

## 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 – 106**  
**April 16, 2009**

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### OntarioWineReview: *Feedback from Newsletter #105*

If I were a wine-cartoonist, I would have had a field day, with a great number of panels, after last month's budget was handed down. Here's one: imagine, if you will, a big government sort (identified by his "liberal" emblazoned hat) standing over a doubled over winemaker (wearing his own monikered hat) holding his groin. Or, another: our same Liberal government type standing over a crumpled winemaker all bloodied, battered and bruised with a steaming pile of you-know-what beside him – two fellows pass by and the one says to the other, "What happened here?" To which the other would reply, "Oh that's the wine industry rep, he just got the shit kicked out of him." But I'm no artist, my stick man artwork would do very little to get my point across. Nope, no visual medium for me. I'm a writer, so I wrote down my thoughts and feelings about what had transpired and I am happy to report that my readers readily responded. In fact, I was ecstatic to learn that you guys write too – and when something really irks you, or seems unfair, you really let me know. Here is some feedback that I received from my previous [newsletter \(#105 – More Have Not Than Ever Before\)](#) – and folks I have to warn you, some of it is not pretty. I have withheld the names to protect you when you visit your local liquor store, or when you deal with the government or any other Big Brother-type institutions.

After getting through the "Keep up the good fight" (of which there were half a dozen), "Amen, Brother" (a few – one in all caps) and the "Come on, Michael!!! Tell us how you REALLY feel!?" came the more emotional / visceral responses.

"After reading your hot topic I needed a huge glass of VQA and bigger shoes with which to kick butt."

"I totally agree that our wine industry desperately needs a passionate, iconic "leader / saviour"!"

"I knew what [your newsletter] was about and was too upset to read anything about it, so I delayed. We are bottling in 2 weeks to supply [some] regional LCBO's ... It made sense to the time of planning ... sales are great ... they love the wine ... unfortunately I know what I make (or not make!) on each case ... We will have to create more events to draw people at the cellar doors ... Thank you for expressing my thoughts."

"I was shocked to read your well researched rant on the Ontario wine industry which is being throttled by both Vincor aka Constellation (showing their true red/white/blue colours now) abetted by our very own LCBO."

And here's one from the west coast ... they too feel our pain.

"You certainly got me going this morning. No need for coffee to get the heart rate up. It is sad to see what the LCBO gets away with - brutal. I hope that it changes for all of the small producers as they are really the ones who make the business and bring the passion..."

This same reader had the pleasure of working with Robert Mondavi at one time in her career and put her feelings very succinctly down on paper: “[He was] one of those people that when you know you are going to meet him you anticipate he is going to be incredible ... and then he is even more than what you imagined.”

Some people proclaimed their ignorance about the inner workings of the LCBO; I suspect many more are in the same boat:

“I know there's a lot I don't understand, [but I] wonder how in the face of deregulation and the sale of other crown companies how the LCBO and it's monopolistic laws are allowed to continue.”

And others could relate to my search for foreign wines in other wine making lands:

“We recently travelled to Western Australia and, as you state regarding US liquor stores, the stores there stock huge amounts of Australian wines (from all wine regions of the country) and you are hard-pressed to find foreign wines taking up shelf real estate. I suppose what I'm saying is that to me, this is the way that it should be, and while I don't know the workings of the LCBO, I can only imagine that promoting our Ontario wineries properly (all regions) [would be a] win, not only for the wine industry, but the economy as a whole in this province.”

But by far, my favourite letter was from a winery owner and grape grower who had a lot to say about the way the provincial liquor store operates, as well as the mess the Grape Growers of Ontario (GGO) and Wine Council of Ontario (WCO) are making of the whole situation. Readers warning: please be advised this is quite the visceral, emotional and angry rant and not for the feint of heart ... side effects may include head scratching, shaking and heart palpitations:

“That was a great newsletter! Truth rang through every word and with the removal of the VQASP, we have had to re-evaluate our sales through Vintages. Even with the VQASP, selling through the LCBO was the least profitable sales channel for us to pursue but now we are essentially giving the wine away and still the LCBO refuses to take responsibility forcing the wineries to agree to an additional 20% if 75% of the product has not sold through the stores within 90 days!!! And then imagine my shock when they called me to discuss purchasing our wines on consignment – we do not get paid for the wine until 75% gets sold through the store system!!! In a province where the “law” states that wine sales must be COD, how on earth can the largest purchaser of wine in the province get away with this? And where is their responsibility in ensuring their staff does their job – SELL WINE!!! And it might be nice if they actually sold Ontario wines – but my last venture into my local LCBO proved that they can barely find the VQA section let alone find a wine in it.”

“Don't get me started on the GGO and grape surplus program which was only developed to really line the pockets of the Board of Directors. They were the first ones with the knowledge and it was only when the information “leaked” out that they owned up to the fact that grapes had already been taken under the program, while other grape growers had no choice but to let their grapes rot on the vines before realizing there was assistance. I have not heard one honest word out of the mouths of the CEO and Board of Directors of the GGO. I recently started reading their annual report and need to ask – how can they claim they are accountable (“We are accountable to the grape growers for decisions made and for the rationale upon which these decision are made” – from page 1 of their annual report) after the catastrophe which was last year's surplus program. ... As a major partner in the grape and wine industry, is it not time the growers got off their tractors and realized that unless they start making a small attempt at understanding the challenges facing the wine industry, their products will no longer be required? I shake my head when I hear that [one of my neighbours] has over 100 acres of vineyards coming into production over the next three years – what was he thinking!!!

And the in fighting between WCO and GGO kills me – one blames the other, and vice versa, for everything. Last I heard, the reason the VQASP was eliminated was because the GGO went to the government to complain that the grape growers were not benefiting from the program. I have no idea who to believe any more – from where I sit, every one has their own agendas and refuses to take responsibility for their actions and [seem to] forget their integrity when they leave for work in the

morning.

Thanks for letting me vent – that was a great newsletter!!!”

Finally, I will leave you with these words from the publisher/editor of the County Wine News who sent [my newsletter \(#105\)](#) around to their entire mailing list:

“In a free society such as ours, citizens are periodically called upon to make informed decisions that are reflected in the structures of industry, government and law, Michael's summary of the current and potential states of the Ontario Wine Industry in this Newsletter may be helpful in your quest to stay informed so you can make qualified decisions when called upon to do so. Perhaps you are the Patton, Gandhi, Moses, or Mondavi he is calling to.”

As for my final words (for now) - Amen and goodnight, thanks for writing in.



**Grape Guy's Picks of the Bunch:** *New wines for the hot season ahead*  
See winery's individual website for details

**Nyarai Cellars 2008 Sauvignon Blanc - \$18.95**  
No Website yet

It's finally time to blow the lid off of this thing, before it's too late, or in the immortal words of George Clinton, “blow the roof off the mothersucker.” Back in Newsletter 102 – February 19, 2009 – I told you to watch for a new Sauvignon Blanc coming from Nyarai Cellars. Well I just came from tasting the final bottled version of the flagship white from this boutique winery – the aforementioned Savvy B – and I would have to say that I'm as impressed now as I was then, maybe more. Nyarai Cellars is made by winemaker Steve Byfield, formerly an assistant at Southbrook and Ridgepoint and head winemaker, for the last incarnation of the now defunct, Thomas and Vaughan. Today he toils as assistant at Calamus by day as well as with his own label (Nyarai, a South African term that means “humble”). Steve told me that he chose Sauvignon Blanc because it's his favourite grape to work with, plus there's already enough Riesling and Chardonnay out there. He vows to always make Sauvignon Blanc his signature wine with a few other wines occasionally surfacing in good vintages. The nose is very appealing with sweet pink grapefruit, peach and a touch of zesty bubblegum nuances that dissipate with air and time in the glass. The palate is where this wine shines; a big fruit driven Sauv with good acidity and lovely citrus and melon flavours that hang out for a long time. This is one beautiful summer time wine and will be available at quite a few restaurants near you. Many of the restaurateurs who have tried it have embraced it, as you are bound to do. This wine will be available thru the soon to be up-and-running website. Price: \$18.95 – Rating: \*\*\*\*½

**Fielding Estates 2007 Viognier - \$30.00 (W)**

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

Those fed up with Chardonnay might find themselves gravitating towards grapes like Viognier that can handle both light wooding and un-wooded styles; and have lots of potential flavour profiles. This Fielding version is fun and fruity, built for what this winery stands for – summers at the cottage lounging out in your Muskoka chair. Beautiful tropical aromas are followed by wonderfully tropical sweet fruit on the palate and a lengthy finish that makes you wait, not wanting those flavours to disappear from the mouth too quickly – but always willing to refresh the palate when they do dissipate. Some say Viognier is going to be the next big “it” grape – if the Vios coming out are going to be anything like this Fielding offering, then all I can say is “bring it on”. As for the price, this one's for those special moments in the Muskoka chair, say dusk when the loons are singing their song and the fading sun is hitting the water just right ... add the sound of a popping cork to the sweet song and peaceful surroundings, sit back and enjoy. Only 315 cases were made, so drink slowly my friend. Price: \$30.00 – Rating: \*\*\*\*½

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

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

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**Weekly Wine Notes and More: *Pelham Rivalry, Cattail, and plenty 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:

Great News – Now you can listen to the [Podcasts](#) of your choice - individually

April 7, 2009 – Cattail Creek 2007 Merlot ([read](#)) ([listen](#))

April 14, 2009 – Henry of Pelham Sibling Rivalry wines ([read](#)) ([listen](#))

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

[Churchill Cellars Portfolio Tasting](#)

[Piper vs. Charles – the Heidsieck Tasting](#)

[The Wines of Penny's Hill and Mr. Riggs](#)

[California Wine Fair](#)

[French Wine. Trade Tasting](#)

**[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

[Southbrook 1998 'Lailey Vineyard' Cabernet Sauvignon](#)

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

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

[Rosehall Run 2004 St. Cindy Pinot Noir](#)

[The Grange of Prince Edward County 2004 Cabernet-Merlot](#)

[Huff Estates 2003 Cabernet Sauvignon / 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

[9 New Reviews Added](#)

Including: Danzante, Finca Las Moras, Korta, Vitkin, Kaiken, Rothschilds and more

**Vintages Release:** [May 2<sup>nd</sup> Release report coming soon](#)

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

April 2009

**A Much Belated Congratulations ...** As Christmas time came and went, there was lots going on and certain things fell through the cracks – as they always do. One of those things was the giving out of a hearty congratulations to Colchester Ridge Winery for having their 2007 Riesling selected as the official Queen's Park white for 2008-2009. Another should go to Reif Estates for being selected as the House's red (2006 Cabernet Sauvignon Reserve). Interestingly, both wines are now being sold in the Queen's Park gift shop.

**Does this Sound Familiar? ...** Another Canadian event is singing a similar tune as the Olympics. The food and drink served at the 38th Annual Juno Awards Gala March 28 in Beautiful British Columbia suffered the same fate that official Olympic wine is bound to suffer. Melaine Berry, president of the Canadian Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences was quoted as saying, "we initially started with the 100-mile radius for food, except where our footprint would be smaller if we went outside of that radius." So how'd they do? The wine was Little Black Dress from California, the beef from Alberta and the salmon from "somewhere in the Pacific Northwest". I'm starting to think they just don't care about being Canadian and their Canadian pride out there in BC – might as well call them Quebec West.

**About 15% of the World is Happy to Screw ...** Cap that is. According to leading screwcap manufacturers, they now have 15% of the world wine closure market, up 25% from the previous year to 2.5 billion units. Most of the recent growth is from Europe – a usually tough seal to crack for alternative closures. Screwcap and cork manufacturers are expecting growth for both closures at the expense of synthetic closures. We'll wait and see who wins this battle for the bottle.

**A Little Wine with the Morning Funnies ...** Japanese palates don't look to Parker, Tanzer or Aspler, they look to wine critic Shizuku Kanzaki. The only problem is Shizuku has never and will never attend a tasting or sign the delivery slip for a bottle of wine. You see, Mr. Kanzaki is a cartoon figure that is making quite a name for himself in the wine world. If a wine appears in his weekly Manga, you can bet the demand for it will be stratospheric. The comic revolves around Shizuku's quest for his father's much-coveted wine cellar, but during his travels he encounters other wonderful wines. Some 500,000 Japanese read his exploits each week. I lamented earlier – if only I could draw.

**The New French Paradox ...** Years ago, we looked to the French diet of wine and butter as the way to stay healthy; we all assumed it was the wine, but now there is a new study, done by the French themselves, who are governed by a teatotaling president who has turned his government's attention to systematically dismantling the national treasure of France: the fermented grape. The newest volley has been launched by the Ministry of Health, in their new brochure they claim: "The consumption of alcohol, and especially wine, is discouraged. A single glass of wine per day will raise the chance of contracting cancer by up to 168%." Wow, that's a lot. But the wine industry shot back with their own numbers and rhetoric: "The extremists must not be allowed to take consumers hostage ... Wine consumption has dropped 50% over the last 20 years in France but cancer has increased. You have to admit, that's a paradox" Says Xavier de Volonjtant, president of the wine producers' association of the southwestern Languedoc region. It seems those crazy French are at it again, and I always knew it was the rich creamery butter and not the wine..

**With one hand they giveth, with the other they taketh away ...** Just last month it was announced that Canada has removed a 3% tariff on oak barrel imports; also announced was the establishment of a \$1-million fund designed to help Canadian wineries cultivate export markets. Now, why the heck can't the provincial government be more helpful and get this industry off the ground instead of having one agency with one foot on the wineries' neck and the other tugging his hand to get up. Makes no sense, I'm so confused I think my head might explode.



## Wine Event Spotlight: *Three Biggies are Coming Your Way*

Have you always wanted to taste wines from across Canada but due to the provincial laws of importation were unable to do so? Well here's your legal opportunity to sample Canadian wines from coast-to-coast. The **All Canadian Wine Championships "Passport to Canada"** tasting. It takes place Thursday May 14 from 7-9:30 at the Caboto Club in Windsor. Tickets are a mere \$30 per person, or if you can rally your friends together (8 or more of them anyway) you can pick up tickets for \$25 each. [Details of the event can be found here.](#)

I'm telling you right now, don't waste another second – get your passports to what possible could be the premier winery event in Niagara ... **The Wineries of Niagara-on-the-Lake Wine and Herb Festival**, which rivals their Taste the Season for best time you can have in wine country. This year a whopping 21 Niagara-on-the-Lake wineries are pairing their wines with a mystery herb. I consistently have a blast during this event. It takes place every weekend in May (Saturday and Sunday) ... passports are \$30 (until April 24) and \$35 afterward. [Details can be found on the Wineries of NOTL website.](#)

Summer is just around the corner. Why am I so sure about that? Because Jackson-Triggs has announced their line-up for **Twilight in the Vineyard** – their annual concert series of Canadian acts that will take up residence (for the evening at least) at the intimate band-shell stage behind the winery in Niagara-on-the-Lake. I have been to a few of these shows and am consistently amazed by the quality of talent that J-T gets and the beauty of the surroundings. This year you'll have the opportunity to see Chantel Kreviazuk (June 27), Bruce Cockburn (July 4), The Canadian Tenors (July 25), Rufus Wainwright (August 1) and David Usher (August 29). Tickets are \$64 each and are available by calling the Jackson-Triggs box office at 905-468-4637 (ext. 2) of 1-866-589-4637. [To view your options visit the J-T announcement and website page.](#)

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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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