

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 – 179
April 12, 2012

In this Edition

- **OntarioWineReview:** *Hey, What Gives*
 - **Grape Guy's Picks of the Bunch:** *Riesling, Franc and Chardonnay*
 - **Bi-Weekly OWR Updates:** *On the Road reviews, Vintages and more*
 - **OntarioWineReview:** *All Hail Aspler*
 - **Wine Event Spotlight:** *A New Kitchener Show and More in April and May*
-



OntarioWineReview: *Hey, What Gives*

Recently I had a conversation with an owner of a small production winery who was asked to "pour" wine at an event because the organizers wanted to "promote" his wine. What they really wanted to do was have free wine poured at their event and figured because he was eager for the exposure, and there was a potential tie-in to their cause, that he would be willing to do so. When he asked how many would be attending he was told 200-250 people "but they are all well-connected high-end type people who I am sure would buy your product" ... for a small producer that kind of outlay of wine for such little to no return is just not worth it. The owner ranted on for a little while and then asked why I didn't write a piece about that "people just think I'm being miserly when I say no, when in fact there's just no return on that investment ... and it's a big investment for a small winery like me". Is it time to cue the string quartet or does he have a point?

But I do have to ask since when did the winery become the new free-milk-and-a-cow scenario of Ontario? I ask that of all the folks putting on events past, present and future. And while I'm at it I also want to ask since when did the phrase "we have a high-end clientele that'll surely be ready to buy your product" become an incentive to give stuff away for free? I don't think I've ever re-purchased anything I got in a SWAG bag.

The words "high-end clientele" (or any synonym you can come up with) and "good exposure for your company" don't always go hand-in-hand; in fact "high-end clientele" like drinking free booze and eating free food, that's how they remain at the high-end of the chain, because they don't have to pay for the high-priced spread. Ever heard about those Oscar grab bags - does George Clooney really need a free diamond-studded Seiko watch; if he wanted one he'd buy one, he ain't running out to get another. These days George needs a get-out-of-jail-free card, but that's a different story.

Being a wine writer I can relate to the winery owner's lament. I too get approached by charities, event co-ordinators, organizations you name it, asking for my services as a "wine expert" and yet when I mention that there is a modest fee involved people are shocked that I wouldn't just want to share your knowledge for free - heck I do enough of it at the parties I attend as just a regular guest (and I know that what I go through winery owners go through too). At this moment I would like to point out that what I'm asking for isn't green-only M&M's in my candy dish, a first class plane ticket, or a bottle of Cristal in my private dressing room with pictures of Charlize Theron and Angelina Jolie in minimum dress adorning the walls. It's a small fee to cover my time, gas and travel expenses. Why is it that we in the wine industry are minimalized for our product or services? Why is everything we "give away" considered great advertising for our business? If the host isn't willing to pay for it what makes them think their high-end guests will? Why do organizers think a winery's "only 10 cases of wine" or my "just take a couple of hours of your time" isn't worth more than a plug in a

program or a chance to get your name out there?

The winery owner had more to say, and here's another piece of our conversation I'd like to share with you: "They pay the caterer, or whomever is supplying the food, they rented the room, the linens and the glasses; why do they think my wine should be free? We're all trying to make a living at what we do." There is obviously only so much pro-bono work you can do (ask any lawyer) before you start needing to put bread on the table and something other than wine in the glass. A winery gets requests for wine all the time and most winery owners are generous to a fault because they want to "get their name out there" - but there's a big difference between one or two bottles and one or two cases. Sure the product comes from mother nature but it wasn't free to make, so why do organizers believe it's free just because they have a good cause, a good event, a good program or lots of people who will be "interested to try your wine" - everybody's always interested in trying the wine, but it's the buying part that's even more important. What makes them think their guests are even going to care what is in their glass? Plus at most gatherings pourers have no idea what's in the bottle, so at events like this the winemaker / owner would have to be there to introduce their wine (now that's not only product they're donating but also their time). But then again how many people attending are going to care?

Case on point: At many a social event I've drunk plonk not worth cleaning my toilet with - because people just got the cheapest thing they could find, heck it's expected. But what's worse is when they do have "the good stuff" and they end up pouring it into a plastic glass no bigger than a Dixie cup with a stem (which doesn't put any wine into a good light), thus diminishing the expensive stuff to plonk-level ... and why does this happen? Because it was free. I'm theoretically interested, it's my job, but I have stopped asking questions at events (unless it's a wine tasting of course) and here's why:

At a wedding I was once told by the bar keeper that the wine came from St. Louis ... "Missouri?" I asked

"No," the barkeep replied, "Obispo - St. Louis, Obispo - must be foreign."

This story is the perfect example of why a winery is skeptical about any event they are not personally attending. (I am sure that's just the person that California winery wanted pouring and representing their wine.)

The promise of people wanting to buy the product or would be very interested, just because your wine is there rings hollow. Sadly, more often than not this is what a winery will hear at an event:

"Can I buy this at the LCBO? ... No. That's a pity ... Oh well fill me up, I'll drink it while I can."

So much for your high-end clientele who'd be willing to buy it - they'll have forgotten all about it as they are popping aspirin the day.



Grape Guy's Picks of the Bunch: *Riesling, Franc and Chardonnay - all over 4 stars*

Rosewood 2011 Mima's Riesling - \$22.00 (W)

www.rosewoodwine.com

Here's a lovely Riesling with a bit of a back story. The wine has been named after an Aunt who loved Riesling and who was tragically in the wrong place at the wrong time ... but it is not something the winery wants to dwell upon - what they want to do is honour that Aunt with the best Riesling possible and in a style they know she would have liked. The nose is loaded with lime pith, wet stone, wildflower honey and green apple aromas. The palate is quite tart, in fact it gives one the cheek-sweats all with a little drop of sweetness to keep it in balance. Lime and lemon play across the tongue with a lovely mineral finish ... great flavour from such a young vineyard. Price: \$22.00 - Rating: ****+

Lailey 2010 Cabernet Franc - Unfiltered - \$30.00 (W)

www.laileyvineyard.com

About two weeks ago I tried a few Cabernet Francs that made me rethink my position on Cabernet Franc being Ontario's red grape of choice - but then along came Derek Barnett with his newest offering, the 2010 Cab Franc unfiltered and he has renewed my faith in Franc. This is a limited edition wine that may not even see the shelves of the winery as it was snapped up during the wineries pre-release get-together in December. The nose is full of blackberry, black raspberry, cherry-tobacco and vanilla notes, while the flavours really sing in the mouth: black cherry, cassis, a touch a tobacco, blackberry and hints of spice with some subtle pepper nuances, all wrapped up in some very silky tannins. This might just be Derek's masterpiece of the vintage. Price: \$30.00 - Rating: **** 1/2+

Southbrook 2010 Whimsy! Chardonnay - \$34.95 (W)

www.southbrook.com

There are some wines that I have to preface with this statement: "I am not by any means a Chardonnay fan, a devotee of the Chardonnay grape, nor a lover of all things Chardonnay." I say that because what I am about to tell you rips my very soul in two and yet adds a sort of salve to my dislike for this grape. This Southbrook Chardonnay is one of the best expressions of the grape I have ever tasted. There is so much to say and so little space to do it in, so let me get started. This wine spent 10 months in 100% French oak with full lees contact the whole time and was also naturally fermented in the same barrel - meaning it spent its whole life in one place ... only 4 barrels were produced, that equals only about 100 cases. The nose is pineapple, caramel, toffee apple, vanilla-peach; with so much fruit and subtle barrel nuances that it's a shame to stop smelling it ... then into the mouth it goes and it's a whole new ballgame. The wine went through malolactic fermentation so there is a creaminess in the mouth, especially upon entry, but it is also reigned by some lovely bright acidity. A very fruit forward wine that has a little bit of everything including some exotic elegance with hints of pineapple and mango, papaya along with vanilla, apple, and peach. Not to belabour the point of how much I really liked this wine, but there was a real elegance of fruit here and a real deft hand with the barrel use so that it plays a supporting role - not a starring one. Simply put this is one awesome Chardonnay, and will have me waffling on the subject of Chardonnay, at least for the next 4-6 months. Price: \$34.95 - Rating: *****

Must Pile ...

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

[Black Bear Farms Strawberry Red Raspberry - \\$29.00](#) (LENS)

[Malivoire 2010 M2 Small Lot Gamay - \\$19.95](#) (NIAG)

[Pelee Island 2009 Gamay-Zweigelt - \\$10.95](#) (LENS)

[Riverview 2010 Riesling - \\$14.95](#) (NIAG)

[Vineland 2008 Riesling Method Cuvee Close - \\$22.95](#) (NIAG)

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



Bi-Weekly OWR Updates: *On the Road reviews, Vintages and more*

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

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

[A Tasting of British Columbia wine](#)

[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

[Many New Posts Added](#)

including La Posta 2010 Cocina, Getting Lucky in 2006 and a Gray Monk 2004

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

[Vintages Shop On-Line April 5, 2012](#)

[Vintages release: April 14, 2012](#)

Advertisement



The Event ... The Niagara-On-The-Lake Wine and Herb Festival - Every Weekend in May

It's that time of year again ... yes the Wineries of Niagara on the Lake are at it again with their Wine and Herb Festival ... taking place every weekend in May ... and this year there's an added bonus: Friday. Instead of just Saturday and Sunday you have the extra day of Friday to get out there and enjoy the pairings of wine, food and herbs. All the details can be found here: <http://wineriesofniagaraonthelake.com/wine-and-herb>

The Giveaway ...

This year I have passports to giveaway, three pairs in total ... of course there's a skill testing question, plus the bonus tie-breaker question:

Skill testing question: What day has been added to extend the Wine and Herb festival weekend?

Bonus: Which winery was rated as my favourite last year? ([see report here](#))

Email your answers to me at michael@ontariowinereview.com - we will draw three winners from the correct answers received before 11:59pm April 17, 2012. Please be sure to include your name, address (with postal code) and phone number to be eligible.

Advertisement



OntarioWineReview: All Hail Aspler

Hot on the heels of his Order of Canada, Canada's own Tony Aspler has received another award, but this time it's an international wine honour. I am tickled rosé because it flies in the face of something my father said. A while back I lauded Tony because he had proven my father wrong on one of his predictions of my chosen profession, "Wine writer," he said, in that usual fatherly scoff, "well there's something you'll never get the Order of Canada for."

Well Tony has devoted his life to the grape and to the Canadian wine industry. He has given up his liver, his teeth, his sanity and his hair, all to make sure Canada was on the wine maps of the world and that we all drank something good, and kept us away from the plonk. By doing this he has once again proven my father wrong. You see, after I pointed out to my father that Tony received the Order of Canada he piped up and said, "Well it's not something that's gonna get you into the hall of fame." Wrong again pop - read on and weep.

On June 5th, 2012, in New York, Tony Aspler will be inducted into the Wine Media Guild of New York Wine Writers' Hall of Fame. The Hall was established in 2007 for "individuals who have made significant contributions to the body of wine writing and education. Each year, individuals who have had exceptional careers and significant achievements as wine authors, journalists or educators are nominated and elected by a committee of their peers. Consideration is on a global basis. Previous Inductees include, among others: Michael Broadbent, Robert Parker, Kevin Zraly, Steven Spurrier, Matt Kramer, Hugh Johnson, Jancis Robinson, James Halladay, Peter Sichel, Gerald Boyd, Dan Berger, Ed McCarthy and Karen MacNeil."

Congratulations on another milestone Tony.



Wine Event Spotlight: *A New Kitchener Show and More in April and May*

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