

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 – 95
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OntarioWineReview: *Boozy Gifts for the Holidays*

With the holidays just around a corner, the mind drifts to days off, a new year and what to get so-and-so for the holidays. I've heard that this can cause stress in people's lives -getting someone the "perfect gift"... I don't think the stress should be on the "perfect gift". It should be on getting somebody something they'll actually use - the perfect gift ain't the perfect gift if it's just gonna sit on a shelf and collect dust, unless of course you get someone a box of Swiffers. To that end, I wandered into the LCBO's gift tasting a few weeks back, eyeballed the gift packs and compiled this list of useful gifts for those on your list ...

For The New Year's Partier ... tailor-made for those who are heading out on December 31st the Jackson-Triggs tote bag (\$17.95 – #83147) seems the perfect accessory. A bottle of J-T Sparkling Brut in a thermal bag, and they even provide you with a special closure for those who don't finish the bottle – blasphemy I know, but it happens.

One Definitely for the Ladies ... from Colio, it's the Girls' Night Out gift pack (\$49.95 – #89706) - three bottles of wine (Chardonnay, Merlot, Merlot/Chardonnay) packed in a reusable armoire - I suspect for holding jewelry – a place to hang the necklaces, a drawer for bracelets and rings, etc. Nifty and neat.

For the Classy One on Your List ... Classy Wine from a Classy Name. One of the classiest guys in the wine business died this year (Robert Mondavi). This Private Selection gift pack (\$37.95 – #82693), with a bottle of 2006 Merlot and 2007 Chardonnay Private Selection wines in a very classy gift box, echoes the classiness of the man who brought you the wine ... (Mondavi, although the giver may be classy too; at least he will get some class points for this gift.)

For the Couple Who Can't Decide ... if you have a partner like I have you're drinking red while she's drinking white. From Jackson-Triggs comes another tailor-made gift that will keep everyone involved satisfied: a two sided thermal bag that separates (\$31.95 – #621391) – it comes complete with a bottle of red and a bottle of white. This is pretty ingenious for the above couple. The bag separates into two distinctive bags (one black and one gold – so there's no mixing them up) held together with a zipper so they can arrive at a party together; they can divide and conquer when they get there (both with their own bottle).

For Those Who Like to Cook with Wine ... sure I like cooking with wine, sometimes I even put it in the food, get this gift set from Masi (\$27.95 – #898460) and you've got a chance to do both. A bottle of Serego Alighieri (red wine) and a bottle of Masi's own balsamic vinegar ... it's the best of both worlds.

For the Fruit Lover on Your List ... meaning somebody who likes fruit in their alcohol. I tried this Fruili Strawberry beer that I quite enjoyed. It definitely had lots of strawberry taste - what's more, they even provide you with a nice drinking glass: four beer, one glass ...who needs friends (\$14.50 – #83816).

For the Poker Player ... getting all liquored up and playing poker goes together like a horse and carriage. Patron Silver Tequila gives you the chance to bring it all together again with their poker pack (\$76.90 – #49478) - a bottle of tequila in an aluminum carry case complete with poker chips and a deck of cards .

For that Secretive Tippler on your List ... you know one, or at least suspect one, so why not be an enabler this holiday season and pick up the Gibson's Finest Sterling with vacuum flask (\$29.95 - #604231).

For the Spirits Lover ... we have our classy wine gift covered, but for those who dig more on the spirits, this Appleton Rum pack (\$22.95 – 84657) gives you two tumblers and a small bottle of rum in a classy leatherette box ... civilized, especially because you can share (obviously rum drinkers share while beer drinkers do not).

For Those Who Like Something Sweet and Tasty ... this is also for those with a sweet tooth on your list: Dooley's Toffee (\$16.95 – 600403) is a tasty little bevy that comes complete with two glasses and a mixing spoon - but whose kidding who, this one goes great straight up.

Next newsletter is my holiday gift list – excluding boozy gifts of course – reviews and ideas on books, games, glassware, etc.



Grape Guy's Picks of the Bunch: Three at Different Price Points

Chateau des Charmes 2007 Gamay Noir 'Droit' - \$16.95 (W, L, WTH)

www.chateaudescharmes.com

Back in 2002, Chateau des Charmes made my favourite version of their now legendary Gamay Noir 'Droit'. I think that wine is about to be overshadowed by the 2007 version. Much has been said about the 2007 vintage in Ontario – words and phrases that include “best ever” have been used to describe it ... and with wines like this coming out of cellars across the province there's no wonder. I'm going to tell you two things about this wine you might not believe. 1) the wine is unoaked and 2) the wine was left on the skins for 14 days. I tell you this because the smells and flavours smell and taste oak influenced and the colour is deep and dark. The nose is full of cherry and raspberry – typical for Gamay, but there is also a touch of cinnamon, clove and allspice. The palate is big, with ripe tannins, big cherry flavours, peppery nuances, and a black cherry finish with great acidity that keeps you coming back for more. Round and soft, yet still with a big presence in the mouth, if that is at all possible to wrap your head around. This might be an indelicate description but I heard it and liked it, so I'm going to use it here: “this is one kick-ass wine”.

Stoney Ridge 2005 Meritage – Founder's Signature Reserve - \$23.15 (W, WTH)

www.stoneyridge.com

This wine made a few changes in my glass and thankfully the final change was the one I most enjoyed. I opened this bottle and immediately was accosted by leathery, gamy and very subtle hints of black raspberry. The palate proved a little off-putting with lots and lots of green notes: green pepper, pea pods, green beans and freshly tanned leather – there was also a mercifully short finish that introduced a little cedar and vanilla. 30-minutes later, while cleaning up my tasting lab, I gave

the glass a quick sniff; interestingly there was enough of a shift away from the green that I decided to give it another hour. An hour-or-so after that (almost 2 hours after opening), a different wine emerged, the greenness had blown off leaving behind a supple and chewy wine with a juiciness not hinted at 2-hours earlier; black berries and vanilla were most notable as its signature ... there was also a cedary-smokiness left behind on the palate that lingered twice as long as the initial finish. This is one of those wines that needs time – both in the bottle and in the glass to come around, but when it does – look out, it's very good. Lie down 2-3 years before enjoying, or decant an hour for now enjoyment.

Kacaba 2004 Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon - \$42.95 (W)

www.kacaba.com

Big occasions call for big wines, and that's where Kacaba's 2004 Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon comes in. Although labeled as a straight Cab Sauv this wine does have a bit of Cabernet Franc in it to round it off (about 15%) – it also has plenty of wood contact, 32 months to be exact, in both French and American barrels. The nose is big, with sour cherry, blackberry and black pepper, there's also a touch of green pepper on the nose. On the palate the green pepper comes across more forcefully with spices and herbs as well as a blend of black fruits that cross the palate. A good finish with plenty of acidity and a sweet cherry cedar finish which lingers a long time on the tongue. This wine was a Bronze medal winner at the Ontario Wine Awards in 2008.

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:

October 28, 2008 – Chateau des Charmes 2007 Aligote ([read](#)) ([listen](#))

November 4, 2008 – Reif Estate 2007 Cabernet Merlot ([read](#)) ([listen](#))

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

[Pizza at Southbrook](#)

[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
[Southbrook Winery 1997 Triomphe Cabernet Merlot](#)

[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

Nothing this week – but keep checking back

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

When it's not an Ontario wine, here's what I'm pulling out of the cellar

[5 new wines added](#)

Vintages Release: [Ontario "Vintages" Releases: Saturday November 8, 2008 Vintages Release](#)

Ontario Wines of Note at Vintages for November 8, 2008:

[Cave Spring Cellars Estate 2005 Cabernet Franc](#)

[Fielding Estate 2007 Riesling](#)

[Inniskillin 2004 Montague Vineyard Pinot Noir](#)

[Jackson-Triggs 2005 Delaine Vineyard Syrah](#)

Also check out the [Vintages Essentials Collection Selections](#) for Fall 2008



In the Cellar: *with Dan Sullivan (Rosehall Run)*

When it comes to passion, you can't beat the boys from the County (Prince Edward County) and one in particular, Dan Sullivan - owner and winemaker of Rosehall Run - is right up there. On the same hot early-July day I visited Norman Hardy I drove the half-kilometer down the road to visit with Dan in his new production area. Dan used to make all his wine in the basement of the wine store; you could look over the railing while tasting and see the barrels all crammed into that little space. Sometimes you'd catch a glimpse of Dan squeezing between the narrow rows. Now Dan has so much room I think he might get lost in here. The barrels aren't crammed together, in fact they look sparse by comparison. As Dan toured me around his new eight-month-old building (opened November 2007), he seemed to almost skip from room-to-room. He took the stairs three at a time, pointed out modifications and gravity flow area; where hoses and pumps and tanks and barrels would go - he was like a kid in his own candy store ... Does that make him Willy Wonka? That's a debate for another day. Let's check out and see (or taste) if Dan's wines warrant all this new space.

We start upstairs in the tank room, where we taste the 2007 Gewurztraminer - a mix of Niagara (75%) and County (25%) fruit, set for release in July (2008). This will make a great summertime patio wine (for a few summers to come) with good floral, rosy and melon character.

Downstairs we went, with Dan miles ahead of us, he's practically dancing as he presents the 100 percent barrel fermented 2007 Rosehall Vineyard Estate Chardonnay (set for release Christmas 2008). This one shows lots of complexity in both smell and flavor: pineapple, apple, touch of pine, spices, melted butter, a cinnamon-nutmeg combo, nectarine and peach - all show up on the nose, on the palate or both. If this wine holds these flavors and smells through bottling, Dan's gonna have himself a real winner here.

Dan smiles as he steals some wine from another barrel and doles out a sample. This time it's a red. Deep and rich in color, black smoky fruit on the nose ... this is the 2007 Estate Cabernet Franc (set for release spring 2009). By release date this will have spent twelve to fourteen months in barrel (mainly French wood). "07 was such a great year here, Dan says, "I want to give this wine a nice long time in barrel," his smile widens as he completes this sentence, "I don't want to deny it's birth right." This is another stunner: vanilla, cherry, raspberry and supple tannins fill the mouth and we still have another four to six months to go.

"I should've showed you that one last," Dan says, "but I know you're such a fan of Franc I couldn't wait." As I sip on the Franc, Dan goes on to describe his Cuvee County wines. A series of wines (currently Chardonnay, Cabernet Franc and Pinot Noir) which are made from all County fruit, but not necessarily Rosehall's vineyards. The prices will range from \$18.95 - \$22.95. He offers me up a sample of the Cuvee County Cab Franc - red raspberry and tobacco notes with a cherry finish ... quite a nice wine for under twenty bucks.

We finish our tour back upstairs where we rinse out our glasses in the "lab-room" sink (a small anteroom off the main area full of test tubes, beakers and gadgets). Dan's still smiling widely as he looks around - his wife Lynn calls the building "his new toy". Some guys get excited about a new stereo or television, video game or the latest DVD release of Batman ... while there are those who prize a building - and not just any building - their new production area ... proving that winemakers truly are a different breed.

After the barrels and tanks we crossed the field back to the tasting room where we tried some recently bottled wines and upcoming releases. Dan left us in the very capable hands of his wine store helper (I'm horrible with names), because he had to get ready for Six Barrels for Six Chefs over at Huff. Among those sampled at the bar, and not previously reviewed, the [2007 Fieldstone Vineyard Riesling](#) and the [2007 Chardonnay Sur Lie](#) proved to be incredible hits; while the [2007 Sullyzwicker White](#) and [2005 Cabernet Sauvignon](#) continued to be favorites. As for Dan's new "toy"

- he seems to be putting it to very good use. Cheers.



Wine Event Spotlight: 20 Valley – Prince Edward County - Featherstone

The folks of the 20 Valley are at it again – this time they seem to be going for the tummy, in a big way. Twelve wineries are taking part in **Wrapped Up in the Valley**, a two weekend deal where the wineries are pairing up tasty little treats like Pear Chutney, Mini Onion Cheese Tarts and Homemade Parmesan Risotto with reds, whites, icewine and sparkling wines. Plus, there's "a little something" for you to keep or giveaway – depending how generous you're feeling. It all happens on the following two weekends in November 22-23 and 29-30. Visit www.twentyvalley.ca for more information or call 905-562-3636 ... See you on the taste trail.

Speaking of the Taste Trail, Prince Edward County is famous for putting that name into the minds and hearts of the wine and food lovers of Ontario. Now they give you yet another reason to visit, **Countylicious**. From November 7 to 22 a prix fixe menu (appetizer, entrée and dessert for \$30) is being offered at 11 of the County's finest eateries. Visit www.countylicious.ca for details of participating restaurants, menus and accommodations.

Finally, one of my favourite winery events is the **Featherstone pre-Hibernation Holiday Open House** (I threw in the hibernation part). Before proprietors Louise and Dave close up for the season, they throw a shindig full of food, new wines and plenty of spirit. Louise's gourmet treats and recipes are sure to please and they sure do make you want to be a guest at her place over the holidays. It happens over two weekends, November 22-23 and 29-30 – check out www.featherstonewinery.ca for hours and directions ... just another event where I might see you.

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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