

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 – 158
May 19, 2011

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OntarioWineReview: *Whose to Blame*

Over the Christmas holidays an interesting email hit my inbox from an outspoken member of the Ontario Wine Society (OWS):

"Thought you might be interested in this response. An American reporter did a review of the Brigadoon restaurant in Oxford Mills (North of Brockville on the way to Ottawa). He was surprised that there were NO Canadian wines on the menu." [You can read the original piece here from the Waterdown Daily Times – Dec. 12, 2010.](#)

My OWS friend wrote both to the author of the piece and to the restaurant, and he sent me both this email and the restaurant's reply.

Now before I get too deep into this I thought it would be prudent to give a little background information. Firstly, wineries are always saying they do not get support from local restaurant. Last year, the OWS started a tent card program to try and get restaurants to open their wine lists up to more local options – a program (it turns out) they cribbed from New York State. So let's look at some of the comments from the owner of the Brigadoon Restaurant in Oxford Mills, which I am sure, reflect the feeling of many Ontario restaurants.

Point #1 - "The Canadian wineries do not promote the products to the Restaurants, or should I say not the ones in the country side; too much work maybe?"

It would be interesting to find out how many wineries actually get out to rural restaurants to promote their wines, and how many concentrate on mainly urban centers.

Point #2 – "Canadian wines are very expensive to put on the menu and in the past I have found consistency problems as in sediment in the bottom, cloudy white and each batch being different."

This seems to be a broad sweeping statement that is hard to address because I do not know which Canadian wines have been tried. Sediment is okay in a red wine, it can't hurt you and promotes better ageing potential. Cloudy whites could be a shipping or storage issue, but also depends on the quality of the winery and the wines. "Batch" variation or vintage variation are two different things altogether. And finally, you would think someone would be willing to pay a few dollars more to go local, afterall local-vores are a growing segment of the population.

Point #3 – "Most of the high end wines you do not hear about and are a hard sell when the French or Italian wines are much cheaper. I am all for going local, but I also run a business."

Maybe somebody should be subscribing to this newsletter; but then again maybe somebody should at least give selling local a try before poo-pooing the entire premise.

Point #4 – “I think these things need to be addressed by the wineries, restaurant owners do not have the time to go running all over Ontario to find wines. I would love to but I work every day. I have phoned some of the other wineries in Niagara and left messages which no one has replied to.”

I have a hard time believing that an Ontario winery salesperson / owner would completely neglect a call from an interested restaurant. I asked three different wineries if a rural (re: out of the way) restaurant called would you ignore them or figure out how to get to them. Nobody said they would ignore the restaurant.

Point #5 – “I think you will find that a lot of the problems are with the wineries and not the restaurants.”

So now it's finger-pointing time. Restaurants blame wineries, wineries blame restaurants. The question is who is to blame for the lack of local wines on Ontario restaurant wine lists?

We've heard from a restaurateur and now I'd like to hear from some wineries, let's see if we can't get to the bottom of this dilemma so we can see a greater show of “local wines” on local restaurants' wine lists (and please CIC or ICB does not count as “local” – never has, never will).

Restaurant owners, winery principals, and even the general public what are your thoughts? We should begin a dialogue to rectify this situation, stop the finger-pointing and work together. In the words of Jack Nicholson as the Joker: “Why can't we all just ... get along.”

Responses and comments will appear in a future newsletter – please send to Michael@OntarioWineReview.com or join up and post them on the new [Ontario Wine Lovers facebook group](#).



Grape Guy's Picks of the Bunch: *New Wines for Summer + Some bonus reviews*

Coyote's Run 2010 Pinot Blanc - \$17.95 (W)

www.coyotesrunwinery.com

When I visited some wineries in Michigan last year I was really impressed with, of all things, their Pinot Blancs – same thing happened a few years ago when I was out in British Columbia. Now there are a few who grow Pinot Blanc in Ontario and it seems like even fewer make varietal wines from the grape, but I have to tell you that for a winery that doesn't grow their own Blanc grapes Coyote's Run sure has perfected making the wines. They get the grapes from Vineland Estates and they make the prettiest Blanc going. First there's the nose that's full of floral, apple blossom, mineral notes and hints of melon. The palate has melon (honeydew) and apple blossom ... it's just an all out pretty wine with great acid balance and a lovely long finish. Enjoy it this summer with pleasure and with friends. Price: \$17.95 – Rating: **** ½

Also Available: [Coyote's Run 2010 Red Paw Pinot Gris](#)

13th Street 2009 Sandstone Old Vines Gamay - \$27.95 (W)

www.13thstreetwinery.com

This is serious Gamay for serious Gamay-lovers. It's only made in vintages where 13th Street believes they have achieved proper fruit quality and can make a distinctively different wine from their entry level offering. This wine was aged 10 months in French oak, mainly new with some 30-40% second use – the result is a weightier-meatier Gamay with good fruit character, yet plenty of backbone; smokey and spicy raspberry-strawberry notes caress the tongue in this extremely well-made wine. Price: \$27.95 – Rating: **** ½

Also Available: [13th Street 2009 Gamay](#)

Vineland 2009 Chardonnay - \$12.75 (W, L)

www.ontariowinereview.com

www.vineland.com

"For this price it's gotta be unoaked," I say to myself as I'm looking at the wine list at the tasting bar at Vineland Estates ... but it's the smell and flavours that gives it away completely: a nose of lime, white peach and mineral with a taste that mixes green apple with the delicious variety (of apple) and intermingles some peach. Very refreshing with good acidity and what I'll call a medium-quick finish: the flavours disappear quickly, but the acidity lingers on. Price: \$12.95 - Rating: ****+

Also Available: [Vineland 2007 Merlot](#)

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



Weekly Wine Notes and More: *Fresh, the ACWC and Fielding Sparkles*

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

[Get Fresh in the Valley](#)

[All Canadian Wine Championships Day 1](#)

[All Canadian Wine Championships Day 2](#)

[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

[Fielding Estate 2006 Sparkling Riesling](#)

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

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

[6 New Reviews Added](#)

Including: Wines from all over the world make an appearance

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

Now available – [May 28, 2011](#)

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<http://www.wineriesofniagaraonthelake.com/wineandherb.html>

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OntarioWineReview: *Flat Rock Goes Rogue*

“Come on by the winery,” invited Ed Madronich, “I have something interesting for you to taste.” Now that’s the call of the wild for any wine writer. “Interesting” is one of those buzzwords that perks the ears and makes you wonder: interesting good or interesting bad?

We started with two wines that proved to be very good, two wines that Ed dubbed as “Rogue” because they were not something seen at Flat Rock before. One was the [2009 White Pinot Noir](#) – yup, a white Pinot Noir, that’s a Pinot that has seen no skin contact which let’s the juice run clear and leaves behind something that’s head-scratchingly simple in concept but diametrically opposite to what you expect ... white pinot noir, huh? Very interesting.

Next, in his Rogue line, the [2007 Syrah](#), another unexpected wine from Flat Rock who bill themselves as a Chardonnay, Riesling and Pinot Noir producer – where does estate Syrah come from? Turns out there are three rows of the stuff right in the middle of the vineyard, between the Riesling and the Chardonnay – it proved to be an exquisite Syrah, probably one of the best Ontario has ever produced.

But the tasting didn’t end there. It wouldn’t be a trip to the Rock without some Chardonnay and Riesling to throw down your gullet – the most interesting of which was the vertical of Nadja’s Vineyard and their regular Riesling ... the oldest of which dates back to 2004. This is a real interesting tasting for fans of Riesling, especially those who like to lay them down to gain complexity. The Nadja’s tasting compared the brand new [Nadja’s Vineyard 2010](#) to the 2008 (strong nose with peach pit and stone on the palate), the 2006 (developing petrol aromas and lime skin and mineral in the mouth, while retaining excellent freshness) and the 2004 (lots of petrol and mineral smells and tastes, along with lime pith added for flavour).

The regular Riesling showcased the 2009 along side the 2007 and 2005. 2009 was a great Riesling year with fresh acidity and great fruit flavours and aromas; while 2005 and 2007 were hot and relatively Riesling unfriendly. In 2007 the sweetness screams through on the palate, while the 2005 shows a sense of style with upfront sweetness and good acidity pulling up the rear helping to balance out the wine – it all ends with lime notes and peach undertones.

What this side bar tasting proved to me is that Riesling is a force to be reckoned with here in Ontario, and ageing them can only enhance the enjoyment of these wines ... there seems to be failure in the very extreme vintages, where too much heat plays a factor, for this cooler climate loving grape; let’s just say this: 2007 was an excellent vintage for reds, but it didn’t do the aromatics whites (of which Riesling is one) any favours.

Wine Event Spotlight: *Auctions, Tastings, Hikes and Fairs*



Fine Wine Auction, Gourmet Dinner and Wine Pairings ... Date: June 15, 2011 - Location: Four Seasons Hotel, Toronto ... The GMP Capital Inc. Wine and Dine Event unfolds with a fine wine auction led by well-known auctioneer Stephen Ranger. The auction includes exclusive wine lots and samplings from some of the city's best cellars. Warren Porter, president of Iron Gate Private Wine Management, will guide guests through a sumptuous meal with wine pairings for each course. All proceeds go to help homeless kids at Covenant House. For more information go to www.covenanthouse.ca/wine or contact Jacqueline Herrington at 416.204.7038

Sip...Savour...Discover ... The popular wine-trek program has started. Once again, wine and hiking enthusiast Peter Carr-Locke will take you on a journey to enjoy the beauty of the Niagara Escarpment. He will guide you on a moderately challenging hike along the picturesque Bruce trail through wooded Escarpment slopes along the banks of the Twenty Mile Creek to the winery in Jordan. Conclude the afternoon with an in-depth pairing of Cave Spring wine. Saturday, May 28th 11:00 - 2:00 Cost: \$20.00. Reservations required. Book now at 905-562-3581 ext. 302 or by e-mail at retail@cavespring.ca.

Niagara Food and Wine Show ... Details: www.niagarafoodandwine.ca

4th Annual Ontario Wine Fair ... is being held at café Taste, 1330 Queen Street West, on Saturday, June 4th, 2011 it features 20 wineries from Niagara and Prince Edward County, as well as 30 artisan cheeses from the exploding Ontario cheese industry. Guests have the choice of attending between 1pm-5pm, or 6pm-10pm. The cost is \$60 in advance, or \$70 at the door (all prices include tax). Space is limited for this premium event. For tickets and details, check out www.cafetaste.ca or call (416) 536-7748

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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