

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 – 204
May 9, 2013

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OntarioWineReview: *Hostage Situation – Part 1*

So by now you've probably heard, the LCBO has set a strike deadline of May 17, 2013 ... Now, why does that day ring a bell? What's so special about May 17? Is there some significance to that date? Oh yes, now I remember, it's the first holiday weekend of summer, lovingly known as the May 2-4 ... (for our American friends out there, the May two-four does not always land on or near the 24th – it's a Canadian thing). You'll be getting ready to go away, or invite people over, head north for some camping, some R & R or just hanging around a pool (weather permitting) and the LCBO obviously has your back at what should be one of the best times of summer ... NOT.

For the third time in a decade the LCBO is holding Ontario hostage – and just like they did in 2005 and 2009 when the threat of a strike was on the table, they'll be an 11th hour (more like on the 11th hour and 59 minute mark) resolution where the LCBO employees get everything they want because the province does not want to lose the revenue the LCBO brings into the province. Screw the teachers, they take money out of the system, but the LCBO brings it in, so they should get whatever they ask for, right? It's the approach taken by every government who has "stared down" the LCBO, and lost. Not that I'm necessarily for the teachers, but if it's a choice between educating our youth or feeding our appetite for liquor I know which side I fall on ... and so would any right minded Ontarian – it's the booze that wins out every time.

And just like in 2005 and 2009 the LCBO will make a ton of money in the days before the "strike". It'll be a feeding frenzy of mammoth proportions in the aisles, right up to the last hour. Shelves will be decimated as people stock up for what surely will be touted as long, drawn out the labour strife ... that'll never come. And why do I say that? Because any right thinking Ontarian knows that if the LCBO goes on strike it means more than loss of revenue to the province, or an inability to get out of country booze ... it means the end of the LCBO (and everyone involved knows that).

Take a peak around us privatization is today's buzz-word and it's all around us. In our own country, to the south, in Europe – at corner stores, in supermarkets and in specialty stores ... heck even Pennsylvania is getting into the act of loosening their liquor laws (and nobody thought that day would come) – but not here in NO-FUN-Tario, a have not province ... we sit under the rules and thumb of the Liquor Control Board. If they go on strike questions will be raised as to why we have a provincially run system, why we support unionized workers, or why we can't be more liberal with our booze (plus you just know some idiot will want to declare it an essential service). So it does not behoove the LCBO to walk off the job and the government won't allow it because they'll be tough questions to answer. So don't go betting the farm on a labour dispute and seeing picket sign toting employees at the local Board store – this one will end like all the others, with the LCBO threatening to walk out, a mass throng of buyers the day before, and the sun rising to a new dawn the next day

with a new deal for LCBO employees ... and all will be right in Ontario for another 4 years ... when we'll do it all again.

Personally I'd like to see them strike ... I want the government to answer those tough questions I'd like to see the privatization issue raised seriously, and even a minor loosening of the laws is a step in the right direction. And as it would seem, so do you. Our last poll showed, an [overwhelming 73%](#) of you want to see beer and wine in "corner" and grocery stores, [while over 91%](#) of you want some form of privatization in the provincial liquor system – be it a mix of private and LCBO, total free market or just the addition of private wine stores.

It's time to have your say again in the OntarioWineReview on-line poll, this time we'd like to know your thoughts regarding the "strike" – go to www.ontariowinereview.com, scroll to the bottom and vote now. It was, in a nutshell, our goal.



Grape Guy's Picks of the Bunch: *Eight Wines in Total*

Muscedere Vineyards 2010 Cabernet Sauvignon - \$30.00 (W)

www.muscederevineyards.com

During the 2010 growing season a former Niagara Grape King told me, "If there were any grape I'd make wine from this year it would be Cabernet Sauvignon." He confidently said that it was a perfect year for the hard to ripen variety, and in Ontario we get about 3 out of every 10 years to get it to proper ripeness. The boys at Muscedere must have been taking notes, cause they've crafted a beauty of a Cab here. 14 months in 50% new oak, making about 200 cases (or so). The nose is spiced red fruit with black fruit undertones – the taste is chocolate en-wrapping juicy blackberry, black cherry, and cassis along with a finish laced with spiced-raspberry and cherry. Quite simply a lovely bit of winemaking here. Price: \$30.00 – Rating: **** ½

BONUS REVIEW: [Muscedere Vineyards 2010 Meritage](#) (W)

BONUS REVIEW: [Muscedere Vineyards 2011 Riesling](#) (W)

BONUS REVIEW: [Muscedere Vineyards 2010 Syrah](#) (W)

Peller 2010 Chardonnay – Andrew Peller Signature Series - \$31.95 (W)

www.peller.com

I know I'm not supposed to mention my hate-on for Chardonnay anymore, cause I seem to be coming around ... of late I've tasted some pretty amazing Chardonnays from places like California, Chile and yes Canada – I would include this Peller Signature in that category with its vanilla, peach, butter, green apple and smoky-hints on the nose – while on the palate apple puree, peach cobbler, vanilla, cinnamon and toasty-smoky notes really come through and all with a lovely long finish ... it just seems so well-balanced especially for the hot 2010 vintage. Price: \$31.95 - Rating: ****+

BONUS REVIEWS: [Peller 2010 Cabernet Sauvignon – Andrew Peller Signature Series](#) (W)

Strewn 2011 Chardonnay, Barrel Aged - \$12.95 (W, L)

www.strewnwinery.com

This is some funky Chardonnay – but funky in a good way. The label says 'barrel aged' but it's so much more than that, according to winemaker Marc Bradshaw. Some was barrel fermented; some barrel aged and some just had "barrel treatment" in various forms. The result is a wine that delivers far beyond its price point. Mineral, peach and spice fight against vanilla-cream and brazen acidity.

Between the nose and the palate this wine seems to take on a life of its own. Price: \$12.95 –
Rating: ****

BONUS REVIEW: [Strewn 2011 Riesling Terroir](#) (W)

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



Bi-Weekly OWR Updates: *On the Road, International Wine Notes and more*

The return of Weekly Wine Videos

Just as the name suggest ... every week I'll introduce you to another fabulous Ontario wine that you've just gotta try – [Check out the YouTube Channel Now](#)

[Video #2 – Thirty Bench 2010 Small Lot Merlot](#)

[Video #3 – Vineland 2011 Elevation Riesling](#)

NEW – [Ottawa Life – International Wine Selection\(s\) of the Week:](#)

Check out the [Ottawa Life – Thirst Impressions](#) blog for my weekly selections

This week's posts:

[Discovering Wines of Portugal – part 1](#)

[Discovering Wines of Portugal – part 2](#)

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

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

[California Wine Fair 2013](#)

[Family Wine Merchants: Icons of Wine 2013](#)

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

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

[Featherstone 2003 Cabernet Franc Estate](#)

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

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

[Featherstone 2009 Gamay Noir](#)

[Maleta 2007 VIEW Chardonnay](#)

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

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

[Read the New Posts Added](#)

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

[May 11 2013 – Vintages Release](#)

[Vintages Shop On-Line May 2, 2013](#)



Sign of the Times



OntarioWineReview: *Hostage Situation – Part 2*

The other day I was reminded of the toll an LCBO strike would take on our home grown wine industry. I've spoken in the past about how it would benefit us, with people having to look to Ontario's wineries to fill their vinous void. How local could become the new battle cry – not just for produce and other food stuffs, but for wine as well (which we sorely lag behind here in Ontario as compared to other wine producing parts of the world). But there is a downside to the LCBO strike that affects our wineries and it couldn't come at a worse time.

"Many of us at smaller wineries (and the larger ones also) are preparing our 2012 wines to send off to LCBO for VQA testing so we can bottle in time for early summer release. Normally, VQA testing takes an average of 2 to 3 weeks for approval but this threat of the LCBO striking will certainly create a backlog in the VQA system as wineries are panicking and rushing to submit for VQA approval before the middle of May."

Wineries need VQA approval for a number of reasons – and that will effectively be shut down by the LCBO strike. Which means as of today, if you don't have your wine in for VQA approval the likelihood of it being approved for sale for the May long weekend (kick off season in wine country) - is nil ... meaning your SOL.

My email writer went on to makes another fine point: "OPSEU says the main issues are wages and benefits, job security and improvements to health and safety standards." Which she found appalling (you'll hear why in a moment) but awhile back I linked through to a memorandum about OPSEU's position and what management is offering, what I lovingly refer to as the ["What they want – What we say" document](#). In it you'll find some pretty fun reading and wacky management ideas, like promotions based on merit (sacrilegious) and belt tightening due to the tough economic times for all Ontarians (not our fault, says the union) ... my emailer spits out her lament with perceived venom towards the union as she discusses the small winery situation: "Many of us who own or work at smaller / younger wineries have little to NO wage at all in hopes that the winery can survive! Where

is the support for the "little guys"??"

I can answer that last question with this unequivocal answer: the LCBO doesn't care about "the little guy" they see wineries as their main competition, so if you're hurting ... tough, the less of you there are the better – more money for them to take in once you're gone. One less mouth clamoring for shelf space that could better be filled by the next Yellow Tail or FuZion. Don't think for one second the LCBO gives you "little guys" a moment's thought ... for proof just read the "What they want – What we say" document and therein lies your answer. The LCBO union reminds me of the Martin Scorsese movie GoodFellas, and if you're wondering how allow me to jog your memory with this quote:

"Business bad? F**k you, pay me. Oh, you had a fire? F**k you, pay me.

Place got hit by lighting, huh? F**K you pay me."

Welcome to the attitude of at the LCBO labour union.

Now go watch the movie and you'll find more parallels between the two organizations – you can read whatever you like in this statement.



Wine Event Spotlight: *2 in the Month of May and Music in the Air*

The Wine & Herb Touring Pass Event (Wine & Herb) ... returns this May 2013 and brings with it 27 unique VQA wine and food pairings created by the Wineries of Niagara-on-the-Lake. Wine & Herb takes place Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays in May 2013 (May 3/4/5, 10/11/12, 17/18/19, 24/25/26) from 11 am to 5 pm. Touring passes are \$43 per person (plus HST), entitling the holder to a VQA wine and food pairing at each winery, passports are valid for every weekend. Visit <http://wineriesofniagaraonthelake.com/wine-and-herb> for details.

Food Truck Eats – 20 Trucks, 20 Wines at Peller ... According to the Peller news release - Look who's parking in our backyard - Kick off the summer at one of the biggest food truck events in Canada this May long weekend featuring 20 of Canada's biggest and upcoming food trucks. Food trucks are North America's newest trend in eating gourmet food. The line up includes these trucks driving down to Niagara to pleasure your palate: The Big Chief, Bonfire Catering, Buster's Sea Cove, Caplansky's Delicatessen, Dirty South, Dobro Jesti, El Gastronomo Vagabundo, The Feisty Jack, FoodMan & CultureBoy, Gorilla Cheese, Gourmet Gringos, Hank Daddy's Barbecue, Itty Bitty Pie Company, Manual Labour Coffee, Roaming Buffalo, Rome'n Chariot, R&R BBQ, Southern Smoke Truck, The Tide & Vine Oyster Company, Tony's Corner StrEATery ... May 18 – 1-6pm / 19 – 6-10pm – Tickets are only \$15 and still available. [Details by clicking right here.](#)

A Night of Music Under the Stars ... Once again Jackson-Triggs puts together an all-star line-up of musicians that'll sing their hearts out for a bottle or two of wine. This year look for these great Canadian artists to fill the beautiful Jackson-Triggs amphitheater with sounds you'll not soon forget: Sam Roberts Band (June 14); Chantel Kreviazuk (June 15); Steven Page (July 6); Natalie MacMaster (July 13); Quartetto Gelato (August 4); Spirit of the West (August 10); Bruce Cockburn (August 30); Great Lake Swimmers & Elliott Brood (August 31); Alan Doyle (September 6) – [Find times and prices here.](#)

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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