

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 – 86
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News from OntarioWineReview ... Facebook and Are you up for another Challenge

Two important happenings here at OntarioWineReview to share, and this time it has nothing to do with Vincor.

Facebook ... I finally took the facebook-plunge last week, and once it was done there was no looking back (although I'm still not totally sure how this thing works – without wine I am lost). Not only do I now have a facebook profile and page "Michael Pinkus", I started a group "Ontario Wine Lovers". Then, lo and behold, a fan club emerged, "Grape Guy Fan Club". So, for all of you facebookers out there, look me up and let me (and my fan club) know what you would like from the Grape Guy, or just stop by and say hi; afterall, we need all the friends we can get, right?

Grape Challenge Choice ... Speaking of friends (best segue I could think of), friends and lovers of Ontario wines should look at the poll on the right hand side of the home page on the website (www.ontariowinereview.com) for the Challenge question. In the past, we have challenged Baco Noir (2006) and Cabernet Franc (2007) ... now it's time to pick the grape for 2008, from the possible eleven (11) choices. To date, Gewurztraminer and Pinot Noir are neck and neck. So have your say and check out the poll, (right hand side of the home page: www.ontariowinereview.com). Poll closes August 6, 2008.



OntarioWineReview: Point Scales – wine as poetry

Over the holidays, I was taking a long lonely train ride back to Toronto (from Windsor) writing my Vintages report for January. I was confronted by all these scores from Robert Parker, James Halladay, David Lawrason, etc. and it struck me like a thunderbolt ... suddenly I had Robin Williams shouting in my head as he did in the Dead Poets Society (TouchStone 1989) about the essay written by Dr. J. Evans Pritchard Ph.D. ... I invite you to see the movie again - or just go to chapter three on your DVD and replace "poetry" for "wine". J. Evans writes: "To fully understand poetry [wine] we must first be fluent with its meter, rhyme and figures of speech, then ask two questions: one, how artfully have the objectives of the poem been rendered? And two, how important is that objective. Question one, rates it's perfection; question two rates its importance - and once these questions have been answered, determining the poem's [wine's] greatness becomes a relatively simple matter."

After drawing the graph with "perfection" as the horizontal and "importance" as the vertical and plotting a few points for poems by Byron and Shakespeare, Williams' character, Professor Keating, calls it all "excrement" ... "We're not laying pipe, we're talking about poetry [wine]. How can you describe poetry [wine] like American Bandstand? Well I like Byron, I give him a 42, but I can't dance to it."

By the same token, how can you really put a number on a wine using a chart or a graph ... sure this is okay for

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competitions, when you need to score wines and come up with a winner head to head - but what about you at home - do you rate your wine by that method? Do you sip the Yellow Tail and say, "I'd give that an 86" or a bottle of Dr. L. Riesling and say "that's an 89 for sure"? No ... you describe it as smooth, soft, or fizzy ... you may say things like fruity, pleasant or "I really like this". I doubt numbers ever even come up when discussing the wine, unless you are discussing the price - "you paid \$12.00 for that, really - no way it's that cheap"; or if your host tries to impress you, "Parker gave it a 92" - to which your response is one of two things: "oh, really" or "I wouldn't give it a 92". Wine is subjective and we must be objective when drinking and tasting it ... though objectivity gets thrown out the window depending on your day, what's going on in your world and your surroundings ... company also plays a big part, but that's a subject for another day, or see my [Clark Smith review](#).

I don't use a rating system; though I have been asked on many occasions to either do so or asked why I don't. I like to follow along with the teachings of Professor Keating: "Armies of academics going forward, measuring poetry [wine] ... no! We will not have that here ... here you will learn to savor words and language [flavours and smells]." It hit me on that train ride that wine is like poetry and that parallels can definitely be made. When I arrived home, I watched the movie again, and yet another line from the same scene struck a cord with me. There they are in the classroom and Keating has the boys "huddle up" around him as he explains why we read and write poetry ... again substitute the word "poetry" for "wine" and you'll see what I mean: "We don't read and write poetry [taste and drink wine] because it's cute, we read and write poetry [taste and drink wine] because we are members of the human race, and the human race is filled with passion ... But poetry, beauty, romance, love, these are what we stay alive for."

Now maybe I'm overstating it a bit, most of us don't have a passion for wine that rocks the very foundation of our souls - but think about wine and its role in your life ... happy occasions, sad occasions, festive occasions - whatever the occasion, where does wine fit in? Do you rate your occasions on scale of 1 to 100 or do you use words like: awesome, amazing, fun, incredible, the best, the worst. Wine is always about you ... you make the choice to buy the bottle, you decide when to pull the cork, you make a decision about how long to keep it open and you decide on what occasion to pour it ... you also decide whether you like it or not. You can agree with me about red fruit, cranberry, chocolate, peaches, apples – and thus derive your own review - but I'm not going to defend a 92 or 86. I guess if that's how you're going to rate your wine, then that too is a choice that's up to you.



Grape Guy's Picks of the Bunch: *Special Pinot, Gamay, Rosees, and a Feathery Merlot*
See individual winery website for information.

Cattail Creek 2007 Gamay Noir - \$15.00 (W)
www.cattailcreek.ca

Hot Dog! Another winery on board to make Gamay – I love it. Such a versatile grape – you can oak it and make it stand up for a decade or you can leave it light and fruity, as a perfect summer red. Gamay is one of those grapes that can turn your white-only friends into budding young red drinkers. Here's the wine to try that experiment. Cattail's Gamay is in the light and fruity style with red currants and strawberries on the nose ... black raspberries, red berries and a nice smooth red fruit finish. This is one wine you could put a light chill on and enjoy on the patio in the afternoon, then let it warm up (back to room temperature) and turn around and serve it up during the evening meal – and I would be willing to bet most folks will think it's a completely different wine. Fifteen bucks is a steal ... but don't let the cat out of the bag about that.

Featherstone 2006 Merlot Estate Bottled - \$27.95 (W, WTH)
www.featherstonewinery.ca

If you're thinking, "I've never seen a Merlot from Featherstone," you'd be right. This is the first vintage from these 3 year old vines and they produced so little fruit in 2006 that only 60 cases of this wine was made. Louise Engel, co-owner, told me that each vine produced one cluster and they meticulously hand harvested every one (the good news is 2007 was a completely different story for these vines – producing enough fruit to get 500 cases made – but we'll save that review for next year at this time). The wine spent 15 months in French oak and has developed a mixture of blackberries and red fruit on the nose. The palate has sour cherry and juicy blackberries with some cassis and a little tannin bite on the finish. Quite lovely and a good first effort with this grape from Dave Johnson (winemaker).

Sink the Pink – a look at some great Ontario Rosés:

The last time Pink was this popular Happy Days was on the tube. But seriously, whatever you're looking for in a Rosé, Ontario has it. Here are a few you'll want to enjoy this summer:

[Huff Estates 2007 Rosé](#) (W, WTH) – [Henry of Pelham 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon Rosé](#) (W, L, WTH)
[Flat Rock Cellars 2007 Pinot Noir Rosé](#) (W, WTH, L) – [Strewn 2007 Cabernet Rosé](#) (W, L, WTH)
[Malivoire 2007 Ladybug Rosé](#) (W) – [Reif Estate 2006 Gamay Rosé](#) (W, L, WTH)
[Muscedere 2007 Rosé](#) (W) – [Hillebrand 2006 Gamay Noir Rosé](#) (W, WTH)
[Thirty Bench 2007 Pinot Meunier Small Lot Rosé](#) (W, WTH)

Something exciting from Prince Edward County:

[Picard-MacLaurin 2006 Pinot Noir](#) (available only at Huff Estates)

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:

June 24, 2008 – Jackson-Triggs 2006 Delaine Vineyard Pinot Noir ([read](#)) ([listen](#))

July 1, 2008 – Lailey Vineyard 2007 Vidal ([read](#)) ([listen](#))

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

[Discover Australia](#)

[Made in Italy – part 4 of 4](#)

[Meeting Clark Smith](#)

[New Vintages Festival – Passport Program and Grille](#)

[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
Check back next week

[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
Check back next week

Vintages Release: [Ontario "Vintages" Releases: Saturday July 5th, 2008 Vintages Release](#)

Ontario Wines of Note at Vintages for July 5, 2008:

[Pillitteri 2002 Family Reserve Merlot](#)



In the Cellar ... with Rob and Fabio of Muscedere

An impromptu visit to Muscedere Vineyards in early May, found the tasting room open for the season and six new wines to sample. The best of which were the summery [2007 Rosé](#), the awesome [2006 Pinot Noir](#) and the delicious [2006 Cabernet Franc](#). Afterward, we were invited into the barrel cellar to taste some of the upcoming and newly resting wines.

Most interesting of which were the pieces, and then the final product, of the upcoming 2006 Meritage – which will be a 45/30/25 Franc/Merlot/Sauv combination. Three different barrels were tasted, each with a different blend of the components. Barrel 1 and 2 (in wood for a year so far) showed signs of red and black fruit respectively – 1 had a sweet aspect, while 2 had more tannins, acidity and vanilla nuances. Barrel 3 (only 4 months in wood) was black and earthy; the fruit in here was from older vines and showed a touch of greenness with a full-on coffee bean finish. Put them all together and the greenness and coffee bean disappeared, leaving behind cherry, vanilla, great fruit flavours (both red and black) and a lengthy finish with excellent tannin and soft acidity.

Rob Muscedere, winemaker, informed us about the limiting measures they used for the 2006 yield. "We cut down to one bunch per shoot that probably saved us quality-wise during such a wet harvest." The '06 Meritage "should be ready in the next few months," I am told, "but that's not set in stone; we don't want to rush it just to get it out on the shelves."

Moving along to the wines just settling in for their long oak-nap. Rob excitedly pulled the bung (the stopper in the top of the barrel) on the 2007 Syrah, his first effort with this grape. "It was a great year for us down here," he proclaimed, "I'm really excited about these wines." It's a feeling echoed all across Ontario. Only 5 months in and the Syrah is showing great fruit, some spiciness and white pepper notes, it already has a tasty lingering finish.

The '07 Cabernet Franc has big spicy flavours with tobacco, toffee, vanilla and black fruit with a primarily mocha finish. The '07 Cabernet Sauvignon is red fruit and cinnamon while the Pinot is loaded with red berries, sour cherries and has already developed a good tannin and acid base.

It would seem the boys of Muscedere have a lot to be excited about for good reason. "We came along at a good time, the last few vintages have been very good to us," Rob says, all Fabio (his brother and co-owner of the winery) could add was to lick his lips and say, "mmm, that's good."



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

Book Review:

To Cork or Not to Cork:
Tradition, Romance, Science and the battle for the wine bottle
By George M. Taber

So I'm sitting here wondering how to start the review of this book and I remember the words I wrote in an email to Tony Aspler, (we share a love for Taber's last book [Judgment at Paris – review Newsletter #54](#)), "Well I'm on page 25 and Taber's got me again – I keep making excuses to take a break from whatever I'm doing just so I can read a few more pages ... my toilet seat hasn't seen this much action since my spicy Burrito days." Tony wisely did not respond – really what more was there to say. While maybe I shouldn't have given you all those details, I think you get the point ... this is another fantastic book.

Taber has a way of reeling you in with story after story, personality after personality, facts, figures and oh-my-God moments. He relates the history of natural cork and then slowly starts telling you about the alternatives – the good, the bad and the ugly. It's a story about how the wine industry has been policing an industry (namely cork) that has failed to monitor itself, until it found itself threatened ... complacency has led to a scramble to regain market share.

George Taber takes you behind the scenes, all over the world in labs and into fields, back rooms and forests. From Portugal and Spain, where cork is made and manufactured, to find out what is being done to eliminate TCA (cork taint) from wine to what brought these large companies to even investigate an issue they deemed part of doing business and unimportant not that many years ago.

With George's help, we find ourselves in New Zealand and Australia, where the Stelvin Revolution really took off, because of the inferior, bottom of the barrel (or is that the short end of the branch) products these countries were getting. Plus there are stops in England, France, the United States, Germany and plenty of other countries along the way - each with its own particular pop or twist on the wine bottle closure issue.

The word "intriguing" just scratches the surfaces when describing this book. George Taber doesn't have the answers to the age old question he poses: "To cork or Not to Cork", but he sure arms you with the most up-to-date facts and makes you think each and every time you open a bottle of wine.



Wine Event Spotlight: *April Wine and Wine Boot Camp*

They're back – April Wine returns to Harbour Estates for **Rock n Ribs**, September 6, 2008 ... all the ribs and cork you can eat and all the April Wine music you wanna hear. Tickets are \$110 each and tell sell out fast. Go

to www.harbourestateswinery.com for all the details.

For all of you who have wanted to live the “wine lifestyle” here is your chance, Peller Estates in conjunction with ‘The Wine Enthusiasts’ of the iYellow Wine Club are putting on **The Extreme Wine Weekend – A Boot Camp for Bon Vivants**. I’m not sure I can do it justice by explaining it here; that’s why I suggest you head over to [the Peller website](#) to learn all about it. Keep these dates in mind before you do though: June 28-29, July 19-20 and August 2-3 ... those are the dates Boot camp begins. Good luck.

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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