

## 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 – 108**  
**May 14, 2009**

### In this Edition

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- **Ontario Wine Review: *If the LCBO got slapped like the OLG – a re-imagined story***
  - **Grape Guy's Picks of the Bunch: *New wine from a new winery and an old favourite***
  - **Weekly Wine Notes and More: *30 Bench, Rosewood, Lots of Road and more***
  - **Quick Sips: *Embezzling, Fake Cork, Getting Stung in Italy and more***
  - **Wine Event Spotlight: *Cave, Riesling and the OWS Oakville***
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### **OntarioWineReview: *If the LCBO got slapped like the OLG – a re-imagined story***

On March 10, 2009 the Canadian Press Released a story about the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corporation's decision to buy 22 foreign-made cars as prizes for one of their competitions. It was suggested to me that the story might also read well if the OLG was replaced by the LCBO and a few words inserted here and there so that the story was about the LCBO being blasted for buying foreign "wines" instead of domestic ones ... [I have a link to the original March 10th story here](#) – but take a look at what a few word swaps can do and see how the story fits what our Ontario wineries are going through.

### **LCBO blasted for offering More Off-shore blends and Foreign Made wines**

May 14, 2009

By Michael Pinkus, based on material (c) 2009 by Canadian Press, written by Romina Maurino.

Ontario's locally-challenged Liquor Control Board was read the riot act for making the "crappy decision" to buy European- and foreign-made wines as shelf fillers instead of domestic ones, the provincial government said today.

Deputy Premier George Smitherman – dubbed Furious George for his aggressive and often abrasive manner in the legislature – said he minced no words when he spoke with the Liquor Control Board's top brass this morning.

"That was a crappy decision and I let them know it in full force that it wasn't going to be tolerated going forward," Smitherman said. "It's disappointing, it's disillusioning, it's wrong on all levels and it was a big mistake."

Smitherman agreed with the Opposition that the LCBO was wrong to promote 22 countries as part of its many campaigns at the province's liquor stores at a time when thousands of Ontario wineries are in such dire straits [ironically, Money For Nothing was playing on the parliamentary Muzak system].

"Is it too much to ask that your government continues to appear to be concerned?" Progressive Conservative Ted Chudleigh asked in the legislature.

"I'm a Conservative, but I've got to say that the (Ontario Wine Industry) has suffer the greatest under (Premier Dalton McGuinty's) government."

Smitherman, who is responsible for oversight of the public liquor agency, said he "made it clear" the move showed "a huge lapse in judgment" and that he expected the LCBO to improve its performance going forward.

"When you're in a promotions department, that's a flashy brand and people respond well to it," he said. "They just misunderstood the bigger context that we all understand."

The LCBO, which has been under fire in recent years following a report in July of 2005 into "[Strategy for Transforming Ontario's Beverage Alcohol System](#)", said in a statement it regretted the decision to feature foreign wines and Cellared in Canada blends over 100% domestic product (VQA).

"The promotion was developed 10 months ago in a different economic environment," the company said.

"Supporting Ontario business is an important part of the LCBO's mandate and these promotions should not have included foreign-made wines."

A spokesman for the LCBO said the agents paid \$29,500 plus tax for each listing, which they then retailed for more than double.

Norman Beal, chair of the Wine Council of Ontario, said the wineries were frustrated by the move, [which was] made public at a time when more and more wineries are struggling to make ends meet.

The Canadian and Ontario governments have also offered automakers \$4 billion in aid to prevent their collapse. While offering very little in the way of aid to the struggling wine industry.

"I don't want to pretend that 15, 20 wines will make a difference, but it's the message that's sent to Canadians and especially to wineries in this time when they feel a tremendous sense of insecurity," Lewenza said.

The LCBO's decision, he added, underscores the need for a procurement policy on government programs [and agencies].

"I would like for (Smitherman) to use not just his stern remarks but his legislative powers to make sure that the interests of Canadian jobs, Canadian workers and Canadian wineries are at the heart of a procurement policy," Lewenza said.

While Smitherman said he was so angry about the decision that he couldn't describe his initial reaction because he didn't "want to swear," he stopped short of asking for any resignations for now.

NDP Leader Andrea Horwath said the LCBO's management got off easy after what she called a slap in the face to wineries. "It's the responsibility of the minister and it lies on his shoulders to make sure that there's accountability in this situation," Horwath said. "The CEO should be taking responsibility for this and needs to be brought up on the carpet."

Horwath also chastised the government for questioning the NDP's choice of a Nova Scotia company to tally its votes at a weekend leadership convention when they couldn't find anyone to provide that service in Ontario.

"It's a cheap way of doing it – they need to keep their own house in order and looks at their own record," she said.

Chudleigh said he was satisfied with Smitherman's response and believed the minister was sincere in his anger about the error.

"I'm very pleased I wasn't at that nine o'clock meeting, especially on the receiving end," he quipped.



**Grape Guy's Picks of the Bunch:** *New wine from a new winery and an old favourite*  
See winery's individual website for details

### **Ravine Vineyard 2007 Redcoat - \$19.00 (W)**

No Website yet

There's a new winery in town (St. David's, just outside of Niagara-on-the-Lake) and it's going to be one to watch. Last year I got a preview of their Riesling, during an impromptu pre-opening visit; and a few other wines were also previewed and poured when the principals visited the Wine Writers' Circle just before Christmas. Earlier this year (February) I made an actual visit to the now open to the public winery ... here I was able to look over the wine list – most of the stuff I had tried, but this one was a wine I hadn't. One thing I will say about Ravine, to their detriment, is that their pricing is a little high (only 3 wines are under \$20) – I have never been one to keep quiet with my thoughts on wineries coming out of the gate with high prices for unproven wine; it so seems that they want to get their investment back quickly instead of gaining a following and increasing prices gradually ... but that's just my pet peeve. The "Redcoat" is a decent sip at a decent price (under \$20). It's a pretty equal blend of the big three: Cabernet Sauvignon (35%), Cabernet Franc (33%) and Merlot (32%), simple yet totally enjoyable. Cherry, herbs, licorice – in an easy drinking, quaffable style with a touch of tannins and a lingering white pepper finish. Price: \$19.00 – Rating: \*\*\*\*

### **Featherstone Estate 2007 Gamay - \$17.95 (W)**

[www.featherstonewinery.ca](http://www.featherstonewinery.ca)

When I first got a preview taste of this wine during Cuvee (Feb. 2009), I was thrilled by the big cherry flavour of this wine and its kiss of cinnamon toasty-ness and white pepper. I gave it five-stars on the spot. Now, some three months later, I tried it again, this time in it's finished, bottled and ready for sale form, and I have to tell you I'm just as, if not more, impressed with this wine than I was back then. Those extra three months in bottle have focused this wine. The flavours and the barrel notes (30% new and 70% used) have fully integrated, giving the full effect of what good Gamay can be. Beautiful ruby colour is the first thing you'll notice. Sweet red cherries on the nose, which continue onto the palate and turn black while still keeping that nice kiss of cinnamon and white pepper. Keep it in the mouth for a spell and you'll get a nice deep, full mouth enveloping flavour with great tannins and a soap opera-like "bold and beautiful" cherry finish. Yummy – chill slightly and enjoy. Price: \$17.95 – Rating: \*\*\*\*\*

**The Fab Fives:** This past weekend I attended the Lailey Vineyard open house, at which a number of new 2007 wines were released. I had previously written a preview of these wines in December 2008. Now these wines are bottled and ready. Three of these wines received an unprecedented five star rating, I have dubbed them "The Fab Fives" – take a look why: [2007 Cabernet Sauvignon](#) – [2007 Cabernet Franc](#) – [2007 Meritage](#)

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



### **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**

**May 5, 2009** – Thirty Bench Wine Makers 2006 Small Lot Cabernet Franc ([read](#)) ([listen](#))

**May 12, 2009** – Rosewood Estates 2007 Riesling Reserve ([read](#)) ([listen](#))

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

[Drinking with another Dave \(Wisconsin\)](#)

[Somewhereness](#)

[Bouchard and Fevre Tasting](#)

[Foster's California Tasting](#)

[Ontario Wine Awards Gala Dinner & Award Ceremony](#)

**[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 new this week – 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

**Nothing new this week – keep checking back**

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

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

[5 New Reviews Added](#)

Including: Atteca, Luzon and Marietta Cellars

**Vintages Release:** [May 23 Release report available now](#)

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

**May 2009**

**Congrats to Pascal ...** On April 22, 2009, Osoyoos Larose's (Okanagan, BC) winemaker Pascal Madevon, officially became a Canadian Citizen. Welcome to our way of life here in Canada Pascal – if I were there I'd buy you a Timmy's coffee and a timbit to celebrate.

**A Sure-Fire Way to Make Money in the Wine Business – Embezzle ...** Andrew Peller's former financial manager, Christine Papakyriakou, pled guilty to siphoning \$7.4 million from the company over the past 11 years. For my comment see the headline.

**Pop Goes the Fake Cork ...** Champagne house Duval-Leroy is about to break from a 350 year old tradition; for the first time in the Champagne region's history a bottle will be sealed with something

other than cork. Duval-Leroy will introduce a new closure that will “make the same sound as when a traditional cork is being removed from the bottle.” This will be done on a limited amount of bottles to test the market’s acceptance. Heck, if they can make milk moo and cans of beer talk they must be able to make bottles pop.

**California at One Billion ...** It has been reported that U.S. wine exports finally hit the one-billion dollar mark in 2008, up 6% from the previous year. Canada was the second biggest market for the U.S., after Europe, with \$260 million, followed by Japan, Hong Kong and Mexico. It would seem that if California makes it (they make 90% of the wine exported), we’ll buy it, it’s just that simple.

**Red so Embarrassed it Blushes ...** In a move that has the French stewing, the EU announced plans to allow rosé producers to combine white and red wine to produce the currently popular rose-coloured wines. French producers say it is a “sacrilege” to allow such a thing to happen to rosé, which has a time-honoured tradition of how to properly make it. Every other wine seems to get bastardized, why not rosé.

**Celebrity Winery Alert ...** Just when you thought it was safe to wade back into the winery pool, along comes another celebrity with aspirations of being a vigneron. Turns out Sting (yes Police Sting) will be trying his hand at wine named after his 16th century Italian Villa “Il Palagio” ... I wonder if he’ll finally find that message in a bottle he’s been looking and waiting for.

**Convenience Wine ...** A group called “Ontario Wants Wine & Beer in Convenience Stores” has put forth the idea, once again, that 100% VQA wine should be sold in the more than 10,000 variety stores across the province. James Kang, who spearheads this new call, gives 3 reasons why the convenience store model would work to help our beleaguered wineries move more product and get greater recognition: longer hours, a variety of goods already on the shelf and they are already frequented by tourists. Kang also added a fourth reason, there’s already a huge network of stores already in place. He makes sense, which probably means this idea will never see the light of day in Ontario. Check out the new poll and have your say (bottom right hand side of the home page)

**Wines That Came to My Door – So I Tried Them ...** I get a few non-Ontario parcels show up and I try each and every one of them – here are a few good suggestions for those times you decided not to pick local in your wine choice: Chateau Hauchat 2005 (\$15.00) – a nice cinnamon/nutmeg nose with vanilla and cherry also taking up residence in the olfactories. Nice tannins on the palate with black fruit, spice and anise. This one is tasty now, but has good aging potential, especially for a wine under 15 clams. Obikwa 2008 Sauvignon Blanc (\$8.95) for under 10-bucks this delivers grassy, mineral and chalky-gooseberry with a grapefruit finish. Finally, a decent little Remy Pannier Chardonnay Brut Sparkling – which is quite lovely for bubbly lovers.



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

What could be better on a spring afternoon than a hike through the woodlands? How about a glass of wine to accompany your jaunt? Cave Spring has an interesting little sojourn for you adventurers and hikers. **Sip ... Savour ... Discover at Cave Spring** – a walk and talk about their vineyard along with Rieslings and cheese. [Be sure to check out their website for all the details.](#)

Speaking of Riesling, it’s the **3rd Annual Ontario Consumer Riesling Challenge** at the LCBO in Guelph Saturday May 30. 11 LCBO listed Rieslings will square off, and consumers will be able to vote for, their favourite. The problem is you don’t get to try them all – the fee is \$10 for 4 tastings, so pick wisely. I have no other details to pass along so you might want to start making some calls to Guelph LCBO stores to find out which one its being held at.

The **Ontario Wine Society now has an Oakville chapter**, and for their first event they’re going to be popping lots of corks, literally. It’s an Ontario sparkling wine tasting led by Donald Ziraldo of

Inniskillin fame. The reception wines will be two new releases from Stoney Ridge presented by founder Jim Warren and new marketing representative Martin Charrois, appetizers will be served. It takes place Sunday May 24 at Seasons Restaurant in Oakville starting at 6:00 pm. \$42 per person (members & non-members). Seating is limited to 60 people so reserve space quickly if you are interested. [Reservations can be made online.](#)

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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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