

## 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 – 96**  
**November 20, 2008**

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#### News from OntarioWineReview ... *The Challenge has been Issued*

We are just mere days from the official announcement of our next Challenge, but I thought it appropriate to sneak-peak you on the dates, the grape and the where. The next OntarioWineReview Grape Challenge will take place over the course of four nights in February (4, 9, 16, 23), at Campbell House Museum in downtown Toronto (Queen West & University) – and the grape: Pinot Noir. Mark the dates on your calendar – tickets to the general public go on sale in December. Look for the official announcement in the next edition of the newsletter and on the website.

**Subscriber Exclusive:** For those wishing to get a jump on this tasting event, either for themselves or as a gift, tickets are \$50 per night and are available by calling either 416-346-2223 or 416-385-9400 – leave a message and I'll get back to you within 24 hours. Or email me for further details: [michael@ontariowinereview.com](mailto:michael@ontariowinereview.com)

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#### OntarioWineReview: Special Edition – Gift Giving/Getting Guide

This holiday season it doesn't have to be about a bottle of wine or another set of glasses. Show your giftee that you put much thought into their present (even if you didn't). Below, is a list of gift ideas for your wine loving friends, or for you to put on your "Get Me This" list. I have tried, read, watched, played, or sampled each and every one, and I found them interesting/fun or an intriguing enough to pass a recommendation on to you.

**Winerd (game) ...** What are the attributes of a wine that is described as "okay"? Well, if you're playing this game with the myopically challenged late at night (or what ever other excuse they give), the real question might be "What are the attributes of a wine described as "oaky"?" This trivial pursuit style game with questions about regions, styles, grape varieties and all things vineous - along with a tasting component, is interactive and fun. Heck, even the playing pieces are corks (plastic ones, but corks nonetheless). My friends and I played three games (minus the tasting part) and had a blast. Granted, we had polished off three bottles before we started playing - which might be another reason given for why the wine was possibly "okay". In three games, I missed one question – and I tell you the pressure was on me to answer all of them. Of course, being as competitive as I am I am sure I put that pressure on myself. If you're looking for an okay game, okay wines and an okay time – this game more than over-delivers on that description. You can find it online at [www.winerdgame.com](http://www.winerdgame.com) - or at a game retailer near you.

**Orgasmic Appetizers by Shari Darling (cook book) ...** Who could go wrong with a title like that? Paging through the book is a feast for the eye and a smorgasbord of ideas for your next party or get-together - or why not try some of these scrumptious little dishes to treat yourself ... just try to show some restraint when it's all cooked up. Dishes like "prosciutto-wrapped grilled ravioli", "pecan pesto & sundried tomato toasts", "virgin cherries stuffed with goat cheese" and "sex and the lobster sliders" had my mouth watering and had my foodie-girlfriend, Erica, reaching for the cookware (she's already got a few pages dog-eared for future reference). Each recipe comes complete with wine recommendation – though it's style of wine, not precise bottles, so you'll have to do a little thinking on your own. Having met Shari Darling and spent some time with her, I can tell you

that she stands behind, and has personally tried, each and every one of these recipes ... Whether you find these truly "orgasmic" is up to your own personal tastebuds, but I can guarantee that at least your mouth will start watering and get the juices of your glands (salivatory) flowing – any other flowing juices are up to you.

**The 500 Best Value Wines in the LCBO by Rod Phillips (book)** ... Rod does a fine job of breaking down the wines currently available at the LCBO, by both category (red and white) and country. His notes are short, concise and on point and make it easy to find the wine you are looking for. He also provides a bit of space for you make your own notes ... a great gift for frequenters of the LCBO.

**John Cleese "Wine for the Confused" (DVD)** ... This wine 101 edu-tainment program appeared on PBS and is a great tool for those new to wine or lovers of John Cleese. Cleese's passion for wine shines through as he discusses personal experiences with wine while touring around to a few of his favourite wineries in California, and discussing his "favourite" grapes. Topics include grape variety, winemaking, serving and storage. The centerpiece of the program focuses on segments of John's which are interspersed throughout the show. Here, he tests his friends by playing a few wine based party games like guess-the-flavours, red-or-white and find-the-expensive-bottle-by-taste-alone. Cleese's joking style and confused expressions keep you watching and chuckling, while you learn a little bit in the process. Be sure to see the very funny sketch about selecting wine in a restaurant, where John plays both the snobbish waiter and bewildered patron. Plenty of bonuses on the disc to keep you watching and learning for hours.

**A Good Year (movie / DVD)** ... Based on the book by Peter Mayle this movie teams up actor Russell Crowe and director Ridley Scott (again). This time, they trade the manly action sequences of guns blazing, espionage and sci-fi for a more touchie-feelie topic – love and wine ... maybe, one man's inner search to find his roots and regain control of his life ... but perhaps I am reading too much into this. Crowe plays an investment broker who inherits his uncle's vineyard in France – of course he wants to sell it and be done with it until... Well if I gave the plot and its twists away, there'd be no sense in you getting it. The critics panned this movie, more for the departure of content and style from the usual Scott / Crowe collaboration than for its storyline – I guess it's tough to go from Sand and Sandel epics to a good old fashioned love story that centers around wine and beautiful scenery. Time to rediscover this one for yourself or give it as a gift – either way somebody is bound to thank you for it.

**Sideways (movie / DVD)** ... Since I am talking about wine movies, I'd be remiss if I didn't remind you about one of the greatest wine movies of all time: Sideways. By now I'm sure I don't have to tell you the storyline. For those on your list who have yet to see it, this is the classic buddy-road movie about Pinot Noir that they'll always cherish and love you for getting them. This is your chance to make them understand why you snicker at the term "drinking and dialing", and why Merlot has such a negative connotation. This might be the primer they need to understand your wine obsession.

**"The Easiest Wine Stopper in the World" (gadget)** ... Sometimes the best and simplest gadgets are found in the most unlikely of places. A few weeks ago, I was wandering about in Niagara-on-the-Lake and happened into Crabtree & Evelyn. There on the shelf, tucked away in a corner, was something billed as "The Easiest Wine Stopper in the World" and it really was. You push the top onto a bottle until you hear the click, to undo it, you push the button on top and pull it off. It seemed so simple and easy I decided to buy one and see if my mechanically challenged mom could use it (in truth I thought it would be easy to use with arthritic fingers too). Pop on, push off ... easy one handed operation, even simpler with two. Available at Crabtree & Evelyn stores in Niagara-on-the-Lake, Pen Centre (St. Catharines) and Mapleview Shopping Centre (Burlington). Only \$7.95.

**Vin-O-Life (gadget)** ... Another simple yet useful wine friendly gadget I found in a winery gift shop this year (not sure which one) was called Vin-O-Life: Wine Filter and Saver. To break it down, this is a plastic tube with a microfilter wrapped around 3/4 of the base. You insert it into the neck of the bottle and pour your wine. The device filters out all those nasty bits of sediment, tartaric crystals and anything else that might be lurking around in a bottle of wine. When you're done pouring, you snap the lid closed to keep any more air from getting inside and store it away until you next glass, some 5-minutes later. [www.winecellarexpress.com](http://www.winecellarexpress.com)

**"Uncorked" (DVD)** ... For those looking to go a little deeper with their wine knowledge than what John Cleese is offering, you might be interested in this three DVD six episode set narrated by Ted Allen. Episodes take you through simple tasting techniques to three major regions of California (Napa, Sonoma, and the Central Coast) before depositing you into a two-part discussion of France. A good collection of educational wine knowledge and history.

**The Definitive Guide to Canadian Artisanal and Fine Cheese – by Gurth Pretty (book)** ... As followers of my On The Road with the Grape Guy blog know I was in British Columbia this past summer. Thanks to this, Gurth's first book, I was able to find Carmeli's Goat Cheese Artisan cheese shop and taste-test not only some

of the best goat cheese of my life, but by far the best gelato I have ever had, bar none, made exclusively from goat's milk. Such is the beauty of Gurth's book – no matter where you are in this fine country of ours, from coast-to-coast, town-to-town, Gurth has assembled the places to visit for cheese lovers.

**The Definitive Canadian Wine and Cheese Cookbook – by Gurth Pretty + Tony Aspler (book) ...** So it only stands to reason that Gurth would meld his love of cheese with the universal cheese pairing, wine. Together with fellow wine writer, Tony Aspler, Gurth put together his favourite recipes – all made with cheese. From brunch to lunch, appetizers to hors d'oeuvres, main course, salads and dessert – Gurth cooks with all things cheese, while Tony uses his years of experience, and the margins, to pair these dishes with wines that will not only tickle the palate, but enhance the enjoyment of the dish.

**Porto Sippers (gadget) ...** Imagine a cat sitting up on its haunches with its tail straight up in the air in the shape of a question mark – now lop off the cat's head and you have the look of these funny shaped glasses. No bigger than 3 inches high and a 2 inch curly-que tail these "Porto Sippers" claim (on the box) to "date back to the 1600's in Europe ... [and] allow you to sip port through the stem to maximize your wine tasting experience." Well, I'm not sure the practicality of these little "hand blown" glasses – at times, I found myself tipping the glass to sip from the little rim instead of trying to drink from the "stem" or cat's tail, but I'll tell you what the fun part was – the way you could aerate your port by blowing through the straw and creating bubbles from the bottom of the glass ... It changed the port dramatically by smoothing out rough tannins and bringing out the fruit and chocolate nuances. This discovery changed my opinion of these Porto Sippers from silly little kitch items to something useful and fun. For the port-lover who has everything - [www.mariefrancecarriere.com](http://www.mariefrancecarriere.com).

**Graham's Port (drink) ...** 10-Year-Old Tawny, 2003 Late Bottled Vintage – These two bottles arrived on my doorstep a few weeks back and I can tell you without a doubt, they are both excellent products for celebrating the holidays. The LBV is deep and dark in colour with plums, chocolate and rich cherry flavours; the 10-Year-Old deals up almonds, caramel, figs, honey and dried cherry. I always find that LBVs are best after being open a few days – they drop tannins and becomes very smooth. As for 10-Year-Old Tawny, it's great any time. Both are available at the LCBO.

**Crazy 8 from Applewood Winery (drink) ...** Cider doesn't always have to come from apples or pears, that's why this drink from Applewood Farm Winery – near Stouffville – is such a refreshing change. I'm not promoting it as a gift – but I think it would be a unique drink to have lying around the house for the holidays, to serve or just enjoy. I'd go so far as to put it in the glass with the turkey dinner. Oh, and what is it you ask? An 8.8% alcohol cider made from raspberries – simply delicious ... [www.applewoodfarmwinery.com](http://www.applewoodfarmwinery.com)



**Grape Guy's Picks of the Bunch:** *Two Syrah/Shiraz and something bittersweet*  
See individual winery website for information.

**13th Street Winery 2006 Wismer Vineyard Syrah - \$24.00 – (W)**  
[www.13thstreetwines.com](http://www.13thstreetwines.com)

Back in the fall I found myself at an event for Whitty Farms. You may or may not know that the Whitty Farm folks have joined forces with the 13th Street folk to bring us a bigger better 13th Street Winery. This really should take 13th Street out of the shadows of its current cult winery status and shine a much deserved brighter light on it. What this will mean to existing fans of 13th Street is that those hard to get wines you have enjoyed over the years will become even harder to get once more people know about this excellent winery. On this day, Whitty got themselves a special license to pour wine on their property and 13th Street brought out two new wines just for the occasion – this happened to be one of them. This is a very fruit driven Syrah with lots of cherry aromas and flavours – also hints of white pepper, but this one's all about the cherry, because the cherries keeps coming back to you, especially on the finish. Light and smooth and lots of, you guessed it, cherry ... that's what this 2006 Syrah is made of.

**Konzelmann 2007 Barrel Aged Shiraz - \$13.00 – (W)**  
[www.konzelmannwines.com](http://www.konzelmannwines.com)

Looking at the wine above (13th Street 2006 Wismer Syrah), I can't help but think this is the tale of two diametrically opposed growing seasons. 2006 was considered a so-so year, while 2007 was the vintage of a lifetime, best on record, absolutely perfect – you pick your superlative. So while the 13th Street is light and lively this Konzelmann has a little bit of oomph! The wine spent 9 months primarily in used French oak barrels, which means they did not impart too much wood character, thus letting the fruit from this amazing vintage shine through. Blackberry, dark cherry, pepper and a dusty finish that has enough tannins to allow this wine to stand

up nicely to meat dishes – the finish lingers on the palate, like the thoughts of that “perfect” vintage linger in the hearts and minds of Ontario winemakers. I liked the 2006 version of this wine very much, and I am enthralled by the 2007 – especially for the price.

**Vignoble Rancourt Winery 2006 Cabernet Franc Icewine - \$39.90 / 200ml – (W)**

[www.rancourtwinery.com](http://www.rancourtwinery.com)

This is a sad yet celebratory wine. Back in December 2007, the visionary behind Vignoble Rancourt, Lionel Rancourt, passed away leaving behind plenty of unfinished dreams and a winery ... His legacy is bottled here, in one of his last wines. It is superb and only makes one miss this man for what he could have accomplished. First thing that hits you when you put your nose in the glass is baked strawberries dusted with cinnamon, makes you want to dive right in. Your first sip will make you take another, and another, and another – light strawberry with baking spice on the palate and good balancing acidity makes this wine taste less sweet than it actually is. Don't get fooled, this is still a whopping 22 on the sugar code, afterall, it is an icewine, but the taste hints at only half that sugar.

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



**Weekly Wine Notes and More:** *Lost & Found - Taste it Again - On the Road*

*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:

November 18, 2008 Thirty Bench 2006 Winemaker's Red – ([read](#)) ([listen](#))

November 11, 2008 Vineland 1998 St. Urban Chardonnay– ([read](#)) ([listen](#))

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

[Tasting with Sebastian Labbe of Vina Carmen](#)

[Stem Wine Group Tasting](#)

[Wente Tasting](#)

[Jean Jean / Ogier](#)

[Le Sommelier Portfolio Tasting](#)

[Sommelier Service Tasting Evening](#)

**[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

**Nothing this week – keep checking back**

**[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

[Colio 2002 Barrel Aged Cabernet Franc](#)

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

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

[There is always something new here](#)

**Vintages Release:** [Ontario "Vintages" Releases: Saturday November 22, 2008 Vintages Release](#)

**Ontario Wines of Note at Vintages for November 22, 2008:**

[Cave Spring 2006 CSV Riesling](#)

[Flat Rock Cellars 2007 Nadja Vineyard Riesling](#)

[Mike Weir 2006 Pinot Noir](#)

[Stratus 2005 Red](#)

[Stratus 2005 White](#)

[Wildass 2005 Red](#)

[Wildass 2005 White](#)

**Also check out the [Beaujolais Nouveaus Reviews](#) for the 2008 vintage**



**Wine Event Spotlight:** *Open Houses everywhere and Cellar Dinner New Year*

Open Houses and Holiday Feasts are in this edition of the Event Spotlight ... we'll start in the Lake Erie North Shore where **Sanson Estate Winery** is having their **6th Annual Christmas Open House** – Saturday and Sunday, November 22-23 from 10am to 4pm. Wine tastings, food samples (even some kid-friendly treats), local meats, seasonal produce, cooking demonstrations, ready-to-go gift baskets and custom gift ideas. With the holidays approaching, don't be caught flat footed, or wineless – remember, the in-laws are coming, booze is a must, so there are also some new releases available.

Our next open house is in Niagara, where **Fielding** is having their **4th Annual Holiday Open House**, Friday December 5th 4:30 to 7:30. There will of course be wine, but also food from the Good Earth Cooking School, door prizes, and discounts on all non-wine items (can't discount wine, this is Ontario).

Finally, if you're looking for something to do on New Year's Eve, think about a **barrel cellar dinner** – **Hillebrand** has one planned and it sounds delicious; the date is obvious, the price ... well best you look that up too. Visit [www.hillebrand.com](http://www.hillebrand.com) for details.

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**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](mailto:michael@ontariowinereview.com). We look forward to hearing from you!

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