

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 – 89
■ August 14, 2008

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OntarioWineReview: *R-E-S-P-E-C-T, find out what it means to me*

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.

There seems to be two schools of thought when it comes to Cellared in Canada wines. Either, you fall on the side of Dan Kislenko, of the Hamilton Spectator, where, in his article about B.C.'s blended Wild Horse Canyon Wines (September 22, 2007) he praises the initiative and stresses the fact that they are “award winning”, and wonders when Ontario will do the same (I suspect he means win awards with their blended stuff). “There’s nothing wrong with these wines ... given the amount of wine it sells across the western provinces and the awards it has won in competitions. Now it’s Ontario’s turn.”

Or, you’re on side with Tony Aspler, who in a speech delivered during Bacchus at Brock (June 8, 2007): “I am not going to get into off-shore blends here. I will only say that no self-respecting wine region imports vast amounts of other people’s wine to blend into theirs at least not legally. If you have a poor vintage in Bordeaux or Burgundy you live with it. And it is nothing short of a disgrace that the LCBO puts these so-called ‘Cellared In Canada’ wines on the same shelves as VQA wines.”

The debate also rages on as to the labeling of these products and whether the word Canada or even Ontario should be on the label at all, but that debate is for another time. What we shall discuss here is the blending practices of some Ontario wineries and how the LCBO acts as co-conspirator in perpetuating the myth that these wines are Ontario wines.

Now those are pretty harsh words, especially “co-conspirator”, but let’s look at how these wines are marketed by our friendly neighbourhood wine monopoly. At present, there is absolutely no delineation between the VQA stuff (100% Ontario grape product) and the Cellared stuff (off-shore blend with a 30% minimum domestic product, by law). Oh sure, the signage is there, but on the shelf it’s a different story. To make it easy on the consumer these wines should be segregated and placed on opposite ends of the store – pretty sure I know where the VQA stuff would end up ... but I digress. Let’s talk about blending and then get into the specifics of the LCBO.

Firstly, that our wineries are permitted to produce these wines dates back to archaic laws that should have been abolished once our replanted vineyards came on-line. In 1989, Ontario pulled up their *lubrusca* grapes, planted *vinifera*, in the hopes to compete on the world stage. Knowing that the proper maturity of the vines, and a full replenishment of inventory stocks to keep our wineries solvent would take time, there was a piece of legislation enacted which stated that the practice of blending off-shore wine with our own would cease in the year 2000. Yet, this was never upheld; there’s just too much money to be made, by too few in this case. Only wineries holding a pre-1993

license can blend - thus limiting the playing field in this category. Sound fair? Sounds very Ontario. Either we should allow all our wineries access to this lucrative money source (BAD IDEA), or ban the practice altogether (BETTER IDEA) ... Level that playing field. (Please note: this mysterious piece of legislation has been requested by me on numerous occasions, but never seems to materialize, although there are many who know of its existence – [see this page of the Grape Growers of Ontario website for more information](#)).

Secondly, being marketed as a “Canadian product” under the same banner as VQA wine in our liquor monopoly is appalling. A straw poll of customers at my badly signaged LCBO store (one of the largest in Ontario), thought that anything under the muddled VQA-Cellared in Canada was Ontario wine. One lady had a white label Jackson-Triggs 1.5L bottle (Sauvignon Blanc) and she told me it is Ontario wine because it is made by Jackson-Triggs. So let us take Jackson-Triggs as an example, (I really do hate to keep picking on them) and Inniskillin; two respectable Canadian wineries and not just here in Ontario, I’m talking globally. They put blended wines under their own name onto the LCBO and their Wine Rack shelves, which confuses the heck out of your average everyday customer. They should at least be required to put these wines under a secondary label that has no reference to J-T or Inniskillin – but it’s because these wines go out to the public with these respected, reputable and recognizable Ontario winery’s names emblazoned across their label that the public perceives them as Ontario / Canadian wine when, in fact, they are 70% foreign product masquerading as Ontario.

Take Wild Horse Canyon wines (made by Mission Hill), Soaring Eagle (Lakeview Cellars) or the Oakridge range (Peller) – all made by respectable, reputable and recognizable wineries here in Ontario – yet their names do take up the majority of real estate on the front label. I wish you-know-who would follow that lead. Respecting 100% Ontario wine by our most visible worldwide industry leader, is the first step to respecting our wine industry as a whole, and gaining more acceptance, not only in Ontario but worldwide. When a noted wine writer like Jancis Robinson criticizes us for this practice (“I have long seen this as a blot on Canada’s image and demeaning to Canadian wine consumers, quite apart from damaging to Canadian wine producers.” - September 28, 2005), and she has a worldwide readership, how can that world around us take Ontario wine seriously; come to think of it how can any of us here at home. If we don’t respect our industry, why should they?



Grape Guy’s Picks of the Bunch: *Best of the Lake Erie New Vintages Fest*

Colchester Ridge Estate Winery 2006 Cabernet Sauvignon Reserve - \$24.95 (W)
www.colchesterridge.com

In a few short years, the winery also known as CREW, has become a real player and innovator down in the region. They took home a big Chardonnay prize at the Ontario Wine Awards earlier this year, and I can only see them building on this success. Bernard Gorski, the owner and winemaker, used American “water bent” barrels, which means the barrels are soaked in water before being bent and toasted, allowing for a deeper toast and possibly, a longer life span. This wine spent 14 months in these barrels and has really developed into something special. The nose is loaded with vanilla, cinnamon, lots of black fruit and sweet, sweet oak. The taste is going to come around slowly over the next couple of years, but currently there are great toasted vanilla, spiced cherry and red berry flavours here. Keep your eye on this winery for more great wines to come.

Sanson Estate Winery 2007 Riesling - \$14.95 (W)
www.sansonestatewinery.com

When Maureen, of Sanson Estate Winery, called me up and said, “Dennis has just made his first Riesling, I hope you get a chance to try it at the Vintage tasting this weekend.” I was surprised. I thought for sure that by now Dennis had made a few Rieslings in his day. Dennis is a finicky winemaker, he makes what he likes to make, and even if he has success with a variety he’ll ditch it from his repertoire if he isn’t happy with it, which is what happened with his Shiraz. One thing I have

learned about Dennis, is he makes good wines, so if he has decided to try his hand at a wine, you best take notice. This Riesling has a nice Bosc pear nose, but there's little else on the smell, this should open up over time. In the mouth, you'll find a heck of a lot more to reel you in: pear, lemon, touch of peach and a fine sweetness on the mid-palate before it ends up dry. I recommend picking up a few bottles this year ... but just don't get too attached to being able to get it all the time.

D'Angelo Estate Winery 2006 Iced Foch - \$15.00 / 375ml (W)

www.dangelowinery.com

You'll see very few Marechal Foch reviews on my site. The reason is that very few really impress me. Here I am looking at this half-bottle of Foch Ice and wondering what the heck Sal D'Angelo was thinking. My intrepid curiosity got the best of me and I decided to give it a go. And by George, isn't this one of the nicest dessert wines I have tasted in a while, with a scent to match. Raspberry jam and black cherry greet the nose, while in the mouth it's very cherry and cranberry; a drier than expected finish makes it seem much less than the 23 it is on the sweetness scale. Maybe a touch thick, but not cloying. And look at that price ... makes a great gift, and a rare one at that.

[To see more of the wines that made my best of list visit the review of the event.](#)

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:

Vineland Estates 2007 Elevation Chardonnay ([read](#)) ([listen](#))

Vineland Estates 2007 Rieslings ([read](#)) ([listen](#))

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

[Fiesta Buckhorn](#)

[Chateau des Charmes Farm to Table Experience](#)

[Taste of the Danforth Kick-Off Party](#)

[Lake Erie North Shore Vintages Tasting](#)

British Columbia Trip:

[Day 3](#) – [Day 4](#) – [Day 5 & 6](#) – [Day 7 & 8](#) – [Day 9 & 10](#) – [Day 11 & 12](#)

[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

[Creekside 2004 Shiraz](#)

[Willow Springs 2002 Testa Meritage](#)

[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

[Marynissen 2001 Gamay Noir](#)

[Ridgepoint Wines 2002 Cabernet Franc](#)

[Harbour Estates 2004 Petit Verdot / Malbec](#)

Vintages Release: [Ontario "Vintages" Releases: Saturday August 16th, 2008 Vintages Release](#)

Ontario Wines of Note at Vintages for August 16, 2008:

Coyote's Run [2006 Red Paw Pinot Noir](#) and [2006 Reserve Chardonnay](#)

[Megalomaniac 2006 Sonofabitch Pinot Noir](#)

[Featherstone 2007 Gewurztraminer](#)

[Fielding 2007 Gewurztraminer](#)

[Tawse 2007 Sketches of Niagara Riesling](#)

[Vineland Estates 2006 Sauvignon Blanc](#)



Raise your Spirits: *Have you seen a wine groupie?*

I was at an event not too long ago and I saw a woman I know from various other events that I've attended. She's not a writer, not an agent, and not an LCBO representative ... so I sidled up to her and said, "Funny bumping into you here, I see you at all of these - do have some connection to the industry?"

"No," she replied straight-faced, "I'm just a wine groupie." She then smiled and took a sip from the red liquid in her glass.

Wine Groupie - only in this day and age could we have such a thing. Wine consumption is on the rise and the public's thirst for wine knowledge is at an all time high. It used to be that groupies followed bands or movie stars, they pasted their walls with posters and Teen-Beat Magazine articles: head shots, group shots, crotch shots. We chose camps: Beatles or Stones, screamed for Elvis' shimmying pelvis, threw panties at Tom Jones, dressed up like Johnny Rotten, rebelled in so many ways to be more like them and be different all at the same time ... but now the "groupie" term has been absconded by wine culture. So what exactly is a wine groupie?

Do they lineup for the latest release of Yellow Tail? Scream emphatically as you peel the label off a bottle of Bordeaux, fainting at the site of what's under it? Do they follow the California wine show from town to town across the country? Lineup for Gourmet Food and Wine Expo tickets months in advance, camping out overnight to be first in line to get them? Plaster their walls with Vina Carmen and Little Penguin adverts?

What is it to be a wine groupie? I'm not sure what it is exactly, but it sure is a lot of fun judging from the glazed look in the eyes of my newfound friend. The glass of wine constantly being topped up with red, white, rosee or sparkling. All new and wonderful taste sensations - along with the animated ooo's, ahh's and mmm's emanating from her with every sip of the new elixir she found in her glass. It's the wonderful world of wine. You don't have to change your hair color, the way you dress, or your home furnishings, to join in and become a groupie - come as you are we're taking all kinds ... everyone's invited. And the best part is every year it's all new, all over again - no retreads, no greatest hits packages to fulfill contracts, no over the hill reunion tours. It's kinda like a box of Bits n' Bites - next vintage, whole new ballgame.



Wine Event Spotlight: *Shores of Erie, Grapes for Humanity, Riesling Insanity*

It's time once again for the **Shores of Erie International Wine Festival**. This year, 12 wineries and 29 restaurants are participating in one of Ontario's best wine festivals. I used to say it was the best little festival nobody knew about - but it would seem that this quiet little festival is growing. Also this year, there are two music stages (main and vineyard) and two locations to enjoy yourself - the quiet and acoustic Vineyard knoll and the louder and more boisterous Main grounds ... so for those who like to rock with your wine and for those who like to mellow with their wine - this festival now has a place for both of you. It all happens from Thursday September 4 to Sunday September 7 at Fort Malden in beautiful Amherstberg - overlooking the Detroit River. For more information visit www.soewinefestival.com. As always, yours truly will be there, giving not one but two seminars - one on White wine and one on Rosé. Also look into the special Shores of Erie Winemaker's Dinner - Friday September 5.

Ticket Giveaway ... Now I know you wanna be there, I know you wanna go. And this year I have another 10 three day passes to give away to the event. So here's what I want you to do. Send you name, phone number and address (with postal code) to me at michael@ontariowinereview.com - and answer this impossible skill testing question: What are the topics of Michael Pinkus' (The Grape

Guy) lectures? (see above). Entry deadline is Tuesday August 19, 2008. Good Luck.

Is your wine cellar feeling a little light but haven't the funds to really stock it properly? Well here is your chance to take a chance and get, potentially, a great deal on a case of wine. Tony Aspler's Grapes for Humanity charity has acquired 100 cases of wine, which they are selling off for the unbeatable price of \$250 per case at an event being held at the Miller tavern on September 8, 2008 from 6-8pm. For details about how you can get involved with the **Great Re-Stock Your Cellar Event** visit the [web announcement](#) for details.

Have you heard the news, Ontario makes some pretty good Riesling – well Cave Spring Cellars is going to prove it to you and in so doing prove that Riesling can also age pretty well. Join Cave Spring Cellars for the **Riesling Estate Vertical Tasting** and taste Rieslings from as far back as 1999 right up to the present. Dates are August 16 and August 30 at 1:00pm and the cost is a measly \$20 to taste a piece of history. All wine will also be available for purchase in limited quantities. For more information, go to www.cavespring.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!

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