

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 – 100
January 22, 2009

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OntarioWineReview: *Three Issues That Plague Ontario ... This Month*

Sure it's a New Year, but it's the same old confusion, sniping, backbiting and complaining in the wine world – especially the Ontario Wine World. Let's start with a very recent article published by Sun Media (Province Must Emphasize its Ontario Products – January 12, 2009). The writer promotes the idea of VQA wine stores, or even Ontario-only wine stores (more on that distinction in a moment), but it's this quote that infuriates me, and yet again will cause more confusion amongst Ontario's wine buying public: “[The government] could also help by revising the Wine Content Act to ensure more Ontario grapes go into each bottle of wine sold and enhancing and expanding education efforts that help consumers understand the difference between VQA wine ... and blended wines ...” I'll spell it out for those who didn't catch it. “More Ontario grapes go into each bottle of wine sold,” that makes it sound like foreign grapes go into all our wines, when in fact it's only the Cellared in Ontario wines where we have foreign content. If the Wine Content Act is raised to 50-50 or 70-30 in favour of Ontario grapes (from the current 70-30 in favour of the foreign stuff), it's still has foreign content and it is still not 100% Ontario wine (which is what VQA always has and always will stand for). Put it this way, even a little bit of e-coli in the water is considered contaminated water. Talk about muddling an issue, this writer had a full head of steam going, and I was with him up to that point ... and then, Oh Brother, it's amazing how one simple line can change an article from good to bad. This is what happens when non-wine writers get involved in wine related stories armed with only a few of the facts. They muddy the waters. You have to be crystal clear about the difference between VQA (100% Ontario wine) and Cellared in Canada product, absolutely crystal clear. On this issue, we have to educate Ontarians, we have to hammer home VQA, VQA, VQA – 100% Ontario grapes go into this product; always have always will.

Speaking of Ontario wine, my sweetie made this off-handed comment to me while watching Food Network Canada, “I wonder if those wines on his wine rack are Ontario wines.” (After all, the host was talking about eating and cooking local). To that I replied, “In the U.S., wine is from California, Washington, Oregon, etc. In Italy, it'd be from Piedmont, Veneto, Puglia and the likes. In France, it's Bordeaux, Burgundy, Champagne; Australia's the Barossa, Chile's the Maipo. In Ontario, it's from the U.S., Australia, Chile, Argentina ...” She looked at me confused, “Ontario makes wine,” she said. While confusing to an outsider from the United States this makes perfect sense to you and me (I am speaking to Ontarians here). It's a sorry comment to make about a wine-producing region of the world, but it's true. From the same article mentioned above, I quote these lines: “One would be hard pressed to find any other wine region in the world that promotes imported competitors as much, or more, than their domestic brands. This would be akin to government-sponsored commercials encouraging people to buy foreign cars or imported produce. The idea is inconceivable, yet in Ontario liquor stores it's accepted as a standard course of action.” When I was in Michigan over the holidays, I discovered that in any wine store or shop, I was hard pressed to find “foreign wine” (not

from the US). Sure it was there, but the American brands were all front and center. When in Italy, this past September, I noticed the same thing. In Ontario LCBO stores, I find myself searching for the Ontario section which is sometimes as little as half of an aisle, while the Aussies take up half of the store.

We have a third issue to discuss and I brought it up in the first paragraph and promised to come back to it: VQA wine stores vs. Ontario-only wine stores. I am sure that many of you have seen the “Official map to the Wineries of Ontario”; did you know that approximately 50% of all of Ontario’s wineries do not appear on that map? For those not so good in math that’s “approximately half”. Many of those wineries come from non-DVA (Designated Viticulture Area) regions of Ontario (Niagara, Prince Edward County, Lake Erie North Shore and Pelee Island); it is important to note that not all the wineries from these regions are on the map either, only those that belong to the Wine Council of Ontario (WCO). When it comes to the WCO there is more muddy water here and it gets very political. Some folks don’t believe in what the WCO stands for, don’t like their politics and believe that the big wineries have more clout because they pay more dues. I am not here to get involved with this sordid issue, I want to discuss what all Ontario wineries want: access to their own market and recognition that their product is all-Ontario. In this day and age of ‘slow food’ and the ‘100-mile diet’ it is imperative to a growing number of consumers that their food and drink come from the place/province in which they live.

Now acronyms are thrown around like water in the hopes of people remembering them. For example, VQA, which as we should all know stands for 100% Ontario product in the bottle; to get that designation, you have to be part of one of those DVA’s I mentioned earlier. This means you have to be growing your fruit in a specific part of Ontario ... if you are not, and your bottle still has 100% Ontario product in it, you can not use the VQA symbol; you can’t even put the word “Ontario” on your label, because the VQA owns that term when it comes to wine. I say we need another acronym for these wineries; might I humbly suggest the new acronym that could appear prominently on the neck of these bottles of non-DVA, 100% Ontario wine be OVA. OVA stands for the Ontario Viniculture Association and currently represents 75 Ontario wineries. Their mission is to boldly go where no organization has gone before, “to advocate on behalf of all producers of 100% Ontario wine in order to achieve equality of opportunity for all Ontario wineries.” It does not look like VQA is going to relax any of its rules or policies anytime soon (re: VQA wines being from only recognized DVAs), and nor should they, but I think its time for those wineries making 100% Ontario product outside of recognized DVAs to have their own logo to ensure their wines are 100% Ontario too – OVA. Sure that’s requires more educating the public, but why not add another three letters to all the acronyms we now try to teach people. We can then say that both VQA and OVA wines are all 100% Ontario fruit. While we are at it, since it does not look like we will be ditching the Cellared stuff anytime soon, we should find a cute little acronym for those wines too - C.R.A.P. comes to mind, though I have no idea what it would stand for – if you have any ideas please email them to michael@ontariowinereview.com - I will publish the best in an upcoming newsletter.

So let’s recap, cause this is a lot to take in in one sitting: VQA is 100% Ontario grown and produced wines, always has and always will. To reinforce this into the hearts and minds of the Ontario public, we should be working towards eliminating, not reducing, but eliminating the mixing of foreign content with our home grown product. This can be done.

There are plenty of Ontario wineries making good quality, 100% Ontario wines who are unable to publicize this information. They are not part of any DVA and they can’t even put the word “Ontario” on their label. We need a new logo (a la VQA) to designate these wines as 100% Ontario product – I suggest OVA.

It’s time to level the playing field for all Ontario wineries. It’s time to promote Ontario product in our own backyard – buy local, eat local and all that jazz – but when we’re still promoting foreign wines over our own domestic product and when media and wineries continue to confuse the public between 100% true Ontario product and blended product – how can anyone be expected to keep it all straight? The answer is easy, eliminate the stumbling block, ditch the part that causes the

confusion: the practice of blending foreign and domestic product together. Our practice of doing this is antiquated and archaic, made for a time when we were not self sufficient in grape growing. In 2008, we dropped 4000 tons of fruit to the ground and with more vineyards coming on line in years to come that number could easily double. Does that sound like an industry that is no longer self-sufficient ... an industry in need of foreign aid? We should also be recognizing all Ontario wineries and not segregating them. Yes DVAs are important, but so are the other wine growing and producing areas. All major wine producing countries state their origin on the label, some at different levels of classification: Even lowly French table wine (Vin de Table) has the words "product of France" on it, and all California wine at least has the state on the front label – not say Product of USA. If you are not in a DVA and thus not VQA, than you can at least be OVA (or something equivalent) ... I recently read a quote, sent to me by an Ontario fruit winery, and although it deals with fruit wine, it can be applied to ALL wineries (both grape and fruit), "With fruit wine, all of Canada is a wine region" ... with so many growing grapes/fruit in all four corners and reaches of this province, there must be some way to designate its origin. To achieve this goal, I turn to Jack Nicholson's Joker for the final word, "Why can't we all just ... get along."



Grape Guy's Picks of the Bunch: *Something New and a Pre-release*
See winery's individual website for details

Fielding Estate Winery 2006 Syrah - \$27.00 (W)

www.fieldingwines.com

This wine was released late last year, and was originally offered to visitors in April as part of the Fielding futures program. I liked this wine then and now that it's been bottled and has had time to settle into its new glass home I still like it – even more. The nose has a smoky characteristic, with cinnamon, raspberry, floral and earthy notes, and as it opens up in the glass, there's the definite, unmistakable smell of Montreal Smoked Meat (I love smoked meat). The taste echoes the nose, matching it smell for taste and even adding in a touch of white pepper. Finish-wise, we're looking at one elongated lingering finish that's all smoky, earthy and cinnamony. This one's full of finesse and very tasty. Price: \$27.00 – Rating: ****

Huff Estates 2005 Cabernet Sauvignon Reserve - \$ TBA (W)

www.huffestates.com

Not many people believe that Cabernet Sauvignon has a future in Prince Edward County, but Frederic Picard does, which is why he has put together this 2005 edition from what many are saying is the best growing season (for grapes) to ever hit Ontario. To that end, Picard decided to take his chance with making a ballsy, gutsy and powerful Cabernet from the County. He carefully selected his Cabernet Sauvignon, put it into French oak for an extended period of time (22 months) and decided that a little bottle age would help it too (16 months). Upon its release this spring, the wine will be 38 months, or over 3 years, from vintage date. And what has all the care and concern wrought, I shall tell you. Currently, it's a very closed nose with a bit of black cherry poking its way through ... even with a maximum of stirring and aeration, I could not get it to open anymore than I did. Waiting will be the answer, or maybe a decanter. In the mouth, there's a different story, big black cherry, blackberry, spicy-cidery notes and just a hint of green pepper (but this blows off quickly). The finish is spicy, cinnamon, cedar and plenty of in your face tannins. I am rating this wine a 3.5 stars now, but it has potential to go to 4 in the next two years. Only 300 cases made. Price: TBA – Rating: ***½

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



Weekly Wine Notes and More: 3 Taste it Agains - 2 White 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:

January 13, 2009 – 13th Street 2007 June's Vineyard Riesling ([read](#)) ([listen](#))

January 20, 2009 – Hillebrand 2007 Limited Edition Gewurztraminer ([read](#)) ([listen](#))

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

It's been a quiet couple of weeks.

[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 – but keep checking back

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

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

[13th Street 2004 Cabernet-Merlot](#)

[Stonechurch 2004 Reserve Pinot Noir](#)

[13th Street 2004 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

[6 New Reviews Added](#)

Vintages Release: [Ontario "Vintages" Releases: Saturday January 31 – coming soon](#)

Ontario Wines of Note at Vintages for January 31, 2009:

[Coming Soon](#)

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

For January 2009

Goodbye to a Pioneer ... On January 2, 2009 Niagara lost one of its pioneers when John Marynissen passed away at the age of 84. John was the first to successfully plant Cabernet Sauvignon in Niagara, 1978, which are still thought to be Canada's oldest vines of that vinifera grape. He was crowned Grape King in 1978 and won Cuvee awards for Best Red in 1996 and 1997. His eponymously named winery opened in 1990, although he had been growing and selling

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his fruit since '78. He will be truly missed by all who knew him and by an industry that truly loved him.

Truth and Rumour ... Nothing says New Year like a hot juicy rumour, and here is one I heard a few days ago ... Diamond Estates might be growing again with the acquisition of Stoney Ridge. More on this if it develops further.

Got a Spare 600 Million Euros ... well then you too can be in the running to buy Chateau Latour ... on December 30, 2008, it was announced that this icon first growth winery in France was up for sale. If the expected buyer actually comes through with the cash, it will be the first time "in decades" this famed house has been back in Bordelais hands.

Ouch? ... Constellation Brands, the world's largest wine maker by volume and owner of Vincor Canada, announced its third quarter net income dropped 30% from 119.6 million to 83.5 million ... not sure what to say here, there is so much running through my head – I'll let you add your own tag line, I'm in a giving mood.

Beer Gets a Bump ... Quietly, very quietly, on November 24, 2008 the LCBO and the minister in charge (Finance) recommended and got a boost in the price of beer (6.7%), which basically quashes Buck-A-Beer here in Ontario. The LCBO, who usually regulates these things, says it was the minister who insisted on the increase and they conceded with little to no debate; no reason was given by the Minister of Finance. I'm thinking the Minister's kids are getting near drinking age and he wants to stop them from buying booze – that'll teach 'em.

And You Thought the LCBO Had Wacky Rules ... Here's a weird one for you. A liquor store in New York was fined \$10,000 over the holidays for selling wine-gift-bags. According to the State Liquor Authority selling of gifts bags constitutes running a second business and is punishable by the above mentioned fine. On the other hand, you can sell other wine paraphernalia like glasses, stoppers, and corkscrews, just not gift bags. No reason was given as to why this law is on the books; it was put there by New York's Wine-Nazi, "No BAG for you."

Ontario Viniculture Association ... is pleased to announce it's new website; for more information about this organization visit www.realontariowine.ca.

The U.S Will be On-Top in Yet Another Department ... Soon American wine drinkers will be able to hold up their foam fingers and shout "we're number one" when it comes to wine drinking. A new report by the International Wine and Spirit Record, the organization that crowned Italy as the number one wine consuming country (overtaking France in 2007), will not have the crown for long. By the year 2012, the U.S. of A will overtake them ... a little advice for all my Italian readers, if you wanna keep the crown, start drinking more and start the young 'uns drinking earlier.

Bad News for Australia ... For the first time since 1995 Australian wine exports have taken a tumble. The once mighty and powerful Oz has seen its market share drop, exports are down 18%. The two key markets that lead this downturn Down Under are the U.S. and Britain. And those thinking that domestic drinkers would pick up the slack, think again. Australians are drinking 2.2% less of their own wine ... seems that even the Aussies are getting sick of Yellow Tail.

Investment Advice ... If you had purchased \$1000.00 of Nortel stock one year ago, it would now be worth \$49.00. With Enron, you would have had \$16.50 left of the original \$1000.00. With WorldCom, you would have had less than \$5.00 left. If you had purchased \$1000 of Delta Air Lines stock you would have \$49.00 left. On the other hand, if you had purchased \$1,000.00 worth of wine one year ago, drank all the wine, then turned in the bottles for the LCBO recycling REFUND, you would have had \$214.00. Based on the above, the best current investment advice is to drink heavily and recycle.

They Came to My Door So I Tried Them ... Three wines that impressed me over the holidays:

Flor de Crasto (\$9.95 - #89870) with plums, spice and raspberry on the nose; spices, herbs, and red fruit on the palate – very quaffable at a good price. Barone Ricasoli 2006 Brolio (\$24.00 - #3962) a lush and lovely wine with good spiciness and a good black fruit component on the nose; the palate is even better with those spicy black fruits, lots of herbs, fine tannins and a smooth delivery. Fat Bastard 2007 Sauvignon Blanc (\$14.95 - #610659), not your typical Savvy B that you are used to, this is a French version: melon, pineapple, orange peel and tart green apple find their way both in smell and on taste.

New From BC, salmon – just kidding ... One of the leaders out BC way has got a new line of wines. Mission Hill has introduced 2006 Perpetua (Chardonnay) and their 2005 Quatrain (Blend: Merlot, Syrah, Cabernets Franc and Sauvignon). Perpetua is a single vineyard Chardonnay that is treated like a baby through its entire life from grapes to bottle. The nose is rich in pineapple rind, melon, apple, vanilla, apricot, cinnamon/nutmeg, allspice, butterscotch, lime and almond – such beautiful aromas you'll linger long before you sip. The taste follows the nose to a tee and is incredibly smooth and luscious ... this is a BC Chardonnay at its best (5 stars) and ageable. My first bottle of Quatrain was part of a shipping mishap; too cold temperatures and a courier who didn't seem to care makes a bad match for good wine – the cork was halfway up and wine was spilling out into the box when I got it. A new bottle is on its way and I'll have a review for the next edition of Quick Sips in February.



Wine Event Spotlight: *Cuvee 2009*

One of the premier events of the season has come around again. An event known to few outside the Ontario wine world, and in fact is still pretty much a mystery to most. It is one of the most unique of all wine awards – and offers some of the most interesting tastings for visitors. It's Cuvee – the peer wine awards, what I would consider the Oscars of Ontario wines. This is the event where winemakers judge and evaluate (blindly) each other's work and choose the best wines in a variety of categories. The weekend kicks off February 27, with the Gala where the awards are handed out. But the weekend is only just beginning – there's the Cuvee-En-Route program, where participating wineries bring out past winners and cellar selections for a one shot taste, try, and sometimes buy. This year's **Cuvee Weekend** is February 27-March 1 – details can be found at www.cuvee.ca ... and if you're an Ontario wine fan, this is not to be missed.

Ticket Giveaway ... To that end, I have 2 pair of En-Route passports, so that you and a guest can experience the wineries and their wines: past glories and present achievements. I need you to email me (michael@ontariowinereview.com) with your name, address (with postal code) and phone number along with the answer to this skill testing question: To what Movie Awards can you equate the Cuvee Awards? Deadline for entries is 11:59pm, Thursday January 29.

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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