

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 – 110
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OntarioWineReview: *Hiding the Truth*

Well, the people have spoken, and here's what they said, "We don't like 'Cellared in Canada' wine, we think it's a crime against our domestic industry, and we're not gonna take it anymore!" Oh, how I wish. Truth is, most people can't tell the difference ([as proven in my Esprit newsletter article -with pictures; and poll results](#)) ... sure you could in the glass, but standing in front of those shelves at the LCBO you can't. Now the VQA has made it even easier on the makers of Cellared in Canada wines to hide them from you. What, you didn't know about the new guidelines for the VQA symbol on a bottle of wine? The VQA didn't consult with you? Well they sure listened to their membership - the vocal ones anyway – or maybe it was the ones with the deeper pockets. These wineries felt that the big VQA logo on the capsule made the wines look cheap and gaudy, so it's out with the logo on the capsule (or at least it has become optional), where it's easy to spot, and onto the label, where it can be missed. Some wineries are putting the logo on the "back" label which in truth, should be the front label though you would think it the back label because it has all the info on it but ... it gets so confusing. The bottom line is that the easy to identify VQA logo, which formally appeared on the capsule of every bottle of 100% Ontario grape wine, and we have been told to look for in countless radio ads, is no longer a pre-requisite. That simple to spot assurance that what you were buying was 100% homegrown is now a thing of the past. In my opinion, this plays right into the hands of those 'Cellared In' makers who don't have to have any large identifier on their bottles at all, and of course the LCBO conveniently mixes these in with the 100% stuff. What, you didn't know that either? Surely you knew that the LCBO is the biggest offender in mixing up the cellared and 100% VQA wines (they're not alone mind you, both Peller and Jackson-Triggs do it in their private stores, you know the one's you find in the supermarkets - Wine Racks and Vineyards Estate) – yup soon you'll be playing the game of "Spot the Difference".

The LCBO loves when you play that game, they make consumers play it all the time in the Ontario section, though they deny it. They claim that if you find a mix-up, they'll fix it. Sounds great but how many people 1) spot the difference, 2) decide to take the time to point it out to staff and 3) wait around to see if the error is corrected. I was in a store on Woodbine (in Toronto) and the signage (VQA / Cellared In) and bottles were all over the place, with no semblance of order whatsoever, it was an absolute mess. I said something to the cashier and she looked at me like I had two heads and said, "it happens when we're busy". That kind of mess does not happen just because you are busy, it's apathy on the part of the staff. You would hope that the seller of your liquor could at least get the place of origin right. The next time I was at that store nothing had changed. Bottom line, unless you stick around, and let's face it, who has the time, nothing gets done. The LCBO proves to me time and time again that they do not care, is the onus on management, staff, higher up or lower down? They sure do talk a good game about getting behind the Ontario industry, but in practice it's a whole different bunch of grapes, so to speak.

So what's the answer? The LCBO won't do a thing. The VQA has turned its back on making VQA easier to find, and in fact, has made it easier to hide non-VQA wines. My favourite quote to date is Laurie MacDonald, of the VQA, who told me that it was up to the customer to check the label and be more aware of what they're buying ([Newsletter #105 – More Have Not than Ever Before](#)). The answer my friends is truth in labeling. We may never get rid of Cellared in Canada wine, there's just too much money in it for the companies that are allowed to produce it. The least they can do is be honest and truthful about what's in the bottle – clearly mark it on the label. Tell the consumer where the grapes are really from, give us a breakdown – and not just with those teeny-tiny letters on the back label which makes the small print at the bottom of contract look large. Put it right on the front label in a font and size we can all read: Jackson-Triggs Sauvignon Blanc (30% Chilean, 40% South African, 30% Ontario – stretched with 20% water), French Cross (70% Australian, 30% Ontario – stretched using 10% water) or whatever the breakdown may be. What your shocked that Jackson-Triggs makes Cellared in Canada wine? That French Cross is not from France? Nope ... Jackson-Triggs white label brand is Cellared in Canada product from Vincor, French Cross is the same kind of wine produced by the folks at Andrew Peller - the only difference, Jackson-Triggs proudly splashes their name cross the front label, so you automatically assume that because they are a Canadian company you are buying a homegrown product. Peller at least has the decency to couch their name in small print on the back label or elsewhere. Ah, foolish consumer, think back to what Laurie MacDonald inferred with her comments: caveat emptor, buyer beware, read your back labels, bring a magnifying glass when you shop in the Ontario section, or visit your eye doctor for a stronger prescription, whatever it takes, but pay attention 'cuz we don't have your back.

[A poll that has been on my website for the last 4 months](#) asked for your input as to what the acronym CRAP could stand for if put on Cellared in Canada wine ... an overwhelming majority voted for "Cheap Readily Available Plonk" (42%), which pretty much describes what it is. These letters should be splashed across the capsule of Cellared in Canada wine; if they're going to make it harder to spot the VQA we should at least be making it easier to spot the non - that's called give and take folks. Now I'm sure the Peller's, the Vincor's, the Pelee's and the Pillitteri's aren't gonna be too thrilled about putting CRAP on their bottles of wine - especially not somewhere as visible as the capsule, so let's just give them the acronym of what they themselves are giving to the wine. But instead of printing it on the back label in letters written by ink-dipped baby-mouse paws, let's put it on the neck of the bottle for all to read "CIC" – Cellared In Canada. Why not let the consumer make an informed choice. Give us a fighting chance when we're standing in front of those LCBO shelves in the "Ontario" section.

In this, the day and age of whole foods, hundred mile diets and eating local, I would love to see if the wine buying public would make the homegrown choice. If the consumer knew upfront that one bottle, filed under "Ontario", was actually a wine made from a majority of grape hauled in from Chile and blended with a minimum requirement of local grapes, and the other 100% Ontario grown and made, would they choose to put their dollars back into the pockets of the growers and winemakers in their own backyard and choose 100% VQA. I'd like to see us at least get that chance to prove our own stuff means more to us. But the hiding and manipulation, the misrepresentation, misguiding and misgivings of big wine producers who are allowed to make this kind of "wine" while not giving us the tools or opportunity to make a properly informed decision, that to me is the real crime of Cellared in Canada wine.



Grape Guy's Picks of the Bunch: *Awesome Chardonnay and a Cabernet-Merlot*
See winery's individual website for details

Nyarai Cellars 2007 Cabernet-Merlot - \$18.00

www.nyaraicellars.ca

Virtual wineries are all the rage these days; winemakers who want to show off their skills but don't have the money to purchase their own estate; let's face it a winery is an expensive proposition, when

all you want to do is make wine the growing part shouldn't be what stops you. After winning a bronze for his Sauvignon Blanc at this year's Ontario Wine Awards, I decided to give winemaker Steve Byfield's other wines a try. I was really drawn to this wonderful Cabernet-Merlot. Steve likes to think of himself as more of a white wine maker (he's thinking of adding other whites to his stable next year), but he's done an excellent job with this red. The nose is full of inviting aromas: strawberry, spice, vanilla, caramel and chocolate, while the palate deliver sweet red and black fruit, spices and pepper with a long smooth finish along with nice balancing acidity. I sure hope Steve continues to play around with reds because he seems to do these well too. This one's good for five-plus-years and offered at a good price. Price: \$18.00 - Rating: ****½

Chateau des Charmes 2007 Estates Chardonnay - \$13.95 (W,L)

www.chateaudescharmes.com

Sit down folks, because I'm about to extol the virtues of a Chardonnay. Those who know me, know I've planted myself firmly in the ABC camp (Anything But Chardonnay), because I have tasted so many bland, boring, over-oaked and way too similar Chards. So when one strikes my palate and awakens my senses, I like to shout about it. Those who follow Ontario's growing seasons know that 2007 was a great year, better for reds than whites, but the always reliable Chardonnay did alright for itself. This beauty starts off with a great vanilla-caramel nose and pleasant white fruit smells - I like smelling (and tasting) fruit in my oaked Chardonnay ... the fruit continues onto the palate with vanilla and a touch of spice - great acid balance gives this one a pleasant long finish ... and the more than reasonable price bumps this wine up to a five star rating. Price: \$13.95 - Rating: *****

Cool Summer Whites – under \$15 (almost all anyway) ... By no means is this all of them, but here's a sampling of available whites for your summer sipping pleasure: wines that won't break the bank.

[Angels Gate 2008 Susreserve Riesling](#) - [Caroline Cellars 2006 Momentum Enchantment](#) - [Creekside 2007 Sauvignon Blanc](#) - [Henry of Pelham 2007 Chardonnay Reserve](#) - [Henry of Pelham 2007 Riesling Dry](#) - [Inniskillin 2007 Brae Blanc Reserve Series](#) - [Pelee Island Winery 2007 Pinot Grigio](#) - [20-27 Cellars 2008 Falls Vineyard Riesling](#)

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



Weekly Wine Notes and More: Northfield Block, York is 50 and much more

The Grape Guy presents the "Weekly Wine Note"! A savoury selection of Ontario wines to impress, enjoy, or just plain drink! A NEW Wine Selection is added every Tuesday and you can listen to the Podcast.

**Here are the [Weekly Wine Notes](#) that were added to the Blog and Pod in the past two weeks:
Great News – Now you can listen to the [Podcasts](#) of your choice - individually**

June 2, 2009 – The Grange of Prince Edward County 2007 Cabernet Franc Northfield Block ([read](#)) ([listen](#))

June 9, 2009 – Lailey Vineyard 2007 Vino 50 Chardonnay ([read](#)) ([listen](#))

NEW Reports in the [On the Road with the Grape Guy](#) section:

[The F'in Winery Tour](#)

[Archibald's Fruit Wine and Food Festival](#)

[What's NEW in the ... Lost and Found \(blog\)](#)

Wines that got "lost" on my wine racks - some are Treasures others are Trash ... Find out what happened

Nothing new this week – keep checking back

[What's NEW ... Taste it Again Grape Guy \(blog\)](#)

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

[Mountain Road Winery 2002 Cabernet Franc](#)

[Colchester Ridge Estate Winery 2004 Cabernet Sauvignon/Merlot](#)
[Chateau des Charmes 2002 Cabernet Sauvignon \(Paul Bosc & St. David's Bench\)](#)

[NEW BLOG – What I'm drinking Tonight](#)

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

[3 New Reviews Added](#)

Including: Mission Hill 2006 SLC Syrah

Vintages Release: *Did not get to tastings in June ... sorry, look for July notes coming soon*

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Two amazing events one fantastic winery.

Click the link below for information on the
Farm-to-Table Experience and the Smooth Jazz Concert series
http://www.chateaudescharmes.com/experience/special_events.html

Advertisement



Quick Sips: *Occasionally interesting things cross my desk that I would like to pass on*

June 2009

Your Priorities Stink ... I find it simply amazing and absolutely dumbfounding that we fought like hell to get the Vancouver Olympic wines (Esprit) to be VQA, something that should have been a total no-brainer from the start, all the while being told that there just simply wasn't enough VQA wine to be had. Now Vincor comes out with [Strut](#), a line of VQA wines for the Sex and the City female set to compete with Colio's Girls Night Out brand – complete with long-legged models on the label. Come to think about it, all you see is legs (and shoes). Vincor says they had the idea long before Colio put out their wines – yup, and they also always intended Esprit to be VQA, and we all know how that went ... swamp land in Florida, here I come. As an addendum, word on the street is that these wines are already being referred to as "Slut", I guess time will tell whether or not these wines really do have legs.

Is Daniel Lenko Gay? ... It's a question that has crossed everybody's lips ever since Daniel launched Chardonn-gay wine back in March. In a statement on Facebook, Daniel wrote: "It is a wine for gay people. Daniel is not gay although some of his wines are ... \$1 from every bottle sold goes to AIDS research. [I am hoping] the gay community will embrace it as their wine of choice." The wine sells for \$19.95 and is available only at the winery.

Pulling the Trigger ... Donald Triggs, of Jackson-Triggs fame, is at it again, but this time, he's starting a winery on the west coast (to be closer to his family in both Vancouver and Australia). Triggs has purchased a piece of property near Oliver, that will eventually have 50-75 acres of vineyard on it. Planting starts this spring, with a hopeful first vintage and winery in about 5 years.

More Bad News for France ... France has fallen to third place behind both Italy and Spain in the exportation of wine rankings done by the International Organization of Vine and Wine.

Ram(sey) Cheap Wine Down Your Throat ... Tough times for the man behind Hell's Kitchen means you gotta sell your name. But according to reports, Gordon Ramsey is only lending his name to Chateau Bauduc for a line of inexpensive (\$12) bottles called "Gordon Ramsey Selections" wines. Chateau Bauduc is Ramsey's house wine of choice at many of his restaurants and are listed as one of his creditors in a recently released financial statement.

Drink Lightly Men ... A new study published in the Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health performed by Dutch researchers, found that men who consumed only wine had twice as much longevity added to their lives as those who drank other forms of alcohol. The study suggests that half a glass of wine a day may add 5 years to your life, where beer drinkers gain only 2½. Light alcohol intake was linked to lower cardiovascular, cerebrovascular and overall mortality in the study.

Le Clos Can Crow ... Congrats to Le Clos Jordanne and their winemaking team, headed by Thomas Bachelder. In a recent tasting, held in Montreal, between California vs Burgundian Chardonnay the ringer won; turns out the ringer was a Le Clos Jordanne 2005 Claystone Terrace Chardonnay from right here in Ontario ... Vivre L'Ontario Libre – or something like that.

Stonechurch for Sale ... Another Niagara winery is on the block. Stonechurch was reported to have gone into receivership last month, and [the sale notice is now up](#). I recently got a chance to try the 2007 wines of Stonechurch, made by Jaime Evans, and if these stellar wines, like the award winning Syrah Reserve (Gold at the Ontario Wine Awards), don't see market it'll be a crying shame. Typical, this should happen just as this winery was starting to turn it around, a crying shame indeed.



Wine Event Spotlight: *All that Jazz*

If you're a fan of jazz, then summer is the time for you. Forget about those jazz festivals in the big city – come out to wine country and listen to jazz the way God intended it to be listened to ... with a glass of wine in the sunshine.

Let's kick off this smooth vibe with the **20th Hillebrand Jazz at the Winery**, (Saturday July 11, 2009) this year's one day "festival" line-up has finally been announced and here are the acts that will be performing: The headliner is Carol Welsmen who finishes off the afternoon, before that, you'll see other great Canadian jazz performers like Joe Sealy's Jazzbirds, featuring Julie Michels, Gillian Margot and Adi Braun; the Shuffle Demons and Brandi Disterheft. Gates open at 2, the music starts at 4 and is scheduled to run until 8 ... but count on being late, cause you won't want the show to end. Tickets start at \$30 and can be purchased online at www.hillebrand.com or by calling 1-800-582-8412 (ext. 2).

Not to be out done, Chateau des Charmes also has a couple of jazz performers of their own showing up for their **Canadian Smooth Jazz Concert Series**. Make it a full jazz weekend when you take in Matt Dusk on Sunday July 12 (the day after Hillebrand's, above) and on August 16 you can catch North of Soul. Both concerts go to support the St. Catharines General Hospital Foundation and to add even more fun to the festivities each concert includes a "superb Wine Country lunch" served up by famous local area chefs' like Stephen Treadwell (July 12) and Eric Peacock (August 16). Price includes the concert, lunch and glass of wine, \$80 for one show, \$145 for both. Lunch begins at 12:30pm with the concert kicking off at 2. For tickets call 905-323-3863 or visit www.scghfoundation.com.

Finally, a last time reminder about the **Sip & Savour Ontario** event happening at the Distillery Historic District – Fermenting Cellar (55 Mill Street) – June 16 from 7:00-9:30pm ... here's your

chance to sip and savour some of the best wines (from the Ontario Wine Awards) and great local cuisine – with 10 Ontario Chefs and 35 wineries in attendance. Tickets are \$60 and they're going fast. For more info and to buy tickets go to www.sipandsavourontario.ca.

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.

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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