

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 – 213
September 19, 2013

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OntarioWineReview: *Think Outside the Board*

Well it happened; the LCBO opened their Ontario Boutiques to great fanfare on September 12, in three cities: Niagara Falls, St. Catharines and Windsor ... three places that have wineries nearby. Three places where the local populace could hop in their cars and within 15 minutes be at any of a dozen wineries in the area. The way we should all view this is the LCBO utilized the Wal-Mart approach to competition: get in there and fight it out with already established businesses. According to reports, they are beautiful, well-stocked and something to see. Now, I'm not questioning whether or not the LCBO was going to do a nice job on these in-store boutiques, heck they have the money to sink into them (yours and mine), I question their location and I question why the Wal-Mart tactics?

I got quite a bit of feedback from my article ([Newsletter 212: Who's Not Loving You](#)) on Facebook, via twitter and by email (no snail mail yet). One was from a winery principal, let's call him Geoff, who resides in Prince Edward County: "One of the reasons that the LCBO chose those 3 particular stores to launch the VQA Boutique Enhancement program was to feature Ontario wines from outside of those particular DVAs. In the past you could not find any County wines in either the Niagara Region or Erie North Shore region but customers were asking about them. Similarly there will be a much better selection of NOTL or LENS wines in the new Prince Edward County LCBO next summer."

First, that the LCBO is planning one of these boutiques in Prince Edward County is again part of their master plan to minimize the role of wineries and pilfer their sales. Our good friend Geoff should not be hailing this as a great step forward, sure it might be for now because his wine gets into the regions he previously wasn't, but what happens when those other wines hit his region, why visit his winery anymore when I can get bigger selection at the Board. This is just a case of somebody sipping on the LCBO's Kool-Aid, and Geoff has obviously drank too much. He's not looking at this long term. In a follow up post he mentions the stores they put the boutiques in as being "inline for an upgrade already so that's where they started" ... give me a break. A responder to the same conversation, and as luck would have it, another Jeff, said: "But the three early ones were chosen because of their proximity to wine country. The LCBO wanted to launch in friendly territory. The Niagara Falls store was open for only three months before they started the retrofit." If you've travelled around Toronto in any way, shape or form you'd know that there are plenty more stores that need renos and retrofits more than the three stores the LCBO put their Ontario boutiques into. Folks, it's the three rules of successful retailing: location, location, location – and to think otherwise is just fooling yourself.

Someone who did get it (Bob) emailed me directly, putting it very succinctly: "The Wine Council's information shows that the majority of VQA wines are still sold at the wineries. I asked one of their staff why they were putting a new VQA [boutique] in the Glendale store in St. Catharines rather than Toronto, and was told that it was because they sold more VQA wine in that store than any other in

their system. Obviously, they are intent on trying to steal as much business away from the local wineries as possible, and therefore to deny the wineries (for the most part Canadian small businesses) as much profit as possible.”

While another reader, Gaye, admitted she has finally seen the light: “I always took your rants re: the LC mildly, as I like being able to shop in the “biggest” importer of wines in the world (sic). But I love Ontario wines, and living in Toronto always bemoan the difficulty of going to Niagara wineries and driving back ... for obvious reasons. So I thought these boutiques were inevitable and of course would be in the place most Ontario wine was drunk, Toronto. As your excellent wife said, “a no-brainer”. This is incredible, opening in Niagara Falls? As if our wine was just something to be sold to tourists. Now I’m totally on side.”

If we have to convince the populace one person at a time this is going to take a mighty long time – and I don’t know if I for one can wait that long, nor can some of the wineries who would love to be able to sell more wine in different parts of Ontario, and outside the LCBO system.

We, the people of Ontario, have got to stop believing that the LCBO is the key to the woes of the Ontario wine industry. The LCBO is not the cure all. Nor is it going to be the saviour. It’s once a year sales push is too little. And the lip service of empty promises to sell more or that these new “boutiques” is exactly what the industry is calling for is just dead wrong. “The location of the three new “Boutique” stores are nothing but smoke and mirrors fueled to detract sales from on-site winery purchases,” writes Mark on the Ontario Wine Lovers Facebook page. “In my opinion [they are there] to buy [votes away from the PCs]. These stores give the Liberals a chance to say, you spoke, we listened ... but in reality, if they listened these stores would be located in Toronto, Ottawa, and London, and not in wine country.”

People ask what it is going to take before we see a better system in place for selling of our locals wines in Ontario. I’ll tell you what it won’t take: it’s not gonna be some website called “My Wine Shop.ca” spearheaded by the Wine Council (the LCBO thinks they’ve just given it to you), nor will it be some guy from British Columbia coming in to talk about their system, or the Premier of that province plying our Premier with a bottle of BC wine. The time for talking is over; the LCBO is not listening and has no intention of giving up the Big C: Control. They hear what they want to hear and it’s not what wineries need or want ... it’s the old saying: they’re hearing, but they’re just not listening.

Here’s what’s going to have to happen: it’s going to take a handful of rogue wineries that’ll buy a store and start selling their wine out of it. If companies like Vincor and Peller want to help the situation they’ll sell off a few of their off-premise licenses to help get the ball rolling – but I wouldn’t hold my breath for that. No, if we’re going to see real change in this province some wineries are gonna have to take the bull by the horns and risk it all. But in truth, the fallout would be too great; the LCBO has a long and vindictive memory: loss of listings, and none for the foreseeable future, and of course the AGCO would step in. Court cases, litigation, constitutional challenges all fought by the LCBO to keep the status quo. The irony is that all this court action it would be funded by the people of Ontario – Ontario wineries would in essence be paying taxes to fight against their own interests ... how’s that for a vicious circle ... so it’s a merry-go-round ride we are unlikely to take.

But I thank Mark and Gaye and Bob for writing in, for getting behind the idea that the LCBO just doesn’t have it right this time; for standing up, for taking a stand, for hopefully telling their friends and passing it along. The more people we get talking about this kind of tomfoolery the LCBO is perpetrating on the people of Ontario the better it’ll be in the end.



Grape Guy’s Picks of the Bunch: *Bordeaux Varieties from 2010 (and one ‘11)*

Chateau Des Charmes 2010 Cabernet Franc – St. David’s Bench Vineyard - \$25.95 (W)

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www.chateaudescharmes.com

Chateau des Charmes' St. David's Bench vineyard is right on the property where the Chateau itself is ... sometimes it is referred to as the estate or home vineyard, but this designation on a bottle is for grapes brought in that are closest to the winery proper. The nose on this Franc has blackberry with hints of smoke and elements of black cherry ... palate is smooth and full of lovely dark fruit and ends with a smoky cedar finish. You'll also find nuances of tobacco leaf and some nice tannins backing it up – but not enough tannins to get in the way of your enjoyment of the wine. Price: \$25.95 – Rating: ****+

Cooper's Hawk 2010 Cabernet Franc Reserve - \$39.95 (W)

www.coopershawkvineyards.com

This young winery has now released its very first "Reserve" wine – and what a vintage to inaugurate your reserves. 24 months in oak have given the wine a vanilla-cinnamon warmth in the olfactories paired with smoke and cassis notes. The palate is smooth with blackberry, smoky-vanilla, toasty notes along with black cherry and white pepper edging its way to black. Price: \$39.95 – Rating: ****+

Creekside 2010 Cabernet Sauvignon Reserve - \$35.00 (W)

www.creeksidewine.com

Crikey ... this big Cab from the hot 2010 vintage spent 28 months in oak with the fruit coming from the Queenston Road vineyard. Big and ballsy with black fruit along with raspberry, black cherry and cassis with a robust long finish. This one'll need some time to integrate so buy a few and put them down in the cellar. Drink 2015 – 2025. Price: \$35.00 – Rating: ****+

Peller Estates 2011 Merlot – Private Reserve - \$21.95 (W)

www.peller.com

I have been told by quite a few winemakers here in Ontario not to write off the 2011 vintage ... which is tough considering it's sandwiched between the powerhouse years of 2010 and 2012. But if this Merlot is any indication they may just be right. The first thing outta the glass is rugged tannins, but look beyond that to the blue and black berries, cassis, spice and vanilla-cinnamon finish; you too just might find something to like from 2011 – and there's more to come. Price: \$21.95 – Rating: ****

Pondview 2010 Meritage, Bella Terra - \$39.95 (W)

www.pondviewwinery.com

Not sure why but it seems that Meritage in 2010 was all about Franc and Sauv, leaving behind their good friend Merlot to fend for himself. This is one of a handful of these blends I have tried in the past few days. This one has nice tobacco and cherry on the nose with big spice and pepper notes getting mixed in with all that dark and red fruit on the palate. Another big gun for the cellar, say a 7 year rest wouldn't do this wine any harm; though if decanting it could be ready in a few hours for tonight's enjoyment. Price: \$39.95 – Rating: ****

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



Bi-Weekly OWR Updates: Wine Videos, Blog Additions and more

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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 #31 – [Malivoire 2012 Gamay - Alive](#)

Video #32 – [13th Street 2011 Gamay Noir – Sandstone Reserve](#)

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:

[Celebrating Six Gamay Wines](#)
[Where Do We Go From Here, Wine Lovers](#)

NEW – [Quench By Tidings ... #Wine Wednesday](#) ([see them all here](#))

[West Coast Wine Love](#)
[Looking Out for Number Ones](#)

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

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

[Dave Sheppard's 30th Vintage Celebration](#)
[Niagara New Vintage Tailgate Party](#)

[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

[Hillebrand 2005 Collectors' Choice Cabernet/Merlot](#)

[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 \(blog\)](#)

September 14, 2013 – Vintages Release Report
In-Store Discoveries – September 14, 2013

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Wine Event Spotlight: *Stocking, Tasting, Wrapping and Playing*

Calamus' Annual FALLSTOCK ... will be on Saturday September 21st from 12:00 pm to 5:00 pm. This year is something special as the barn turns 125 so it is a birthday party! Come and hear live music and sample the delicious food catered by "Lovin' from the Oven". There will be new wine releases for you to try and lots of friendly people to party with. Drop by and see why so many Calamus fans make this an annual Fall excursion. Calamus.com

Taste Ontario ... The highly anticipated taste-and-buy event is coming to Ottawa and Toronto, with over 80 wines from over 30 of Ontario's most passionate and talented winemakers. Both the Ottawa (Oct. 7) & Toronto (Oct. 10) event are taking place in October this year. Make it a friends' night out, visit our Icewine Lounge, enter to win a Wine Country Ontario Getaway, meet the winemakers and enjoy Ontario's best. New this year is an online ticket sales system. Tickets only \$65 — these events sell out quickly. <https://kiosk.eztix.co/kiosk/15297>

Lamplighter Present Four One Act Plays About Wine ... Lamplighter Tour guides from Lincoln and area set the historic scene and let their audiences eavesdrop on the dramas unfolding at four of Lincoln's finest historical sites. Rotary Club of Lincoln Lamplighter Tour's 10th year! The four day run this year goes from November 21 to November 24 and will tell the tale of the history of wine making in the area. You are in for a treat with four engaging one act plays followed by tantalizing, delicious desserts and tea sandwiches back at Misses Nettie and Nan's Tea Room. Tour dates and times can be found at www.lamplightertour.com. Each tour lasts approximately two hours. Tickets for the event are \$35 and go on sale at 9 am on Saturday, September 28. Alternately you can call 905-563-8387 or 905-650-4779 to speak to a live operator on Saturday from 9 am until 2 pm.

Wrapped Up in The Valley ... Two days, 25 incredible sip & taste experiences brought to you by the Wineries of Twenty Valley. Your Wrapped Up passport is valid for one taste-filled weekend. November 9 & 10; 16 & 17 or 23 & 24 — here's how to get your passports: <http://www.20valley.ca/page/store>

And watch this space next newsletter for your chance to win Niagara on the Lake Taste the Season Passports.

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>.

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“**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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