

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 – 78
March 13, 2008

In this Edition

- **Ontario Wine Review:** *Vincor Fallout*
 - **Grape Guy's Picks of the Bunch:** *Reif Merlot and a little Pavlo*
 - **Weekly Wine Notes and More:** *Konzelmann Riesling, Lighthearted Lailey, Vintages, Cuvee, etc.*
 - **Raise your Spirits:** *A Chilly Reception*
 - **Wine Event Spotlight:** *Ironic Chef at Vineland and COC Fine Wine Auction*
-



OntarioWineReview: *Vincor Fallout*

Well it's been almost two years now since Constellation (a New York based company) bought out our very own beloved Vincor and by all outward appearances nothing has changed. Jackson-Triggs is still Jackson-Triggs, Inniskillin is still Inniskillin, etc. etc. It looks like business as usual. Sure there was all that fear-mongering and gnashing of teeth about how the sale would change the face of Canadian wine ... and yet all's quiet. Sure it looks like Le Clos Jordanne will never be built, Frank Gehry (architect) made a "shipload" of money designing a winery that is now a pie in the sky dream, instead of a floating roof in the sky reality ... and Jack Diamond (architect) is rubbing his hands together with glee because his project beat Gehry's into the Niagara region (Southbrook); but otherwise nothing has changed, except everytime I see the name Vincor, it is followed by the parenthetic (a Constellation company) ... otherwise, nothing has changed - nothing. And believe it or not, that should bother you.

I hear you asking, "why grape guy, why should the long thought ruination of the Canadian wine industry by that bohemoth from the south (Constellation) NOT happening bother me? If everything is status quo, shouldn't I be happy that we have not lost our Canadian identity?" Ah, but my fine reader friends we *have* lost something, or let me put it to you this way, we've lost sight of something – something we should be rallying around and making a fuss about: VQA wine stores.

Since Vincor was sold, April 3rd 2006, there has been no consideration or mention of what to do with those Wine Rack stores (you know the little kiosks you find in grocery stores, malls and on street corners that sell Vincor wines exclusively- and one of the few "competitors" to the LCBO's centralized liquor dominance). The moment Vincor was sold there should have been, and should have continued to be, an uproar about these stores – not stopping until the problem was fixed. Originally the special license to open up additional locations was given to Vincor to promote and sell Ontario wine, but now – not so much. Although Jackson-Triggs, Inniskillin etc. remain Canadian wineries, their profits go south of the border. Have you been in one of these stores (and I don't even have o say lately, because this has always been the case)? Not all the wines on the shelves are VQA, it's that "cellared in Ontario" crap that makes us the laughing stock of the wine world (they'll be an article on that later). Those stores should have been seized from Vincor soon after the sale was made to Constellation and they should have been turned into VQA Wine Stores promoting 100% Ontario wine. Currently, according to the Wine Rack's website, there are 164 in the province of Ontario. If we were to divide those up evenly and geographically among the wineries of Ontario (for argument's sake let's say those that belong to the wine council – 73 in 2007), each winery would have their wines in an additional 2.24 stores. Now say we allow these wineries to have joint control over these locations – buddy-up so to speak with four other wineries (5 in total), these five would have their wines in 11 locations across the province ... Imagine how many more hands good quality VQA wine would find itself into. These stores would not be allowed to sell "cellared-in-Ontario" wines - only 100% VQA-Ontario product. These stores would serve to educate the public as to what VQA actually is and stands for, because confusion still exists, especially with all those reports about short-crops and lowered percentages. Think about it, the exposure would be amazing and the profits would remain in the hands of our own Ontario-based wineries. Of course the government would get their share, we'd need some kind of governing body over these stores, this is Ontario afterall – but let's leave the LCBO out of this one, and create an independent body not beholden to the current monopoly.

Now, I'm not preaching protectionism or about closing our borders to foreign wines, I love wine from everywhere, as long as it is good. What I am talking about is having some pride in our homegrown product. We really don't have to look much further than B.C. to see what home-province wine-pride can do ([see newsletter #17](#)). As Ontarians we pride ourselves on being open to other wines. One winemaker went as far as to complain to me that the Wine Access Canadian Wine Awards is slightly-biased towards B.C. because some of the main judges are B.C.-centric and know what their home province wines taste like and thus rate them higher; while our Ontario representatives are more open minded – because that's the kind of province we are, especially when it comes to wine. But what's wrong with showing some pride in our wineries, showing those who visit our province that Ontario is a winemaking region and that we're making world-class wines in the process? What's wrong with giving Ontarians better access to these wines? That's something we should really be looking at and making noise about in the wake of the Vincor sale ... not being complacent and wiping our collective brows with a big "whew" that nothing has changed.



Grape Guy's Picks of the Bunch: Reif Merlot and a little Pavlo

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

Reif Estate 2006 Merlot Reserve - \$24.95 (W, WTH)

www.reifwinery.com

To me Reif is a hit and miss winery ... when they hit they are so close to the bull's eye it's scary and it makes me wonder how on earth their stuff misses. Case in point: their line of 2002 First Growth wines are exemplary (Pinot Noir, Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon) – then there is their 2006 Cabernet Franc – misfire, smells like citrus??? This Merlot is another hit ... tons of blackberries, cinnamon and pencil shavings on the nose; in the mouth it's striking: juicy blackberries, smooth oak-vanilla tannins, great flavours that have you craving more. It's ready to drink right now, but another 3 years in your cellar wouldn't hurt it either. This one really hits the mark, especially with the Merlot crowd. It's wine like this that makes me wonder if those misses I referred to had something to do with me?!?

Mastronardi Estate 2006 "Pavlo" Signature Reserve Meritage - \$30.00 (W)

www.mastronardiwines.com

Do you know Pavlo? I have to admit that 2 years ago, I'd never heard his name; since then, I hear it all the time, especially since I began traveling to the Lake Erie North Shore area ... He seems to be very big down there. He's a Greek-Canadian International Recording artist who "created the Mediterranean Music Genre" and his playing's as beautiful as any I've heard. Turns out he's a good friend of Eadie Mastronardi (owner of this winery) and as friends usually do, they help each other out (or do things for one another). Pavlo has played at a few of Mastronardi's events at the winery, and in return Mastronardi has provided Pavlo with his very own wine. But unlike owning your own label in the music industry, this is not a vanity project for this musician; it's a serious wine venture, and who better to spearhead a wine than a guy playing Mediterranean music (golfers and hockey players don't have that sensual aura or background about them). The nose starts off raisiny, but quickly turns into cassis, black cherry, sweet herbs and when the wines sits (without aerating) there's even a pleasant butterscotch sensation that rises up into the olfactories. In the mouth, you'll find a crossfiring of your tastebuds, as sweet and sour raspberries, sour cherries, herbs, a touch of something herbaceous along with rich chocolate tannins that pinch the sides of the tongue – all these flavours fight it out in your mouth before they subside down your throat. Finally, there is only one way I figure I can end this review properly; throw down a hat, stomp my feet as the guitar strumming rises, two clicks of the heels and "Oh-La!"

Two Found Reviews:

Last week I reviewed Cave Spring Cellars – two wine reviews surfaced after publication, so I thought I would pass them along to you.

[Cave Spring Cellars 2005 Cabernet-Merlot](#) (W, L, WTH)

[Cave Spring Cellars 2006 Dry Riesling](#) (W, L, WTH)

The Must Yard: Some have a dumping ground for reviews – I have a Must Yard

Must (n.) something that cannot or should not be missed – (n.) grape juice before the end of fermentation, ie: new wine.

[D'Angelo Estate Winery 2002 Pinot Noir](#) (W)

[Hillebrand Winery 2006 Wild Ferment Chardonnay](#) (W, WTH)

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

www.ontariowinereview.com

A bi-weekly newsletter dedicated to helping you discover Ontario's best Wines and Wineries.



Weekly Wine Notes and More: *Konzelmann Riesling, Lighthearted Lailey, Vintages, Cuvee, etc.*

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 every Tuesday or you can listen to the Podcast.

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

Konzelmann 2006 Riesling ([read](#)) ([listen](#))

Lailey 2006 Merlot ([read](#)) ([listen](#))

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

[Cuvee Gala 2008](#)

[Cuvee En-Route 2008](#)

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

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

Just Found: [Featherstone 2004 Cherry Barrel Cabernet Franc](#)

[NEW BLOG ... Taste it Again Grape Guy](#)

Taste it Again has it's own blog - find out what has happened to some of my favourites over the past few years

Vintages Release: [The March 15, 2008 LCBO Vintages Release report is now available.](#)

Ontario Wines of Note at Vintages for March 15, 2008:

[Angels Gate 2006 Riesling](#) – [Chateau des Charmes 2006 Chardonnay Musque](#)

[The Grange of Prince Edward County Trumppour's Mill Victoria Block BF Chardonnay](#)

[The Ice House Northern Ice 2006 Cabernet Franc Icewine](#) – [Huff 2006 South Bay Rose](#)



Raise your Spirits: *Advice about things we "wine" about: like stains and hangovers.*

These days, the message is getting through to people about red wine, but still the stigma is there. The stigma I am referring to, is the chilling of said reds. Many people that I talk with about red wine seem to look at me sheepishly, head bowed, an awe-shucks kick of the leg - because they have some deep inner secret about their reds they feel I will not approve of ... they chill them. I don't know how many times in the past 6 months I have been talking to someone and I'll say, "you might want to chill that one" and they'll say, "I *hate* to admit it, but I chill all my reds."

"Hate to admit it", forget hate-to-admit-it, be proud of what you're doing – chilling red isn't a crime, it's the way it's always been ... it's just the world around us that has changed; let me explain. Today, room temperature is ~70 degrees (21 Celsius) – but in the days when room temperature for reds was first adopted, room temperature wasn't controlled by central air or ambient heat; it was a drafty old French Chateau. Here you were lucky if rooms got into mid-50's, and walking around with shorts and a t-shirt on indoors was more likely to give you hypothermia than any kind of comfort. So when you went down to the basement and pulled a bottle off the wine cellar shelf to serve with dinner, it was already "chilled". The idea that red wine, to be served properly, had to be stored next to the oven, was perpetuated by restaurants – and some how that's just become the norm.

Wine should not be the same temperature as your soup ... too warm and you kill off all those great subtle flavours. Same can be said about too cold, but if it's too cold, it can always warm up to produce those flavours – too warm, and you're being even more uncouth by dropping a few ice cubes in to chill it down, diluting the taste with water in the process. The only thing worse is stirring in a packet or two of sugar (I've seen and heard about both courses of action) and in truth, that makes me cringe more than you telling me, "I chill all my reds down."

So next time you talk about your practice of chilling your red wine, don't hang your head in shame, don't kick the ground in embarrassment, hold your head up high and speak boldly and proudly: "I put all my reds in the fridge." Now if you'll excuse me, it's been about 15 minutes, I have a California Cab I have to liberate from the icebox.



Wine Event Spotlight: *Ironic Chef (Vineland) and COC Fine Wine Auction*

In Stadium Kitchen, Vineland presents, The Ironic Chef (Wednesday April 16, 2008) ... Two Teams. One Kitchen. And the Final Outcome: You Decide. This evening has all the right ingredients for spirited competition. In the spirit of the Iron Chef television show, the Vineland culinary experts are put to the test ... against each other! Multiple courses, a judging panel of industry experts, and you, the discerning diner will decide who walks away with the crown this year as Vineland presents the 3rd Annual Ironic Chef. The stakes are incredibly high this year – as the winner will have bragging rights (for at least a year) and will break the tie, as each team has won once in the previous two meetings. Order your tickets today for this evening of fun and food. For reservations call 1-888-846-3526 or check out www.vineland.com

The next night the Canadian Opera Company invites you to participate in their **9th Annual Fine Wine Auction** (Thursday April 17, 2008) at Crush Wine Bar – 455 King Street West. Selections include a 1988 Leroy Nuits St. Georges aux Boudots, a 1999 Georges Roumier Bonnes Mares, a 1989 Château Mouton Rothschild, a 1989 Château d'Yquem, a 1985 Joseph Phelps Insignia, and an incredible array of spectacular wines from around the world. Reception is at 6pm with the Auction beginning at 7pm. Tickets are \$35. Visit www.coc.ca for detail.

Hamilton Ticket Winners: Well, as many of you found out, the answer to the skill testing question was not as easy as you originally thought. Usually I ask you to name a winery, but this time I asked; "In what city is the Hamilton Food and Drink Fest taking place?" I know many of you sweated this one out, so I will now end the suspense that has been building for the past two weeks. The correct answer was, Hamilton. Our winners are: Leon Meslin (Mississauga) who came up with "The answer to your poser is ---- Hamilton"; Sue Couch (Beamsville) who found the answer "After a lot of research and internet browsing"; Brenda Clark (Markham) who answered with authority: HAMILTON; and Ramute Misevicius (Toronto), who was a little more timid but still forceful with the answer: Hamilton! Congratulations to all our winners – your tickets will be in the mail to you shortly. For more information about the Hamilton Food and Drink Fest check it out on the internet by visiting www.hamiltonfoodanddrinkfest.com.

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!

© 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