

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 – 88
July 31, 2008

In this Edition

- **Ontario Wine Review:** *WINERY REVIEW – Mastronardi Wines*
 - **Grape Guy's Picks of the Bunch:** *A Rosé and a Vidal*
 - **Weekly Wine Notes and More:** *Grigio, Gamay, Live from BC, Vintages and more*
 - **The Wow Factor:** *Galvanizing a region*
 - **Quick Sips:** *The Rumour Mill, Celebrity Wine, News from France, Wine vs. Beer, Did you know ...*
 - **Wine Event Spotlight:** *Lake Erie North Shore New Vintage Tasting*
-



OntarioWineReview: *WINERY REVIEW – Mastronardi Wines*

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.

I've heard of grape tomatoes, you know, those tiny tasty red nuggets – now granted I don't like tomatoes (though I love their by-products) – but I have touched a few in my day; even know and associate with people who eat and love them. But how do you go from growing tomatoes in the tomato capital of Canada to growing grapes, in the tomato capital of Canada? If you're Mastronardi it started with the desire to expand their greenhouse operation and a promise from a winery to buy their crop.

Back in 2002, Mastronardi were growing tomatoes at their greenhouse when they learned of a 100-acre property “just around the corner” that was for sale. Seeing an opportunity to expand their tomato growing operation, they went to take a look. The “they” in this story are Tony and Eadie Mastronardi, and the “what” they were looking at was a vineyard planted back in the 1980's and owned by Colio for the previous 11 years. They bought the land. As they were readying to rip out the grapes another Lake Erie North Shore winery approached them and said, “If you continue to grow these grapes, we'll buy them from you.” Tony asked himself, “What do I know about growing grapes?” But he decided to try his hand at it anyway – and within a year he was bitten and smitten by another kind of vine. As Eadie now says, “growing tomatoes is his occupation, growing grapes is his vocation.” Tony wouldn't give it up for the world – you couldn't pay him enough to get rid of his grapes.”

Mastronardi Winery hired Lyse LeBlanc to make their wines. Lyse was a winemaker who owned her own winery and then joined the ill-fated Grape Tree Winery before “retiring” from the business for good, with a very bad taste in her mouth. “We lured her back,” say Eadie with a wide, welcoming, you-can't-refuse-me smile, “and we're so glad, and lucky to have her.”

In 2006, Mastronardi opened their doors. Planted on the property was, and still is, Cabernet Franc and Sauvignon, Merlot, Riesling, Gewurztraminer, Baco Noir, Vidal, Zweigelt and RieslingTraminer ... Tony is so convinced that his plot of land is one of the best in the area, that he is doing some test planting in a new 13 acre parcel. There, he will grow some interesting and experimental varieties, including Zinfandel, Pinot Noir and Viognier.

The Mastronardi Winery sells about 90% of their 100-acre vineyard's production to other wineries, and from their 10% of the grapes they make about 8000 cases of wine a year. The goal is to one day reverse that number or, better yet, produce wine using all 100 acres worth of grapes.

The winery is nothing much to look at from the outside. The house to the right of the driveway gets most of the compliments and attention, that's in comparison to the building on the left, which is in fact, the winery. From what I am told, inside, that “nice house” is pretty rundown. Outside the winery, the only thing that is eye-catching is the big letter “M” on the building, inside it's a completely different story – a Spanish/Mediterranean look with classy archways. The wines aren't displayed on any old shelving units; they sit in backlit stone alcoves with the tasting bar at the end of the room.

After 2 years Mastronardi is putting a new, younger face on the Lake Erie North Shore, along with wineries like Muscedere, Sprucewood, Colchester and Viewpointe. These wineries are changing the complexion of the area one wine and one interesting story at a time.



Grape Guy's Picks of the Bunch: A Rosé and a Vidal

For directions and more information visit www.mastronardiwines.com

Mastronardi Wines 2007 Cabernet Rosé - \$12.00 (W)

The odd part about rosé is that it is made from red grapes and can have smells and tastes usually associated with white grapes. This Mastronardi Rosé is made from 100% Cabernet Franc grapes and has some of the most interesting smells. The nose has so much going on: apples, cherry, hints of strawberry, a tropical nuance (akin to kiwis) and the sweet smell of banana chips(?). The taste is simpler, yet very delicious – red berries, hint of cherry and some strawberry-kiwi with a touch of tartness on the finish. This one is so delightful, especially on the nose – but the good news is that it's delicious to sip on too, especially while you try to figure out what you're smelling.

Mastronardi Wines 2007 Vidal - \$8.00 (W)

The art of dry Vidal winemaking is to distance yourself from what Vidal is now popular for, icewine, and make something radically different with it. When most people see the word "Vidal" on the label, they automatically think sweet, but those willing to have a little fun can make surprisingly pleasant patio sippers. Lyse Leblanc (winemaker for Mastronardi) has crafted a delicious summer sipper that tastes more Gewurztraminer-like than Vidal-ish. On the nose it has peach, floral and a tiny bit of spicy white pepper ... in the mouth you'll pick up a fruity-floral note, along with that surprising Gewurz-like spiciness.

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



Weekly Wine Notes and More: Grigio, Gamay, Live from BC, Vintages 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:

July 22, 2008 - Pillitteri Estates 2007 Pinot Grigio ([read](#)) ([listen](#))

July 29, 2008 - Henry of Pelham 2006 Gamay Noir ([read](#)) ([listen](#))

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

[Hillebrand Jazz at the Winery](#)

[Jackson-Triggs Twilight in the Vineyard starring Colin James](#)

[The Riesling Experience](#)

[British Columbia Day 1](#)

[British Columbia Day 2](#)

[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

New additions will be added soon

[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

New additions will be added soon

Vintages Release: [Ontario "Vintages" Releases: Saturday August 2nd, 2008 Vintages Release](#)

Ontario Wines of Note at Vintages for August 2, 2008:

[Lailey Vineyard 2005 Cabernet Sauvignon](#)

[Lailey Vineyard 2006 Pinot Noir](#)

[Lailey Vineyard 2007 Riesling](#)

[Fielding 2007 Pinot Gris](#)



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.

Not so much a wow as a turning point, a turning of sadness into a joyous celebration. At age eleven the Mastronardi's daughter Brittany died of a rare disease called Batten ([learn more here](#)). First they named a wine after her ("Brianje" – Brittany Angel) and donated the proceeds to finding a cure. Then an even bigger and better notion occurred – a party called Dionysus (Greek God of wine). In three short years this idea has galvanized a region. Now on Dionysus weekend all the wineries of the area band together for open houses and new releases, restaurants participate, hotels offer packages ... and the party, this year alone, 3 separate acts including international recording artist Pavlo and comedy sensation The Doo Wops gave of their time to entertain and help raise funds for this worthwhile charity ([see review](#)). It's amazing what the human-will and spirit are capable of in times of adversity. Mastronardi took tragedy and turned it into triumph.



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

For July 2008

Rumour Mill is Working Overtime ... a few weeks ago the grapevine was laden heavy with fruit: someone's father had passed away (untrue); a popular icewine producer in Niagara-on-the-lake was for sale (unconfirmed and unlikely); Mike Weir was picking up his golf clubs and moving to B.C. – leaving Creekside's involvement with him and his winery up-in-the-air (heard from many sources); and finally, 20 Bees was being purchased by Diamond Estates, home of Birchwood, Lakeview and Eastdell (this proved to be true). Speculation is that 20 Bees will become the home of Dan Aykroyd's proposed winery (that waits to be seen).

More Celebrity Winery News ... No. 99 has a California home too. Not only does Wayne Gretzky lend his name to a winery here in Ontario, but the Great One also has one in sunny California. A new 2005 Cabernet Sauvignon is available through Hobbs and Company by the case - \$44.99 per bottle.

Legislature goes Fruity ... After much lobbying, the fruit wineries of Ontario have been shown a little respect by the government. On June 9, 2008, the Ontario legislature overwhelmingly approved fruit wine to be served in the dining room and at special Queen's Park events. 30 wines from 15 wineries were in the running for this honour. These were narrowed down to 18 and then presented to the assembly at a special tasting. The following three wines were voted the first fruit wines to be on offer: Applewood Winery MacMead (sparkling), Scotch Block Winery Oak Aged Black Currant (off-dry) and Archibald's Winery Spiced Winter Apple (sweet). Congratulations are in order for this momentous occasion.

More Bad news for France ... by 2015 Spain will overtake France as the world's number one wine producer.

Bad News for Beer ... Canadians are drinking more wine over the past 10 years. Since 1997 wine sales have risen 7% for all alcohol sales to an all-time high of 28%, while beer has lost ground over the same period, accounting for 47% of the beverage alcohol market, down 5%.

Did You Know ... Here's a quirky Ontario labeling fact for you to mull over. The word "Ontario" may not be used on a wine label unless as an indicator of appellation (i.e.: VQA Ontario VQA), this restriction was imposed by the VQA Act of 1999 and is still enforced today. As we all know "VQA" signals that the wine is made from 100% Ontario fruit, but this applies to grapes only. Ontario fruit wine (strawberry, blueberry, apple, etc.) producers are not allowed to be part of the VQA and therefore can not put the word "Ontario" on their label, even if it is to give place of origin of their fruit (i.e.: Ontario Strawberries were used to make this wine). And this too is strictly enforced. It's a head scratcher isn't it?



Wine Event Spotlight: *14th Annual Lake Erie North Shore Vintage Tasting*

As luck would have this event is a great tie-in to the winery review in this newsletter. The annual roving Lake Erie North Shore New Vintage Tasting is taking place at Mastronardi Estate Winery this year, Sunday August 10, 2008 from 1-5pm. It's "roving" because each year a different area winery hosts the event ... what a novel concept.

Why Should You Go: It's a great way to get acquainted with the wines of the Lake Erie North Shore without all the traveling around because all the wineries will be there to sample their new wines and some old favourites, plus there is always some great food at these tastings.

Also, for the first time ever, there is the Vintage Tasting Winemakers Dinner (August 9 from 6-10pm) ... at this inaugural event all 13 winemakers will host a table of guests for this multi-course fine dining experience. For further details or to buy tickets visit www.mastronardiwines.com or www.swova.ca.

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