

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 – 155**
■ **April 7, 2011**

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OntarioWineReview: *Drink Now or Drink Later*

Probably one of the most asked questions I get is, "when should I drink this wine?" So much so that I have caught myself asking that question to many winemakers while tasting wines alongside of them.

What I find myself telling people-who-ask sounds like a huge cop-out. I end up turning it around and asking them whether they like their wines fresh and fruity or with a little age on them, edging more towards the dried fruit or foresty floor.

Truth is, most people prefer their wines to have fruit rather than floor, which explains why new world producers, especially those in Chile, Argentina and Australia, do so well, their fruit is fresh, full and mouth-filling, especially at the time when most people drink them. Studies have shown that 90% of all wine is drunk within 24 hours of purchase, and 95% within 48 hours. That means that only 5% of you are lying your wines down for any length of time. That also means that you're missing out on the best part of wine, it 's never-ending change-ability.

I trust that most of you have seen the movie Sideways - I seem to stick it into the DVD player (now Blu-ray) every year, it 's like catching up with old friend (granted they seem stuck in a Groundhog Day-like cycle - but until a sequel comes along I'm stuck with them). Anyway, I 'm not ruining anything (for those who haven 't seen it) when I quote Maya here on the allure, and never-ending change-ability, of wine:

"It's a living thing." She begins. "... I like how wine continues to evolve, like if I opened a bottle of wine today it would taste different than if I'd opened it on any other day, because a bottle of wine is actually alive. And it's constantly evolving and gaining complexity. That is, until it peaks ... And then it begins its steady, inevitable decline."

It's that kind of reasoning that prompted a winemaker recently to put a bottle of 2009 Cabernet Franc into my hands and say, "I really wish you would revisit this wine, I think it has really changed from when you first tried it."

We, as a society, drink our wines far too young, on the other hand, I know some collectors who are drinking wines far too old, if they are drinking them at all. And some who are way too hung up on what RP says. Just because he says drink 2010-2025 doesn't mean you should wait for the very last minute. In the end it's all about personal taste and what you like to drink, and when ... and that is what my stand-pat answer about what you like (fresh vs. dried fruit) is all about.

Now, there are a few simple ways that you can find out for yourself at what stage of a wine's lifecycle you enjoy it at. The first is to buy a few bottles of an inexpensive wine that you enjoy ... most wines are made in a drink now style so consuming a bottle upfront shouldn't rip your throat out with tannins. Make some notes about the wine and slip them in with the remaining bottles. Now store the remaining wine in a cool place and revisit them over the next 2-5 years. I did this years ago with a case of Gato Negro Merlot from Chile, I drank a bottle a year until it became apparent that the wine was indeed dead (that was on the 5th bottle), I would say year 2 and three were my favourite of the wines I drank.

But this method takes time. The even quicker version is to use a decanter. Decant your wine at the beginning of an evening and re-taste it over the course of that evening (4-6 hours), make notes, see how the wine evolves and changes from hour to hour. If you really want to advance your findings try the wine the next day, or over the next few days ... or until you can't stand drinking that wine anymore. One thing you will surely see is how a wine evolves and two, you'll see where your tastes lie: fresh and fruit, dried fruit, or somewhere in the middle. At the end of all this do I think you're gonna start a cellar? Probably not. In fact, I believe you'll just start using your decanter more to artificially age the wine to your liking - oh well, as long as it's to your liking that's all one can ask for.

Speaking of wines that need time, here is a list of wines that I have recently come across that are a little rough now but look good for the future ... they need time, but will time make them better? Here's where the old saying: "Only time will tell" comes into play:

[Strewn 2007 Terroir Merlot](#)
[Alvento 2007 Sondra](#)
[Alvento 2007 Emilie](#)
[Peninsula Ridge 2009 Barrel Aged Chardonnay](#)
[Henry of Pelham 2007 Speck Family Reserve Cabernet-Merlot](#)



Grape Guy's Picks of the Bunch: *Three Wines with Great Potential ...*

Alvento 2007 Sondra - \$26.95 (W)

www.alvento.ca

I still scratch my head over Bruno Moos and his wife leaving Italy to make wine in Ontario, (can you say "witness protection program"? I knew you could) ... I'm kidding of course, because we're all a little richer for their contribution to our industry. Sondra is a Merlot-Cabernet Franc blend that has lots of wood smoke on the nose, the palate seems to have come a little further with the inclusion of fruit amongst the smokiness, namely raspberries and cherries. It needs a little time to come around (2-3 years) but has very good potential - this is quite possibly the best Sondra made to date. Price: \$26.95 - Rating: *** 1/2+

Henry of Pelham 2007 Speck Family Reserve Cabernet- Merlot - \$50.00 (W)

www.henryofpelham.com

The sign of a good winery is to have wines in any and all major price ranges. Henry of Pelham has everything from their cheap and cheerful quaffers to serious red blends meant to kick around quietly in the cellar for a decade or more. This is the latter kind of wine. The nose is full of smoky raspberry notes, but offers up little other hints as to how the palate will be. The palate echoes the nose in its quietness, preferring to remain as closed as the nose - but in there (currently) are lots of tannins, smoke, cocoa, vanilla, spice, a decent amount of acidity and nice structure ... based on Henry's previous '07 efforts I'm prepared to give this wine a score based on potential and not on its current vibe. Let it sit 3-4 years before deciding to pop the cork and it should drink well into 2017 and beyond. Price: \$50.00 - Rating: ****+

Reif Estates 2007 First Growth Cabernet Sauvignon - \$50.00 (W)
www.reifwinery.com

This is the gem of the 2007 First Growth series of wines from Reif, it's ready to drink now (with a little decanting) but could easily age a decade or more with beneficial results. Aged in a mix of 70% French and 30% Hungarian oak, all new, for 30 months. This is a fruit driven Cab with both red and black fruits on the nose. The palate is where this one really shows its mettle, red starts the show and ends black with good spice, pepper and silky tannins taking part in the intermezzo right thru to the finish. Nice balance, this one is both really sippable now and really ageable for later enjoyment; but don't just take my word for it, for godsake, don't forget to age some of this and try it out for yourself. Price: \$50.00 - Rating: **** 1/2+

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



Weekly Wine Notes and More: *Been on the Road these past two weeks*

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):

The Weekly Wine Note Podcast is on hiatus

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

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

[Montras Properties Lunch](#)

[Terroir and Signatures of Bourgogne](#)

[Rodney Strong Taste and Blend](#)

[Ontario Wine Awards Last Day of Judging](#)

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

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

Nothing New This Week

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

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

[Angels Gate 2006 Sussreserve Riesling](#)

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

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

[7 New Reviews Added](#)

Including: Ports, Cabs, Zins and a 1994 Oregon Pinot Noir

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

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Deadline has been extended to April 10, 2011

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OntarioWineReview: *Reif 2007 First Growth Wines*

On a cold January day I made my way over to Reif Estates to try this year's crop of "First Growth" wines. To say "this year" is a little bit misleading, the vintage date is actually 2007, but with an average barrel aging time on each varietal of between 2-3 years they are just being released to the public, with a price of \$50 per bottle. Now before we all start to scoff and run away from prices like this, there is a reason for it, and I will attempt to explain it: The grapes in these bottles represent some of Reif's first vinifera planting (as of vintage date about 19 years). As stated earlier, these wines age between 2-3 years (most about 30 months) in new American and/or French oak barrels; and they yield somewhere between 100-200 cases of each wine (limited in the grand scheme of things). The grapes themselves are hand-harvested and are cropped between 1-and-a-half to 2 tons per acre. Finally, the wines are bottled unfiltered so they are ripe for ageing and are made only in the best vintages (4 times in the past 10 years). So with all this care and preamble it's time to ask the big question: How do these wines taste? Well, truth be told, pretty darn good, for wines that need time: The [Pinot Noir](#) is smoky and spicy; the [Merlot](#) is tight (as young Ontario Merlot is apt to be) with smoky dried fruit notes; the blended [Cabernet-Merlot](#) is full of dark fruit; and the [Cabernet Sauvignon](#) is nothing short of excellent, showing good red and black fruit with pepper, spice and silky tannins ... wines worthy of your cellar and your taste buds - depending on your preference of course.



Wine Event Spotlight: *Volunteer, Be a Part of or Just Go*

Volunteer for iC4 ... The International Cool Climate Chardonnay Celebration is being held in Niagara July 22-24; and an event this big is going to need some help, if you are interested in volunteering for this event be sure to visit the website below:
www.coolchardonnay.org/content/want-to-volunteer

F'in Wine Tour ... this is a friggin' good idea and has been for the past 4 years. Wineries that all start with the letter F: Flat Rock, Featherstone and Fielding pool time and resources to bring you something fun and exciting. This year's tour is April 2-3 and April 9-10 and this time they brought in another F'in partner: Fifth Town Cheese. Check out each winery's individual website to find out what

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they are pairing.

Cheese Festival ... Speaking of cheese, it's time for Cheese Lovers to rejoice, now you have a festival built just for you: The Great Canadian Cheese Festival happens in Prince Edward County (Picton to be exact), June 4 and 5. For details on how to get your cheese-freak on go to: www.cheesefestival.ca

Six Barrels for Six Chefs ... I love this event and you can bet I will be there again this year, I hope you will too. Six chefs get together with six barrels of wine and create food that is truly out of this world, and all is done out in the vineyard. This year the six chefs are: Michael Stadtlander, Jamie Kennedy, Michael Potters, Ryan Crawford, Denis Cotter and Hiro Yoshida. Wineries providing wine are the usual Huff Estates (your host for the evening), Norman Hardie and Closson Chase. For more details visit the new website: www.six4six.ca

Terroir (in the County) ... More local Wineries than ever before will be participating, paired with some of the best foods The County has to offer. Another wonderful event at Picton's Crystal Palace, this time on May 28, 2011 from 12-5pm - details can be found at www.thecountywines.com/pecwaannualeventsc16.php

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. We look forward to hearing from you!

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