

## 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 – 97**  
**December 4, 2008**

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#### News ... *The Challenge Has Been Issued ... The Dates Are Set ...*

Finally, after months of planning I'm ready to unveil the plans for the OntarioWineReview Pinot Noir Challenge. [Full details can be found on the website](#), but here are the nuts and bolts of it: we have about 40 Pinot Noirs from over 28 wineries ready for you to sip and sample over the course of 4 nights. Campbell House Museum (NW corner of University and Queen in Toronto) will be hosting this year's challenge. 10 different wines will be poured each night, and this time we categorized them by year (pitting '06 against '06s, '07 against '07s and so on). The nights of the events are February 4, 12, 16 and 23, 2009. Helping us along the way will be Schott Zwiesel glassware, who will be generously providing crystal stemware for the evening. [Details of time, place and ticket prices can be found on the website](#). Looking forward to seeing repeaters and new faces. [Click here for the flyer](#); or [visit the website for all the details](#). Hope to see you at the challenge.

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#### OntarioWineReview: *Drink Ontario in 2009*

The '07's are slowly starting to come onto the market ... the whites are good, but '07 is definitely the year of the red. Recently I was sent an on-line question about the Ontario 2007 vintage: "What are your thoughts on [the 2007] vintage?" I started writing my reply and it got way to long, so I decided to make it an article instead.

Problem with Ontario having a vintage like 2007 is that the next year and the year after will not be as great no matter how good they are – especially when you have been touting '07 as "the vintage of a lifetime". Consumers that turn to Ontario wine because of the 2007 wines might turn away in '08 saying, "this wine is not as good as last year", and that's a problem. Although we try to educate people on wine they still seem to gravitate towards the Chilean, American (namely California) and Australian wines because they can recreate their sameness year after year. And the reason people buy French wine is the cache of owning a Margaux or Petrus – Ontario really doesn't have those icon wineries. Sure we compare ourselves to the French – same latitude, comparable climate, struggle to get ripeness, good acidity, ageability; but rarely do you hear outside the fanatical Ontario wine drinking community, "Did you try that '88 Inniskillin Franc, it was killer."

Sad part is there is no way around it ... Ontarians seem less than enthusiastic when it comes to their wines. Many are still confused about VQA, and sadly, even some of our writers aren't clear about that stupid 99-1 rule that was passed during the short crop of 2005 (so how on God's green earth can we expect to public to grasp it?). Heck, that was the dumbest declaration ever in the history of Ontario wine and set us back 10 years, at least in the public's eye; people still believe it happens to this day and was not just a one time thing.

Having just recently traveled to BC I saw a wine industry so enamored with itself and the wines it produces that mediocre wines were fetching prices 3 or 4 times what they would get here, and what they are actually worth. While in Ontario, I'm thrilled to see our prices are in line with quality, and even some that are real steals – out West-Coast way the quality to price ratio is way out of whack. A few winery principals told me that this bubble will burst soon enough, and there will be an "adjustment", but as for when that will happen, nobody is sure; and

they certainly won't foist it onto themselves. It is because of this that I am glad I live in Ontario and drink our local wines – I'm getting a real bargain, though I'm sure our vintners don't feel the same way. But what's wrong with showing some pride in our wine, Ontarians can be so ignorant when it comes to their own locally produced product – some aren't even aware that our wines (and I'm not just talking icewines here) are competing and winning amongst the best in the world.

A recent wander through my local LCBO saw one guy buying so much "Ontario" wine I was proud – then I noticed that it was the off-shore blend ... I asked him if the wine was from Ontario he said proudly and fiercely, "damn right, I only buy Ontario, gotta support the local economy". He then got into his pick up and drove to the beer store. Now I do not want to get off on the blending tangent again, I don't want you to believe that I am a one-trick pony when it comes to writing about Ontario; but what I am saying is that it is time to educate yourself and the people around you about Ontario wine. I'm not saying you should stop drinking your Spanish, Italian, French, Australian, Stateside or Other-side of the world wines. What I am saying is this, over the Holidays get to know your local stuff. Make a conscious effort to drink a few more Ontario wines this holiday season – make a New Year's resolution that "I will drink at least one Ontario wine a month, or bi-weekly, or weekly ... one more bottle than I usually do." There will be no better time to introduce yourself, or your friends, to Ontario wine. 2007 was an amazing vintage, and with the wines starting to hit shelves there is no better time to drink and learn about Ontario ... as for the 2008's, I guess we'll have to cross that bridge when we come to it; afterall, in the wine game it's one year at a time.



**Grape Guy's Picks of the Bunch: Merlot and Mead**  
See winery's individual website for details

Henry of Pelham 2007 Pinot Noir - \$17.00 (W,L)

With the holidays coming you're going to need yourself a nice Pinot Noir to serve with that turkey, and have I got a suggestion for you. Why not try something from the outstanding 2007 vintage? You would think that all that heat would have cooked the delicate Pinot grape, but it seems even the finicky Pinot enjoyed the temps in '07. The nose on this beauty is loaded with sour cherry and red currant along with some spices and herbs. In the mouth you'll recognize cranberry, sour cherry and lots of other red berries; good mouth watering acidity, sweet tannins and there's a pleasant touch of dustiness on the finish ... this just might be turkey 08's best friend.

Peller Estates 2007 Private Reserve Gamay Noir - \$18.95 (W)

You may be thinking to yourself that \$18.95 seems a little high priced for a Gamay – but I think you best put your lips and nose to this one before passing such a harsh judgment. First, we don't have just any Gamay here – it's the Gamay from that beauty of a growing season known as 2007 – quite possibly the best ever in Ontario. That allowed the fruit to ripen fully and because of the lack of rain it concentrated all the flavours into very small berries; so although the tonnage yield, the grapes were of very high quality. Now that you are armed with some background here is the rest of the story ... The nose is big on cherry, which is to be expected from Gamay, but there is also plenty of raspberry and some nice vanilla notes in there too. The taste follows the cherry theme, big cherry, with cinnamon and a touch of sweet oak flavouring. This wine is light and lovely – perfect to serve around the holidays and it has such a beautiful festive colour to it too.

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



**Weekly Wine Notes and More: Pelham Merlot, Street Chardonnay, 4 Days in Piedmont, Italy**

*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 25, 2009 - Henry of Pelham 2005 Merlot ([read](#)) ([listen](#))

December 2, 2008 - 13th Street 2006 Sandstone Chardonnay ([read](#)) ([listen](#))

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

Piedmont Italy - [Day 1](#) ... [Day 2](#) ... [Day 3](#) ... [Day 4](#)

[Southbrook Poetica Launch](#)

[Niagara-on-the-Lake Taste the Season 2008](#)

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

A bi-weekly newsletter dedicated to helping you discover Ontario's best Wines and Wineries.

[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  
***New additions will be added next week***

[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  
***New additions will be added next week***

**Vintages Release:** [Ontario "Vintages" Releases: Saturday December 6, 2008 Vintages Release](#)

**Ontario Wines of Note at Vintages for December 6, 2008:**

[Chateau des Charmes 2005 Equuleus](#)

[Fielding Estate 2005 Meritage](#)

[Henry of Pelham Cuvee Catharine Sparkling Brut](#)

[Inniskillin 2007 Riesling Icewine](#)

[Inniskillin 2006 Sparkling Icewine](#)

[Le Clos Jordanne 2006 Village Reserve Chardonnay](#)

[Le Clos Jordanne 2006 Village Reserve Pinot Noir](#)

[Malivoire 2006 Gewurztraminer](#)

[Tawse 2006 Pinot Noir](#)



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

For December 2008

**Congratulations to Konzelmann ...** a hearty congratulations goes out to Konzelmann winery in Niagara-on-the-Lake for having the only Canadian wine on Wine Spectator's "2008 Top 100 Wines" list. Konzelmann's 2006 Ice Wine squeaked onto the list at number 100.

**Weir has a New Home and New Partners ...** months of speculative rumours have finally been quelled as Mike Weir announced his plans for his Niagara-based winery. First, the partnership with Creekside is over and stepping in to fill the winemaking void is Chateau des Charmes. Second, the winery will now be located on the Niagara Parkway on a 15-acre parcel of land next to the Whirlpool Golf Course. This is big news for Weir Wine fans who have long been hearing about a total exodus from Ontario and a move to BC for the golfer's new winery. A BC project has not been ruled out for the future but Weir is committed to staying in Ontario, "We don't plan on moving it anywhere. We want to be established here. If it takes us out west some day, that would be great ...". The 2007 vintage of Weir wines will be the first produced by the Chateau.

**Speaking of Rampant Speculation ...** the thought of Amazon getting into the wine selling and distribution business has people salivating. Estimates of between 20-50% lower prices is being bandied about because as one insider put it, "[Amazon] would eliminate a whole tier of the distribution system." "Distribution is the biggest bottleneck in the wine market," says Mike Veseth, economist at the University of Puget Sound in Tacoma, Washington. "It adds about 50% to the cost of a bottle of wine." No date has been set for Amazon to start selling online wine but when they do it'll make a PO box in the states look even more attractive – did I say that out loud.

**What We Will They Think of Next ...** here's one that should make the great Larry Paterson ([Little Fat Wino](#)) and his rants on wine additives simply freak out and blow what he has left of his mind. A leading French barrel maker, Seguin Moreau, will be producing flavour-enhancing barrels for commercial use by the year 2011. These barrels will be termed "intelligent barrels" and will aid to enhance certain flavours in the wine such as red fruit, tannins and spices. Barrels adding flavour is nothing new – all barrels add a certain amount of "seasoning" depending on the wood type and where it is from – but this is the first time a barrel will have a specific designation as to what it will add. Larry, it's time to start pulling out what's left of your hair.

**Reality Show About Wine – Seriously ...** I am sure that we have all sat back and thought, I would love to watch a reality show based on the trials and tribulations of winemakers and marketers. Well now you can. Coming in early 2009, PBS will begin airing "The Winemakers", twelve men and women will compete for the chance to create and launch their own wine label and will focus on everything from viticulture and enology to sales and marketing. The show is being filmed in the Paso Robles region of California and winners will be awarded a trip to the Rhone Valley in France (amongst other things I suspect).

**Brunello Will Stay the Same ...** Fans of Brunello di Montalcino wines will be happy to learn that the wine will continue to be made from 100% Sangiovese. A recent vote by the Brunello producers themselves about whether or not other grape varieties can be added to the wine was overwhelmingly opposed by 96% of producers. Voters included such prestigious producers as Marchesi Antonari who fell into the 96% majority and Castello Banfi, who were part of the 4% minority.

**Tesco Strong-Arms Their Supplier ...** could it be true? Is Britain's biggest retailer laying down unfair terms to its suppliers? An unnamed source (for fear of reprisal) has been quoted as saying he got a memorandum from Tesco that gave him "take it or leave it" terms which included an immediate 20% cut in the price Tesco will be charged, a doubling of promotional activities that will be funded by suppliers, and a complete ban on price increases for the term of one year. Is the LCBO teaching them or are they teaching the LCBO?

**The Gods Must Be Crazy – and so too are the French ...** the government of "the second biggest wine producer of the world" looks like they are going to hand cuff their wine industry even more. Followers of this column have learned that this year the French government is turning against their winemakers with laws that hamper the way they can do business. The newest volley is Article 24 an amendment from the health minister that bans "free alcoholic drinks with the intention of promotion". This would affect en primeur barrel tastings, Vinexpo and other such wine-centric events. Article 24 is set for debate in parliament early in 2009 and if it passes the French will know our pain.

**Niagara College Expansion ...** I'm thinking that the folks from Niagara College were reading my accounts from my New York trip back in the summer of 2007 and took notes on my comments about their New York Wine and Culinary Centre ([Newsletter #63](#)) as they were planning their new expansion. In short, the expansion is set to focus on promoting the entire province's wine culture, "The wine industry is an important partner to us and we want to be an important partner to them." Said Steve Gill, winery and vineyard manager. We should all be looking forward to visiting the completed project in August 2009.

**It Came to My Door and I Gave it a Try ...** Kilikanoon 2006 Killerman's Run Shiraz (\$19.95 - #925453) appeared a few weeks ago along with a few others – but of the bunch this one was the one that really blew my socks off. Nice black fruit with pepper notes, hints of blueberry and good smokiness. There's also a bit of wood character that I would have wanted to blow off, and it did over the course of an hour or so – therefore I would recommend lying it down for a few years, or enjoy it over the holidays with friends and food.



#### **Wine Event Spotlight: Open House, NOTL Has Another and Chocolate in PEC**

It's that time of year again – time to saddle up the horses, set the GPS and go in search of **13th Street Winery** for their Bi-Annual **Open House**. Now I must tell you this is an RSVP event and I've given you only 1 day to get your name on the list, but trust me it is always worth it. This year they will be showcasing 9 new wines and a plethora of delicious foods. So if you are a fan of good wine, good food, or just love a good road trip call 13th Street (905-562-9463) book your spot and then set the guidance system to 3983 13th Street in Jordan ... and for goodness sake bring your wallet – you'll want to take a few bottles home for the holidays.

It would seem that the Wineries of Niagara-on-the-Lake aren't finished with you yet. Hot on the heels of the wildly successful [Taste the Season](#), the 18 wineries now bring you a premiere sampling and seasonal shopping event called the "**12 Stocking Days of Christmas**". Each winery has chosen a specially selected gem from their cellar ... including a 1998 Pinot Noir, 1999 Riesling Icewine, 2001 First Growth Merlot, 2002 Merlot Family Reserve, 2001 Dean's List Chardonnay, and the list goes on and on – or at least for 13 more wines. It all happens December 3 to December 14 – details and ticket price can be found [here](#).

Finally ... those of us with a sweet tooth will be dying to find their way to the county for the **Copper Kettle Chocolate Company's Customer Appreciation Day** – Saturday December 6 from 10am-5pm. This is something I wouldn't miss, and I won't because it just so happens that I will be in the county this Saturday. The Copper Kettle has chocolate for everybody, sugar-free, sugar-loaded and much more. So feed your sweet tooth, or that of someone you love this holiday season, be sure to check it out: 186 Main Street, Wellington – 613-399-5889.

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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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