

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 – 92
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OntarioWineReview: *WINERY REVIEW – Sprucewood Shores*

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 don't expect you've heard of Sprucewood Shores ... unless, of course, you live in the Lake Erie North Shore area, especially with the proliferation of wineries popping up all over Ontario ... but this winery should be on your radar as one to watch, and visit, the next time you are in the area.

Boasting one of the youngest winemakers in Ontario, this family owned and operated winery is a labour of love for the entire clan: Gordon Mitchell, owner and jack-of-all-trades, Hannah Mitchell, the financial side, Steve Mitchell, sales and marketing, Jake Mitchell multimedia/website design, Marlaina, events and, Tanya, daughter and talented winemaker. These are the behind the scenes folks. It's what you'll see when you first arrive that will impress you.

The family has been growing grapes on this property for the past 18 years. In their first year of production as a winery, 2004, they produced some 700 cases of wine and from the 2007 vintage they produced 2500; a nice steady increase over the past 4 vintages. The property itself sits on 52 acres of land of which 32 are planted; 25% of their grapes are used for their own wine while the rest is sold off. But that's enough facts and details – let's take a look around.

You enter the property on a long winding driveway, that ambles you through the vineyard, passes you in front of the winery and finally deposits you at the back of the property, overlooking the waters of Lake Erie.

The “back” of Sprucewood is the “front” – that's where the entrance is located; hope I don't lose you here. It's out “back” where you'll find the patio for special functions and general lounging, overlooking the vineyard while far off is the main road. The “back-front”, (if you turn 180 degrees upon entry), you'll see Lake Erie and the piece of beach the Mitchell's have reserved for picnickers in the warm weather months. A new feature added this year is the “beach picnic” (see wow factor). Now, let's step inside and get away from all this back-to-front-and-turn-yourself-about talk.

Sprucewood reminds me of one of those old homes from the movies, with secret rooms and stairs that are just waiting to be discovered. Upon entry, you'll notice a busy, yet sedate and tranquil atmosphere; art adorns the walls, to your right, is the large “L”-shaped tasting bar, there's a staircase to your left that goes up to the gallery that overlooks the tasting room. A private anteroom to your left, just beyond the stairs, is reserved for private tastings. The tasting room itself is quite expansive and when you walk across it, you'll find yourself at another set of doors, which take you to

the outdoor patio.

The upstairs gallery is open to the happenings below and you can walk the entire length leading to a small balcony overlooking the vineyard and patio. The place, now only 2 years old, still has that “new-car” smell and look to it.

Sprucewood is very inviting and pretty from both the inside and outside, which suits this “best looking family of wine” quite well. While I have heard some say Tanya just might be one of Ontario’s better looking winemaker’s, son Steve has been described, by many a lady who sees him as a “hunk”; these two siblings get their looks from mom ... where Gord fits into the equation I’m not quite sure (wink). However, neither the people nor the place is just eye-candy ... the real sweet (and dry) stuff is in the glass.



Grape Guy’s Picks of the Bunch: *Odd Blend Rose and Late Harvest Riesling-Traminer*
For directions and more information visit www.sprucewoodshores.com

Sprucewood Shores 2007 Rosé - \$10.95 (W)

Odd combinations usually produce some of the most interesting wines. Who would have even thought that adding Viognier to Shiraz would cause such a stir, or blending Gamay and Pinot Noir would result in such a palate pleaser. Well here’s another interesting blend that works remarkably well: Cabernet Franc and Pinot Noir. Wineries in the Lake Erie North Shore have really embraced this grape (Cabernet Franc), as all Ontario wineries should, and have come up with some exceedingly good wines using it straight or blended. This one’s a rosé, yes it’s pink – but it’s not the treacly pink stuff we all grew up on, although the nose might give you that impression. Smells of strawberry and cherry greet the olfactory lobes, while the tongue will also think sweet, as a note of caramel starts off the tasting experience before giving way to sweet ripe cherries. It all ends with a dry tart cherry finish – what an awesome taste sensation. All that from a pink wine – amazing huh?

Sprucewood Shores 2007 Late Harvest Riesling-Traminer Vidal - \$12.95 / 375ml – (W)

Another odd combination of grapes, with more intriguing results. Late Harvest usually signifies upped levels of sweetness, but let’s hold off on revealing that until we give up some descriptors. The nose is way too inviting, with a lychee-peachy-pear mix of smells. In the mouth, it’s smooth, yet not syrupy, flavours explode with tropicality and locality: Bosc pears, apricots, peaches in light syrup, lychee fruit and hints of melon. Now, as for your sweetness guess ... all who said two (2) were dead on, the rest of you, what were you thinking?

Other Sprucewood Shores wines of interest:

[2007 Pinot Gris](#) (W)

Two short supply must buys:

[Chateau des Charmes 2005 Rosé Sparkling](#) (L) - [Organized Crime Winery 2007 Riesling](#) (W)

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



Weekly Wine Notes and More: *Two from the Hill, 1 Coyote, a bunch of back 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:

September 16, 2008 – Two Hillebrand 2007 Artist Series Sauvignon Blancs ([read](#)) ([listen](#))

September 23, 2008 – Coyote’s Run 2007 Cabernet ([read](#)) ([listen](#))

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

[Shores of Erie International WineFestival – Winemakers Dinner](#)
[Shores of Erie International Wine Festival – The Main Event](#)
[Chilean Preview](#)

[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
[Inniskillin 2002 Cabernet Franc Reserve](#)

[What's NEW ... Taste it Again Grape Guy \(blog\)](#)

Find out what has happened to some of my favourites over the past few years

[Mike Weir 2003 Cabernet Shiraz](#)
[Creekside 2002 Cabernet-Merlot](#)
[Harbour Estates Winery 2002 Cabernet](#)

[NEW BLOG – What I'm drinking Tonight](#)

When it's not an Ontario wine, here's what I'm pulling out of the cellar
[2 New ones added](#)

Vintages Release: [Ontario "Vintages" Releases: Saturday September 27, 2008 Vintages Release](#)

Ontario Wines of Note at Vintages for September 27, 2008:

[Chateau des Charmes 2006 Late Harvest Riesling](#)
[Birchwood Estate 2006 Cabernet Franc Icewine](#)
[Flat Rock Cellars 2007 Twisted](#)
[Henry of Pelham 2007 Off-Dry Reserve Riesling](#)
[Ridgepoint 2006 Medium Dry Riesling](#)
[Ridgepoint 2005 Meritage](#)



The Wow Factor: Taking a break on the patio or by the lake

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.

Imagine being able to buy a picnic basket loaded with all kinds of goodies, like gourmet cheeses, breads and meats and heading down to a beach where you can sip on your Sauv, Riesling, Vidal or any other of the dozen or so choices of wines available. Well just such a thing is possible at Sprucewood. This year, Sprucewood opened up their "Picnickers-beach". The property is right on Lake Erie and it's a short 400 foot walk down to the water's edge, where you can spread out a blanket or take over a picnic table. After lunch, and if you dare, you can dip your foot into the lake. Or if you stress about being so close to water, take your basket out to the beautiful sun-drenched patio area. Plenty of ways to while away the afternoon with food and wine.



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

For September 2008

Staff Change ... After the 20 Bees flame out many wondered what would happen with winemaker Sue-Ann Staff. It was said in more than one circle, "she is just too talented to be out of work for long." In the spring, a rumour was floated by Sue-Ann herself, that she was moving back to the family farm to start her own premium line of wines. Well, as it turns out, she has been snapped up by another buzzed about brand ... she will take over winemaking duties for John Howard's Cellars of Distinction from current winemaker Andrzej Lipinski. This harvest, she will be brought up to speed and transitioned in over the next month. She will also be performing double duty for John, shuttling between Ontario and France, where he has another vinous project.

And So It Begins ... A short press release from Pelham hit my desk on September 18 proclaiming the start of harvest in Niagara: "Hand picking of Pinot Noir and Chardonnay grapes [presumably destined for sparkling wine] began this morning to mark the official beginning of the harvest at the

vineyards of Henry of Pelham ... This years' start is a week later then normal due to the rain during the season but quality looks good ... Harvest will continue through late October when we start to harvest most of our reds."

Homegrown (or is that fed) Goodness ... Vineyard raised lamb is the latest food and wine innovation to be featured on the menu at Peller Estates Winery Restaurant. Peller obtained three lambs from Featherstone Winery, which used the little bleaters in the vineyard to trim the leaves off the bottom of the vines and expose the grapes to the sun. "I have a great respect for these lambs and so I created a dish that used the entire lamb," said Chef Jason Parsons. Found on the menu was Lamb Assiette – braised shoulder, a tongue and kidney pie, a mint and garlic roast leg, flash seared liver and a sautéed lamb chop. All was garnished with local chanterelles, fava beans and fresh mint ... fava beans huh? Does this mean that for next season Peller will be working at making a nice Chianti?

Artevino 2008 Wine Awards Announced ... With TASTE! just around the corner the winners for this year's Artevino competition were recently announced. Artevino is the wine competition that celebrates Eastern Ontario wineries and wines: all wines entered had to be made by wineries in the Quinte region (which includes Prince Edward County and surrounding areas). The top scoring County White was Rosehall Run 2006 Chardonnay Rosehall Vineyard, while the top scoring Red was Norman Hardie 2007 County Pinot Noir.

Taking on the Monopoly ... Earlier this summer, Derek Forward started an on-line petition to end the Beer Store monopoly in Ontario stating: "the LCBO and the Beer Store, both founded in 1927, are arcane institutions that have no place in today's world. Originally founded out of the puritanical belief that all alcohol consumption was wicked, these two monopolies have controlled the warehousing, distribution and retail of alcohol in Ontario ever since ... We believe in today's world individuals do not need their consumption habits to be dictated by government institutions ... As for retailing alcohol, this should no longer be the domain of the 2 monopolies." The Beer Store is run by Molson-Coors Brewing Company, Belgium-based InBev and Japan-based Sapporo, though many still believe it is a government run shop like the LCBO. Forward insists that the problem with these two giants is that they eliminate choice and are out of touch with today's consumer. The petition can be found [here](#), or check out [End the LCBO](#) for other juicy tidbits.

What's in a Name ... One of my favourite British Columbia winery visits this summer was to a place called Golden Mile Cellars (see [Day 4](#) & [Day 9 / 10](#)). Effective September 4, 2008 they have changed their name to Road 13 Vineyards, same owners and winemaker, same great wine, only the name has changed.

France Ekes Out a Little Revenge ... Taking a page out of the American playbook of wine competition shockers, Guigal's Chateau d'Ampuis Cote Rotie 2004 has won Australian magazine "Winestate's" third annual "World's Greatest Shiraz" challenge, a competition that included nearly 800 wines from around the world. Placing third was another French wine, Guigal's Brune et Blonde Cote Rotie 2003, while Australia's Henschke's Hill of Grace 2004 placed second. All-in-all, the French placed 3 wines in the top five, which prompted Winestate's editor to dub the competition "Judgement of Adelaide", a reference to the Judgment of Paris in 1976 where the Americans bested the French in both the Red and White categories. "This is the first time that the French have won the competition. Usually Australians dominate, but this year we have three Rhone Valley wines in the top five. It truly is revenge of the French!"

Holy water turns to wine ... Mark Hope-Urwin, a former executive with the John Lewis department store chain, has been recruited by Birmingham Cathedral to oversee a radical change to its image and branding. His plans include a chain of city-centre wine bars and "loyalty cards" for regular worshippers. The wine bars would feature stained-glass windows, pictures with a religious theme and be decorated in "Episcopal purple". The loyalty card would encourage a sense of belonging as well as be used for discounts in the cathedral book and gift shop; as for the wine bars, that's just "keeping up with the times". I wish I was kidding here but truth really is stranger than fiction.



Wine Event Spotlight: *4 events from all over the province*

With a new tasting room, a new patio and a bunch of new wines Calamus Winery is ready to celebrate. Join them for “**Fallstock**” Saturday October 4 from 11 to 5. Live music, wine specials, plenty of food and lots more happenings. Check out the [Calamus website](#) for all the details – and bring your best names along as they hold a contest to name their archer-mascot.

Saturday October 11 sees the **4th Annual Harvest Barbeque Dinner** taking place at The Grange of Prince Edward County ... a feast of food with previews of the newly released Trumpour’s Mill wines. Entertainment will be provided by Kevin Quain. Tickets are \$60 and reservations are a must. See [The Grange website](#) for details.

Moving across the province to the Lake Erie North Shore we find the showpiece winery, Viewpointe, is hosting **Wine and Dine with Number 9**. Gordie Howe will be on hand to sign his book “Nine” and eat a helping, or two, of his reported favourite, smoked beef brisket. There are two seatings for this exciting event 1-2pm and 2-3pm on Sunday October 5. Tickets are \$110 and includes lunch, a book and the opportunity to dine with a legend. [Details can be found here.](#)

Finally, join winemaker Andrzej Lipinski Sunday September 28 as he hosts a **Winemaker’s Luncheon at Treadwell’s** in Port Dalhousie. 6 wines (2 from each of his winery projects) will be poured during the 4-course lunch. Taste some of Andrzej most acclaimed wines from Megalomaniac, Organized Crime and newest venture, Foreign Affair. Tickets are a very reasonable \$75 and can be purchased by calling Treadwell’s restaurant at 905-934-9797.

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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