

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 – 162
July 14, 2011

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OntarioWineReview: *Don't Make Me Do This*

If there is one thing I hate it's being forced into defending the big guys in this industry; but on June 24 the folks at the [Fashionable Press](#) (on Facebook) forced me into doing just that.

I happened across an article entitled; [Why is it that Diamond Estates have an independent Wine Store in Scarborough](#) where they accused Diamond founder Murray Marshall of being in bed with the government calling it "cronyism" because Murray just happens to be "chairman and CEO of VQA Canada" (NB. Ken Douglas is Chair, Laurie MacDonald is CEO and President of VQA Ontario).

The article goes on to point fingers at the AGCO "that granted the license to the consortium of old boys" and says that Diamond got their store because "Diamond is a large Canadian wine and spirits agency, representing, among others, a list of some of the more prominent Niagara wineries ..." And then asks, "Why did they slip so quietly under the radar ...?" This does smell of something-wicked-this-way-comes, but it has nothing to do with cronyism, old boys networks or anything else that rotten ... it's purely good business sense on the part of Murray and Diamond.

In brief: Diamond started acquiring interest in Niagara based wineries almost a decade ago, nabbing over the years Lakeview, Birchwood, EastDell and Thomas & Vaughan in fairly short order. They added the Dan Aykroyd brand as a virtual label - unloaded Thomas & Vaughan and gobbled up DeSousa ... now DeSousa is the key to this whole sordid affair and it has to do with the wacky out-of-touch-with-reality wine laws we have here in Ontario.

Upon reading the Fashionable Press' article I shot back the following (on everybody's favourite medium these days) the Facebook comment section: "Have you really not been paying attention??? Diamond has a store because they bought a winery that had 1) a pre-1993 license and 2) had a pre-existing store. No mystery here, no cronyism, just smart business sense. In Ontario's archaic system there are two things that reign supreme: a pre-1993 license (which allows you to blend foreign and domestic wines) and a winery with an outside store attached. Diamond got them both when they acquired DeSousa."

The reply from Fashionable was quick: "Yes we understand that point the issue remains why no other winery can do the same thing?"

To which I answered, "This comes back to the archaic laws ... not cronyism or the fact that Murray Marshall is chairman and CEO of VQA Canada. As many know I am not a huge supporter of the big wineries that can blend (and do) but Murray is working well within the crappy, backward, stink-ass system we call the alcohol laws in Ontario. If another winery wanted to do it they can pony up the 3+

million Cilento will sell their license for (of course I may be off by a few million on the price because that pre-93 piece of paper is a license to print money)."

To understand all this, and all its intricacies and complexities is to understand why Ontario's small wineries are so pissed off (and yes that is the right wording here) when the subject of VQA stores is brought up. But back to Diamond ... The moment DeSousa went up for sale Murray saw it as an opportunity to get a store that wasn't tied to Niagara and a way to get his products into the hands of consumers in the much more lucrative market of Toronto (in this case Scarborough).

Now the astute amongst you (or the Ontario wine history buff) will note that Lakeview also has a pre-1993 license (est. 1991) - but that's where it gets even wonkier. While Lakeview would be allowed to blend foreign with domestic wines, the original owners never branched out to buy another retail store, so their operation was stuck in Niagara post-1993 when the moratorium on wine store licenses was imposed. DeSousa (est. 1990) on the other hand, did acquire one additional retail licence prior to the cut-off.

The hard part about owning these stores is they are rarely permanent, and here's why. The rationale behind placing one of these additional retail outlets somewhere is that it is an "under-serviced neighbourhood" ... Fashionable asks the following: "Why didn't the LCBO find this under-serviced gem and plunk one of its outlets there? ... Why did they choose in a gentlemanly way to cede over to Diamond?"

To that I say 'Have No Fear', if that Diamond store does well then you can bet the farm that the liquor monopoly will parade in like a white knight and announce a store nearby ... which will force Diamond to relocate the store to another "under-serviced area" ... and how, you may ask, will the LC know that Diamond is doing so well? That my friends is what smells bad in this entire deal: Who do you think gets to look at the sales numbers from these off site stores? Hmm? They're not called the KGBO by some for nothing.



Grape Guy's Picks of the Bunch: *A Look at Some Really Good Ontario Bubbles*

Most people aren't thinking of sparkling wines in the midst of summer - and I ask you, "why the flock not?" ... Here are some welcome additions to the canon of Canadian (Ontario) bubbles:

The Grange of Prince Edward County 2008 Brut Rosé - \$29.75

www.grangeofprinceedward.com

Bubbly, blubbly, toily and trouby ... while it does take a lot of toil and trouble to make good bubbly, drinking it can be a totally divine experience, especially when you put your hands on a good one. This Brut from the Grange is made from 100% Pinot Noir grapes that spent 20 months ageing its way to bubbly nirvana. It's Rosé so it has that lovely pink colour, you'll find it refreshing, crisp and clean - it has a slightly sweet mid-palate that tastes like a mix of strawberry and peach then ends with a citrus tang and linger on the finish. The County really is a great place to make good bubbly and this is yet another good example. Price: \$29.75 - Rating: ****+

13th Street NV Cuvee 13 Rosé (Brut) - \$24.95

www.13thstreetwinery.com

Have you seen the new packaging for the Cuvee 13 Rosé Brut? It's quite attractive with the clear bottle and eye-catching label - definitely no gaudiness here. It also has no vintage date, the first time the powers that be at 13th Street have released a non-vintage rosé sparkling. A blend of 55% Pinot Noir and 45% Chardonnay aged up to 3 years before disgorgement. It plays out like you would expect with strawberry and raspberry on the nose with a lovely fresh nuance of red fruit flavours. It's just toasty enough, and does not hide the stunning red fruit on the palate. Price: \$24.95 - Rating: **** 1/2+

Creekside 2000 "X" - \$49.95

www.creeksidewine.com

There have not been many Ontario wines that have gone by a single letter, but then again there have been no Ontario wines that can claim what Creekside has to offer in this bottle: a 100% Chardonnay sparkling wine aged 10 years on lees and in bottle ... you read that right, ten years. Former Creekside winemaker Craig McDonald said "we liked to push extremes; we started this wine the year I arrived and we just kept seeing how far we could push it." The wine is like nothing you've ever experience in Ontario before (on purpose). The nose is honey, hazelnut biscotti, oatmeal, dried pear and wax with other signs of aged Chardonnay thrown in for good measure. Palate is just as intriguing, with roasted hazelnut, beeswax, candied lemon peel and honey all with a bruised apple finish. Interesting, intriguing and definitely more than just a curiosity. Drink now - this wine requires no further ageing. Price: \$49.95 - Rating: ****+

Other Bubbly I'm a-Buzz about ...

[Chateau des Charmes 2008 Rosé Sparkling](#)

[Hinterland 2008 Rosé Sparkling](#)

[Huff Estates 2008 Cuvee Peter F. Huff](#)

[Pelee Island 2009 "Secco" Pinot Blanc Brut](#)

[Tawse 2008 Spark](#)

Other reviews added to the site this week ...

[Chateau des Charmes 2007 Old Vines Cabernet Merlot](#)

[Colaneri 2009 Corporso](#)

[Coyote's Run 2009 Red Paw Pinot Noir](#)

[Lailey 2009 Canadian Oak Pinot Noir](#)

[Pondview 2009 Bella Terra Cabernet Franc](#)

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



Bi-Weekly OWR Updates: *Ottawa Life Posts, On the Road Pieces and More*

Weekly Ottawa Life Blog Entries:

[What's with all this New Oz Wine - Part 1](#)

[What's with all this New Oz Wine - Part 2](#)

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

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

[Report from Duorum Dinner](#)

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

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

[Cave Spring Cellars 1997 CSV Estate Chardonnay](#)

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

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

[Chateau des Charmes 2005 St. David's Cabernet Franc](#)

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

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

[3 New Posts Added](#)

including BC vs Argentina on steak night

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

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Coming Soon: July 23 and August 6

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Getaway lead by yours truly - The Grape Guy

<http://www.winevirgin.com/getaway/>

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OntarioWineReview: *An Early Summer Visit to Coyote's Run*

Nothing beats sitting on a deck or patio on a warm summer day with a glass of something refreshing in your hand, unless of course, it's sitting inside an open air gazebo tasting a variety of newly released or soon-to-be-released wines. Which is exactly what I did a few weeks ago at Coyote's Run Winery. Sitting across the table from me was Jeff Aubry (owner) and Dave Sheppard (winemaker), we tried a number of wines before a scrumptious kabob and salad lunch on their new covered patio. The day was hot but the wind cooperated blowing cooling breezes of warm air through where we were sitting ... as for the wines:

We started the day with the [2010 Unoaked Chardonnay](#) (\$14.95) which is destined for LCBO shelves any day now - smooth and enjoyable this one is a great little summer sipper for those who enjoy the fruitier side of Chardonnay. We then moved on to the signature of Coyote's Run, a comparative tasting of Red and Black Paw vineyard wines, this time the Chardonnays. This is really a personal choice kind of tasting: Do you like your Chardonnays delicate with a femininity to them ([Red Paw 2010](#)) or with a masculine edge, fuller and firmer in the mouth ([Black Paw 2010](#))? I lean a little more to the delicate side, as I enjoy sipping wine before, during and after a meal and don't always want to rely on the food to bring out the best in the wine.

Coyote's Run has a line called Rare Vintage, which are produced only in exceptional vintages and not always with the same grape varieties. The 2010 vintage has so far sparked the [Rare Vintage Pinot Gris](#), this truly is a rare find and is unlike any Pinot Gris you have had in the past. Check your preconceived notions about this grape at the door.

A good white vintage (like 2009) does not always mean good reds are just around the corner - some reds struggle in those cooler years and temps and then it is up to a winemaker to determine where those grapes are destined to go. Dave took his best 4 barrels of [Cabernet Franc and produced an estate 2009 version](#), foregoing the usual Red and Black Paw designation on the label for a more complete wine. By no means is this wine perfect, but it sure will resonate with Franc fans.

Finally, a sneak peak of two wines to come. The brother wine to the Five Mile White, Five Mile Red should see LCBO shelves in the spring of 2012 ... an interesting blend of Pinot Noir and Merlot (40% each) with Cabernet Franc and Syrah (10% each), if all goes well it should be a good value at \$16.95. The piece-de-resistance was the 2010 Rare Vintage Cabernet Sauvignon, a first for

Coyote's Run (they have never produced a straight varietal Cabernet Sauvignon), and with their first they're going for the gusto. Dave says he's eyeing a 20 month-plus barrel stay for this one and Jeff was pretty much rubbing his hands together with glee over it at just over 8 months in new wood that barely shows on the wine, instead opulent rich fruit steals the show ... time will tell with this one, but it sure showed all the signs of a beauty at this stage. Only 100 cases will be produced, I'll keep you posted.



Wine Event Spotlight: *A Grape Guy Lead Tour and SWOVA Tasting*

WINEVIRGIN.COM, VIP WINE TOUR & SHOPPING EXCURSION ... includes pickup and departure in the morning from Burlington Go Train station, transportation via Deluxe Window Passenger Bus accompanied by your host Michael Pinkus, The Grape Guy of Ontario Wine Review. The trip includes: WineVirgin T-Shirt; Three winery visits with a behind the scenes look from vineyard to bottling room and with wine samplings at each. [Visit Wine Virgin.com starting July 4, 2011 for details on how you can get on this amazing trip.](#)

SWOVA 17th Annual Vintage Tasting - August 07, 2011 from 1:00 5:00 PM is being held this year at Colchester Ridge Estate Winery ... Special seminars and guest speakers Konrad Ebjich and Michael Pinkus will be highlighting the Lake Erie North Shore vintages! Food provided by Mettawas Station, Thai Palace, Tecumseh Roadhouse and Ducks on the Roof! Come and enjoy music provided by Just Jazz and the University of Windsor Quartet. Tickets are \$55.00 a person, are limited and by advanced sale only ... so hurry and get yours today! Call 519-738-9800 or email info@colchesterridge.com. Or for more details about the winery go to www.colchesterridge.com

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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