

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 – 157
May 5, 2011

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OntarioWineReview: *Meet Ontario's Virtual Wineries*

On Friday April 15, 2011, I organized and was in attendance at one of the most interesting Wine Writers' of Canada Circle meeting/tasting in quite some time. It saw a small group of Ontario journalists trying wines from 10 different "virtual wineries" (wineries without property or retail space to call their own) and talked with 9 principals from these virtual label. In attendance were:

Thomas Bachelder (winemaker / owner) - Bachelder Wines
Charles Baker (owner) - Charles Baker Wines
Steve Byfield (winemaker / owner) - Nyarai Cellars
Peter Graham (winemaker) - Five Suns
Jeff Hundertmark (winemaker / owner) - 100 Marks
Kevin Panagapka (winemaker / owner) - 20-27 Cellars
Nicole Speranzini (director of marketing) - Mike Weir Winery
Ilya Senchuk (winemaker / owner) - Leaning Post Winery
Andrew von Teichman (partner) - Generations Wine Company
not personally in attendance, but his wine was - Paul Ross (owner)

Each winemaker or winery principal introduced themselves and their project, many based on a single varietal wine (or at least they started out that way). And most had one goal in mind: to one day open their own bricks and mortar winery.

A Few Lines About Virtually Anything ...

Charles Baker - started his brand in 2005, one of the first of the next generation of virtuals in Ontario; makes only one wine a year. Focus: 100% single vineyard Riesling; label hosted at Stratus.

Andrew von Teichman - partnered with Alan Jackson to make Union wines, an LCBO based brand, white and red currently on the general list; official company name is Generations Wine Company (because of the 2 distinct generations the partners come from). Focus: making blends from 100% Ontario grapes, fruit for which are sourced from all over Ontario; hosted at 20 Bees.

Thomas Bachelder - former winemaker of Le Clos Jordanne now on his own, playing 'negociant' in 3 regions: Niagara, Oregon, and Burgundy; wines coming out September 2011; maximum production 3000 cases (1000 from each region). Focus: Chardonnay from three different regions.

Jeff Hundertmark - winemaker for Marynissen; will be adding white wine in 2011; projected release in 2012; Jeff is hoping for the illustrious 100 Marks for his wines, as he has put it wistfully and

playfully into his name (100 Marks). Current Focus: single vineyard Pinot Noir; hosted at Marynissen.

Nicole Speranzini - winery began in 2005 and was established to help the Mike Weir Foundation (est. 2004); 20,000 cases from 5 varietals with national distribution; new home is imminent which will take them out of the virtual realm. Current home: Chateau des Charmes; rumoured new home: the old EastDell property.

Steve Byfield - established Nyarai Cellars in 2008; current cellar-master at Calamus; also makes blended white and red as the vintage dictates; won at Cuvee 2011 for his red blend 'Veritas'; close to 1000 cases total production; Nyarai means "humble". Main Focus: Sauvignon Blanc; hosted at Calamus.

Ilya Senchuk - worked at Daniel Lenko since 2002, now with Foreign Affair; buys fruit from Lowry Estate, will be adding Riesling and Merlot to his label; recently purchased 11-acre property to grow his own grapes ... planting begins in 2012; wines coming out late summer or early fall 2011; project is called Leaning Post Wines. Focus: older block Pinot Noir; hosted at Foreign Affair.

Kevin Panagapka - established in 2007; started out with Riesling (from Featherstone Vineyard) and then made Pinot Noir from his own plot of land; name comes from his grower number (2027); looking at making a sparkling in the future; main interest is to find out the difference terroir makes if all other variables remain constant; manages all vineyard work of his purchased fruit (blocks), does all the cluster thinning himself; won at Cuvee 2011 for his Riesling. Focus: single vineyard wines; hosted at Featherstone.

Peter Graham - assistant winemaker at Lailey Vineyard; owned by Gina Edwards (who was also in attendance); currently an '09 Pinot Noir and 2010 Sauvignon Blanc; source fruit from different vineyards; Peter joined the team at the beginning of 2011 taking over from Marc Bradshaw (who seems to have fled the country?). Double focus: Pinot Noir and Sauvignon Blanc; hosted by Cattail Creek.

Choice Quotes ...

On why remain a virtual and the perils of such: "If you're making 1000 cases or less it's better to be virtual, the only problem is you don't own your wine." - Kevin P.

[ed. note: under the law of the land the wines are owned by your host winery and you make the wine under their manufacturing license, therefore the owner of the virtual label is not the owner of his or her product.]

About the stigma of being a Virtual Winery: "When you drink a bottle from New Zealand, Australia, California or where ever, do you think whether it's a virtual winery or not? No. It's a bottle of wine and it's what's in that bottle that counts. Stop limiting yourselves." - Thomas B.

[ed. note: Thomas was very vocal about the pride virtual winery owners should have in their wines and the jobs they do.]

On the ownership of vineyards and ties to the land (3):

"We walk those vineyards [where they have contracted fruit from] before and after our day jobs so we are tied to those vineyards." - Peter G.

"Worst thing about being a virtual winery is you don't own your own vineyards; best thing about being a virtual winery is you don't own your own vineyards." - Thomas B.

"It's a combination of the vineyard, the owner (the person) and the relationship we build with the land and the people." - Charles B.

[ed. note: virtual wineries are all about building long term relationships with good growers making good fruit and keeping those relationships strong over the long term.]

Why Virtuals are vital to the industry and established wineries, especially in a rough economy:

"Virtuals provide another revenue stream for their host winery, one that did not exist before." Nicole S.

[ed. note: many of the principals had never thought of that angle, as indicated by the head nodding and eyebrow raising; virtual wineries are seen by some as leeching off the hard work of established bricks and mortar wineries, but are vital to a growing industry. The revenue stream does not stop with the host, they also provide revenue to growers who may not have been able to sell their grapes, and at a premium because they specify how they want them grown.]

To preview some tasting notes of barrel and tank samples of these soon to be available virtual offerings, and to see pictures of the event, visit my [On the Road with the Grape Guy blog](#).



Grape Guy's Picks of the Bunch: *Virtual Wines and Their Homes*

2027 Cellars 2009 Queenston Road Pinot Noir - \$34.95 (O)

www.2027cellars.ca

The nose of this wine is still a bit shy, due to its youth, but what it does give off is quite inviting, mainly dark sour cherry fruit. The palate has a stronger personality showing itself to have that dark sour cherry, (which follows from the nose) but with plenty more to offer, flavour-wise. The fruit, spice and tannins meld together nicely on the finish with good length. 2009 was a Pinot year and it really shows in this bottle. Interesting to note that the wine went through a wild fermentation process and was aged 14 months in a mix of new (30%) and old (70%) French oak. Drink Now to 2016. Price: \$34.95 - Rating: ****

Union 2009 Red - \$13.95 (L)

www.unionwines.com

There's a slight difference between the 2007 version of Union Red and the 2009 - and it's most noticeable on the label: "gamay" is gone, instead the listed grapes are Pinot Noir, Cabernet [Franc] and Merlot ... in actual fact the gamay is in the bottle but it makes up less than 5% of the blend, so it does not appear in print. Otherwise this is a very similar wine to the '07, still with good fruit, spice and herb notes, but in '09 there's an elevated acidity that helps to clear the palate quicker. Great little wine to have around this summer; you should start seeing it on LCBO shelves any time now (if it isn't already there). Price: \$13.95 - Rating: ****

Most recent host winery wine reviews:

[Calamus 2009 Special Select Late Harvest Vidal](#) (Home of Nyarai Cellars)

[Cattail Creek 2009 Riesling](#) (Home of Five Suns)

[Chateau des Charmes 2007 Equuleus](#) (Home of Mike Weir)

[Featherstone 2010 Black Sheep Riesling](#) (20-27 Cellars)

[Foreign Affair 2008 "The Conspiracy"](#) (Leaning Post)

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



Weekly Wine Notes and More: *Lots on the road and lots of drinking*

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 is Currently on Hiatus

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

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

[9th Annual Churchill Portfolio Tasting](#)

[Vinexx Portfolio Tasting](#)

[PMA Chairman's Gala](#)

[The Green Living Show - Bio Vino](#)

[California Wine Fair 2011](#)

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

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

Nothing To Report This Week

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

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

Nothing To Report This Week

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

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

[10 New Posts Added](#)

Including: Wines from Italy, France, Spain and a night of Ontario whites

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

Now available – [May 14, 2011 release report](#)

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Wine and herb
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<http://www.wineriesofniagaraonthelake.com/wineandherb.html>

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

May 2011

U.S Expands World Dominance in Wine ... A study by wine industry consultants Gomberg, Fredrikson & Associates, revealed that US wine exports jumped 26 percent to an estimated value of \$1.14 billion, 90 percent of those exports were from California. America's biggest market is Europe: 38% of US exports were shipped to 27 countries in the European Union; an increase of 14% from 2009. Other top markets include Canada, Hong Kong, Japan and China. Read more: <http://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/food-and-drink/american-wine-bottles-lining-more-international-liquor-shelves-2244947.html>

Aussie Wine Sparks Look into Labels ... While wineries seek awards and medals, such praise rated low when it came to what the average consumer is looking for in their choice of wine. "Research suggests it takes just 45 seconds for most people to select a wine after walking into a

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shop," says UniSA Professor in Wine Marketing Larry Lockshin. "Labels do play a part, but only usually in terms of colour or the logo. Very few people look at anything more than this." This was all sparked by a wine from Schild Estate ... read the interesting conclusion of this article here: <http://www.adelaidenow.com.au/forget-the-details-wine-drinkers-look-at-the-bottom-line/story-e6frea6u-1226029690373>

Whole Foods Bar ... The upscale grocer, Whole Foods, is opening bars that serve craft beer and local wine in more than a dozen stores in the USA in a test before a wider roll-out. In the past 18 months, small, locally focused bars have opened inside five Whole Foods Markets in California, and two each in Arizona, Illinois and Texas, among others. Earlier in April, another open inside its flagship store in Austin. By 2012, the 305-store chain plans to open at least seven more bars (even one in Hawaii), says co-CEO Walter Robb. See more of the Whole story: <http://www.usatoday.com/money/industries/food/2011-03-25-whole-foods-bar.htm>

Don't Be Such a Boob, Try Some Breast Milk Cheese ... April showers bring with them May flowers, but in New York the first day of May brought something a little different. A New York gallery offered adventurous eaters the opportunity to sample cheese made from human breast milk, which garnered mixed reviews and some puzzled looks. The Lady Cheese Shop is a temporary art installation by Miriam Simun, a graduate student at New York University who hopes to use the craft of cheese-making to raise questions about the ethics of modern biotechnologies. "Cheese is the conversation starter," Simun said. "Some people are loving it, and some people are gagging." Simun found three nursing women willing to have their milk turned into cheese. She screened the milk for diseases, pasteurized it and learned the basics of cheese-making. Three varieties were available on Sunday — West Side Funk, Midtown Smoke, described as "creamy and just pure heaven," and Wisconsin Chew, the taste of which apparently reflected the vegetable-filled diet of the woman who provided its milk. Read the full story here, "honey, can you hand me the crackers": <http://www.edmontonjournal.com/entertainment/Yorkers+sample+cheese+made+from+huma+n+breast+milk/4710100/story.html>



Wine Event Spotlight: *Spring is in the Air*

Hillebrand's Jazz and Blues at the Winery ... no line up announcement yet, but this is always an exciting time to sit in the vineyard and listen to great Canadian blues (August 13, 2011) and jazz (July 9, 2011) - details can be found here: <http://www.hillebrand.com/Jazz-&-Blues-at-the-Winery.php>

Jackson Triggs Announces Their Concert Line-Up ... the JT amphitheatre will be hoppin, boppin and rockin this summer with some really big names coming to the stage, including: Colin James, Serena Ryder, Gord Downie and Spirit of the West ... just to name four ... check the website for dates and times: <http://www.greateststatesofniagara.com/Buy-Our-Wines/Amphitheatre-Tickets/Amphitheatre-Line-Up>

Salut Appearance ... The Grape Guy, Michael Pinkus will be at Crush Wine Bar (455 King Street West) at 11:00am Saturday May 7, during the Salut Wine + Food Festival to pair Ontario wines with Ontario cheeses, for details of how you can be a part of this delicious tasting click here: <http://www.salutwinefestival.com/events.aspx>

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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