

## 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 – 81**  
**April 24, 2008**

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#### OntarioWineReview: WINERY REVIEW – Cattail Creek Family Estate Winery

*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.*

It's time I tell you the tail of the cat ... about Cattail Creek that is. My first encounter at the winery was in October of 2007 – since then, I have returned 3 times because it's just a lively, vibrant place – like my cat when the lights go off.

You have probably read a few of my wine reviews about their wines in recent months. That's because I was thoroughly impressed with the wines made by this young upstart winery (so were the Cuvee judges handing the winery their first award for their [barrel fermented Icewine](#)) and the folks that made it happen (owners Roselyn and Andrew Cieszkowski). But it's not just about the two faces you see behind the counter. There's Roselyn's brother “the farmer” who makes sure they have adequate good quality grapes; and Roselyn's mother, who seems to be part of every story on the relatable bits of down-home, family folklore on the back label of each bottle.

The 100-acres worth of vineyards was started (planted) by Roselyn's grandfather back in 1957 ... now they have 4 locations that make up the total amount. With all those grapes, you'd think Cattail larger than it is ... but in truth, most of what Cattail grows is sold off to local area wineries. They just save the best for themselves (cue BTO's “Looking out for #1”).

The tasting room is bright, wooden and still has that “new car” smell. The main part of the tasting room is large and spacious with the available wines on shelves surrounding the room. Big windows let in lots of daylight and give the room a very homey feel ... a warm feeling for a “Family Estate Winery”.

Behind the counter, you'll meet Roselyn or Andrew. Roselyn is bubbly and infectiously happy, Andrew is a little more low-key and laid-back with a constant smile (probably infected by Roselyn). Roselyn is thrilled to announce during today's (my third) visit that they have hired they're first employee – then she stops and says, “I guess Tatiana is our first employee [winemaker], but she's like family now, so I don't think of her that way.” It's then that Roselyn sheepishly admits to doing some of the winemaking work herself, “pumping over or punching down – whatever Tatiana tells me to do.” I guess it's hard to think of somebody as an “employee” when they're telling you what to do.

In 2006, Cattail made about 1700 cases, in 2007, the amount will be closer to 4000 cases ... that, according to Roselyn, is where they would like to remain for now. “We still want to remain a small operation picking from a lot of resources,” she says referring to their 100-acres of plantings, “rather than the other way around.”

Cattail is a welcome addition to both Niagara-on-the-Lake (having joined the N-O-T-L wineries association – swelling their numbers to 18) and the wineries of Niagara. Price points remain good and the wines are quite accessible, especially the whites. Their line of Rieslings comes from 3 different clones (varieties of Riesling) some older, some middle aged and some younger – and you can really tell the difference in the glass.



**Grape Guy's Picks of the Bunch:** *What Lenko is known for – Chardonnay and Merlot*  
For directions and more information visit [www.cattailcreek.ca](http://www.cattailcreek.ca).

Cattail Creek 2006 Cabernet Merlot Reserve - \$24.00 (W)

Cattail has been opened since September of 2007. Their '06s have been on the shelf since they opened and the '07s will soon be arriving – but what is also finding its way onto their shelves is the reserve wines from 2006 – namely their Cabernet/Merlot blend (71% Cabernet Franc, 29% Merlot) which spent 14 months in French and American oak. Smells include vanilla-oak, coffee, and a red berry mix of strawberries and raspberries. The taste adds a little more to this roster, starting with the smooth mouth feel that has tannin bite and dryness on the finish; flavours include that aforementioned vanilla – but they develop away from the red and turn more to black with blackberries and cassis leading the way – there is also a showing of cinnamon and a variety of spices. This wine could probably sit another 3-5 years in your cellar quite easily.

Cattail Creek 2007 Sauvignon Blanc - \$16.00 (W)

Sauvignon Blanc is becoming more prevalent in the Niagara region. The Zealanders have made it famous and fashionable (again), but the flavours from Ontario aren't the same as you'll find in the Kiwi variety. In this version of Sauvignon Blanc, pink grapefruit and the sweet smell of clementines rule the roost, while in the mouth, its very green apple oriented with a big bite on the side of the tongue with its bracingly acidic finish ... which is totally offset by its sweet beginning. Just bottled in January, this wine still has to settle down in the bottle and when it does, it'll be a great summertime wine.

#### ***A Look Ahead ...***

A few tank samples during my most recent visit revealed some great whites on the horizon, including their 2007 Chardonnay Musque (~\$15-16) due for release mid-to-late April, a sweet pineapple nose with lots of tropical fruit in the mouth ... you'd swear it was sweeter than the zero it claims to be. Also due out is a barrel fermented Chardonnay and what is soon-to-be their signature: Niagara-on-the-Lake family of Rieslings.

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 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 Estate Winery 2006 Shiraz ([read](#)) ([listen](#))

Stoney Ridge 2004 Forte ([read](#)) ([listen](#))

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

[Made in Italy 1](#) – [Made in Italy 2](#)

[Annual Austrian Tasting](#)

[Ironic Chef at Vineland](#)

[Vinexx Spring 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

#### **[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

**Re-tasted:** [Southbrook 2001 Cabernet Merlot](#)

**Vintages Release:** [The April 26, 2008 LCBO Vintages Release report is now available.](#)

**Ontario Wines of Note at Vintages for April 26, 2008:**

[Flat Rock Cellars 2006 Unplugged Chardonnay](#)

[Henry of Pelham 2006 Gewurztraminer](#)

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

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



**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.*

If Roselyn hadn't mentioned the 100-acres of plantings, I never would have known, nor would I have guessed that their family has been in the grape growing business since 1957 (Grandpa's first planting). Driving down their driveway is like stepping back in time; in fact, you half expect to see tumbleweeds blowing by as you make the drive up to what looks like an old west saloon that should have with an inn on top ... All that's missing are the half cut swinging doors. Being located in what seems like the middle of nowhere is what really gives it that other worldly feeling ... They are the only winery on this lonely stretch of road, and their sign appears out of nowhere like an oasis.

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**Quick Sips:** *Occasionally interesting things cross my desk that I would like to pass on*

**April 2008**

**Northern Ice Strikes Twice ...** The Ice House winery, which is located in Niagara-on-the-Lake and specializes in making icewine, took home a double coup from Monde Selection capturing two of the rarely awarded Grand Gold medals for their Northern Ice 2005 Vintners Reserve and the 2006 Cabernet Sauvignon. They were the only winery in the world to get that kind of recognition this year. According to Monde Selection "[Grand Gold] means that the product awarded was unanimously recognized by the jurors as exceptional and perfect."

**Snowed ...** For those of you who are still stuck on the notion that the LCBO is the world's largest buyer/seller of alcohol, check out this quote from Dan Jago, head of Tesco's Wine, Beer & Spirits division (Britain). When asked "How big a player is Tesco in the wine market?" Dan replied, "Our total alcohol sales are now worth £3bn (\$6.25b/€4.3b) per year, which is made up of wine sales of over £1.5bn, with beer and spirits adding a further £750m each. Tesco is actually the largest wine retailer in the world, twice as big as the Liquor Control Board of Ontario (LCBO). While the beer range is small but growing, wine already comes to 1,150 SKUs."

**Everything Old is New Again ...** The last time wine was delivered by sailing ship (to Ireland) was in the late 1800's, but that's about to change. Compagnie de Transport Maritime a la Voile (CTMV) has already begun delivering wine by sailing ship, with its maiden voyage being made to Ireland – thus saving an estimated 140g of carbon per bottle, compared to regular shipping methods. The plan is to have a fleet of 7 sailing vessels making deliveries such as this by 2013. The current boat is a 52-meter (170 foot) three-masted barque Belem. The first shipment contained 60,000 bottles, and each carried a label with a stylized ship logo and the slogan: "Carried by sailing ship, a better deal for the planet." The next shipment is planned for Canada in June (which port is not specified), though other countries like England, Sweden and Denmark are already on-board to receive shipments. The ship will also be used as a promotional tool in port for importers, as tastings for up to 100 people can be accommodated.

**Valpolicella Gets Screwed ...** Prominent Italian producer Allegrini has pulled out of the Valpolicella Classico denomination because the governing body will not change the rules to allow the wines to be sealed under screwcap closures. "The closure is more important to us than the denomination" said winemaker Franco Allegrini. And thus it is only a matter of time until we'll be seeing Allegrini under Stelvin on our shores. Italian wine lawmakers are, and have been, fierce supporters of cork, because Italy is one of only two countries (Spain being the other) that makes the now controversial closure.

**It came to my desk and I poured myself a glass ...** I was sent a bottle of Marc Kreydenweiss 2005 Barbabelle (\$12.95 – with shipping and taxes \$14.93) – a biodynamic wine made in France (Vallee du Rhone - Costieres de Nimes) – from [Wine On Line](#). I had been told by Konrad Ejbich that it could possibly be one of the best wine value in Ontario. The wine is made with Syrah, Grenache and Mourvedre. Nose: raspberry, cherry, blackberry, black pepper, herbs and spice ... lots going on here. Taste: touch of oak, touch of spice, nice fruit and some pepper nuances, just a dusting of tannins with nice balancing acidity. I liked it so much I bought a case.

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**Wine Event Spotlight:** *Terroir in PEC ... May 17, 2008 and a ticket giveaway – and more*

It's Terroir time again – a time for Prince Edward County to shine. Terroir is the celebration of last year's vintage wines and the soils upon which they grow; an event where the wineries parade out their newest and greatest wines. [Last year's](#) event was a big success and this year's is shaping up to be even better. **Terroir happens at the Picton Crystal Palace on the Picton Fairgrounds on May 17, 2008** – admission is \$20 in advance or \$25 at the door. Details can be found at [www.thecountywines.com](http://www.thecountywines.com) or by calling 1-888-313-9463.

**Ticket Giveaway ...** Trust your friendly neighbourhood Grape Guy to have put his hands on a pair of tickets so that he can put them into yours. Last time round it was an alphabet soup caper, this time it's as easy as knowing your Prince Edward County wineries. Send me an email with your name, address (w/postal code), and phone number with the correct answer to the skill-testing question (below) to [michael@ontariowinereview.com](mailto:michael@ontariowinereview.com). Be sure to put "Terroir Happens" in the subject line of your email.

**Question:** Name 3 Prince Edward County Wineries. Need a hint [click here](#).

**Jackson-Triggs Twilight in the Vineyard ...** [Last year](#) I attended one of these concerts and was blown away by the band and the venue – though dinner left me a little hungry. J-T has addressed that lone concern about the food by bringing in Jamie Kennedy's team to do the Q in the vineyard ... they've also lined up a slew of great Canadian acts: 54-40 (June 28), Colin James (July 12), Suzie McNeil (August 2), Gordie Sampson (August 16) and Matthew Good (August 30). Tickets are \$64 – and for such an intimate venue it's well worth it ... and don't forget about your dinner options. Call the box office 1-866-589-4637 or visit [www.jacksontriggswinery.com](http://www.jacksontriggswinery.com).

Time to Take Mama out of the House ... My mother often accompanies me on tours, tastings or at events ... 1) it's nice to get her out of the house and 2) to get away from dad for a few hours (you long-time married ladies know what I mean). Anyway, the perfect thing to do is head over to Sprucewood Shores Estate winery, in the Lake Erie North Shore, for "**A Celebration of Mothers and Wine**" - Sunday May 11 at noon ... visit [www.sprucewoodshores.com](http://www.sprucewoodshores.com) (and look under events) or call 519-738-9253 for more details.

**The winner of the Wine and Herb festival passports**, being held in Niagara-on-the-Lake on weekends through the month of May, is Marvin Medelko (Mississauga) – to get your passports to this awesome event go to [www.niagaraonthelake.com](http://www.niagaraonthelake.com) or to check out why you should want passports go to [www.wineriesofniagaraonthelake.com](http://www.wineriesofniagaraonthelake.com).

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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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