

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 – 90
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OntarioWineReview: *WINERY REVIEW – Cornerstone Estate*

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.

About 3 years ago, when Cornerstone was the new winery on the block, I walked in, tried some wines and promptly walked out – they weren't ready ... neither the wine (which left much to be desired) or the service (same).

On this Saturday afternoon, I pulled into the parking lot with little to no expectations for this little winery, and sometimes those are the best expectations to have. No cars were in the parking lot, hence no customers were in the store – could that be a reflection on the wines? Owner Jerry Kopanski answered that question, “We're not on the map, most people find us by accident or are looking for directions to another winery,” he says, “we're on the map this year – I'm hoping the business generated will pay for the listing.” (Wineries pay ~\$5000 to the Wine Council of Ontario for the honour of being in that booklet and on the map).

Mirroring how people were finding his winery, Jerry kinda fell into the wine business by accident. He bought the 19-acre farm from an elderly lady whose husband had just passed and she wanted out. The farm was mostly fruit trees with a large parcel of unplanted land. He asked around about what grew well and the advice was a resounding “grow grapes”. He had people lined up to buy his crop long before he even planted a single vine. So into the ground grapes went and things went well up until 2002 when a bumper crop hit Ontario and everybody was full. “No one wanted my grapes, so it was either let the birds have them or make wine.” Grower and winery owner Daniel Lenko helped make the decision easier by helping Jerry make wine his first year. “I never planned to be a winemaker or winery owner,” he admits quite honestly.

The following year (2003) people once again wanted grapes from him, but Jerry had already invested in equipment (tanks, hoses, press) and barrels ... so winemaker is what he became. Then along came Frank Zeritsch, fresh out of the 30 Bench partnership – Frank is now in his 70's and still loves making wine. He walked in and immediately told Jerry he needed to add fruit wine to the portfolio. “He told me ‘get me a ton of strawberries and see what I can do,’” Jerry reports, “it's now one of my biggest sellers and wins lots of awards.” The apricot story is even more interesting and well worth you stopping by, just to hear Jerry tell the tale of how he made apricot wine for a price that was the pits (literally).

When you drive up to Cornerstone, remember that it's a little place just off John Street – don't make the mistake of coming in from Tufford and knocking on the back door (which has happened on more

then one occasion according to Jerry) – the address is on Tufford, but the entrance is off John. You'll know you're at the right place when you see the sign "Cornerstone" above the door. It's a simple shop with a tasting counter on the right and the wines lining the walls to your left. Glassware is a mish-mash of ISO, dessert glasses and other stuff you'd find about the kitchen; serious tasters should request the ISO's, they're the best of this lot, and the wines show much better in them. Jerry is a good, if at first, shy host, but get him talking and he's very open and honest when he talks about his wines. "The only way I know what I'm doing right or wrong is by talking to my customers – find out what's working and what's not ... keep those products that are and get rid of those that are not," he says with just a hint of his Polish accented English (he's been here in Canada for 21 years) and it would seem that he has the making of a growing wine business on his hands – whether he wanted to be part of it or not.



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

For directions and more information visit www.cornerstonewinery.com

Cornerstone Estate 2006 Riesling Reserve - \$14.00 (W)

Looking for something different and unique in the over-populated Riesling landscape – this just might be the ticket ... sure there are plenty of Reserve Rieslings in the marketplace down Niagara-way, but how many are putting 10% Riesling icewine into them ... sounds sweet, but I assure you it only measures up to about a 2 on the sugar code. That's because the Riesling is fermented bone dry – and the mix of acidity and sugar helps keep this one's finish rather dry on the tongue. The nose has the icewine nuances: apricot and honey; and of course those typical Riesling characteristics: apples, peaches and citrus – but the mouth is a more muted sweetness as the dry Riesling fights the icewine sweetness to a virtual draw. Those smells you sniff become flavours you taste, but light and tasty with a medium-short finish. Interestingly, Jerry Kopanski, owner, opened a bottle of his 2004 version of this wine to taste and see how it was aging. It had the smell of old Riesling, the petrol had developed nicely on both the nose and palate, while the honey and apricots were also present. "This one's (2006) the best we've ever made," Jerry told me, if the '04 is any indication of how the '06 will age, in 4 years this will be even better.

Cornerstone Estate 2006 Cabernet Franc Icewine - \$35.00 / 200ml (19) – (W)

There's a first time for everything, and for Frank Zeritsch, winemaker at Cornerstone, it was red icewine. Sure he'd made the white stuff before, but red proved a little more challenging – but with this wine he's shown he's not only adept at it, but has made it look easy for a first timer, proving that you really can teach an old dog new tricks (Frank is over 70). This is a red berry bowl of fruit, it smells like strawberry and cherry – the palate seems to add an additional element to all that red fruit, namely a sprinkling of cinnamon and nutmeg along with a dose of chocolate mid-palate and a fantastic lengthy finish.

Other Cornerstone wines of interest:

[2006 Vidal / Riesling](#) (W); [2006 Strawberry Festival](#) (W); [2002 Cabernet Franc](#) (W)

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



Weekly Wine Notes and More: JT, HOP, Lost wine and Taste it Again + Vintages

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:

August 19, 2008 – Henry of Pelham 2006 Reserve Pinot Noir ([read](#)) ([listen](#))

August 26, 2008 – Jackson-Triggs 2006 Delaine Chardonnay ([read](#)) ([listen](#))

**NEW Reports in the [On the Road with the Grape Guy](#) section:
*It's been a quiet couple of weeks***

[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
[Hillebrand 2001 Trius Red](#)

[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
[Fielding Estate 2004 Semi Dry Riesling](#)
[Hillebrand 2002 Trius Cabernet Franc](#)
[Peninsula Ridge 2002 Cabernet Franc](#)
[Coyote's Run 2004 Cabernet Franc](#)

Vintages Release: [Ontario "Vintages" Releases: Saturday August 30, 2008 Vintages Release](#)

Ontario Wines of Note at Vintages for August 30, 2008:

[Creekside 2007 Butler's Grant Riesling](#)
Daniel Lenko: [2005 Old Vines Merlot](#), [2006 Reserve Riesling](#), [2005 Signature Chardonnay](#)
[Lailey Vineyard 2006 Late Harvest](#)
[Mike Weir 2007 Sauvignon Blanc](#)
[Wildass 2006 Rosé](#)



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.

Here's where I usually talk about something other than the wine, but I feel it is important to stress the growth of this winery – not in size, but in quality. Three years ago I would have warned you away from making the trip to Cornerstone (be it accidentally or on purpose) but today, the small winery has improved its wines to a point where what's in the bottle now matches or exceeds their very reasonable price points. Sure there are still a few weak wines on the shelf – but every winery has those – on the whole the drive to, and tasting at, Cornerstone will be worth your time; whether it's a unique icewine infused Riesling, the aged Cabernet Franc (2002), the fruit wines, icewines or "most popular Port". Cornerstone is now a winery to watch – and visit.



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

For August 2008

Starting here at Home ... rumour has it that Diamond Estates (owner of EastDell, Lakeview Dan Akyroyd and the 20 Bees property) is now the proud owner of De Sousa winery. Let's hope they can start producing some decent wines there, my last visit turned out to be dreadful. I see this move as a step in the right direction.

Confused about Riesling ... turns out that a recent study of U.S. Wine drinkers found that most have no idea what kind of wine Riesling is. 28% "realized that Riesling is available in a variety of styles", 45% believe Riesling to be only a "sweet wine" and 56% "seldom to never" drink Riesling. Funny stats considering that Riesling sales are up in the U.S. by a whopping 23%.

We're being screwed and plasticized, but not corked ... A recent report out of France says that less than 50% of all wine sold is now under cork. 35% of all bottles are currently sealed with an alternative closure, while another 30% of wines are sold in tetra-pac, bag-in-box, jug or aluminum tin. The statistic on the bottles is the biggest change: in 2000, 99% of bottles were using natural cork; New Zealand leads the charge in this category with 90% of its bottling under screwcap and Australia is next in line with 60%.

Goodbye pop, Hello crack ... it is being reported that two of the top French wine houses, Domaine Romanée-Conti (Burgundy) and Chateau Margaux (Bordeaux) are looking at the screwcap closure for their wines. "It is true," said Paul Pontailier, of Margaux, "we've been doing tests for the past four or five years; but it's too early to say whether we will use them ...". Sounds sacrilegious but it could happen.

Chateau Montelena falls into French hands ... one of the two wineries that helped topple the mighty French wine juggernaut at the Paris Tasting has finally fallen into foreign hands, the French. Michel Reybier, owner of Bordeaux's Chateau Cos d'Estournel has purchased the California icon winery. Now both 1976 winners (Stag's Leap Wine Cellars was the other) are under some form of foreign control, Stag's Leap was purchased in part by an Italian partnership that also involves Chateau Ste. Michelle of Washington State.

A Rosé is a Rosé is a Rosé ... unless you are in France, where rosé has now overtaken white wine in volume sales. It is now estimated that one in five bottles of wine sold in France is rosé. Due to this year's hot summer, pink could hit the half-of-all-bottles mark by the end of the year. The trend is being buoyed by the youth of France, who find it is a great social drink ... and, for all you macho guys out there, it is popular with both men and women.



Wine Event Spotlight: *Niagara Wine Festival turns 57*

Can't believe this festival is in its 57th incarnation ... 57 years of Niagara wine, have we really been making quality wine that long – or were we just smart enough to celebrate the grape? From September 19 to the 28 find out what all the wine-hype is about at this year's **Niagara Wine Festival**. You can take part and enjoy more than 100 events including winery tours and tastings, concerts, Niagara cuisine, artisan shows, wine seminars, family entertainment and one of Canada's largest street parades. Tickets, passes, information and much more can be found at www.niagarawinefestival.com. For those of you who have been turned off by the Niagara festivals in the past year, let me say that, if the [last festival](#) was any indication about the new direction the Niagara festival is taking – this might just be the year to come back and enjoy.

Shores of Erie Winner ... Thanks to all who entered, but I only had 5 pairs of tickets to give away. Our winners are: Gerry Davies (Ottawa), Shirley Botheras (St. Agatha), Angela Allt (Guelph), Brenda Clark (Markham) and Sandy Mailloux (Windsor).

For all those interested in attending, the festival runs from September 4 – 7 and tickets are still available. Details can be found at www.soewinefestival.com. The Grape Guy (Michael Pinkus), namely me, will be giving two interactive tastings and talks: one about white wines and the other, rosé – hope to see you there and that you'll drop by and say "hi".

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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