

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: *What Bad Marketing Dreams Are Made Of*

It has been brought to my attention, on a number of occasions, and it should be brought to yours, that Jackson-Triggs has two new wines out to celebrate the spirit of the Olympics called "Esprit" – a Merlot and a Chardonnay. Now, let's forget about what's in the bottle for the moment and focus on the outside – the packaging, more specifically, the label. Yes, it's a standard bottle and sure the label isn't as eye-catching as it could be, but take a good hard look at the label, when you get a chance, and you'll notice something's missing. I'll give you a hint by telling you what the wine is celebrating: The 2010 Winter Olympics in British Columbia, currently and arguably Canada's hottest wine region. Time's up?

If you guessed that a VQA logo is missing you'd be absolutely correct. Canada's official wine of the Vancouver games is a blended, cellared in Canada bulk wine, from "imported and domestic" wines, all whipped up by our most recognizable "industry leader". This to me is a crime and a slap in the face to B.C. and all of Canada's wineries. This would be the equivalent of the Albertville (France) Olympic games (1992) having Masi as their official wine; the Sydney (Australia) games (2000) with a George DuBoeuf produced product or the Turin (Italy) games (2006) relying on Wolf Blass for their wine. Am I the only one appalled by this action?

In a press release found at www.2010commercecentre.com, dated Feb. 8, 2007, you'll find these quotes from Vincor president and CEO Jay Wright: "We are thrilled to have this opportunity to honour our Canadian athletes while affirming our role as Canada's wine industry leader ... Vincor shares a passion and determination towards excellence. This agreement ... will be great for the Canadian wine industry. I hope Canada will join us in the excitement that we feel regarding this exceptional opportunity to position Canadian wine brands on the world stage." Can anyone else see (and read) the irony in these lines? Industry leaders should lead by example – yet this "industry leader" has positioned this product as a cellared in Canada piece of crap; in theory, and practice, inferring to the world that we can't make/grow good wine, so we have to blend it with superior product from elsewhere. The world is watching and Vincor brings out our "best" ... an offshore blend with a legislated 30% CanCon and 70% Southern hemisphere product (though Vincor claims they use more than 30% in their blended wines). Is anyone else as embarrassed and offended for the B.C. wineries as I am?

Truer words were never spoken then when John Furlong, Vancouver Organizing Committee CEO, made this quote; I'm sure he had no idea how true and close to home he would hit: "Vincor Canada and their talented team of winemakers have embraced the spirit of the Games." Now think about that, the Olympics are international in scope, and Vincor has nailed the international spirit in these bottles of wine by using international juice to make the wine. How ... Very ... Canadian.

Looking further through the release you see phrases like: "while reflecting the pioneering spirit of the Canadian wine industry" ... blending – is that what our great pioneering spirit is all about? Or how about this one referring to Vincor: "... Its founding vision has been to further the reputation and sales of Canadian wine in the premium, super-premium and ultra-premium categories ... in the international marketplace." Not with this wine they won't. The release continues by extolling the virtues of Canada's wine giant "develop[ing] vineyards", their "most sophisticated viticultural technologies", "talented high quality grape growers" and "viticultural experts to

draw the best from the vines". Yet, with all this expertise the best wine they could offer up, to show the world how far Canada has come, and to promote British Columbia, was cellared in Canada, blended from domestic and imported product ... are you kidding me?

I for one find this disgraceful, in poor taste (no pun intended) and makes a mockery of our entire wine industry nationwide – that our "industry leader" couldn't put together a better, more nationalistic wine (even by blending Ontario and B.C. wines together – as they had done in the past with their Unity series of wines) would have made more, and better, sense.

I brought this issue up with Bruce Walker of Vincor Canada and even he seemed to have issues with this product, one of which is the Canadian content. "It has been our intention from the very beginning to bring out a second tier wine that's 100% VQA closer to the games," he told me. It has been my observation that Vincor is a little uncomfortable with this raced-to-market official-Olympic product. I was told that the driving force behind this product was supply – they just simply didn't have the product available to make a 100% VQA wine coming out of the 2005 short crop situation. They had to meet their agreement with the Olympic Committee (who licensed the product) and had to deliver something.

Andrew Howard, new marketing honcho over at Vincor, who was into his new job for three weeks as of April 1, 2008 – is reported to have asked this very question when presented with "Esprit": "Why is this not VQA?" Now, Bruce Walker assures me that Mr. Howard is a "very smart man and a quick study" and that the brand is being "re-thought" and we may see a shift of both label and content "sooner rather than later". "We have tanks full of VQA-wine thanks to 2006 and 2007, mostly in Ontario; in B.C. demand usually outstrips supply, so this change could happen soon, the reserves are now there."

Vincor is now an American controlled company, but I am still a Canadian with my own nationalistic pride for what we make and do in this country; not much still has the "Made in Canada" moniker on it, but I know our wine is one of them, and, for an event where we are hosting the world, namely the Olympics, I expect to see the VQA logo on the bottles of wine promoting it. This is not some kind of jingoistic anti-American rant, but you would think a country as fiercely nationalistic as the U.S. would understand. Last I checked it wasn't Miguel Torres who sponsored the wines in Los Angeles (1986).

However Vincor plans to recover from this marketing debacle I hope it is "sooner rather than later", because I for one refuse to buy "Esprit". I understand a portion of the price goes to support our athletes, but shouldn't the product we're selling also support the industry it promotes (i.e.: wine) – making it a win-win situation for all involved. When, and if, the VQA version of Esprit does come to market I'll be the first in line to buy a bottle and submit my review – and good or bad, at least it's a step up from what's being offered now. We make good wines across Canada, even international media seem to be getting on-board and celebrating that fact (Jancis Robinson's visit and subsequent article and most recently Wine Spectator, May 15, 2008 "Niagara Rises"). I just wish that our "industry leader" would do the same.

For those interested, the wine in the bottle is sub-par and shows little varietal characteristics to either merlot or chardonnay, save you money and buy either 100% Chilean wine or better yet 100% Ontario – these two should not be mixed ... especially in a bottle that celebrates a Canadian event.



Grape Guy's Picks of the Bunch: A Scattershot of Chardonnays

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

Coyote's Run 2006 Reserve Chardonnay - \$21.00 (W, L, WTH)

www.coyotesrunwinery.com

For those who remember the fall of 2006 you'll recall that the rain started on September 1st and never let up. That means that happened between the raindrops and the big worry was about diluted grapes. Well it seems that Coyote's Run dance-of-the-dodge-of-the-raindrops has paid off handsomely with this beautiful Chardonnay. Barrel fermented and aged 5-6 months in Hungarian oak, winemaker David Sheppard has crafted a buttery-soft Chard with peachy and apple notes, well balanced, a great vanilla oak to fruit flavour ratio and big alcohol that tastes nowhere near it's 14.2%. This is not a sipper wine, it's a supper wine – so prepare something nice and enjoy.

Cave Spring Cellars 2006 Chardonnay - \$13.05 (W, L, WTH)

www.cavespring.ca

Value is written all over this Chardonnay ... I was once told by a winery owner that the General List at the LCBO is a blessing and a curse for the following reason: in a good year, when you have made an exceptional wine and could easily get more per bottle you are stuck at a certain price point; but then in lean years, where the wine is okay, you still get that same price – so it does balance out. Here's a Chardonnay that could be selling for a few bucks higher, cause the quality is most definitely there, but its general listing keeps it remarkable affordable. The nose has a touch of lime and mineral with undertones of unripe honeydew melon. The palate has all kinds of pretty fruit, like soft yet tart apple, tangerine and lemon – it's fresh and lively with more complexity and acidity than you expect, there's also just a smattering of oak flavouring (20% of the wine spent 6 months in old barrels). This is not only a real winner, it's a steal for the price.

More Shout Outs for Chardonnay ...

Oaked – [Lailey Vineyard 2006 Niagara River Chardonnay](#) (W, WTH) - [Malivoire 2005 Moira Chardonnay](#) (W) - [Rosehall Run 2006 Chardonnay](#) (W)

Unoaked – [Kacaba 2006 Sur Lie Horizon Series Chardonnay](#) (W) - [Lailey Vineyard 2007 Unoaked Chardonnay](#) (W, WTH) - [Palatine Hills 2006 Unoaked Chardonnay](#) (W) - [Ridgepoint Wines 2007 Unoaked Chardonnay](#) (W)

Musque – [Cattail Creek 2007 Chardonnay Musque](#) (W) - [Malivoire 2007 Chardonnay Musque "Spritz"](#) (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 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:

Rosehall Run 2006 Rosehall Vineyard Pinot Noir ([read](#)) ([listen](#))

Lailey Vineyard 2006 Niagara River Pinot Noir ([read](#)) ([listen](#))

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

[Lunch at the 'Brand' – Somewhereness 2008](#)

[Lichine / Wine Guy Luncheon – Fielding Launch](#)

[Ontario Wine Awards – California Wine Fair](#)

[Rosehall Run Tasting – Peninsula Ridge Tasting](#)

[Niagara Wine Auction Weekend Launch](#)

[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: [Chateau des Charmes 2001 Estate Bottled Pinot Noir](#)

Vintages Release: [Ontario "Vintages" Releases: Saturday May 10th, 2008 Vintages Release](#)

Ontario Wines of Note at Vintages for May 10, 2008:

[Cave Spring 2004 Riesling Icewine](#)

[Chateau des Charmes 2006 St. David's Bench Gewurztraminer](#)

[Malivoire 2005 Pinot Noir](#)



Comparative Wines: [Vineland 2006 "Quadruple Threat" of Sauvignon Blancs](#).

Originally this little experimental tasting was going to be a [Weekly Wine Note](#) feature to take the place of the [2005 Rossmel Vineyard Sauvignon Blanc](#) review, which sold out before I could publish it (no surprise here, it

was a delicious Sauv Blanc). This year (2006) winemaker Brian Schmidt decided on a different tact for his Sauvignon Blanc – vineyard specific and different making methods. Now you may have heard of a vertical tasting – that's where you take the same varietal wine and taste it through its different years – for example [Vidal Icewine 1999-2004](#). This here is a horizontal tasting of sorts – same year, same varietal, just made differently; in this case, to see and taste its subtle and not so subtle differences. Here's a look at Vineland's line of 2006 Sauvignon Blancs.

I gathered a few Sauvignon Blanc loving friends together to taste these wines with me, I wanted to gauge their reaction to the different wines and to get their thoughts on the variety of styles displayed in this array of Sauvignon Blancs – from the full stainless steel to the fully oaked versions, and whatever fell in-between.

The 4 wines in question are the [2006 Sauvignon Blanc](#) (\$16.95), the [2006 Sauvignon Blanc – Smith Vineyard](#) (\$25.00), the [2006 Sauvignon Blanc – Neufeld Vineyard](#) (\$25.00) and the [2006 Sauvignon Blanc – Wismer Vineyard](#) (\$25.00) (poured in that order) – all with slight variations in their making; and all currently available at the winery.

All the wines had the Sauvignon Blanc characteristic you'd expect, citrus – but as you climbed the ladder, or more apropos for a horizontal tasting, walked the line, more wood was introduced, thereby changing the flavours and adding more depth and complexity to each subsequent wine.

Where as the straight Sauvignon Blanc (all stainless steel made), whose fruit was taken from Vineland's own estate in Beamsville, was almost clear in colour and loaded with grassy-citrus notes and crisp flavours; the Wismer Sauvignon Blanc (100% barrel aged for 7 months) was much darker – taking colour from it's barrel home – with smells that were more tropical along with melon and vanilla aromas; here the citrus aspect was more muted. The flavour profile was still mainly citrus, but vanilla and butterscotch were also present and the finish was twice as long as any of the others, there was also the feeling of less acidity in the mouth.

Smith and Neufeld walked the tight rope between the two extremes. Smith was all stainless steel fermented and aged, and was from a single vineyard in Niagara-on-the-Lake. The citrus was there, but so were some petrol notes and a high level of cat's pee (this is good in Sauvignon Blanc – not so good on your furniture). Neufeld, another single vineyard in Niagara-on-the-Lake, was a half and half combination – half stainless, half oaked – this showcased the best of both worlds. Citrus still reigned supreme, along with other aromas, included tropical fruits, melon and floral. The barreling muted the citrus and added vanilla flavours, while the acidity level remained fairly high.

So what do we take from a tasting like this? Well first, Vineland now has a Sauvignon Blanc to suit every- and any- body's taste buds. Whether you like them citrusy and mouth puckering, smoother and longer of flavour and finish, or somewhere in between. We also got to smell and taste differences in the terroir these grapes came from; because each wine was not only vinified differently but came from different vineyards around Niagara, each locale adding its own unique signature to the grape, while the winemaker (in this case Brian Schmidt) manipulated it to get a result best suited to it. Sure each wine had a citrus component, that's the very nature of Sauvignon Blanc, but some were more lemon, others more lime, while still others were grapefruit or orange. Your personal preference is totally up to you.

To experience these wines for yourself, and to take the Sauvignon Blanc challenge, to find where your tastes lie visit [Vineland](#) at 3620 Moyer Road in Vineland - if you're a fan of Sauvignon Blanc this is one stop you won't want to miss on the wine route this year.

Special thanks to Brian Schmidt, for making these wines, and Gaby McCotter for providing them for this tasting.



Ask the Grape Guy: *Do You Spit or Swallow?*

While most men chuckle at the title and the women think I'm a disgusting pig for asking I will quickly qualify my question – when you visit a winery and/or taste wine at an event, do you spit out your wine or swallow what you've sipped?

Personally I'm a swallower ("which makes me very popular in prison," said Conrad Black), but seriously, unless the wine is so putrid I have to get rid of it for fear of my stomach revolting, I will send a little down. I like the effect of the wine as it hits the back of my throat and glides down (stop your tittering). I find that on the back palate and after a swallow is when I can fully determine my like or dislike for a wine. This is where I determine

the wine's finish, and get to properly evaluate how it will go with my meal or even by itself. At no point at home do I spit out my wine, nor do I use it as a mouthwash, as I have seen some hoity-toity wine folks do. I like to sample a wine under home-like conditions, except there usually isn't a TV in most winery tasting room; nor is there a BBQ grilling up burgers or steaks; so for that I must use my imagination. When tasting wine I like to ask myself an all-important question: will I enjoy this at home? Now your tasting technique and mind-questions are very much your own, be you a spitter or a swallower; gargler or swisher – but don't turn your tasting into a chore, enjoy what your sampling, get the full feel of it – always keep in mind where you'd drink the wine you're tasting. I approach each bottle of interest in that way – and only after it has shown me it's true taste will I make the determination to take it home or not – by spitting I lose half of the enjoyment ... Cheers.



Wine Event Spotlight: *7th Annual Pathways to Wine*

The annual **Pathways to Wine** is being held Thursday June 12 at the Waterstone Estate and Farms in King City – just north of Toronto. The event features premium wines (supplied by Lifford Wine Agency) and this year they have expanded the palate to include beer sampling. Enjoy the surroundings of the country while partaking in hors d'oeuvres and live entertainment. Plus there's a huge silent auction to raise funds for Pathways for Children – Youth and Families of York Region. Tickets to this evening event (6:30-9:30) are \$60 and can be purchased by calling Pathways at 905-471-7877 or by emailing Amber Gordon: agordon@pathwaysyorkregion.org.

Ticket Winner: Last time the offer for tickets was to Terroir in Prince Edward County – a chance to taste what's new and exciting in the County. The skill-testing question was fairly easy: Name three Prince Edward County wineries. Some forgot to include any wineries, but my winner, Richard Birch (Toronto) easily named three: Sandbanks, Closson Chase and Norman Hardie. For more information about Terroir - pop on over to www.thecountywines.com. Terroir takes place in Picton Saturday May 17.

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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