

## 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 – 193**  
**November 15, 2012**

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### OntarioWineReview: Useful Gifts

It's coming on Christmas, they're cuttin down trees  
They're puttin up reindeer and singing songs of joy and peace.

I wish I had a river  
I could skate away on

The song above is called “Wish I Had a River” and it has famously been recorded by Joni Mitchell, Sarah McLachlan, and surprisingly by Robert Downey Jr. on an episode of Ali McBeal (one of the few times I watched the show). But I didn't start this article as a holiday song lesson. I did it because I'm trying to fulfill people's holiday wishlist, instead of dismantle it. [A couple of years back I wrote an article about the most useless wine gadgets, gifts, gizmos, gunk I have ever received](#) – and in truth, over the years, that article has led people to ask me many questions about what they should give to the wino-geek in their lives?

So I figure it's about time I write a little something for those who want to give a decent gift this year, and I have three suggestions, starting with something I have sitting on the counter in my kitchen at the ready 365 days a year just in case it is needed: VinOair. Now a few years back I recommended a product called [Vinturi](#) ... I still like my Vinturi, but I find myself gravitating towards the VinOair a little more these days. I find it sleeker, slimmer, more transportable, takes up less room and there's little to no chance for drips and spills – it's like a Vinturi mixed with a Drop Stop. VinOair is an aeration device that you insert into the wine bottle and it aerate the wine through its elongated neck, I don't think it aerates as much as the Vinturi, just because of its small opening, but for portability and ease of use – plus you can operate it one handed – the VinOair is my new aerator of choice for everyday use.



Earlier this year I was contacted by Idea Work Shop asking if I wanted to give Corkcicle a try – it had won awards for the most innovative new wine product / gift idea (or something like that) .. I'm always looking for gadgets and gizmos that work that I can recommend and so am always happy to try some out – but I only recommend them only if I believe they work as they say - and I test everything. Now, don't laugh, Corkcicle looks like the kind of thing I'd usually lambast and skewer (or something you'd find in a sex shop) ... and speaking of skewer I'd say that's what Corkcicle looks like – a cork on one end and a rounded tip on the other. It looks like an icicle, same colour, etc. made of plastic – which I guess is what it was supposed to look like and how it got its name. This is how it works: you keep this “skewer / stick” in the freezer till you need it and then

by placing it in the bottle it is supposed to keep your wines from getting too warm when they sit out on the table (according to literature it is for both reds and whites). In practice it's a little cumbersome to have to remove the skewer from the bottle each time you wanna pour a glass (and it drips if you're not careful – plus, pouring the wine with it in the bottle can cause directional mishaps). The good news is that it is perfect for whites, it helps keep them chilled from the inside – as opposed to my other favourite product Vacu Vin Rapid Ice - a sleeve that keeps the bottle chilled from the outside. Plus it looks classier to see the bottle and label in its entirety instead of a cartoon ice-pack encircling the bottle. Both do the job – but Corkcicle just looks a lot classier doing it. As for reds, I thought it chilled them a little too much from the get go, and added nothing to the enjoyment of the reds. That said, the good news is the plastic icicle sitting in your bottle adds nothing but a chill (no weird / off flavours are imparted into the wine, no matter how long it sits in the wine). For that I give the Corkcicle a pass – great for your white drinking friends – or for those looking to keep whites chilled at the table during a dinner party without the need for a bucket or sleeve.

Finally, for you Riesling drinkers out there, listen up ... everybody knows by now about my penchant and snobbery when it comes to proper glassware – yet I have never subscribed to the each-varietal-needs-its-own-stem camp ... until now. My go to glassware company, Schott Zwiesel, has introduced a new Riesling glass (which I had opportunity to use during the best of Riesling competition in Germany earlier this year) and let me tell you the Sensa Riesling not only looks great but it takes both aroma and flavor enjoyment in Riesling to a whole new level. You'd better believe I'll have a dozen in my house when they finally hit our shores either this month or next. They have only made the Riesling model so far (it's a German company after all) but when more come on-line this'll be the glass line to get.



Also check out the bottle of Henry of Pelham Carte Blanche in the Picks of the Bunch section of the newsletter below for an outstanding aged Ontario sparkling that'd be a perfect gift for those who dig bubbly.



#### **Grape Guy's Picks of the Bunch: *New 2007 Bubbly and a Look at Three-peter Tawse***

**Henry of Pelham 2007 Cuvee Catharine Blanc de Blanc - Carte Blanche - \$45.00 (W, L)**  
[www.henryofpelham.com](http://www.henryofpelham.com)

If you've had your ear to the ground lately you'd know that the making of sparkling wine is becoming very popular in Ontario. But while others are going the 12-36 months on lees route Henry of Pelham, a long time bubbly producer, has decided to make a 54-month (4 ½ years) traditional method bubbly, made entirely of Chardonnay and of which 20% was barrel fermented. It has lovely biscuity notes along with lemon zest, and bruise apple. Subtle and delicious, almost creamy smooth on the palate showing elements of caramel, toffee and almond biscotti ... real nice complexity here without going over-the-top. Price: \$45.00 – Rating: \*\*\*\* ½

**Thirty Bench 2011 Riesling 'Steel Post' - \$30.00 (W)**  
[www.thirtybench.com](http://www.thirtybench.com)

When I tried this wine upon its released) it really was kinda messy – soft and fruity and lacking individual character ... Now, some months later, this wine has finally found its identity – and it shows it in spades. The nose is full of lemon / lime pith and talcy-stoneiness. The palate is delicately balanced: sweet fruit hits the front palate, the acidity kicks in at the mid-way point and then there's the tangy, mineral-based finish. Price: \$30.00 Rating: \*\*\*\*

**Sprucewood 2010 Lady In Red - \$14.95 (W, L)**

[www.sprucewoodshores.com](http://www.sprucewoodshores.com)

Nobody has yet divulged who the “Lady in Red” is; and unless it leaks out that the folks at Sprucewood are closet Chris DeBurgh fans, we may never know. A blend of the big Bordeaux three with a 10% addition of Pinot Noir, makes for one complex lady. Cherry, plum, raspberry and cinnamon spice lead the charge on both the nose and palate ... a fruit driven wine with good acidity and a nice dry finish. This is also the first year the Lady has gone screwy (cap I mean) – well balanced and very enjoyable. Price: \$14.95 – Rating: \*\*\*\*+

**BONUS:** [Sprucewood 2010 Cabernet Sauvignon - \\$14.15](#)

**BONUS:** [Sprucewood 2011 Pinot Gris – \\$14.15](#)

**BONUS:** [Sprucewood 2011 Riesling - \\$13.95](#)

**BONUS:** [Sprucewood 2011 Unoaked Chardonnay - \\$15.15](#)

**Other wines from the Lake Erie North Shore:**

[Oxley 2010 Regent - \\$16.95](#)

[Oxley 2011 Riesling - \\$17.95](#)

**In Honour of Tawse being named Wine Access Winery of the Year for the third year in a row:**

**Tawse 2010 Quarry Road Chardonnay - \$34.95 (W, L)**

[www.tawsewinery.ca](http://www.tawsewinery.ca)

It's been pointed out to me that I'm a bit of a hardass when it comes to Chardonnay – and I'll admit that I can be ... I'm just tired of the same old same old when it come to this grape. Well don't expect that here, this is one amazing Chardonnay. The nose is apple-butter and vanilla with a touch of cinnamon (just a whiff) ... the palate really goes above and beyond creamy, buttery and smooth entry with vanilla-lemon cream, apple compote and peach puree and a yummy long finish that has hints of spice and really good acidity. Price: \$34.95 – Rating: \*\*\*\* ½

**BONUS:** [Tawse 2009 Growers Blend Cabernet Franc - \\$26.95](#)

**BONUS:** [Tawse 2009 Quarry Road Pinot Noir - \\$34.95](#)

**BONUS:** [Tawse 2010 Sketches of Niagara Riesling - \\$17.95](#)

**BONUS:** [Tawse 2011 Quarry Road Gewurztraminer - \\$24.95](#)

**BONUS:** [Tawse 2011 Quarry Road Riesling - \\$23.95](#)

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



**Bi-Weekly OWR Updates:** *Video Wines of the Week – A Rant Against Plastic Cork*

**NEW – Ottawa Life Weekly International Wine Recommendation:**

[Ragali 2008 La Lus Albarossa](#)  
[Casillero del Diablo 2011 Reserva Malbec](#)

**On the Road with the Grape Guy:**

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

**Appellation Wine Tasting**  
**Montgras Lunch**

**Concha y Toro Tasting with Marcelo Papa  
The Pinot Affair  
NOTL Taste the Season 2012**

**[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](#)**

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

**Vintages Report for November 24, 2012  
Shop Online for November 15, 2012**

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*Slow & Sinful Gala*  
A CELEBRATION OF COUNTY BUBBLY  
ENJOY FOOD STYLING MATCHING APPETIZERS FROM LOCAL CHEFS TO COUNTY BUBBLES

**PARTICIPATING WINERIES**  
Huff Estates | The Grange  
Kario Estates | Hinterland  
Lighthall | Harwood Estates  
Barley Days | County Cider  
Sandbanks Estates Winery

**PARTICIPATING CHEFS**  
Michael Hoy | Sebastian Schwab  
Pete Tavola | Angelo Bean  
Loyalist College | The Manse  
... and more to come

Live and Silent Auctions of meals, art & wines

**\$75** per person, available only in advance  
Early Bird Price of County Bubbly until November 21st  
(conveniently applied payments) | [slowfoodthecounty.ca](#)

**Saturday, November 24<sup>th</sup>**  
6:30 to 10:30pm  
Highline Hall  
Wellington Arena

Raising funds for Slow Food activities that support:  
- local County Food Banks - young chefs & farmers  
- healthy food education programs

Follow us on Twitter @SlowFoodPEC

*Slow Food the County to hold its second Slow & Sinful Fundraising Gala*  
**[Get all the details here](#)**

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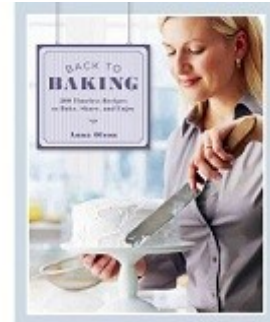
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Lately I have been getting emails to review all sorts of things: beer, vodka, whisk(e)y, rum, wines, of course - but the one thing I had never thought to review were cookbooks, and it seems that those are coming out of the woodwork. The one person I know that simply adores cookbooks is Erica Pleiness, who has never come across a cookbook she hasn't picked up and leafed through ... She reviewed a book for us back in May and she's back with another review, just in time for the holidays.

[Back to Baking: 200 Timeless Recipes to Bake, Share and Enjoy](#)

by Anna Olson  
as reviewed by Erica Pleiness  
(foodie and cookbook aficionado)



A number of months ago I reviewed a cookbook for the OntarioWineReview newsletter and got some good feedback. After that I started receiving cookbooks in the mail to review, but what I found were things that didn't inspire me at all. I worried that I wouldn't be able to write another review unless I forced myself. After a bit of thinking I realized why not review cookbooks that I myself have purchased. Ones, that for one reason or another piqued my interest at the book store.

My first review that I chose from my own library of cookbooks is Anna Olson's [Back to Baking: 200 Timeless Recipes to Bake, Share and Enjoy](#). I picked this one because first I love to bake and second (to be honest) I want to be her. What could be better in life than being able to create delectable goodies for people?

When I first looked at this the pictures drew me in, they were inspiring. The second thing was all the terms and tips within to help you become a better baker. I loved the explanations for how and why to do things. I have found that in baking there are so many things you do because the recipe tells you to do them, but you don't know why you just figure that's how you should do it. The increased knowledge makes me now feel like I can create things on my own.

Of course the book would be just an encyclopedia of knowledge with the recipes – which is why we buy these books in the first place. I made a few things and they all turned out from good to great. Some, because of my own tastes were better than others but they are definitely things I will make again. I made the Basic Banana Chocolate Chip Bread ... yummy ... it was moist and full of great flavour. There was just a ¼ tsp of cinnamon that was added into the batter (something none of my other recipes for banana bread have ever called for) and it gave it a depth of flavour I really enjoyed.

I also made the Fresh Apple Streusel Pie, it was good. The pie dough was easy to make, and I thought quite tasty, and because it only called for a bottom layer and the recipe was the Double Crust Pie Dough I have another crust just waiting for my in the freezer to make some other wonderful goodie. I had a friend help me critique this one (a true pie lover) and he thought more apples could have been in the pie as well as more spices. The spices I agree with as it only called for 1 tsp of cinnamon, as for the apples, I don't know that I could have fit anymore in. On the other hand, we both found that the topping was a bit sandy in texture. All in all I thought the pie was good. The toping might have been an execution error on my part and I think a little bit more butter would have solved the problem. I think I will make it again and just tweak a few things to make it more to my liking.

One of the other things I made was the Flourless Chocolate Torte ... all I can say about this one is

holy hell is it good. I took it to work and someone there told me it was the best chocolate cake they had ever eaten. I would have to agree, it's moist, rich and chocolaty. I have made this one a few times and have plans to make it again and again.

I would recommend this one for sure. I think I will be using this one over and over again not only for the recipes but also as a reference. I hope you like it as much as I do, it's make a good gift for the (aspiring) baker in your life this holiday season, or any time of year ... eat and enjoy.

*Erica Pleiness is a full time nurse and loves to bake and cook in her spare time; she is currently setting up a blog to recount her gastronomic journeys in the kitchen.*



**Wine Event Spotlight:** *The Two Main Events in Niagara and one in the County*

**Taste the Season** – Food and wine pairings all month long in November put on by the Wineries of Niagara on the Lake: <http://wineriesofniagaraonthelake.com/taste-the-season>

**Wrapped Up in the Valley** – Food and wine pairings put on by the wineries of Twenty Valley, and walk away with a collection of savoury cheese shortbreads, find out all the details: [http://www.20valley.ca/events/48/wrapped\\_up\\_in\\_the\\_valley](http://www.20valley.ca/events/48/wrapped_up_in_the_valley)

**Wassail in the County** - Raise thy cup to the vine celebration held the last two weekends of November and 1st Weekend of December: <http://thecountywines.com/pecwaannualeventsc16.php>

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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](mailto:michael@ontariowinereview.com). We look forward to hearing from you!

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