. Well the Broken Press Shiraz took off, and now they break a press every year just so they can make this wine (just kidding), but they do add in the Viognier. This year's version is aged twenty months in new French and American wood and it tastes and smells like ... a little piece of heaven, but something tells me that will not suffice for you, so let's try it this way: violets, black fruit, cassis and pepper make up the nose; while the pepperiness continues by way of white pepper in the mouth along with some red fruit and black fruit. This contrast sends your taste buds into overload as it tries to determine which is which; after all that confusion this wine finishes on a delicate note with a touch of floral spiciness. Even better than its predecessor.

Coyote's Run 2006 Red Paw Pinot Noir - \$24.00 (W, WTH)

www.coyotesrunwinery.com

"Where's the black paw?" I asked. "We ran out of time during bottling," I was told, "harvest commenced and we had to leave it till January." Good enough reason I guess, so there's no comparison at this time. Back in 2004, Coyote's Run made a name for themselves with their Red Paw and Black Paw Pinots - the grapes coming from either the red soil plot or the black soil plot that splits the property ... each soil imparting its particular terroir characteristics. In 2005, there was not enough Pinot to make different bottlings so they combined everything to make a 2005 Pinot. Now with a bumper harvest in 2006, we're back to distinguishing the red from the black grown grapes. The Red Paw has a nose of cranberry, sour cherry, and a variety of red fruits with a subtle earthiness. In the mouth, cherries and vanilla lead the charge, while a little bit of the earth creeps in, with a hint of tannins enroute to a finish that is smooth and tasty.

[Also check out the Coyote's Run 2005 Off-Dry Vidal](#)

Taste it Again Grape Guy:

On occasion, I'll take a wine I like and put it away in a "special box" for a few years just to see how well it ages ... here are some of those wines:

[Cave Spring 2002 Cabernet-Merlot](#)

[Southbrook 2002 Cabernet-Merlot](#)

[Stoney Ridge 2004 Pinot Noir](#)

[Stratus 2002 Wildass Red](#)

[Willow Springs 2002 Cabernet](#)

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:

Thirty Bench Winemakers 2005 Small Lot Chardonnay ([read](#)) ([listen](#))

Vineland Estates 2005 Elevation Cabernet-Merlot ([read](#)) ([listen](#))

[NEW Blog ... Lost and Found:](#)

Wines that got "lost" on my wine racks - some are Treasures others are Trash ... Find out what happened

The January 5th LCBO Vintages Release report is available here:

[Ontario "Vintages" Releases: Saturday January 5th, 2007 Vintages Release](#)

Also see the reviews of the notable Ontario Wines being featured in this Vintages release:

[Harbour Estates 1999 Riesling Icewine](#)

[Kacaba 2003 Escarpment Series Chardonnay Sur Lie](#)



My Two Barrels Worth - Cabernet Franc and Ontario

My first "challenge" was back in February of 2007 and featured Baco Noir. At that time, many people told me they thought Baco Noir was "Ontario's grape". One colleague of mine went so far as to say we should be promoting it as such, like California promotes Zinfandel, drawing the parallel that Baco is to Ontario what Zin is to California - no offense, but I could not disagree more. Ontario's grape is Cabernet Franc ([see previous article](#)), and after smelling and tasting my way through over 50 different kinds in a variety of styles, I'm even more convinced than ever before. Franc is the blending grape of Bordeaux - the right bank has Merlot, the left bank has Cab Sauv ... but the lowly Franc has neither, used mainly to add structure to the blend – basically it's a back up roll, it's along for the ride, think of it as the Ringo Starr to Merlot and Sauv's Lennon and McCartney.

Here in Ontario, Franc shines. Sure we blend it into Meritages, sometimes it's at the forefront of the blend and other times it takes a backseat, but we also make straight Cab Franc, Reserve Cab Franc, Late Harvest and Icewine Franc wines; we run the gamut of Franc and we make it well and consistently year after year.

I've been in discussions with winemakers, winery owners and wine people from all aspects of the industry - some hear Franc calling out to them while others dismiss it as the rantings of lunacy ... but it is my belief that Cabernet Franc should be the grape we focus on as an industry and use it to help turn the world's attention to Ontario. It seems these days that every winemaking country has a calling card - a grape to call their own. I mention Riesling you think Germany, Cabernet Sauvignon = California, Shiraz = Australia, Sauvignon Blanc = New Zealand, Carmenere = Chile, Malbec = Argentina, Zinfandel = California, Chardonnay = anywhere that makes wine, same thing with Merlot, of course blends (Meritage) go to France [Bordeaux] ... the list goes on and on but nobody has adopted Cabernet Franc as their mainstay. It's homeless - sure it roams the globe popping up here and there, but it has nowhere to call "home". It's time we heed its calling and bring Franc into our fold, and give it a place to finally call home. We have the world's attention with Icewine. Now it's time to show them that we can make other wines too - not just copies of wines from other places, but a distinctive Ontario wine – Cabernet Franc; as with Shiraz, Sauvignon Blanc and Zinfandel, when people hear Ontario, they should think "great Cab Franc".

Over the course of the next two newsletters, I will be examining the results of the Cabernet Franc Challenge ... the winners, the comments and the best Cab Francs in each category. Some results you might find surprising – but that's because you never thought of "that winery" as making good Cabernet Franc. Some of our winemakers know what we can do best here in Ontario and how to work with this grape. Franc is Ontario's calling-card-to-be, so we'd better jump on this gift from the wine Gods before someplace like Chile takes it over, or some crazy Eastern European country lays claim to it, and delivers Cabernet Franc to a world market thirsty for new wine – then we will be kicking ourselves knowing that we should've been at the forefront.



Wine Event Spotlight: *Niagara Ice Wine Festival ... January 18 – February 3, 2008*

It's back and even bigger than last year. This year the Ice Wine Festival has expanded to include 3 weekends. Of course my favourite part has always been what is going on at the wineries, instead of the crowded street festivals and icewine bars (plus I can buy the wines I like) that's why I recommend the Discovery Pass: which allows you to explore Niagara's Wine Route. More than 30 participating wineries host special events at their retail locations featuring seminars, luncheons, icewine sweets and jellies, tapas, cheese and other culinary pairings, and of course icewine tastings. Now I have had my druthers in the past about the new route this passport program has taken, but I also put faith in the folks that head the festival that they will right this ship – which is what brings me out year after year. You can check out my reviews of the festival ([2007](#)) and also check out the website for the event itself, www.niagaraicewinefestival.com ... to plan your getaway.

Ticket Winners: We have us some winners for the tickets to the [London Wine and Food Show](#) (Jan. 18-20) ... usually I throw names into a hat and pick out the winners, but this time round everybody sent warm holiday wishes and/or heartfelt notes about what OntarioWineReview has come to mean to them, and because of the time of year I was more in a giving mood that way; so the winners are:

Adam Yates (London) – “Very new member to OntarioWineReview. I am absolutely loving it.”
Grace Hebb (London) – “Any chance you still have tickets left ... Season' s Greetings.”
Jane Tunks (Springfield) – “Girls from work and I went a couple of years ago ... and had a great time.”
Simon & Eileen Crouch (Chatham) – “Enjoyed seeing you at the event in Fort Malden. Happy New Year”
Marlene Blackler (St. Marys) – “I would love to win the tickets.”

Happy New also to John Crawley and Graham Botheras ... but unfortunately, as they say on Survivor, “I have nothing for you.”

Quick Reminder – the Grape Guy is speaking on the Saturday night (Jan. 19) at 7:30 – hope to see you there.

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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