

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 – 102
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OntarioWineReview: *In the Cellar ... with Darryl Brooker*

In late October (2008), I accompanied a couple friends to the Hillebrand Buyers' Weekend, where club members get a sneak peek at some of the wines Hillebrand will be releasing in the new year. Many of these wines were from the coveted 2007 vintage, so I was eager to taste them.

The day started in the Trius barrel cellar, where 40-50 of my "closest friends" and I sat at a very long table, set with three glasses and a miniature bottle of water. Winemaker Darryl Brooker took the lead, giving his thoughts, feelings and the occasional tidbit of a story about each wine. At one point, Darryl called the 2007 vintage "the best harvest I've ever seen." That's not just hyperbole from some youngster, Darryl's been around quite a bit with four harvests in New Zealand, four in Australia and now five in Ontario under his belt. And although this was called "buyers' weekend", during the tasting, Darryl expressly told us that he was not here to sell wine, there would be no salesman tactics on his part, "I just like showing the wine," he stated. "Whether you buy or not I don't care"; I'm sure this comment made the marketing representative in the room cringe.

The three 2007 wines shown in the cellar were: the Showcase Merlot (big blackberry and cinnamon with plenty of dark fruit, herbs and bittersweet chocolate on the palate - firm tannins will see this one at age ten to fifteen years); the Showcase Cabernet Sauvignon (mocha and cassis on the nose, black and red berries with bigger, firmer/drier tannins than the Merlot and a coffee finish ... this was a monster); and the Trius Grand Red (a blend of 50% Cabernet Sauvignon, 30% Merlot and 20% Cabernet Franc, which was all the Franc available to Darryl at this level, meaning there will be no Showcase Franc this year; deep rich color, great mouthfeel, silky tannins that lead to a rough mouth-drying finish). All these wines are the top tier of Hillebrand's output and are all barrel samples, which still have between six and nine months left of ageing to do. They're also wines made from small plots of land (ie: 10-acres at most) with long fermentations and lower crop yields (ie: 1.7 tons per acre). Prices will be \$35 for the Showcase wines and \$52 for the Grand Red.

From the cellar we were taken upstairs where other pre-release wines are waiting for a taste and buy ... there are also some special older wines on for tasting. We lead off with four Chardonnays. my favorite is the Trius 2007 Barrel Fermented version (\$18.95 – release winter 2009) - the nose is all buttery, butterscotch and caremelly; the palate follows the nose to the flavour, but also adds a nice toasted apple note. This one is going to be terrific upon release, and a bargain at under \$20.00. Reading over the Hillebrand tasting notes, I saw some very conservative numbers, the one for this Chardonnay, "drink now through 2010", but in my humble opinion, I think you'll be enjoying this one for the next five to seven years.

Moving on, we try something that has not been made at Hillebrand since 2002: Pinot Noir - 2007

Showcase Pinot Noir 'Clark Farm' (\$35.00 – release winter 2009). This 13-month in French oak beauty showed big cherries, cranberry, pomegranate and cinnamon on the nose, with aggressive tannins in the mouth which, at the moment, cover up some sour cherries and cranberries along with herb and spice notes. This one still needs time to settle in bottle so don't be surprised to see release pushed back to spring or summer, but it'll be quite the drink come Thanksgiving 2010 and beyond.

Two old wines from another fantastic Ontario vintage popped up on the tables, the 2002 Showcase Merlot 'Glenlake Vineyard' and the [2002 Trius Red](#). The Merlot was still in excellent condition and had plenty of life left in it, the 2002 Trius review can be found in my "[Taste it Again](#)" column.

Before I get to my recommended steal-of-the-day, I'll tell you about two releases from the 2006 vintage that look very promising. The Showcase Cabernet Sauvignon 'Clark Farm' (\$35.00 – Valentine's Day 2009) and the Trius Grand Red (\$52.00 - March, 2009) were both delicious and surprising. Surprising that from such a so-so vintage came such wonderful and ageworthy wines – both could easily sit for five years before drinking and will continue to drink and age well 7-9 years from vintage date.

Finally, allow me to whisper in your ear about the 2007 Trius Red (\$19.95 - release Spring 2009) ... this one has been priced the same (under \$20.00) for the past ten years, and I am told it's due for an increase: "maybe a couple of bucks", and that should come with the 2008 or 2009 vintage release; but let me state, for the record, if they raised it with this version, it would still be very much worth its price. 50% Cabernet Franc, 30% Cabernet Sauvignon and 20% Merlot, this wine showed great depth of color (reddish-purple) and a nose loaded with the kitchen sink (vanilla, smoke, cherry, plum, chocolate, herbs, spice, aniseed, I'm sure I could go on) with a palate to match. Another low estimation of aging "2012" is noted – personally, I'd like to see this one in a decade. I'll have a full review upon its release, but be prepared to stock up on this cellerable red.



Grape Guy's Picks of the Bunch: *A Couple of Wonderful Pinot Noirs*
See winery's individual website for details

Rosewood Estates 2007 Pinot Noir - \$18.00 (W)

www.rosewoodwine.com

Simplicity wins out over complicated 4 out of 5 times, every time. That's because people don't want to work to enjoy a wine, they want to simply enjoy it. Take the night I wrote this review – I came home and decided I did not want to tax my palate, so I found something cheap and cheerful that I had tried before and just drank it. I don't want to give you the impression that this is a simple wine, it's not, it has good depth. But what I'm trying to say is that it is up front about what it is giving you – there is no deep hidden meaning, no taxation of the palate – just great depth of simple, recognizable flavours. The nose delivers what you would expect from Pinot Noir: earth, cherry, cranberry and rhubarb. The palate comes through with the promise of the nose, an earthy beginning which turns to sour cherry and cranberry with fine tannins, good acidity, a dash of vanilla for taste and a shaving of cinnamon on the finish. Yummy, very approachable by all, and a gold medal winner to boot (Wine Access Canadian Wine Awards) – Kudos to winemaker Natalie Spytkowski.
Price: \$18.00 – Rating: ****

Lailey Vineyard 2007 Pinot Noir Canadian Oak - \$35.00 (W)

www.laileyvineyard.com

Derek Barnett is a huge fan of Canadian Oak. He has been using it since his Southbrook days and he continued his love affair with this wood when he moved to Lailey. He ends up making some very interesting wine when he does (I remember getting coconut notes in a Chardonnay). On the other hand, sometimes the resulting wines don't deliver what he was initially looking for (they taste rather ordinary) – but on those occasions where it does work, well, I think the best term to use here is

“magical” ... This wine is one of the latter. To start, Derek used single vineyard fruit from the vineyard known as “the Brickyard Vineyard”, and is a very limited production wine (only 84 cases). But these little tidbits of information do not help to explain the price of \$35.00, afterall, price means nothing if you can't back it up where it counts ... I am here to tell you, this one goes all the way to eleven. The nose is your basic Pinot Noir experience: cherry, vanilla, a touch of earth with hints of floral ... a little tight because of its jeunesse (that means young) – but if that nose develops like the palate has, in two years this is going to be the wine that'll turn you into a Pinot Noir fan. The palate wows you with a mixture of sweet and sour cherry, cranberry, vanilla, cinnamon and spices, all wrapped up in a gentle cedar blanket with a touch of violets on the finish. What more is there to say, except seek between the cushions on the couch, dig up a relative buried with some valuable antique you can hock, or, if all else fails, borrow from a friend. Use any means necessary to get a few extra shekels because you have got to try, and buy, this wine, at least two bottles, one for now and definitely one for later (say 5 years). You won't be disappointed with this delicate and delicious beauty. Price: \$35.00 – Rating: *****

And one more for good luck: [Malivoire 2007 Mottiar Pinot Noir](#)

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



Weekly Wine Notes and More: *Snow Angel, Gamay Rosa, Re-Tastes 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:

February 10, 2009 – Pillitteri Estates 2006 Gamay Rosa ([read](#)) ([listen](#))

February 17, 2009 – Angels Gate 2007 Snow Angel ([read](#)) ([listen](#))

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

[Days of Wine and Chocolate – Niagara-on-the-Lake](#)
[Australian Tasting: Masterclass and Consumer Show](#)
[Osoyoos-Larose Launch and Tasting](#)
[Chateau Musar – 4 Reds, 4 Whites](#)

[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
[Thirty Bench 1999 Riesling Icewine](#)

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

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

[Hillebrand 2002 and 2005 Cabernet Franc Comparison](#)
[Lailey 2005 Riesling](#)
[Norman Hardie 2005 Riesling](#)

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

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

[4 New Reviews Added](#)

Vintages Release: [Ontario "Vintages" Releases: Saturday February 28, 2009](#)

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

February 2009

BC takes their wine a little more seriously ... In 2004, British Columbia started taking steps towards new standards for their wine industry. A few weeks ago, with the establishment of an advisory board, they have taken the final step in achieving that goal. Now BC has an independent authority in place to oversee their wine production and enforce the newly adopted 2007 regulations. These regulations set a minimum standard for BC wines. These regulations state which grapes are acceptable for their wines, establish minimum brix levels, alongside other criteria. These regulations also bring about clear labeling standards, "to ensure that consumers have a clear understanding about what they are buying", putting the onus on the winery to be honest in their labeling practices. This is diametrically opposite to Ontario, where the VQA has set forth a standard of buyer beware, putting the onus on us as consumers to read the label carefully. Wow ... the west really has won.

Times They Are A Changin' ... A study by France's national observation center has shown that 51% of French people now think wine is a health risk ... in 2003 that number was only 26%. And before that, butter, cheese and wine kept them healthy, wealthy and wise ... well, healthy anyway.

Collector's Items in Your Cellar ... If you have a bottle of "Australian Port" in your cellar, you have yourself a collector's item. Late last year, Australia and the E.U. signed a deal where Australia will stop using the terms "Port" and "Sherry" on their locally produced fortified wines. Other terms affected are Sauterne, Marsala, Chablis, Burgundy and a handful of others. In turn, the EU will recognize the prestige of wine regions in Australia, such as Coonawarra, Margaret River and the Yarra Valley. This has the added bonus of opening up the European market more fully to the higher-alcohol reds from the Barossa and other Australian regions, which to this point were not seen in many parts of Europe. And Australia needs that boost because ...

Australia is Feeling the Pinch ... The Aussies shipped 11% less wine (by volume) and saw a drop of 18% dollar-wise in 2008. This is the first time Australia has seen any kind of drop in their numbers for 15 years. The markets that hit Oz wines the hardest: British – down 18% and the United States, down 26%. The Aussies were propped up by China, Hong Kong and Japan, who were all up.

As Oz Goes Down The Kiwis Go Up ... You knew that somebody was picking up the slack from the Aussies, and that country is New Zealand. Exports there have jumped 19% to a record \$904 million – that number is expected to rise to one billion sometime in 2009.

South Africa Celebrates 350 Years of Winemaking ... “On February 2, 1659, Jan van Riebeeck, commander of the settlement at the Cape established by the Dutch East India Company in 1652, recorded the details of South Africa’s first vintage.” If you do the math, that was 350-years ago ... Happy Birthday.

VQA in Other Lands ... Some loyal readers (Bob and Shelley) passed along a picture from Epcot Center in Disney World Florida. The picture was taken in the Canada pavilion at the park and they report that real Canadian wine was for sale: “Represented [from Ontario] were Chateau des Charmes, Inniskillin, Jackson Triggs and Peller.” They concluded their email with the following, “You’ll be happy to know everything on display was VQA, except it would appear, for the Mission Hill.” Maybe that explains why the folks in BC are so quiet about the Esprit issue ([see Newsletter #101](#)).

Buzz, Buzz, Buzz – I Put a Bug in Your Ear About an Upcoming Wine ... Last week I tried a Sauvignon Blanc that will be perfect for summer. Granted, it was a tank sample, but if the blend comes out as expected, this is going to be one fantastic wine with beautiful aromatics and fantastic flavours. It’s going to be a private label wine sold (hopefully) through one of Niagara’s smaller winery’s, where this winemaker works as an assistant – unfortunately I can’t reveal the winemaker’s name, yet – but I will tell you his Nyarai Cellars 2008 Sauvignon Blanc is pure palate perfection. Look for it May 2009 at a price of \$18 per bottle – well worth it.



Wine Event Spotlight: *Two interesting events*

My colleague David Lawrason passed on this interesting event: **Sips, Sticks & Stilettoes** – a fundraiser for the National Women’s Hockey Team. It takes place Friday February 28 at The National Club (303 Bay Street Toronto). There’ll be a live silent auction, musical entertainment and best of all (for wine fans anyway) 30 fine and rare vintage wines that will not only be opened but poured for your tasting pleasure, including 14 Burgundies ranging from 1964 to 2002. That leaves 16 other mystery wines that are bound to be just as exciting. Visit www.ladiesfirsthockey.com for details and ticket information.

Not sure what **Wine Camp** is, I’m a little sketchy myself when it comes to all the details – but you can find out what it’s all about by visiting www.winecamp.ca ... I do know that it’s scheduled for March 5 from 6-9pm at the Fine Wine Reserve – they will be pouring, talking, reviewing and learning about fantastic Ontario wines – with brief talks from writers, winemakers and growers ... come to think about it, that does sound like fun, especially if there is tasting involved, heck I am sure there is, camp was always a very hands on experience.

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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