

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 – 84
June 5, 2008

In this Edition

- **Update ... Vincor's Esprit VQA and the Olympics**
 - **Ontario Wine Review: Fear Mongerers and Scare Tacticians**
 - **Grape Guy's Picks of the Bunch: Sauv Blanc, Pinot Gris and Blanc**
 - **Weekly Wine Notes and More: Lost & Found - Taste it Again - On the Road**
 - **In the Cellar ... with Jeff and Dave of Coyote's Run**
 - **Season to Taste ... Tasting wine is what you make of it**
 - **Wine Event Spotlight: "If music be the food of love, play on"**
-



Update ... Vincor's Esprit VQA and the Olympics

Well, ladies and gentleman, the bottles of Jackson-Triggs VQA-Esprit wine appeared at my door, and now it's time to give you the lowdown on what's in the bottle. As you may remember, a few weeks back (Newsletters [82](#) and [83](#)), there was a bit of a flap created when I revealed that the official wine of the Vancouver 2010 Olympics was a Cellared in Canada (blended from foreign and domestic wines) product. Vincor / Jackson-Triggs has now released their "limited edition" VQA-versions of this wine, available exclusively at Jackson-Triggs Niagara and Jackson-Triggs Okanagan (I suspect the BC version is BC wine). The packaging is almost identical to the blend-bottles, except for a small VQA emblem in the corner of the back label, and a small fonted "VQA Niagara Peninsula VQA" on the front (see images [front](#) - [back](#)). I can only hope there will be no bottle mix-up come game time ... trust me, they are almost identical. It could happen. You'll notice that even the usual telltale VQA band is missing from the throat of the bottle, which adorns all J-T VQA bottles. Should they not make the VQA logo stand out a little more to tell consumers that this is indeed a Canadian wine? Should this not be a proudly Canadian wine? There is a need to distinguish the labels between the VQA and Cellared in Canada wines – and I mean now. If they keep pulling stunts like the misleading label and the Esprit "cover-up" we'll have to start calling them Jokes n' Tricks Winery.

My other question is ... if the reason for not putting out a VQA wine in the first place was because of the short crop in 2005, why is the red wine a 2005 Cabernet? The white is a 2006 Chardonnay. While both these wines are "decent", they aren't "show stoppers" as one of the members of my tasting panel pointed out. These first offerings will not make the world clamour to our door to drink our wine – I hope that as we get closer to the big show the VQA product that Vincor delivers to the world on our behalf better reflects the kind of wines we can make. The world will be watching, and so should we.

To read the reviews: [2005 Cabernet](#) and [2006 Chardonnay](#)



OntarioWineReview: Fear Mongerers and Scare Tacticians

I in no way think of myself as political. I'm Liberal about certain things and Conservative about others, but this past election in Ontario was a total travesty and turned into a fight of spin and message control (I know, I hear you saying it, "Aren't they all."). Everyone focused on the religious school funding issue John Tory was proposing, with all the uproar that surrounded that nothing else the man said got heard. Considering that this was only part of the message he was trying to convey, and that it was only a policy up for study, that's too bad. Because of this, very few of his other ideas saw the light of day. Now I'm not here to slap the wrists of Ontario-voters for not paying attention to the full message, or allowing their collective-focus to become diverted from the bigger picture. What I did want to bring to your attention was something that got swept under the rug (again) as quickly as it surfaced – and truthfully this would have benefited all Ontario wine and beer drinkers alike – and, in my opinion, right minded thinkers and proponents of the Ontario wine industry would and should have

applauded and backed this notion.

Did you know that John Tory floated that dreaded balloon about beer and wine in corner stores? Not just any and all wine and beer – Ontario wine and beer, “as a way of boosting the profile of homegrown product”; a test program in which Ontario craft beers and wine could be sold outside the confines of the LCBO.

“These big, foreign-owned breweries control the Brewer’s Retail and I think we have to fix that ... I think, similarly, the wineries in Ontario are getting a bit of a raw deal when it comes to shelf space at the LCBO.” Tory also pointed out that this isn’t some crazy European notion of the way life should be, both Quebec and Alberta have corner store booze sales.

Of course, those in favour and against were quick to jump on the bandwagon and expound their pieces of wisdom. Dave Bryans, president of the Ontario Convenience Store Association pointed out, “these stores already sell age-restricted products – like tobacco and pornographic magazines – and have some of the toughest age verification programs in North America.” But then comes the Fear Mongers and Scare Tacticians like New Democrat Peter Kormos, who said, “it’s a dangerous proposition and a foolhardy one [these stores] just [aren’t] socially responsible.” I tend to disagree, I would think that mom and pop would be a little more diligent because they couldn’t afford the hefty fines, the lawsuits or the jail time involved with selling a \$15 bottle of Riesling to Mary-Jane 16.

Premier McGuinty weighed in on the issue saying, “We have every confidence in the system that is in place right now.”

Peter Kormas also missed the mark completely when he cited the billion-plus dollars the LCBO contributes to provincial coffers. I don’t think the government would miss a chance to get their tax money at all – in fact, I see a way in which they could get more. I suspect, if they were to pull something like this off, the LCBO would be the regulatory body and they would be the ones to sell the wines and beers to the stores, thus there could be a double dipping on the taxes: LCBO sells product to the stores with a tax on the product, the stores then sell it to you and me, plus tax.

Another fear monger named Warren Thomas saw the opening up of corner stores to Ontario wines and beers as “noble” but then “you start to lose control, I see alcohol as a mood-altering substance that needs to be controlled.” To this I ask, aren’t cigarettes and porn mood-altering? Ever seen someone hooked on smokes trying to kick the habit? Or a porn addict’s attitude towards women?

Once again, Ontario missed a golden opportunity to kick the doors open on our puritanical views on booze and our government’s need to treat us like children not to be trusted with the keys to the liquor cabinet. It’s the same reasoning given when the question of farmer’s markets being permitted to sell their locally made wines beside their fresh produce. We just can’t be trusted and we must be babysat; it’s for our own good we are told (and don’t forget to put that in a paper bag – don’t want to incite others to drink when they see you walking out of the store with a naked bottle).

I, for one, would still visit the wineries for my Ontario wine, but I live in Toronto, an hour and a half away from Niagara or Prince Edward County and 4 hours from the Lake Erie North Shore. What about the folks who live north of Barrie, West of London, or East of Belleville? Should they not know what all excitement over Ontario wine is about? The current government says “no”.

What do you say – [check out the poll on the right hand side of the website and register your vote.](#)



Grape Guy’s Picks of the Bunch: *Sauv Blanc, Pinot Gris and Blanc*
See individual winery website for information.

Niagara College 2007 Dean’s List Sauvignon Blanc - \$18.95 (W, WTH)
www.nctwinery.com

He’s the godfather of Canadian wine-writers, known around the globe by winery owners and winemakers, he even has an Order of Canada – but who would have thought that our own Tony Aspler would be elevated to Dean. Niagara College has asked Tony to rate some, of what they feel, are their best wines, and the one’s that make the grade get promoted to “Dean’s List” status – complete with report card label showing Tony’s handwritten scores. I can’t argue with the Dean on this one. This Sauvignon Blanc is truly head of the class. Grassy and grapefruit with lovely citrus on the nose – the aromatics sweep you up and drag you in. The palate

is slightly sweet with soft citrus, good acidity and great sippability. I noted it had a very South African sensibility to it – not surprising, head winemaker/teacher Terence Van Rooyen, hails from the Cape. This one is just downright delicious.

Other Sauvignon Blancs of note:

[Cave Spring 2006 Estate Bottled Sauvignon Blanc](#) (W, WTH)
[Chateau des Charmes 2006 Estate Bottled Sauvignon Blanc](#) (W, L, WTH)
[Dan Aykroyd 2006 Sauvignon Blanc](#) (W, L)
[Hillebrand 2006 Sauvignon Blanc – Artist Series](#) (W, WTH)

Fool on the Hill 2007 Pinot Gris - \$19.95 (W)

www.countycider.com

This is the County Cider Company & Estate Winery's upper echelon wine and it is a standout. Made by winemaker Jenifer Dean, this wine is beautiful in both colour, nose and flavour. The light peach juice colour comes from 14-hours of skin contact. The great nose has smells of poached pears, mandarin orange and peach iced tea; while the palate proves to be just as enticing, with apples, lemon and a beautiful pear mid-section ... wonderfully refreshing.

Other Pinot Gris of note:

[Calamus Estate 2007 Pinot Gris](#) (W)
[Kacaba Vineyards 2007 Pinot Gris](#) (W)

Coyote's Run 2007 Pinot Blanc - \$18.00 (W, WTH)

www.coyotesrunwinery.com

Not much Pinot Blanc is made in Ontario, and up until now, Vineland was the only winery that I could name that made one (I've also learned that Konzelmann makes one); but along comes the boys from Coyote's Run and they want to try their hand at making this Alsatian beauty too. So they buy some grapes from Vinlenad and give it a go ... and don't they just make the most delicious summertime refresher you could imagine. Just a touch of sweetness (1) gives extra life to this wine that is loaded with pineapple, banana chips and tropical notes on both the nose and palate. This one's fresh, fruity and lively, while the medium short finish makes it even tastier, sip after sip – because like with Lay's chips – betcha can't sip just once.

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



Weekly Wine Notes and More: *Lost & Found - Taste it Again - On the Road*

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:

May 27, 2008 - Henry of Pelham 2006 Sauvignon Blanc ([read](#)) ([listen](#))
June 3, 2008 - Marynissen 2003 Cabernet ([read](#)) ([listen](#))

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

[Stratus Winery Lunch and Tasting - Albert Bichot Tasting](#)
[Made in Italy – part 3](#)
[Archibald's 9th Annual Fruit Wine and Food Festival](#)

[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

[Southbrook Winery 2001 Triomphe Cabernet Franc](#)
[Marynissen Estate 2002 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

[Creekside 2001 Laura's Blend Red](#)
[Ridgepoint Wines 2004 Cabernet Merlot](#)
[Southbrook Winery 2002 Triomphus Cabernet Merlot](#)

Vintages Release: [Ontario "Vintages" Releases: Saturday June 7th, 2008 Vintages Release](#)

Ontario Wines of Note at Vintages for June 7, 2008:

[Chateau Des Charmes 2006 Estate Riesling](#) – [Fielding Estate 2005 Fireside Series Chardonnay](#)
[Flat Rock Cellars 2007 Twisted](#) – [Flat Rock Cellars 2007 Pinot Noir Rosé](#)
[Henry of Pelham 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon Rosé](#) – [Malivoire 2007 Ladybug Rosé](#)
[Strewn 2007 Cabernet Rosé](#)



In the Cellar ... with Jeff and Dave of Coyote's Run

On a beautiful spring day, I bumped into Jeff Aubry, owner, and Dave Sheppard, winemaker, at their winery, Coyote's Run; and like two good Samaritans, they offered this weary traveler a trip into the cool cellar to try the mammoth '07 reds. We started with the Pinot Noirs.

As many know, Coyote's Run has made their name on their brainchild of Red Paw – from red clay soil, and Black Paw – from black clay soil, Pinots. These wines were deep and intense in both colour and flavour. Red Paw was red and fruity, Black Paw was black fruited and earthy; both had great acidity and firm tannins. They'll need further time to settle which might delay release till after harvest 2008, instead of their usual before harvest timing. The same can be said for the other reds in their portfolio, as all seem to be big, bold, tannic and will require extra time to make them more approachable – though many are so good right now.

Take the blend for instance. Coyote's Run does not make straight varietal Merlot or Cabernet Sauvignon every year – instead they blend to make Meritage. That way, they can be consistent about making one good wine every year and not worry that they'll have an inferior single varietal wine. The '07 Merlot was earthy, blackberry with other dark fruits at its base ... robust with approachable tannins. The Sauv had a deep rich, almost black, colour, which matched its dark flavour profile, along with leather and sweet, supple tannins – hot dog – together they're gonna make one heck of a Meritage. The 2007 Cabernet Franc, the one destined for the LCBO Cabernet blend, has sweet cherry, vanilla and tobacco – once again, this one showed silky smooth tannins with just a hint of bite; there's even a touch of cranberry that lingers around in the mouth. The separation of the Cabernet Francs into Black Paw and Red Paw – an innovation Coyote's Run introduced in 2006, which repeats the success of the Pinots – shows great promise for 2007. The Black Paw is loaded with black fruit, tobacco and tea leaves ... and silky tannins only hint at the wine to come.

Finally, Dave dips the wine-thief (long tube that allows the winemaker to pull out a bit of wine to taste – think turkey baster) into a barrel of 2007 Syrah (another new wine for CR – first vintage 2006) and with a smile fills each glass. "Something tells me there will be less of this wine when it comes time to bottle," he winks at Jeff as he says it, "We each come down about three times a day to taste this one." And it's spectacular: a mix of red and black fruit, full-on peppery in the mouth, great purple colour and those tannins ... those silky wonderful tannins.

There are many in the industry who say this could be the vintage of the decade – maybe even the best ever – the wait is on to see if they're right ... but all indications look very very good.



Season to Taste ... Tasting wine is what you make of it

It seems these days every Tom, Dick and Harry with a wine glass and a pen is writing an article about how to taste wine. Now that's all well and good, and I have nothing against people having proper form ... but "proper form" is for swimming, gymnastics and skating – the key to wine tasting is enjoyment.

The first step, in any of these articles, tells you to look at the wine – 90% of people barely give the wine poured into their glass a second glance, and why should you. Heck most people don't know what they're looking for in the first place. The truth behind peering into your glass of wine was a self-preservation issue – in the olden days when filtering was not as prominent as it is today, you were looking for nasties floating in the wine ... these days it is not much of a concern.

The next step is up to who you are reading. Some say smell, taste, swirl, taste – while others some say swirl, smell, sip, repeat ... in my experience, half of the people visiting wineries don't swirl and the other half don't sniff and some don't do either. Now I will admit that wine tasting is subjective, you like what you like, there's

just no two ways about it ... I can't force you to like liver, heck you can't talk me into eating that nasty stuff – neither should I be able to tell you what kind of wine you like. Though, I can help you enjoy the wines you do like.

Taste and smell are the two most important parts of wine tasting – you really can't do one without the other. Swirling opens up the smells and enhances the taste ... air can be wine's worst enemy – but it can also be it's best friend. But don't feel you have to do it just because the professionals do it, or because you saw it in a movie or on TV. Some make a show out of tasting, other are much more introverted about it. Do what makes you feel comfortable. If you want to enhance your enjoyment of something you think you like try the swirl, smell, taste approach.

Here's a little anecdote to illustrate the point: my father makes a show of his wine tasting ... he sloppily sloshes the wine in the glass, in more of a splash method than a controlled swirl; then he shoves his nose into the glass with a loud snort. He will then inevitably spout off some gibberish about certain non-existent smells and the bouquet being this and that. Then he sips, smacks his lips together and says "now that's a good wine". All this is usually done over some concord sacramental wine. The performance is even more elaborate when something worth cooing about is poured. When all is said and done, my father proclaims one of two words "okay" or "blech" – he knows what he likes and what he doesn't ... all the rest is for show.



Wine Event Spotlight: *"If music be the food of love, play on"*

This has really turned into one of the premier events in the Lake Erie North Shore in a few short years. **Dionysus at Mastronardi Winery** is taking place June 7, 2008 and features an all-star line-up of performers and wine. Headlining, as he always does, is Pavlo, joining him are the comedy antics of The Doo Wops and Canadian jazz icon, Bronwman Ali. Tickets are \$75 and full details about the event can be found at www.mastronardiwines.com. Last day to get tickets is today (June 5). The concert is an evening activity, so why not take the day to explore the Lake Erie North Shore – many of the wineries are hosting an open house that weekend.

I guess when something is as popular as to require a second year, then it becomes an annual thing. The **2nd Annual Niagara Wine Weekend & Auction** takes place June 13-15. This year, the host will be none other than Jann Arden, which for my money is the reason to go; but if you need others there are the Temptations and Pointer Sisters performing at the gala, Michael Bonacini as the celebrity chef Wine and Garden Party, Live, Silent and Barrel Auctions and a whole lot more. Get all the information about this event at www.niagarawineauction.com.

Those Jonesing for jazz, will need look no further than to Hillebrand as they present **Hillebrand Jazz at the Winery**, Saturday July 12. This year's talented Canadian jazz line-up includes Molly Johnson, Kellylee Evans and Daryl Stuermer. The day begins with the gates opening at 2pm and the performances running from 4 till 8. More information can be found at www.hillebrand.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

www.ontariowinereview.com

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