

## 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 – 153**  
**March 10, 2011**

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### OntarioWineReview: *The Battle for Grape Supremacy*

In the wake of our winemakers wondering over to New York to present Ontario Chardonnay to the New York media and consumers I got to thinking about what we are trying to present to the world - and also to the folks right here at home.

Ontario is caught in a vortex of competing ideas all vying for the number one spot. I'm talking about those various camps that want to plant their flag into one grape or another to dub it Ontario's Grape. Some camps want Riesling, which is why a Riesling conference is held in Niagara every so often - the second happens June 9-10 at Brock University. There are those Pinot-philes both in Niagara and in The County that swear it's the next best thing to come out of Ontario since Shania Twain and Avril Lavigne. And when Thomas Bacheldar was prominently in the news for winning best Chardonnay at the Judgement of Montreal the Chardon-ophiles came out of the woodwork. Which prompted the movement that is now afoot, spearheaded by Bill Redelmeier of Southbrook, to make Chardonnay the grape of fame for Ontario. His detractors say he is just tooting his own horn because he does not make Riesling or Pinot Noir.

I also read an article, less than a year ago, written by wine writer and colleague, Matthew Sullivan, that proclaimed Syrah was the next big thing in Ontario and that it should be seen as Ontario's grape. [I have long been a vocal supporter for Cabernet Franc as Ontario's red grape of choice](#), and see that in the most recent edition of Vines Magazine someone is finally listening. But who's right and when will this battle end? When will the whole of Ontario get behind a single grape to showcase to the world, so we can get on with our much ballyhooed plan of taking the world by storm?

The evidence is strong for a single grape-face to the world. One need look no further than the Aussies or Kiwis for inspiration. The Aussies took the world by storming the beaches with Shiraz, while the Kiwis (New Zealand) bet all their money on Sauvignon Blanc, and won respect and a name for themselves, big time. If you look at every successful wine region in the world they have picked one grape to ride onto the worldwide stage. Chile has their Carmenere, Argentina their Malbec, sure the U.S. (read: California) chose Chardonnay and Cabernet Sauvignon, but the quintessential U.S. grape is Zinfandel. The Italians are all about Sangiovese, the Spanish are firmly in the Tempranillo camp, British Columbia gets raves for their Merlot, South Africa is riding Pinotage - but depending on who you speak to that's either a losing pony or a nag waiting to have its day in the sun. Even Bordeaux chose sides with the right bank taking Merlot and the left Cab Sauv - blending is de rigueur but they are dominated by one or the other. Austria has their Gruner and Germany has bet everything on Riesling ... which brings me back to Ontario, because there is a parallel between the German wine experience and what Ontario seems to be experiencing.

Germany is first and foremost known for its' Riesling, but their wines are also universally seen as sweet, love or hate Riesling (and really how can you hate it?), when the subject of German Rieslings are mentioned, the word "sweet" isn't far behind. Germany has now been saddled with that moniker no matter what they do. Ontario / Canada is universally know for ... wait for it ... Icewine, which is ... yup, sweet ... and when times were good we were happy to ride that gravy train all the way to the bank. Problem is Icewine is expensive and considered a luxury product, first thing to get kicked to the curb during recessionary times are luxury products (read: Icewine). But by now the world thinks of us as sweet wine producers, period, the end. We have fits and spurts of greatness in the Pinot World (thank you Le Clos Jordanne); in the Riesling world (Cave Spring via Wine Spectator) and with Chardonnay (we weren't panned in England); but we have yet to back a winning horse ... that's because we keep hedging our bets.

When we were dealing the hot hand with Icewine we should have had riders attached to it. "Want a skid of Icewine, take half a skid of Riesling or Cabernet Franc" just to prove we made something other than the sweet stuff. It's time to lay our bets if we want to be players in the world theatre of wine. Nobody says you can't have a follow-up punch, each of the countries previously mentioned aren't a one graper. New Zealand followed with Pinot Noir then Merlot and then a whole rash of wines followed that. What's stopping us from doing the same, we just have to pick which grape we want to hitch our wagon to. I would also like to point out that Icewine is a style, not a grape, and if Icewine is our leader onto the world stage shouldn't Vidal be our leading grape? After all, it's the one that got the whole ball rolling.

So, is it Pinot Noir, Riesling, Chardonnay, Syrah, Cabernet Franc, Vidal or some other grape waiting in the wings? Time will tell, but the time better come sooner rather than later or we'll all be left lagging behind another upstart country who decided to pick the grape we didn't ...

Now's the time to have your say - go to [www.ontariowinereview.com](http://www.ontariowinereview.com) and look for the poll question on the right hand side of the home page: "Which grape should Ontario back as "our Grape " to promote?" Help our winemakers and owners decided which horse to back ... because around her no one has a clue and we're wasting precious time, credibility and resources.



**Grape Guy's Picks of the Bunch:** *Three Chardonnays from the Tasting ...*

**Tawse 2008 Robyn's Block Chardonnay - \$41.95 (W)**

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

Now here's a prestigious wine that you might want to buy a few so you can keep some in your cellar, this Chardonnay has already picked up White Wine of the Year honours at the 2010 Wine Access Canadian Wine Awards. A wine that was barrel fermented for 3 months then aged an additional 9 to really round out its flavours and aromas. The nose straddles the line between fruit and barrel notes, and does it admirably well with apples and vanilla - it also shows a deft hand with the winemakers delicate use of oak. The palate currently shows the wood more than the fruit: sweet oak and spice, but with a good acid balance that leads me to believe the fruit is not far behind on this one. I don't usually advocate decanting a white, but this one might need a little help to open for the next year or so, if you have the patience wait it out in the cellar for a couple of years. Price: \$41.95 - Rating: \*\*\*\*  
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**Rosewood Estates 2008 Reserve Chardonnay - \$25.00 (W)**

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

If fruit is your bag in Chardonnay, then this is the wine for you. On paper you'd think this Chardonnay would be just riddled with oak notes galore, but in truth it is the fruit that is the star here. Barrel aged for a full 14 months, and on its lees (the dead yeast cells), with a stirring of those cells each week for the first 4 months ... all that is a recipe for big, buttery and oaky. But somehow

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Rosewood has avoided the sucking-on-a-stave feeling and instead let the fruit boss around the wood both on the nose and the palate, a lovely example of how the wood can take a backseat and play a proper supporting role. Price: \$25.00 - Rating: \*\*\*\*+

**Coyote's Run 2009 Red Paw Chardonnay - \$21.95 (W)**

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

Another Chardonnay that shows that even with barrel fermenting and aging oak can play a supporting role to enhance the flavour of the wine, instead of stealing the show. When you put your nose into this glass you'd be hard pressed to find a heavy-handed use of oak, in fact, it'd be hard to find oak at all, the fruit comes wafting out and lures you into the glass for a sip. And it's here where the influence of the oak comes in ... there's a mix of both buttery leesy notes and wood along with just enough fruit to keep you coming back for more - and there's enough of a mix of both in each subsequent mouthful to make it interesting to the last delicious drop. Price: \$21.95 - Rating: \*\*\*\*+

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



**Weekly Wine Notes and More:** *Peace, Harmony and a whole lot more*

A new Ontario wine is reviewed every Tuesday ... take two minutes to listen to the [Podcast](#) or read the tasting notes on the [Blog](#).

[Weekly Wine Notes](#) (added to the Blog and Pod in the past few weeks):

**February 28, 2011 – [Lot 30 Winery 2008 Peace & Harmony \(LISTEN\)](#)**

**[On the Road with the Grape Guy:](#)**

Trips, tours and tastings – join me as I review the highs, and sometimes, the lows

[Days of Wine and Chocolate](#)

[California Media Preview](#)

[Cuvee Winners and Losers](#)

[Cuvee Experts' Tasting](#)

**[Lost and Found \(blog\)](#)**

Wines that got "lost" in my cellar - some are Treasures others Trash ... Find out what happened

[Jackson Triggs 2004 Proprietors' Reserve Cabernet Franc/Cabernet Sauvignon](#)

[Reif Estate 2004 Merlot](#)

**[Taste it Again Grape Guy \(blog\)](#)**

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

[Stoney Ridge 2005 Wismer Vineyard Cabernet Franc Reserve](#)

**[What I'm drinking Tonight \(blog\)](#)**

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

**[2 New Reviews Added](#)**

**Including: An Australian Cab and a Spanish Grenache**

**[Vintages Release \(blog\)](#)**

**Now available – [March 19, 2011](#)**

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### **OntarioWineReview:** *Cuvee 2011 Winners and Losers*

It was the night for the Ontario wine industry to shine, Cuvee 2011 - the only wine judging competition where the winemakers judge each other for top prize. Think of it as the Oscars of the Ontario wine industry. Below you will find the winners in all 22 categories, in some categories there were also a 2nd and 3rd place finisher, to see those you can visit [www.cuvee.ca](http://www.cuvee.ca) to get the skinny on those wines. But there were also a few notable losers at this year's event.

**Loser #1** - *the Ontario wine consumers who purchased tickets to Cuvee ...* the ticket price was \$200 for this year's event and yet the consumers who sipped there way through Ontario's best wines had to do so out of a sub-par glass. It was the same glass that was used at the icewine gala, it wasn't good for that event and it certainly was not appropriate for this one either. Please tell me that for the \$200 price tag organizers could not have got in touch with Riedel, Spiegelau or Schott Zwiesel to inquire about a commemorative glass for attendees to take home, and more importantly, a glass they could actually get some enjoyment from. It makes me wonder if the folks who organize these events have ever actually drank a glass of wine in their lives. When I chose an ISO glass over the horrible glassware being offered ([see picture of glass in my report from the icewine gala](#)) you know it has to be bad. This is an easily rectifiable problem, I sure hope they fix it for next year's event.

**Loser #2** - *the government official who has to give out an award ...* this year it was Kim Craitor, MPP for Niagara Falls who showed up to a tepid response from the crowd. He proceeded to make a few corny jokes and tried to get the industry on his side with a few platitudes about how great the Ontario wine industry is. But when he tells a room of industry people how important the wine industry and Ontario wines are to the government and extols the virtues of bringing tourism dollars to Ontario ... then tells them that the government is behind them 100% ... it's like watching a rock band where the lead singer tells you how wonderful it is to be in that particular city - sure it's great to hear "it's great to be back in Boston" but does he really mean it? I was left scratching my head and wondering if Kim and I live in the same province: if the wine industry is so important to this government why don't they lax some of the laws that handcuff our wineries and give them better access to market their product? I am sure Kim kept wondering if the mic was on while he told us how much he loved and supported Ontario wines with little to no fanfare from hi audience. The mic was on Kim, your words just didn't ring true.

**Loser #3** - *the Noirs, Gamay and Pinot (most notably Pinot) ...* in a province that prides itself on making world class Pinot Noir, and does indeed produce some excellent Gamay Noir, those categories weren't represented by a single winning wine. In the pouring guide for the Cuvee Gala

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(which represents the wines submitted for judging and were deemed to exhibit high enough quality to be poured at the Cuvee Gala by the panel), there were 11 Pinot Noirs and yet no award was handed out for this category. On the other hand, only two Viogniers were submitted and that grape got its own category (and a winner), and five Pinot Gris were submitted for tasting and they too had a category and a winner. So from what I gather the Cuvee judging panel deemed these Pinot Noirs of high enough quality to pour at the event but not of high enough quality to win. I find that hard to believe.

**Loser #4 - Ontario Wines for New Zealand earthquake victims ...** why is it that a fundraising effort to help New Zealand earthquake victims featured three cases of New Zealand wine but nary a bottle of Ontario? What's more, the New Zealand wines were bought "over the river" in New York state. And finally, in a room full of LCBO representatives, why would Dr. Gary Pickering announce (and admit) to buying these wines over the border, driving them back and paying an exorbitant amount of duty on them; who was he taking a slap at? On the night where Ontario is celebrating their best in winemaking could we not have also auctioned off some Ontario wines, say a collection of the winning wines (there were 22 after all) ... I know it was for a good cause but could not our wineries have gotten involved a little more to show the Kiwis we care?

But enough politics and wine glass bashing ... let's get to the winners.

#### **Cuvee 2011 Winners:**

some wines are linked back to full reviews

**Red Wine:** Thirty Bench Winemakers 2007 Small Lot Cabernet Franc

**Limited Edition Red:** Megalomaniac 2007 Sous Terre Cabernet Merlot Reserve

**White Wine:** [Riverview Cellars 2009 Gewurztraminer](#)

**Limited Edition White:** Creekside Estate Winery 2009 Reserve Viognier

**General List Red:** EastDell Estates 2009 Black Cab

**General List White:** Jackson Triggs 2009 Black Series Sauvignon Blanc

**Sparkling Wine:** [13th Street Winery NV Premier Cuvee](#)

**Sweet Wine:** Inniskillin 2008 Riesling Icewine

**Limited Edition Sweet Wine:** Strewn 2008 Riesling Icewine

**Meritage:** [Henry of Pelham 2007 Reserve Cabernet Merlot](#)

**Cabernet Sauvignon:** Strewn 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon Terroir

**Cabernet Franc:** Thirty Bench Winemakers 2007 Small Lot Cabernet Franc

**Merlot:** Hillebrand 2007 Showcase Merlot 'Carlton Vineyard'

**Syrah/Shiraz:** [Jackson Triggs 2007 Delaine Vineyard Syrah](#)

**Red Assemblage:** [Nyarai Cellars 2007 Veritas](#)

**Riesling:** [Twenty Twenty-Seven Cellars 2009 Fox Croft Riesling](#)

**Sauvignon Blanc:** Creekside Estate Winery 2009 Reserve Sauvignon Blanc

**Chardonnay:** Niagara College 2009 Dean's List Chardonnay

**White Assemblage:** Stonechurch Vineyards 2009 Quintet White

**Gewurztraminer:** [Riverview Cellars 2009 Gewurztraminer](#)

**Viognier:** Creekside Estate Winery 2009 Reserve Viognier

**Pinot Gris / Pinot Grigio:** Five Rows Craft Wine 2009 Pinot Gris



**Wine Event Spotlight:** *Wine and Herb is Back*

**Wines, Herbs and a Lovely Spring Day in May, What more could you want ...** The Wineries of Niagara-on-the-Lake are kicking off spring in style with their annual celebration of great wine and fresh herbs! Your weekend touring pass includes stops at all of our wineries (26 this time out) where each will feature a fresh and vibrant herb-inspired wine and food pairing. Check out their website [www.wineriesofniagaraonthelake.com](http://www.wineriesofniagaraonthelake.com) for the complete list of 26 herb-inspired wine and food pairings.

**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.



**Socially Speaking ...**

Follow Michael Pinkus, the Grape Guy's (almost) daily **Tweets** at <http://twitter.com/TheGrapeGuy>. You can become a friend on **facebook**: <http://www.facebook.com/?ref=home#!/mepinkus>.

"Linked In" folks can find Michael at <http://ca.linkedin.com/pub/michael-pinkus/14/704/4b8>

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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