

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 – 178
March 1, 2012

In this Edition

- **OntarioWineReview:** *Why Grape Growers are Losing Sleep*
 - **Grape Guy's Picks of the Bunch:** *2 from the Peller Group and a Mastronardi*
 - **Bi-Weekly OWR Updates:** *Ottawa Life Posts - On the Road articles*
 - **Quick Sips:** *News from around the World of Wine and Here at Home*
 - **Wine Event Spotlight:** *Four big events that are coming your way*
-



OntarioWineReview: *Why Grape Growers are Losing Sleep*

Just this past Monday grape growers and winery owners lost a few hours of sleep ... and that condition will continue until at least May. What pray-tell has our wine industry shaking in its collective boots so badly that they are willing to forego their already mutilated sleep pattern. Well I can tell you it's not the usual stuff like taxation, health care and wild cat airline strikes. It's also not the more specific things that haunt the wine industry like the price of grapes, LCBO involvement and VQA regulations ... nope the winery owners and grape growers are once again in fear of Mother Nature - more specifically her henchman: Jack Frost.

I'm not sure if you understand plants ... more specifically grape vines ... and I only learned this a few weeks ago. I'm no botanist so this will be as plain and unscientific as a scientific description gets. A vine sets its fruit clusters and buds the year before - meaning it knows what it's going to produce and through the cold winter months everything lays in waiting for the right time to poke its head out and begin the growing process. But because we had one rather "interesting" (read: abnormal) winter, we saw plenty of warmer than expected days - so the buds (waiting to pop out) didn't know whether to sleep or grow. Now, vines aren't like snails - they can't tuck their heads back into their home at the first sign of trouble; and they are not like a mouse that can back away from danger ... buds go forward or they stop, that's it. So when we had a warm spell, they figured it was time to go forward, and when it got cold enough they would stop ... right where they were. One viticulturist in Niagara-on-the-Lake told me in early March, "if this continues we could see bud-break in late March or early-April" ... but looking around my own garden during our 20+ degree spell last week, I suspect it may even be closer; I've already got mini-leaves on my rose bushes.

Ann Sperling, of Southbrook Vineyards in Niagara-on-the-Lake, informed me that, "our vines are winter hardy to about minus-20, but I'm informed at this stage it's only about minus-6."

I also spoke with folks in the Lake Erie region, they were the first region to experience above 20 degree temps in the province, and that was in very early March. "I'm out pruning in what has to be the nicest solid week of March weather in our 10 years of having a vineyard." Said Fabio Muscedere of Muscedere Vineyards. When I asked about the risk of frost he said, "That's when the wind machine pays itself off, that said I hope it doesn't happen." Ann echoes his sentiments, "they'll be lots of fans on tonight," she said on Monday afternoon.

The latest recorded frost in Niagara-on-the-Lake - according to one growers records - is May 15 ... frost would essentially kill off a large number of buds, thus killing the potential of a long growing season with lots of grapes to choose from. "It's either going to be a beautiful full crop with lots of options, or if we get frost, we're looking at a very short crop season," one winery principal told me.

For Ontario wine lovers we'd better hope Jack doesn't decide to make a last appearance, or we'll all be drinking Chilean and Australian for our 2012. It's gonna be a scary couple of months ... Welcome to Ontario grape growing.



Grape Guy's Picks of the Bunch: 2 from the Peller Group and a Mastronardi

Hillebrand 2010 Trius Red - \$21.95 (W, L)

www.hillebrand.com

I first tried this wine in its raw form back in November during what Hillebrand calls their "buyers weekend" here folks can get a taste of the wines long before they are bottled and buy them based on potential - it's a kind of futures program. Well finally the 2010 Trius Red is out and I have to say that it has lived up to its potential. A blend of 43% Merlot and 30% Cabernet Franc backed by 27% Cabernet Sauvignon aged a total of 12 months in oak (30% new): 6 months as separate varieties, then another 6 blended together. The result of this tender, loving care is a wine rich in flavour and appealing aromas. At first sniff there are red raspberries, then with a few swirls and some time in glass blackberry, spice, sweet herbs and a hint of anise all make an appearance. The palate grabs your taste buds and just won't let go as there is just gobs of fruit here in the form of cherries and blackberries with some currants thrown in for good measure. A nice red fruit middle gives way to a smoky-raspberry-vanilla finish with just a hint of bite from those otherwise silky tannin, which weigh in at the end to keep it honest ... if it wasn't for the acidity in this wine I'd swear it was an Aussie blend. Great potential over the next 5+ years. Price: \$21.95 - Rating: **** 1/2

Thirty Bench 2010 Red - \$24.00 (W)

www.thirtybench.com

The Thirty Bench Red, in those really good years: 2005, 2007 is one of those wine values that is hard to past up - even if you are one of those that puts the limit on their purchasing at \$20. The 2010 joins the list of good years, not just because of the vintage but because of the pedigree behind it and of course, what is in the bottle. 57% Cabernet Franc, 29% Cabernet Sauvignon and only 14% Merlot make up the blend all aged 14 months in mostly French oak (30% new and 30% 1st fill barrels), with only a quarter of the Cabernet Sauvignon being exposed to American oak. The result is a wine you can easily lie down for a decade, but will have trouble keeping around that long. The nose lures you in deeply with the aromas of super rich dark fruit along with vanilla, cinnamon, plum and black cherry. The taste is also rich, smooth and almost hedonistic with crème de cassis notes, blackberry, black cherry seasoned with sweet herbs and spice. The tannins are silky and cross the tongue smoothly, they trek by almost un-noticed. I tasted both a decanted and straight-from-bottle version of this wine, and the only difference that was the spice and tannins seemed a little more powerful in the un-decanted version. Another beauty from the small lot folks at Thirty Bench. Price: \$24.00 - Rating: **** 1/2+

Mastronardi 2008 Merlot / Cabernet - \$19.95 (W)

www.mastronardiwines.com

The Lake Erie region is our hottest in Ontario, I'm talking temperature here, but it should be a hot destination for you red lovers because they get the right amount of sun exposure. In 2008, when Niagara was struggling to get the best from their grapes, the folks in the LENS were doing just fine, and it shows in this Merlot Cab blend. A nose full of cherry and strawberry fruit with a hint of pepper; following on the palate with cherry-raspberry, white pepper, sweet spice and herbal notes with just a hint of cocoa on the finish. Price: \$19.95 - Rating: *** 1/2+

More from the Must Pile ...

Wines tasted last year that did not make it into last year's publications ...

[Huff Estates 2009 Medium-Dry Riesling](#) - \$17.95 (PEC)
[Malivoire 2010 Pinot Gris](#) - \$19.95 (NIAG)
[Pelee Island 2008 Alvar Cabernet-Merlot](#) - \$14.95 (LENS)
[Pondview 2010 Chardonnay](#) - \$17.00 (NIAG)
[Rosehall Run 2010 Sullyzwicker Red](#) - \$14.95 (PEC)
[Sandbanks 2009 Baco 10th Anniversary](#) - \$19.95 (PEC)

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



Bi-Weekly OWR Updates: *Ottawa Blog posts, On the Road reviews*

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

Trips, tours and tastings – join me as I review the highs, and sometimes, the lows
[Grandi Marchi Tasting and Italian Video Launch](#)
[Alvaro Palacios wines](#)

[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
Nothing New 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
[New Posts Added](#)

including: California Chardonnay, Old Spanish red and New Zealand Savvy B

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

[March 31, 2012 - Vintages Release Report](#)

Advertisement

CAUDLE'S CATCH
SEAFOOD
PRESENTS
WATERLOO REGION
food & drink
SHOW
The Aud
KITCHENER MEMORIAL
AUDITORIUM COMPLEX
VIP Night:
Thursday, April 26, 2012
5-10pm - \$15 Admission
April 27-28, 2012
Friday & Saturday, 3-10pm
\$12 Admission

Giveaway ... This week I have 5 pairs of tickets up for grabs for the [Waterloo Region Food and Drink Show](#) happening April 27-28 at the Aud in Kitchener. The skill testing questions is as difficult as ever: name 1 element in the above picture.

Email yours answers to me at <mailto:michael@ontariowinereview.com> - we will draw three winners from the correct answers received before 11:59pm April 4, 2012. Please be sure to include your

name, address (with postal code) and phone number to be eligible.

Advertisement



Quick Sips: *News from around the World of Wine and Here at Home*

Inside the SAQ ... an article written by Tony Aspler to inform us all about trying to deal with the SAQ (Quebec liquor board): http://www.wine-business-international.com/156-bWVtb2lyX2lkPTQwOCZtZW51ZV9jYXRfaWQ9--en-magazine-magazine_detail.html

Paying thru the Nose ... if you think prices are high in Ontario be thankful you're not living in Quebec - this is not a vindication of the LCBO by the way, more like an FYI about Quebec: <http://montreal.openfile.ca/blog/curator-blog/curated-news/2012/wine-prices-high-quebec-due-saq-markup-study>

You're Not Alone ... seems even Dalton has violated the 1928 Importation of Intoxicating Liquors act, is the LCBO gonna jump all over him for this criminal act? <http://cnews.canoe.ca/CNEWS/Politics/2012/03/11/19488186.html>

Some Shows Must Go On ... interesting to note that while the Vancouver's Playhouse Theatre will be closing its doors, the wine festival that bears its name will continue on: www.vancouver.sun.com/lights+tonight+permanently+Playhouse+Theatre+Company/6282450/story.html

Stupid Criminals ... lesson learned: if you are going to counterfeit wine do a little research first. <http://latimesblogs.latimes.com/lanow/2012/03/la-wine-collector-fraud-fake-french-vintages.html>

A note about Nebbiolo ... Bruno Moos of Alvento emailed this to me with regards to my [review of his Nebbiolo](#): "In Italy many customers are disappointed by Nebbiolo because it is so slow to mature. It had become a big argument between the restaurants and the producers. The problem: Nebbiolo has to breathe at least 12 hours before consumption and decanting does not really help unless it is an old wine. For Barolo, old is 15 years and more. Better yet is a whole day of breathing. Restaurants, especially the very expensive ones, have been told to advise their customers when they make reservation and are planning to order a Barolo or Barbaresco, to advise the restaurant so the sommelier can open the bottle ahead of time, some times a day before, you would be surprised how well a Nebbiolo improves."

Looking to Buy a Winery - Here's one that's selling ... From By Chadsey's in PEC: "This could well be our last year for bringing wine to friends, colleagues and customers. The work we have been doing over the past couple of years to prepare for real retirement and an exit from the wine business seems to have paid off. We have prospective buyers for By Chadsey's Cairns including our house and property. They are undertaking their due diligence to ensure that they can make their vision for the place a reality, and we should know the results relatively quickly." Ed. Note: my understanding is the deal did not go thru but the sale of the property continues.

The Tawse Empire gets Bigger ... Moray Tawse announced the acquisition of Domaine Maume in Gevrey-Chambertin, expanding his family holdings in Burgundy which include Premier Cru vineyards in Chassagne-Montrachet, Puligny-Montrachet and Beaune. The wines will continue to be made under the label Domaine Maume, and Bertrand Maume will continue on with his winemaking and vineyard duties at the Domaine. Pascal Marchand, partner in the Nuits-Saint-Georges negociant, Marchand and Tawse, will oversee the Domain's winemaking, working closely with Bertrand Maume. Moray Tawse and his family currently have vineyard holdings in Burgundy, Argentina and Canada.

And Finally ... Another fill-in feature from GOSH Wine News Services: On this day in wine history in an alternate but parallel universe:

On this day in 1970, the LCBO began re-inventing its stores to allow for self-service. Customers could now touch bottles, leaving behind their DNA which was swept away for testing and filing. The LCBO now has the largest data bank of DNA materials in the world, with some 120 million samples. It is now poised to charge for its lab DNA analysis and results.

On this day in 1989, NAFTA was signed. At the same time, the principals in the Ontario wine industry ignored the warning signs and decided to do nothing, until it was too late. Now, there will never be any free-standing VQA stores, and California wines lead the province in wine sales.



Wine Event Spotlight: *Four big events that are coming your way*

April: First annual Kawartha International Wine and Food Festival - Sunday April 15, 2012 ... find the details here <http://kawarthawineandfoodshow.wordpress.com/>

April: The first annual Waterloo Region Food and Drink Show - Friday and Saturday April 27-28, 2012 ... find the detail of this event here: <http://www.fooddrinkexpo.com/about-us/>

April / May: Get Fresh in the Twenty Valley ... 23 wine and food pairings for your spring time pleasure over two weekends: April 28-29 and May 5-6 , 2012 - details about the event and how to buy tickets: <http://www.twentyvalley.ca/files/Get%20Fresh%202012%20Information%20Package-1.pdf>

May: Wineries of Niagara-on-the-Lake's annual Wine and Herb Festival every weekend in May - this is one of the best festivals of the season - details can be found: <http://wineriesofniagaraonthelake.com/wine-and-herb>

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!

© OntarioWineReview.com 2012. All rights reserved.

You may use the content of this newsletter by including full credit to Michael Pinkus, Grape Guy and a link to www.ontariowinereview.com