

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 – 104
March 19, 2009

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OntarioWineReview:
Pinot Noir Challenge – Rules, Comments and Night One Results

It started out like the last one. A simple poll on the website requesting that 'the people' decide which grape OntarioWineReview should challenge next. Two years ago it was Baco at Southbrook; last year it was Cabernet Franc at the Fine Wine Reserve ... this year, armed with a new venue (Campbell House) and mandate (Pinot Noir), we set out to discover what "the people" thought of Pinot in this province.

The call was made, and 37 wineries from across the province answered it, supplying us with 55 wines. Because the original response to my Pinot Noir query was less than what we eventually got (many wineries did not believe their Pinot would be ready in time for our February Challenge) the decision was made, with our partners at Campbell House, to book only four nights. When all the wines were delivered and collected this meant that our guests would be sipping on about fourteen wines per night (only those attending night three got less - thirteen wines). The breakdown was: 34 wines from the 2007 vintage, 13 from 2006, and 8 from other vintages ranging from 2002 (2), 2003 (3), 2004 (1) and 2005 (2) ... that meant that some of the 2007s would have to find their way into the "odd vintage" night. This was also a new wrinkle for us this year. Instead of breaking the wines down by reserve, regular and blends, it was suggested to me to pit year-versus-year: 2007 vs. 2007, '06 vs. '06, etc.; but because of odd numbers for "other vintages" we could not always accommodate that. Night One attendees tried 2007 regular wines; Night Two were wines from the 2006 vintage and Night Four was reserved for the reserves and specially designated wines (single vineyard, special bottlings, etc.). That left night three as odd-man out, this is where we poured all eight of the older vintages and 6 of the 2007s.

Judging was done on a simple ten-point scale: one being worst, ten being best. Because these tastings were done blind, nobody knew the wines or the prices - all they knew was they were tasting Pinot Noir. Our panels judged the wines based on four criteria: nose and taste – combining these two numbers made up their "do you like it" score; likelihood to buy – this score was based on the question, "if the wine was in your usual price range or budget "would you buy it"?". The final criterion was based on value. After scoring the first three it was time to reveal the price of the bottle. People would once again go back to their ten-point scale and determine whether that wine delivered for its price. This is the category that can make or break a wine ... good value wines rose, and perceived a overpriced bottles fell, down the ladder. In the end, it was those wines that delivered right now that took the crown. Some of our more serious judges took age-ability into consideration, but most were looking for immediate satisfaction in their wine; after all 90% of all bottles purchased are consumed within 24 hours and 95% within 48 hours - the shelf life of a bottle of wine, after it leaves the winery or store, is very short.

The Results ...

Night One ... Fourteen wines were poured, two from the Lake Erie North Shore, three from Prince Edward County, the rest from Niagara, and all from the 2007 'super vintage' here in Ontario. I wish I could tell you that it was close, but this night belonged to a bottle of \$12.45 Pinot Noir from Pelee Island; you just couldn't fight its easy going taste, smooth palate, great fruit nose and ease on the pocketbook. The battle, therefore, was for second, and two wineries from Niagara vied for that. In the end, it was the veteran, Pillitteri, who squeaked out a victory over new an upcoming Rosewood Estate by a mere 0.06 points.

Night One Winners:

Pelee Island Winery 2007 Pinot Noir - \$12.45
Pillitteri Estates Winery 2007 Estate Pinot Noir - \$23.00
Rosewood Estate 2007 Pinot Noir - \$18.00



Grape Guy's Picks of the Bunch: *Winners in their own Right, from Cuvee 2009*
See winery's individual website for details

Niagara College 2007 Dean's List Pinot Noir - \$32.95 (W)

www.nctwinery.ca

When this wine was revealed at the Pinot Noir Challenge, as a people's favourite there was a gasp from the crowd and someone was heard to say, "So it's not even made by a real winery?" That's where you are wrong my friend, my friend, NCT (Niagara College Teaching Winery) is a real winery, as real as the nose on your face; so real in fact that they've won many prestigious awards such over the years. The winery and main teaching is handled by Terence Van Rooyen, a South African winemaker who has teaching in his background (winemakers seem to come from all walks of life). He oversees the student's projects and, when it comes to the wine sold at the winery, it is they (students) who help him so they can gain valuable winemaker knowledge and experience. So au contraire mon frere this is as real as a winery gets. It's not surprising, that this wine was voted as a people's choice finalist on night four, it took home best Pinot Noir at the 2009 Cuvee awards. It has a sweet layered nose of cherries, raspberries and a touch of vanilla ... the palette is just as pleasing, doling out great fruit taste like cherries and strawberries along with hits of cinnamon and firm silky tannins on a smooth finish. Price: \$32.95 – Rating: ****½

Legends Estates Winery 2003 Riesling Reserve - \$29.00 (W)

www.legendsestates.com

Speaking about Cuvee and awards and such here's something that's a must try. Legends entered this outstanding wine into the 2009 Cuvee awards against wines that were much younger and pulled off quite the upset as they tied for the first place Riesling award. A little pricey at twenty-nine bucks, but then they've done all the aging and storing for you; all that's left for you to do is buy it and drink it. The nose reflects the palate with a great fruit to petrol ratio – still plenty of acidity here to keep the mouth watering yet it ends with a slight lanolin coating on the tongue. There's no doubt when you stick your nose in the glass that it's a beautifully aged Riesling ... it's like that old codger down the street that keeps bringing home the ladies, it's old, but it's smooth. Price: \$29.00 – Rating: ****

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



Weekly Wine Notes and More: *White Meritage, Riesling, 2 Vintages 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:

www.ontariowinereview.com

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March 17, 2009 – Jackson-Triggs 2007 Proprietors' Grand Reserve White Meritage ([read](#)) ([listen](#))

March 10, 2009 – Cave Spring Cellars 2007 Estates Riesling ([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

[Woodman Wine and Spirits Tasting](#)

[California Wine Fair Preview Tasting](#)

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

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

[Vineland 2005 Dry Riesling](#)

[Vineland 2004 Semi-Dry 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

[8 New Reviews Added](#)

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

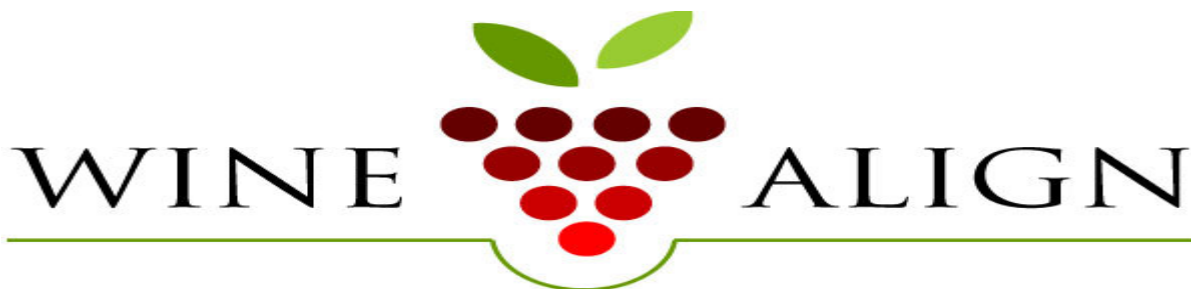
[Ontario "Vintages" Releases: Saturday April 11, 2009](#)

Ontario Wines of Note at Vintages from the coming releases above:

[Konzelmann 2006 Special Select Late Harvest Vidal](#) - (April 11)

[Malivoire 2008 Ladybug Rosé](#) - (April 11)

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For details visit www.winealign.com

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OntarioWineReview:

Results From Nights Two, Three and Four ...

Night Two ... A night for looking back at the vintage of 2006. One Lake Erie wine took on four Prince Edward Counties and 8 Niagara wines ... only 13 wines were poured, this made up our contingent of 2006 entrants. A little bit of controversy arose, as I knew it might. Tonight's highest scoring wine was a Konzelmann 2006 Spaetburgender Pinot Noir, off dry; which eked out a victory by just 0.05 points. But because it was an off-dry wine (which means it had a little sweetness on the palate) it will only get special mention on the evening due to its 'special nature' – I had no other off-dry wines to put up against it so it had to go in this set of wines; but because it had that bit of sweetness it either had an unfair advantage or disadvantage, depending on the taster. Don't fret for Konzelmann though, they still placed a wine in the top three, as they also entered the dry version of the same wine (both wines retail for \$12.50, which caught budget minded eye of the panel and

proved this very impressive). With Konzelmann taking second, and Magnotta Winery taking third with their \$14.95 2006 Pinot Noir Special Reserve ... It left the prize for best 2006 Pinot Noir to the students at Niagara College Teaching Winery; their 2006 Pinot Noir (\$15.95), which by the way, is not the only wine they placed in the nightly competitions.

Night Two Winners:

Niagara College Teaching Winery 2006 Pinot Noir - \$15.95
Konzelmann 2006 Spaetburgender Pinot Noir, dry - \$12.50
Magnotta Winery 2006 Pinot Noir Special Reserve - \$14.95

Night Three ... This was a tough evening for all involved. Fourteen wines were poured 8 of which were from 2005 or later, and six from 2007; how would these wines stack up against one another? The overall winner of the night was from a winery that finds itself in a lot of trouble these days ... Stoney Ridge 2007 Founder's Collection Pinot Noir took top honours by the narrowest margin of any night, just 0.04 points. It was not just its value that carried the day for this wine (\$14.95), it also had a strong showing in the 'taste' and 'would you buy' categories. The older vintages took second and third with Lakeview Cellars 2005 Pinot Noir Reserve placing second and Puddicombe Estates 2003 Pinot Noir placing third. For those interested in knowing what the third place finishers for the old vintages would have been, it was Legends Estates 2003 Pinot Noir – Maria Felt (\$56.60). I would like to take this opportunity to thank Legend's owner Paul Lizak, who entered his 2002 Pinot Noir Reserve into the competition, it was our most expensive bottle entered in any of our competitions to date, retailing for \$159.00. The wine placed first for its nose, in the top ten for flavor (7), and the took fifth for likelihood to buy ... as you can probably assume it did not do well in the 'value' category, but it did place a very respectable 9th overall for the night. As an interesting aside, the panel was asked to identify the \$159 bottle, only 2 got it right.

Night Three Winners:

Stoney Ridge Estate Winery 2007 Founder's Collection Pinot Noir - \$14.95
Lakeview Cellars 2005 Pinot Noir Reserved - \$24.95
Puddicombe Estates 2003 Pinot Noir - \$18.00

Night Four ... Last night, last group of wines; another fourteen in total, with one Lake Erie entry, five Prince Edward Counties and the remainder from Niagara. These wines were been deemed "reserve", or had some other kind of special designation on their label, and were all from the 2007 vintage. Tonight, third place was taken by those college kids again, this time it was the Niagara College 2007 Dean's List Pinot Noir (\$32.95). Second was a wine that many raved about as delivering a good quality to value ratio, along with possessing a fair amount of ageability: the Angels Gate 2007 Pinot Noir – Mountainview (\$25.00). In first for the reserves, it was once again Pelee Island Winery who took home the prize because of an unbeatable quality to price ratio - a 2007 Reserve for only \$14.95 proved just too powerful a lure.

Night Four Winners:

Pelee Island Winery 2007 Pinot Noir Reserve - \$14.95
Angles Gate Winery 2007 Pinot Noir – Mountainview - \$25.00
Niagara College Teaching Winery 2007 Dean's List Pinot Noir - \$32.95

Final Thoughts and Thank yous...

The people have spoken. They voted with their nose, their taste buds, their willingness to buy and finally their value-minded conscience. Value is always a key to this competition - people have to believe they're getting it in their glass. Above I ran down the nights top winners, [on the website you'll be able to see the overall top ten from the competition](#), and another website exclusive, a look at the [By-Year Top 10 \(2007\) / 5 \(2006\) / 3 \(other vintages\)](#) – based on number of wines entered.

Whatever year you're looking for, these are the wines that offered bang-for-the-buck to our panels.

Thanks to all the participants, who filled out scorecards and sip more wines than they were expecting. Thanks to all the wineries who participated, putting their wines and reputations on the line to please the public, without you this competition would not exist. Thanks to [Campbell House](#), [Schott Zwiesel \(Fortessa Canada\)](#), [Balderson](#), [Andrew Peller Limited](#) and [Rush Creek Wines](#) ... and finally thanks to you not only for reading, but for enjoying Ontario wines – we're making a world class product here, year after year, and I for one am proud to be part of reporting it to you. Look for us to do it all again come October/November 2009 – with a different grape ... have your say on which grape we do next by voting in the on-line poll which will run from March 19, 2009 to June 30, 2009 – with the grape being announced in August or September. Cheers.



Wine Event Spotlight: *Farm to Home Event – March 28, 2009*

On March 28th the [Gladstone Hotel](#) is presenting a day of Farm to Home cuisine. It starts with a Farm to Home Fair, where you get to meet local producers, explore Community Shared Agriculture and learn ways to purchase your food directly from local producers. There will be live music and appetizers prepared by the Gladstone's chef Marc Breton. This event runs from 1:30-4:30pm – tickets are \$10 each and available thru [www.UofTix.ca](#) or by calling 416-978-8849; those not willing to commit early will be glad to know that tickets will also be sold at the door.

The day doesn't end there though. Experience more Farm to Home cuisine as you take part in the Seasonal Buffet Dinner that very night, at 6:00pm (all food prepared by Marc Breton); there will also be a selection of Ontario wines and beers to pair and wash down all that great food with. Tickets are \$35, and are best purchased in advance, so that make enough food for you ... to purchase contact Paige at 416-531-4635 ext. 7103. For those interested, the Gladstone Hotel is located at 1214 Queen Street West, both events take place on the 2nd floor.

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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