

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 – 99
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News ... *The Stars are Out and the Pinot Noir is Close*

New Rating System ... Happy New Year to all, and to all a good day. Welcome to another year of wine, winery reviews and the things that go bump in the Ontario wine industry. A few changes will be happening in the OntarioWineReview-niverse in 2009. Starting with this newsletter, you will find that all wine reviews now have a star rating attached to them – you can visit [the wine reviews main page](#) for a full explanation of the system – but suffice it to say, you overwhelmingly asked for it and I listened (which is more than my mom can say).

Pinot Noir Challenge more Details ... We are now less than a month away from OntarioWineReview's next grape challenge, the [Pinot Noir Challenge](#), taking place February 4, 12, 16, and 23 at Campbell House Museum. This year we will be pouring the wines in year categories (2004 vs 2004, 2005 vs 2005 and so on). Some of the wines have still to arrive, but we'll make the year categories available just as soon as we've got 'em. For tickets, call 416-385-9400 or 416-597-0227 (ext. 3) ... looking forward to seeing you there.

Updates ...

Two more wineries entered: D'Angelo (LENS) and Konzelmann (Niagara).
February 23 will be one of the days that 2007 Pinot Noirs will face-off against one another.



OntarioWineReview: *Two Lessons I Learned Over the Holidays*

For the first newsletter of the year, a little frivolity seems in order. Afterall, that's what Christmas and New Year's is all about, right?

Lesson # 1 ... The Holidays are all about the old (or No one Likes a Know-it-All)

Christmas might be a time of charitable forgiveness and a time to open your heart to strangers, but it's definitely not the time to learn about wine. Never was this more apparent to me then this past Christmas Eve as I spent the time with my girlfriend Erica's family.

My December 24th daytime was spent preparing the house for guests while she was at work (I'm a writer, I can work during extended bathroom breaks if I choose). My final job came mid-afternoon when it was time to make the wine selections. I called her at work to find out what the attending brood would be open to trying, or more to the point, what they like.

"Well, they're definitely a white crowd," I was told. "I doubt anybody will drink red, but have one available; they'll prefer sweet to dry, but not too sweet." So I wandered into her basement to survey the wine situation. I have to hand it to her, since meeting me she has greatly expanded her palate and her Ontario wine collection, so I had plenty of available interesting wines. The first thing I found was a [2004 Inniskillin Late Autumn Riesling](#), then a

[2006 Calamus White](#) - that should cover me in the white department for sweet and not too dry. Then I located a [2005 Cave Spring Select Late Harvest Cabernet](#) (375ml). I remembered this one as being quite a treat and not too sweet for dessert purposes, so I pulled it out as well. Finally, the one college-ager in the group is a fan of Fresita - a sparkling wine made from white wine and strawberries from Chile and Patagonia respectively; so I added that to the assortment and stuck the entire collection in the fridge to chill.

Happy with my selections, I called Erica and related my wine choices and the reasoning for them. Before I could get too involved in my "wine speak" she cut me off. "Now don't be getting all wine-geeky this evening, nobody likes a know-it-all." I decided it was best to shut up, I was just happy to be getting a potential of 3 Ontario wines in front of a U.S. crowd.

So how many wines did I open? Two. Two bottles of [Sutter Homes 2005 Zinfandel](#), which Erica and I nursed throughout the evening (although we did not finish both bottles) ... The rest of the family wanted nothing to do with wine - brother went the Miller Lite route; sister-in-law seemed uninterested in anything (I think she had been voted the designated driver the moment brother open his second beer). Curtis (the 4-year-old) was too underage, though I can work on him in the future, as I keep threatening my brother I will work on his 3-year-old daughter (my niece Erin) - they are never too young to learn (wink, wink). Samantha, the 12-year-old took one thimble-sized sip (checking first with mom and dad who said "just a little") from sister Danielle's (20) Smirnoff Ice, claiming that if she drank, she'd want something "fruity". With that one tiny sip judgment was passed - "it's alright." When I tried to interject about it being more lemony and fruity Erica shot me the "don't be a know-it-all" glance.

And where does the education-factor, or non-education-factor come in you ask? The only wine reference of the evening, besides my gift of two bottles of "Michigan's favourite" (as it was presented to me), Boone's Farm (Snow Creek Berry and Strawberry Margarita) which is actually a "flavored apple wine product" made by Gallo in Modesto, California (probably a favourite because it's three-bucks a bottle), was my initial offer of "Would anybody like some wine?"; which I asked while rubbing my hands together, corkscrew at the ready. The Miller Lite was held up (that's a no), the 4 and 12 year old were out (obvious reasons there), sister-in-law shook her head ("maybe later"), while Danielle said, "I hate wine" in a tone that left no room for argument. This comment from the same girl who told me 4 weeks earlier she "hated Canada", yet visits monthly to take advantage of our lower drinking age. Erica, quick on the draw, shot back with, "You like that Fresita, it's wine." A smile appeared across Danielle's face, "oh yeah, that's different," she said taking a pull from her bottle of Smirnoff's. "Not really ..." I started, there was that glance: I know, no one likes a know-it-all, got it. I changed tactics. "I bet I could find the wine you'd like," I ventured. I was then given the look that told me that the dislike for wine was not up for discussion and would never change ... ah to be young again.

And there you have it folks, the holidays aren't about experiencing the new, learning about wine and taking chances (nor is it the time to be a know-it-all). It's the end of the year, time to continue enjoying what you have enjoyed all year long. In a week, you'll make resolutions that might involve something new, but the holidays are about enjoying the old: old acquaintances (such as Miller and Smirnoff) are only to be forgot come December 31st at 11:59pm ... or maybe not, perhaps you'll leave it till the next morning for trying to forget that.



Grape Guy's Picks of the Bunch: *Two 4-star Chardonnays*
See winery's individual website for details

Inniskillin 2006 Reserve Series Chardonnay - \$15.50 (W, L)
www.inniskillin.com

The Chardonnay world at Inniskillin is getting more and more complicated. Currently on their website, they have 8 different Chardonnays spread out over 4 "series" and three different vintages. They have the varietal series, reserve series, winemaker's/single vineyard series and founder's series ... it's enough to make you shake your head and say, "Can't a guy just get a Chardonnay around here." But enough of my bellyaching, I did try a variety of Inniskillin's Chardonnays over the past month or two and this one stood out to me for both value and flavour profile that Chardonnay fans should enjoy. This one is a good blend of oak with a wonderful display of fruit, starting with the nose: there's the barrel-influenced butterscotch notes along with russet apple and hints of vanilla. In the mouth, it delivers fully on the promise of the nose, and then some, filling the mouth with butterscotch, over-ripe apple, peach and vanilla, then ending with the linger of buttered popcorn and a titch of vanilla flavouring.

Price \$15.50 - Rating ****

Coyote's Run 2007 Black Paw Chardonnay - \$21.00 (W)
www.coyotesrunwinery.com

Coyote's Run started this whole Black Paw / Red Paw thing with their Pinot Noirs. They noticed that their vineyard had a distinctive soil division, part of the soil was black clay, the other part was red clay. To view this cool diversion from wine, here's an interesting little thing to do when you visit the winery: if you look out the window, or stand on the deck, in early spring or late fall, before the grapes and foliage obscure the view, you can actually make out the proverbial "line in the sand" that separates the two vineyards. Now, back to the wine. The next experiment the Coyoteers took was to separate their Cabernet Franc into red and black grown grapes. In 2007, they took a little Chardonnay out for a test run, but only black paw stuff, red will be introduced in the 2008 vintage; so unfortunately there is no comparing the two – but you can taste this inaugural segregated wine and still be impressed. This wine spent 6 months in Hungarian oak and only 80% of the wine went through malolactic fermentation (turning the harsh malic acid into softer lactic acid) thus giving the wine that sweet-and-sour dichotomy: keeping crisp acidity with a round, full mouthfeel. The nose is fruity, without too much barrel influence to take it over: there's good pear smells with hints of vanilla. In the mouth, it retains its crispness, due to that 80% malolactic decision, along with a nice display of citrus and a subtle touch of spice. Meanwhile, the finish is medium in length and you're very much in green apple territory here – lovely.
Price \$21.00 - Rating ****

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



Weekly Wine Notes and More: *Strewn, Cattail, Reif and plenty more to keep you busy*

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:

December 23 – Strewn 2006 Rogue's Lot Cabernets ([read](#)) ([listen](#))

December 30, 2008 - Cattail Creek Catastrophe ([read](#)) ([listen](#))

January 6, 2009 – Reif 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon Reserve ([read](#)) ([listen](#))

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

[Drinking with Dave – part 1](#)

[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 2004 Late Autumn Riesling](#)

[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

[13th Street Winery 2005 Riesling](#)

[Fielding 2005 Reserve Riesling](#)

[Cave Spring 2005 Late Harvest Cabernet](#)

[Calamus Estate Winery 2006 Calamus White](#)

[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 Releases:

[Ontario "Vintages" Releases: Saturday January 10, 2009 Vintages Release](#)

Ontario Wines of Note: [Konzelmann 2006 Cabernet Sauvignon Reserve](#)

[Konzelmann 2006 Shiraz](#)

[Malivoire 2006 Gamay](#)

[Ontario "Vintages" Releases: Saturday January 17, 2009 Vintages Release](#)

Ontario Wines of Note: [Angels Gate 2006 Pinot Noir](#)



Lesson #2 ... Nobody Likes a Wine Snob

New Year's Eve 2008 ... it was suppose to be a quiet night at home with a pile of Chinese food and a few movies to usher in 2009, but at the last moment (the night before) we (Erica and I) had been invited to her brother and sister-in-law's for a New Year's Eve party ("get together"). To my pouting-bottom-lip-reaction she said, "We can't refuse." – I'm a big fan of Chinese food and a movie on New Year's Eve..

Now let me backpedal a few days to set the scene. First, I am in Michigan over the holidays (for both New Year's and Christmas). Second, Erica (my main squeeze) has just recently moved into a new townhouse which we have been unpacking and putting away since my arrival December 21st. We finally got to a point in the putting away where we were faced with the dreaded (for women anyway) 'old clothes look through'. Those stored away clothes from what seems like eons ago are sifted through and purged: some favourites are found, while others find their way into the Sally Anne bags (Salvation Army) sitting in a corner. We find three containers of old jeans and two of sweaters; the reminiscing begins with the sweaters. A certain amount of hugs are given to found favs, and a few goodbyes are bid to ancient artifacts. It's now time for the jeans. We unpack them carefully, throwing out the bellbottoms and ripped pairs first. We put them into size piles, and I realize that my pet was once a clothes-horse in her youth. When we uncovered a dozen or so pairs of a certain size, a pile that towered over the others, she said, "they must have been having a sale." I smiled and continued unpacking, "Yes," I replied, "they must have."

For full disclosure and understanding, I must tell you that Erica is a divorcee, it is crucial to this part of the story that you know that. On a lark and feeling rather giddy on New Year's Eve, Erica decided to slip on a pair of these old jeans with a favourite Eddie Bauer cable knit sweater - just to see if they fit, skeptical that they would. She was ecstatic to learn that they fit (quite well I might add) - and was even more thrilled after doing some mental calculations she proudly stated, "these are pre-wedding jeans" ... She practically danced down the corridor with delight. As men know, women are usually at their best pre-wedding; the sweater looked pretty good too.

Of course there is a wine aspect to this story and here it is. The night before this dress up party my mind was not on what jeans and sweater to wear to a gathering - mine was on what wine to bring. I was told that only one bottle was needed, it was for my enjoyment only (Erica would be partaking in the easier to tote around beer option) and that [special bottle of bubbly](#) I had brought for this occasion would have to wait for our own celebration over breakfast the next morning. I surveyed my purchased wine from Michigan and my brought wines from back home. I decided upon a [Lomond 2005 Syrah](#) from South Africa to usher in the new year - Ontario played a part in [my bubbly selection](#).

That decision made, I had but one last question of my lady love, and I waited till the last moment to ask. In her euphoria of fitting into pants and sweater from a bygone era, I figured the time was ripe to slip in this question with hopefully a positive response. I began started fairly innocently:

"Does your sister-in-law have wine glasses?"

"Of course she has wine glasses."

"Are they good wine glasses?" She looked at me, almost telegraphing where I was going. "I mean good glasses, big tumblers for my Lomond?"

"She has wine glasses," was my smiled answer. I paused a few beats, she knew the next question and was ready for it, but she let me at least ask it anyway.

"Would it be rude to bring my own glass?" I asked, while throw in compliment as to how well she looked.

"Don't do that," she said. "Yes, it's rude, you'll look like a wine snob."

"But I am a wine snob," I replied proudly.

"She has wine glasses, you'll use those." That was the final word on the issue. "Now grab your bottle and let's go." I picked the Lomond off the rack and looked longingly at my collection of Riedel, Spiegelau and Schotts Zwiesel stemware.

"No." She said with a smile. "You'll be fine." I sighed. We left the house.

Upon my arrival, I got my answer with regards to the available glasses. They were long stemmed, ribbed and stippled (for my fingers' pleasure I can only assume), and the bowl was no bigger than 2 egg cups ... This was the glass I was to use for my \$30 bottle of Lomond Syrah - I am a wine snob, I thought to myself - sadly I

thought of my 8 Riedel “O” tumblers sitting on a table by the front door back home (box of 8 for \$37 at Target, what a steal), one would have fit so easily into my pocket. Sigh again. I poured my wine and kept quiet, sorry Mr. Lomond. The best review I can give is that my wine tasted wet. “Nobody likes a wine snob,” I had been told, a high price to pay in order to fit in ... but at least my date looked amazing - and I wouldn't need the alcohol to change that. Cheers and Happy New Year.



Wine Event Spotlight: *Pinot, Icewine, Chardonnay and the Aussies*

Do you have your tickets for the OntarioWineReview Pinot Noir Challenge? This is one event you don't want to miss: February 4, 12, 16, and 23 at Campbell House Museum – different wines will be poured each night and there will be over 40 in total. Call 416-597-0227 (ext. 3) to book your tickets. [Full details can be found here.](#)

It's the annual Niagara Icewine Festival, and this year the sub-title of the event is, “When Gold meets Cold” ... an obvious reference to the colour and to the gold medal status this wine finds at many wine competitions around the world. This year's event happens from January 16-25 and there is plenty to keep you occupied, both indoors and out. I prefer the [indoor winery hopping](#) but many others enjoy the icewine bar in Jordan (17-18) or the new Icewine Lounge in Niagara-on-the-Lake (24-25). Take in a dinner hosted by a multitude of wineries or do the festival in style by getting in on the Icewine Gala at the Fallsview Casino. [Check out the website](#) to get all the details about this world-renown event.

Saturday January 24, 2009 Cave Spring will be Looking Back at Chardonnay, a vertical tasting of their 2000, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005 and 2006 Chards ... cost is \$20 and all vintages will be on sale. See [www.cavespring.ca](#) for details.

The Aussies are coming to Toronto ... Friday January 30, 2009 for an Australia Day Wine Tasting evening event – get all the details at [www.wineaustralia.com/canada](#).

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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