

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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OntarioWineReview: *Mountain Road Icewine Tasting – 6 years of Vidal*

What a golden opportunity (no pun intended)! Mountain Road Wine Company, in Beamsville, has 6 years worth of Vidal Icewine currently listed on their tasting menu ... Icewines that date from 1999 to 2004; an opportunity to see and taste the evolution of "Canada's gift to the wine world". I could not pass up the chance to share this experience with friends, so I invited a number of them over on Saturday March 8 to give their noses and palates a workout. How was I to know that Toronto would get 20cm of snow on that very day when I set up the event two months earlier? But three brave souls felt the tasting was worth the effort, and risked life and limb, to take part in this unique bit of bottled history. So we lined up six glasses, popped the corks on the six slim (375ml) bottles and poured a different wine into each to compare and contrast these wines.

Colour ...

The theory I started this taste-off with was that there would be a colour difference along age lines; meaning that the 1999 would be the darkest of the 6 and as the wines got younger their colour would lighten (i.e.: 2000 lighter than 2001, 2001 lighter than 2002 etc.). But this is where vintage variation comes into play (as well in as taste and smell). The darkest of the wines (almost fully rust coloured) was actually the 2000 and then lightened in the following order: 2001, 1999, 2004, 2003 and 2002 (light golden).

Nose ...

The broad range of smells we got from these wines were very interesting indeed – none were unexpected except for the 2001, which had a tinny smell to it and very little in the way of fruit. Someone made the suggestion that it had picked that smell up from the tank it was made in. The most appealing smells were from the 1999 and 2000 (darkest). 1999 (a gold medal winner at the 2004 Ottawa Wine Show) had a vibrant bouquet of honey, pears, apricots and apples – almost ten years old and it still smelled young and fresh. 2000, on the other hand, seems to have aged much faster than it's younger counterparts, developing smells of caramel, toffee, rusty apples and other bruised fruit – there was also a slightly oxidized smell, not unpleasant, but not exactly appealing either. Other smells from the wines were, honeyed apples with cinnamon spice (2002); fruit cocktail in light syrup (2003) and subtle wildflower honey aromas (2004).

Flavours ...

The big revelation was the tasting. Everyone's mouth watered at the chance to taste icewine history. There were both surprises and letdowns. The 1999 lived up to its gold medal status, delivering a thick liquid loaded with honey-soaked dried fruit, very lush in the mouth. 2001 was a beauty, not at all what the nose suggested (remember this one smelled tinny), very flavourful with apples and pears, peaches and apricots along with fresh fruit compote. After those two, the rest paled in comparison on the tongue. 2000's promising nose died in the glass, resulting in a sour, bitter finish; 2002 was too thick – "nice flavours but just too thick, it's like having a mouth full of apple sauce." 2003 had rusty nuances, "like fresh fruit with a bite taken out of it then left on the counter to brown"; and 2004 followed its promising nose with lots of apples and honey, but a metallic finish that didn't round off the experience well.

Conclusion ...

Sipped on their own, each wine has its own charm and certain nuances would not be apparent – but when lined up back-to-back-to-back-to-back-to-back-to-back (6 wines remember) those that were superior rose to the top. The surprise was the [1999](#) Vidal, which really showed well and had little sign of fading away any time soon ... just one year later (younger) the 2000, unfortunately, seems to have grown too old before its time. Our little posse chose the 1999 as our unanimous favourite, while the [2001](#), despite its rather lackluster nose, easily came in second with its beautiful performance in the mouth (nobody could believe it was the same wine). I urge you to try this little test for yourself. [Mountain Road Wine Company](#) is located at 4016 Mountain Street in Beamsville. Thanks to Steve Kocsis and Joanna for providing the wines for this little diversion on a cold and snowy March afternoon.

Ask the Grape Guy ... “How long will open Icewine keep in the fridge?”

I performed a test on these 6 bottles three weeks after the initial tasting. I left them in the fridge with just their cork stoppers in – the results of the tasting were very much the same as the first time I popped their corks. In fact, some of the flavours were more vibrant, although the liquid inside the bottle was definitely more viscous and thick. Interestingly, the same order of preference applied – though the '02 was showing much better and the nose of the '01 had really opened up.

* N.B. the 2000 just won a Gold at the Toronto Wine and Cheese Show – could be that we had a faulty bottle (i.e.: oxidized).



Grape Guy's Picks of the Bunch: A Whole Whack of Rieslings

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

Peller Estates Private Reserve 2006 Riesling – \$15.95 (W, WTH)

www.peller.com

Peller was the only Canadian winery to pick up a medal (silver) at the prestigious 2008 Riesling du Monde competition ... over 500 Rieslings were entered from all over the world, and we all know who rules in that category on the world stage, so to pick up a silver is a pretty big deal. So what does a world silver medal Riesling taste like? Like a very good Riesling - but I suspect you want to know more than that. Well this Riesling is big on minerality, with peach and lime as back up. The taste is big on acidic bite: lemon-citrus pucker with the dichotomy of tart lemonade sweetness, especially in the fore-palate, but then it moves back to its mineral/wet stone roots. It has a very elongated finish that lingers in the mouth with both taste and acidity.

Twenty Twenty-Seven Cellars 2007 Riesling - \$24.95 (W, L)

2027cellars@gmail.com

Winemaker Kevin Panagapka has an idea. It's not new, nor is it unique, but it does allow him to follow his passion of being a winemaker with his own label. He buys the best quality fruit he can and then, to make his wine, rents some space so that he can save a little money (having your own equipment can be expensive), money he doesn't have, yet. But if he keeps making wine like this, he'll soon have a tidy sum and his Twenty Twenty-Seven Cellars will have itself a very reputable name. His grapes, for this wine, are sourced from the 30+ year-old block of vines at Featherstone, and as thanks he puts their name front and center on the label. Smells of peach, lemon-lime, lavender and honeydew, along with a few others, find their way into your nose. Flavours are just as enticing on the tongue: citrus, crisp Bosc pear and tons of soft white peach. This one's a real juicy affair with a smooth medium-acid finish which is long on tree fruit – delicious. By the way, the name 20-27 Cellars comes from Kevin's grower number, which he was issued when he registered his small plot of Pinot Noir grapes with the Grape Growers of Ontario. After trying this one, I'm now looking forward to the wine, and you should be too. Only 100 cases were made of this Riesling.

More Riesling Reviews ...

[Calamus Estate 2007 Riesling](#) (W) – [Featherstone 2007 Old Vines Riesling](#) (W, WTH)
[Hillebrand Trius 2006 Riesling Dry](#) (W, WTH) – [Hillebrand 2006 Showcase Riesling](#) (W, WTH)
[Lailey Vineyard 2007 Riesling](#) (W, WTH) – [Ridgepoint Wines 2006 Medium-Dry Riesling](#) (W)
[Thomas & Vaughan 2007 Riesling](#) (W) – [Vineland Estate 2007 Semi-Dry Riesling](#) (W, L)
[Tawse Winery 2007 Sketches of Niagara Riesling](#) (W, L)

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 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:

Hillebrand Winery 2006 Artist Series Pinot Gris, Limited Edition ([read](#)) ([listen](#))

Chateau des Charmes 2006 St. David's Bench Viognier ([read](#)) ([listen](#))

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

[A Small Taste of Spain – Creekside and Affiliates Tasting](#)

[Hamilton Food and Drink Fest – Tawse New Release Dinner](#)

[Toronto Wine and Cheese Show – Churchill Portfolio Tasting](#)

[What's NEW in the ... Lost and Found \(blog\)](#)

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

Just Found: [Southbrook 1999 Triomphe Cabernet Franc](#)

[What's NEW ... Taste it Again Grape Guy \(blog\)](#)

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

Vintages Release: The April 12th LCBO Vintages Release report is now available.

[Ontario "Vintages" Releases: Saturday April 12th, 2007 Vintages Release](#)

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

[Megalomaniac 2007 Narcissist Riesling](#)

[Mike Weir 2006 Sauvignon Blanc](#)

[Megalomaniac 2006 Bravado Cabernet Sauvignon](#)

[Megalomaniac 2006 Vainglorious Cabernet/Merlot](#)



Uncorked and Decanted: *Nifty gadgets, accessories and other things that enhance wine enjoyment.*

Schott Zwiesel Review – aka those "unbreakable" crystal glasses

As many of my regular readers know, I am a big proponent of good glassware, so when the folks at Schott Zwiesel ([Fortessa Canada](#)) heard this they invited me down for a demonstration of their glasses. Now I hear you asking, "who is Schott Zwiesel?" I'm glad you asked, cause I'm about to tell you.

Schott Zwiesel has been making crystal stemware since 1872. According to their brochure, they were the first company to produce lead-free crystal. They used to make glasses for Riedel, but when Riedel made overtures about buying them, they decided to head out on their own. And why was Riedel so hot to trot about buying this little glassmaker? Because of their new "Tritan" crystal, a magnesium-titanium alloy that made the glasses dishwasher safe, strong and more resilient – in other words, 'break resistant'.

For any of you who have 'tinged' a crystal glass off the counter, dropped one in the sink, or, heaven forbid, onto the floor. You'll know they shatter into a million pieces and scatter throughout the house – you'll find pieces caught between your toes three weeks later in rooms that were not even remotely close to the actual break site. This 'unbreakable thing' I just had to see for myself.

Lloyd Thistle took me through the entire line, showing me that they are as varied in shape, size and style as Riedel (and other glass makers) – and, like the others, have glasses specifically designed for certain wines. But the most impressive part was when he lined the glasses up on the table between us and began swinging his arms around knocking over the glasses ... not one broke.

That's all well and good, but how do they compare to other crystal glasses when it counts ... tasting wine. For that I went to [Chateau des Charmes](#) to meet with Michele Bosc and taste their wines in these glasses. The Chateau is one of the wineries that used to be exclusively Riedel, but a trip to New York (Manhattan) and an experience with Schott Zwiesel changed her mind. We tasted a variety of wines in a variety of glasses – each one matched with its Riedel counterpart, I even did the same test at home with a variety of wines from around the world with the same results – Schott Zwiesel performed just as well or better. When asked why she chose the Schott Zwiesel glasses to use in their special events tasting room, Michele stressed that price per stem had

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nothing to do with it (even though stem for stem the SZ glasses are less expensive than their more renowned counterparts). Balance was her first answer, as she held the glass in her hand, "I love the way this glass feels," and of course the "unbreakability" factor played a role – "anything that minimizes breakage saves us money in the end." She had never seen the knock over trick – so as Lloyd had done with me two weeks earlier I put a glass on the counter and tipped it over – Michele readied herself for the smash (and I must admit I prepared my apology in my head, just in case this experiment went awry), but to both our surprise the big bang never occurred ... "impressive," she said, "but I still wouldn't do that, I'd be too afraid." Although it is nice to know you have that safety net.

Finally, back home I had one more childish trick to prove these glasses were really what they claimed, I moistened my finger and traced the rim of the glass, within seconds the tell-tale high pitched crystal-hum filled the room.

A few weeks later, the moment of me being completely sold happened. I was putting my glasses away in their box and one of the glass bowls winged off another's base with a loud 'ping'; my usual glassware would have been in pieces ... Schott Zwiesel, not even a chip. And after 30+ dishwasher cycles, they looked as good as new and without spots. I'm convinced – less money and unbreakable – I'm sold on Schott Zwiesel. But I'll let Lloyd have the last word on these glasses being "unbreakable": "People call up and ask for the unbreakable crystal glass – it's not unbreakable, we've broken some ourselves, during demonstrations – dropping them on concrete is still bad ... they're 'break resistant', I can't stress that enough; but even after I explain that, people still call them unbreakable. Just to set the record straight, unbreakable glass is called plastic."

To learn more about Schott Zwiesel contact [Fortessa Canada](#).



Raise your Spirits: *Software with a sense of humour ...*

I write everything longhand and then I transcribe it into the computer in one of two ways: either by typing it manually, or by using a voice recognition software which types for me (depending on how lazy I'm feeling that day). The voice recognition software is about 80-85% accurate, the other 15-20% can be either completely nonsensical or downright hilarious with what it thinks I've said – or, put another way, better yet, how it transcribes what it thinks I've said. I have dozens of examples, but have narrowed it down to a small group of my most recent misheard favourites from the past few months (what it should read is in brackets beside the "mishear") ... enjoy.

From the "if-it-wasn't-a-computer-I-would-have-said-it-had-a-dirty-mind" file:

"... So with the disappointment of the "Noirs" still sitting heavy on my Tom."

(heavy on my tongue) - *from the Taste it Again review of [Thirteenth Street 2004 Erv's Burger Blend](#).*

"... while in the mouth there are ripe tannins that wrap up dork berries" (wrap up dark berries) – [Daniel Lenko Old Vines Merlot review](#)

Wine's secret ingredient in addictive, according to my software:

"... [wine] that spent fourteen months in French Coke" (French oak) - [Lailey Old Vines Chardonnay](#).

"... this 200 case, produced only in good vintages, wine spends eighteen months in French Coke, exclusively for this line of wines." (French oak) – [Daniel Lenko Signature Chardonnay](#).

"... When you get your nose into the glass that notion of cocaine is definitely confirmed" (that notion of oaking is definitely confirmed) – [Fielding 2006 Reserve Chardonnay](#).

There is something to be said for the old:

"... Of course, the term old vines means nothing, it's like the term "reserve" - there are no guidelines as to how old "old minds" are" ("old vines" are) – [Angels Gate 2006 Old Vines Chardonnay](#).

"... Lenko does have some of the almost minds in Ontario" (oldest vines in Ontario) – [Daniel Lenko Winery review](#).

Winemakers with other occupations:

"... Tom Green of Lakeview, amongst other wineries under the Diamond Estates flag, has crafted a sarong (crafted a Syrah) – [Lakeview 2005 Reserve Syrah](#) Weekly Wine Note.

Winemakers you don't want to be in the same room with:

"... Dennis Simpson (Dennis Sanson) is an interesting fellow – I'm not just saying that because I've met him, I say it based on the winds he produces" (based on the wines he produces) – [Sanson 2004 Barn Cat Red](#).



Wine Event Spotlight: *Wine and Herb with giveaway and the Ontario Wine Awards*

The 6th Annual **Niagara-on-the-Lake wineries Wine & Herb Festival** is back. The festival with taste sensations, based on herbs, that you'd never believe possible would match with wine. Dill, lemon basil, lavender, caraway, chervil, lemon grass and a dozen other herbs will be making an appearance. May is the perfect month to travel the wine route, as spring will have most certainly arrived by then. This year, your passport is good for all four weekends – so there's no rush to get through all 18 wineries in one day or one weekend. The Festival runs the four full weekends in May 3/4, 10/11, 17/18 and 24/25. Get passports online at www.niagaraonthelake.com or by calling 905-468-1950. Price is \$25 in advance (before April 30) and \$30 at the door (so to speak – after May 1). ... or you can find out how to win a pair of passports below.

Passport Giveaway ...

Okay, I've been pretty easy on you question-wise for my passport and ticket giveaways in the past, but this time I've got a good one for you.

There are 18 wineries taking part in the Wine & Herb Festival passport program – 3 of them start with the letter 'C', three more with 'P' and another three wineries start with 'S'. Your assignment: Name for me one winery from each letter grouping? One correct entrant, chosen at random, will receive a pair of Wine & Herb Festival Passports – which are good for all 4 weekends in May. Email your name, address (with postal code) and phone number to michael@ontariowinereview.com. Deadline is April 17, 2008 (11:59pm).

Need a hint: go to www.wineriesofniagaraonthelake.com and click on the Wine and Herb picture that appears in the middle of you screen.

Also this month is the **Ontario Wine Awards Gala Ceremony and Dinner** (April 26) held at the exquisite Queen's Landing Inn & Conference Resort in Niagara-on-the-Lake. See and taste award-winning wines and actually, be the first to know who won as Ontario celebrated excellence. More information and ticket information can be found by calling Sandy Kurbis at 416-398-3335 (ext. 2) or email sandy@forefrontcom.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!

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