

## 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 – 205**  
**May 23, 2013**

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### OntarioWineReview: *Taken In, Taken In Again*

How many of you were actually taken by surprise that the LCBO settled their threatened strike action before the long weekend deadline? I want to believe that none of you were fooled by the LCBO's marketing/threat campaign – and while the final numbers aren't in, I have no doubt enough Ontarians were that it was like a second Christmas for the crown corporation. Earlier last week I had spoken with some LCBO employees who were pretty sure a deal was already in place but that the LCBO was keeping it under wraps to goose sales on the days leading up to the deadline - those who recall the past should know the LCBO had record days in 2005 and 2009 before threatened strike action those years. The LCBO model of selling booze might be antiquated and mis-guided in 2013 but they aren't stupid when it comes to ripping off, and lying to, the public – they've turned that into an art form over the years. They've never gone on strike in their 86 year history and they weren't about to now – after all, how much sympathy would they really garner from the public if they walked off the job the Friday before a long weekend? The whole thing didn't add up, the dates lead them to the proper circumstances ... this was pure calculated marketing by the boys and girls of the 'BO – and yes it does stink to high heaven.

I think we missed a golden opportunity to open up the debate (again) about privatization, in some form or another. In fact, OntarioWineReview's latest on-line poll showed you agree with this assessment. 67% of you wanted to see the LCBO walk off the job, while a combined 73.7% of readers thought privatization would rear its head during a strike: 40% thought immediately while almost 16% thought it would happen within a week.

In the same week the LCBO was holding Ontario hostage with strike talk, inflammatory radio commercials and threats, a gentleman by the name of Ian Baillie walked into town to fan the flames about a BC-style privatization model for this province. Ian is the Executive Director of the Alliance of Beverage Licensees (ABLE BC) and he works on the side of the private enterprises in that province (bars, pubs and stores). The talk he gave was for the Economic Club of Canada and was sponsored by Wine Country Ontario (WCO). Plenty of WCO members were there, along with beer and liquor store interests (whose sole purpose was to shoot this guy's ideas down with their questions and comments). There are no open minds in this province when it comes to the sale of alcohol, only vested interests and entrenched interests and neither the two shall wander from what they want or have. In Ontario power corrupts absolutely.

Ian, while not the most elegant, engaging or dynamic speaker, did raise the idea of a two tiered system working side-by-side with one another as complimenting entities, and in many cases, filling the gap that the other leaves open. He's not talking about the corner store system, which seems to be talked about a lot these days, he didn't see how 10,000 new outlets selling the same crap (my

words) as the LCBO really added anything to the mix. Instead he talked about capping a set number of private stores that would bring in wines, beers and spirits that the LCBO won't touch because the volume at which they are made are cost prohibitive for the LCBO to stock ... after all if you don't make enough you can't feed the LCBO 600+ store beast.

He talked about revenues being up in BC from liquor sales. What he didn't mention, nor was ever brought up was the rampant alcoholism private stores produced or the instances of kids-buying-booze-forming-gangs-and-car-jacking-innocent-citizens for their next hit of Screaming Eagle Cabernet (or Crystal Skull Vodka) ... because that's just not happening. His message is simple: to have privatization you don't have to ditch your current system ... you can create something that compliments and works alongside what you currently have ([you can read the speech here](#))

So how does this all fit in for Ontario's wineries looking for greater market access? According to Ian's numbers Ontario's wineries make approximately 3000 wines annually (each vintage) – this is different labels (brands) not cases. The LCBO system takes in about 200 of those wines ... that leaves lots of room for the other 2800 wines to make their way into a system that private stores could easily fill. An LCBO spokesperson in attendance stood up and commented that Ian's numbers were way off – with all their different channels and programs (Vintages, Classics Catalogue, LAW program, Small Lot etc) the LCBO brings in some 1400 Ontario wines in total per year ... what the spokesperson failed to grasp is that's still under half of all the wines made in Ontario which have no other outlet besides their on premises store on the winery property (and currently, that's it). The LCBO thinks they are helping but they are actually standing in the way of progress and a chance for these winery owners getting their product to market. Between the LCBO and the VQA I'm not sure who hurts small wineries more ... but together they are a juggernaut of progress-killing bureaucracy.

It continues to boggle my mind that in 2013 we still feel alcohol (read: wine and beer) are the evils they were back in the early 1900's, I'm not saying there aren't alcoholics and problems drinkers anymore, but the vast majority of us also don't believe the devil actually resides in the bottle. This province should seriously look at Ian Baillie's and the BC model for liquor sales, if they don't want to dismantle the LCBO it's the next best thing and the revenue would be greater for a province in desperate need of money. ([read all of Ian Baillie's thoughts, ideas and about the BC model here](#))

Have your say on the way Ontario should sell booze in the new OntarioWineReview poll at the bottom of the homepage – [www.ontariowinereview.com](http://www.ontariowinereview.com)



### **Grape Guy's Picks of the Bunch: 5 Wines from 3 Regions**

#### **Burning Kiln 2011 Cab Frank - \$24.95 (W)**

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

There's nothing I like more than a wine with a good double-entente, except maybe a wine that has even catchier word play. This Burning Kiln version of Cabernet Franc – of which 100% of the fruit is dried (in the kiln method), changes the 'c' at the end of Franc for a 'k' ... they have lovingly named the wine after their farmer, Frank; thus for this wine grower meets winemaker to make a real nice wine. A nose of tobacco, black cherry with a hit of raspberry is followed up by a dry palate that's hugely tobacco oriented. The fruit should come later – as for now rest is what this bottle needs – in your cellar preferably. Price: \$24.95 – Rating: \*\*\* ½

#### **Charles Baker 2012 Riesling – Ivan Vineyard - \$27.00 (OL)**

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

Charles Baker's cheating ways continue. His once blind loyalty to Mark Picone's fruit has now met

with a wondering eye as he finds himself plowing and digging in the fields of the Ivan Vineyard. Charles finds himself with younger more tender fruit (13 years) to contend with. This one has a nice zippy character with a mix of mac/green apple, nice lemony notes and along slightly floral finish ... drier than what you expect for Charles, but ultimately worth every sip ...as a good affair should be, after all, it's got to be worth the risk or there's no reward. Price: \$27.00 – Rating: \*\*\*\*

**BONUS:** [Charles Baker 2011 Riesling – Picone Vineyard](#) (35.00)

**Norman Hardie 2011 Chardonnay, County - \$35.00 (W)**

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

Norman's latest County Pinot Noir (2011) is a huge step up for Norman and is probably his best County yet, so its sibling, the County Chardonnay, has got a lot to live up to. Nice mineral and limestone show up on the nose, which is to be expected as these vines get older and start to dig a little deeper into the limestone soils of the County. Lime and apple appear on the palate along with clean vibrant acidity. There's also a creamy texture in the mouth which is quickly washed away by all that lovely acidity. Price: \$35.00 – Rating: \*\*\*\*

**Tawse 2012 Riesling – Quarry Road - \$23.95 (W)**

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

Well kick me in the head and call me Charlie – not literally please – I've tasted a couple of 2012 Rieslings already and for a hot vintage they have surprisingly high acidity ... longevity might be their downfall (as is the case with 2007 versions), but only time will tell that. This offering is from Tawse and is downright mouth-puckering: lemon-lime leads the charge with a peach softness and good minerality ... that acidity is spot on with freshness and there's a beautiful green apple-like tart finish. Put simply it's exciting for Riesling fans to see Riesling like this out of such a hot vintage. Price: \$23.95 – Rating: \*\*\*\* ½

*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 #4 – [Chateau des Charmes 2010 Equuleus](#)**

**Video #5 – [Norman Hardie 2011 County Pinot Noir, Unfiltered](#)**

**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:**

**[Another Kiss from Spain](#)**

**[A Kiss from Spain](#)**

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

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

**[Ontario Wine Awards 2013](#)**

**[30.50 Imports \(Agent\) Tasting](#)**

**[Malbec World Day Tasting at RTH](#)**

**[www.ontariowinereview.com](http://www.ontariowinereview.com)**

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**Wines of Portugal: A World of Difference Tasting  
Hobbs & Co. Agent Tasting**

**[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  
**Cave Spring 2006 "Dolomite" Riesling  
Cave Spring 2005 Cabernet Franc Estate Bottled**

**[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 25 2013 – Vintages Release  
Vintages Shop On-Line May 16, 2013  
In-Store Discoveries – May 25, 2013**

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**Advertising**



**What's all the Hype About ???  
Visit the Website to "C" ...  
[www.coolchardonnay.org](http://www.coolchardonnay.org)**

**Advertising**



**Uncorked and Decanted: *Nifty Gadget – Ravi Instant White Wine Chiller***

There are some wine related products I fully endorse, some I half-heartedly give a nod to and some I downright disdain as an act of Charlatanism (the tannin removing magnet comes to mind instantly). A few years back I tired and wrote about something called "the Ravi" – it was a wine chiller for reds and whites. I found some merit to the product and some detraction. I thought it okay for whites but a total flavour killer for reds. Now Ravi has asked me to look at their product again as they rebrand it as an Instant White Wine Chiller – and yes it does the job. Take a metal cylinder that you put in the freezer, house it in a plastic casing – put a bottle sized inserter at the bottom and in simplistic language you have your Ravi Instant White Wine Chiller. The three pieces come apart so that the metal goes into the freezer and comes out when you're ready for it ... you fit them all together (as long as you remember where you put the housing) fit it onto the end of the bottle and voila, from

room temperature to chilled in the time it takes to tip and pour a bottle.

Now, it doesn't look pretty, it makes the bottle very top heavy and you'll need two hands to control the apparatus once installed (one hand on the bottle the other to stabilize the Ravi itself) ... but it does work, it chills the wine and if that's what it was designed to do then it clearly does what it says. The one real drawback to the unit is that it is hard to get all the water out once you have rinsed it thoroughly, even with the provided pump that helps blow air through the unit to evacuate the water. It also might take a few tips of the Ravi to get the wine pouring if you have some excess water (read: ice) blocking the internal coils – easy way around that is to set the Ravi on its side in the freezer that way any trapped water will spread out when it forms into ice.

While it's not the most beautiful thing, the Ravi Instant White Wine Chiller does work at what it claims ... I just think I'd pour in the kitchen instead of at the table at your next dinner party. Perfect for those times you forget to put white in the fridge, or for when a second or third (unexpected) bottle is required. If you decide to try it with red wine you'll want to store the Ravi in the fridge ... the freezer is just too cold and will strip out your flavours.

For more information visit: [www.ravisolution.com](http://www.ravisolution.com)



### **Wine Event Spotlight: 5 Big Time Events are Coming**

**New from the Pinot Affair: A Springtime Affair ...** May 29th at Spencer's on the Waterfront in Burlington you'll enjoy a spectacular four course menu, deliciously paired with 10 tantalizing Pinot Noir's (including a new Sparkling Pinot Noir), from ten of Niagara's most delectable wineries. Wednesday, May 29th from 6:00 pm- 10:00 pm all for just \$120/per person (including HST and gratuity) ... details can be found at [www.thepinotaffair.com/springtime.html](http://www.thepinotaffair.com/springtime.html)

**Graze the Bench returns ...** Saturday, June 1 and Sunday, June 2 from 12:00 pm to 5:00 pm seven wineries of the Beamsville Bench are blending the perfect combination of wine, food and live entertainment for the fifth annual Graze the Bench. Wineries include Peninsula Ridge Estate Winery, Rosewood Estate Winery, Angels Gate Winery, Thirty Bench Winemakers, The Organized Crime Winery, Fielding Estate Winery and Hidden Bench Vineyards and Winery. Cost is only \$25 and detail can be found here: [www.grazethebench.com](http://www.grazethebench.com)

**Wine enthusiasts invited to experience Riesling ...** On June 11-12, Riesling lovers get a rare chance to join winemakers, grape growers, wine experts and media when the 2013 Riesling Experience conference is hosted by Brock University's Cool Climate Oenology and Viticulture Institute (CCOVI). The event is an unabashed celebration of Riesling's style, structure and purity. The event includes discussions with top experts, followed by a journey through some of Niagara's oldest Riesling vineyards on the second day. For more info and registration details, go to [www.rieslingexperience.com](http://www.rieslingexperience.com)

**Mastronardi Wants You to Laugh, Dance and Sing ...** Mastronardi announces three nights of Concerts in the Vineyard starting June 14 and running to the 16 ... see who's gonna be there by clicking here: [www.mastronardiwines.com/content/upcoming-events](http://www.mastronardiwines.com/content/upcoming-events)

**Trius Jazz Line-Up Announced! ...** the line-up of premier Canadian jazz artists for Trius Jazz at the Winery on July 13, 2013! Rane Lee. Michael Occhipinti: Shine On - The Universe of John Lennon, Ron Davis, Heilig Manoeuvre. This year you can Choose from a variety of ticket options and experiences that include Vineyard Lawn Seating, Trius Red Lounge, Trius Winery Restaurant Patio Seating and Backstage Pass. You can buy Buy Tickets Online or call 1.800.582.8412 ext. 2 [www.reservations.andrewpeller.com/events/jb-event.html](http://www.reservations.andrewpeller.com/events/jb-event.html)

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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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