

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 – 114
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OntarioWineReview: Bucking the Trend

For once I wasn't trying to stir up controversy, honest ... but somehow it found me. A little over two weeks ago I wrote about [Fiesta Buckhorn](#) in my [On the Road with the Grape Guy blog](#); amongst the wine picks and new winery news was a paragraph entitled, "Shame on Buckhorn" where I chastised them for, once again, allowing Cellared in Canada wines to be poured at an "All Ontario" wine event. There was also an aside, 2-lines within that heading, about a Mexican beer being there amongst all the Ontario craft breweries – but my main focus was the wine, the beer issue had just been pointed out to me in passing during a discussion with another attendee; I hate to say it but I hadn't noticed them. Well, let me tell you, the mess really hit the fan, so to speak; I received letters from past organizers, current organizers, wine writers and others, weighing in on the controversy.

Now, before we get into this too deeply, allow me to say right upfront: I love Fiesta Buckhorn. I think it has one of the best venues and more unique (can something really be 'more unique') set-ups of any event I attend. I would attend Buckhorn no matter what they served because of this feature – plus I have friends in the area and it gives me an excuse to see, and drink wine with them, at least once a year.

That said, I think it is up to Buckhorn to tell us where they stand on what they are serving. "When I had influence at the show it was all-Canadian wine and beers," one former organizer confided in me. This was confirmed by another past organizer: "Exhibitors who come to Fiesta Buckhorn are all aware that this is promoted as a Canada (if not Ontario) only show. We do not ask to see a list of the wines and their pedigree before the event ... as an organizing committee we have no control over the wines that are exhibited. I suppose we are making an assumption that the more than 35 wineries will bring only Ontario product ... we have to trust they will do that." As for beer, "we do not stipulate that the beers at the show be Ontario." We'll come back to beer shortly, let's continue with wine, which was the major topic of my [Buckhorn review](#). Two comments made to me (one by past the other by present organizers) concerned me, and encapsulated what is truly wrong with the Ontario wine market and consumer: "... quite frankly, there isn't anyone on the committee knowledgeable enough who can identify non-Ontario wine to us." In my opinion, this should be rectified immediately and should have been identified as a problem years ago. But it is the next comment that shows a total lack of understanding with regards to the sensitivity of this issue these days when there are websites and petitions against Cellared wines: "How were we to know that this was the case with [the wine in question]? How are we to know what any content of any wine is? Are we to conduct a privately funded research program to do so? We are a NOT FOR PROFIT ORGANIZATION raising funds for a community center." My comment to that was quite simply: "LEARN" (capitalization begets capitalization), after all, there are plenty of sources out there, use the

resources available to you. Crying ignorance is no defense.

The problem stems from the belief that I was accusing Fiesta organizers of willfully deceiving the public, which I am not. Let me state again: I am not accusing Fiesta Buckhorn organizers of deception; I have and will continue to accuse the winemakers of “cellared” wine (who shall go unnamed here because this article is not about their product – this time) of deceiving the public, until such time as labeling practices change. What I am saying is that Buckhorn was merely an accomplice or, more to the point, the facilitator. “We intend to offer wine lovers a chance to taste wines from Ontario Vintors [sic]. We do not intend to deceive anyone. We also don’t hire the RCMP to forensically verify every wine served.” I was angrily informed. “Any yet,” I retorted, “you offend the Vintners who pour 100% Ontario product by allowing one company to bring in the fake stuff.” And saying nothing.

But the harshest criticism I received was on the topic of beer: “... how dare you mention the beer. You were so negative about Corona. I notice you never mentioned the other Mexican beer. Is your vindictiveness only against Corona? Or do you hate all beer? [You also didn’t mention] any of the Canadian, ONTARIO beers that were there? Do you just have a dislike for beer?” First, the website is called OntarioWineReview – emphasis on wine. Second, 15-lines about wine, 2 about beer and this is the reaction I get? Seriously? But to answer the question, no, I do not dislike beer (in fact, I am having one while writing this article). Truth is I was looking forward to some beer after my wine tastings – but after visiting over 35 wineries and tasting close to 100+ wines, my palate for beer was pretty much shot (heck, I didn’t want any alcohol for that matter) ... and it was getting late in the day, booths were starting to close up. My 2-lines about Corona sparked a lot of venom, and that surprised me.

A past organizer sent me the following statement: “Until now Fiesta has been clearly in the consciousness of the wine industry at large as a Canadian Wine and Beer show. Clearly this is no longer the case ... Naturally, Fiesta Buckhorn should be whatever it wishes to be. [Perhaps] having exhibitors like Corona will make it more profitable...” And perhaps this is the way Buckhorn should lean, as my vehemently angry organizer seems to embrace and defend: “If you folks want us to ban Corona [and other foreign beer] ... provide the BCC [Buckhorn Community Centre] with the lost revenues ... That would be over \$1700 ... based on preliminary 2009 numbers [and] that is only 30% of total revenues generated by the Mexican restaurants/beers. That means \$5100 in sales ... Note that the 4 OVA [Ontario Viticulture Association] booths with 13 wineries made just under \$330 ... that’s [only] \$141 for the BCC ...”. This little recitation of the numbers concluded with, “if you have an idea that will meet or exceed the revenues that the BCC gets from these “dreaded Mexican beers”, well I would love to hear it.” I think it’s pretty clear here which way Fiesta Buckhorn is leaning.

“If Yellow Tail or FuZion (imported wines) were there they would be the most profitable booths of all,” said the former organizer. “Perhaps, it is time to convert to the Buckhorn International Wine and Beer show.”

My point is this. I see Buckhorn as primarily a wine and food show, there are more wineries than breweries, if Buckhorn wants to bring in Heineken, Guinness and Kronenberg beer next year that’s great – at least these breweries have a place of origin (Netherlands, Ireland and France), Cellared in Canada wine is a bastard wine created from a variety of lands with no place of origin. If Fiesta wants to change their mandate to encompass these products and call themselves a “Place of Origin” festival that’s great – but then Cellared wine has no place there either.

Another voice was heard in this conversation, a fellow wine writer, who has been a supporter and speaker at the festival since the beginning. “[This is not a new issue], this issue has been lurking around Fiesta for a few years ... my understanding is that the festival began as a 100% Ontario event, but has moved away from this for good reason, survival. The problem is this “change” may not have been loudly and clearly defined and communicated to the media and Ontario wine vendors ... the festival is transforming and the public and vendors still see it in the old light ... The festival is

responsible for educating and communicating their transformation so that everyone gets it.” If that is the case, then let it be known and I will gladly and willingly retract my statements in my [review](#) (or next year I’ll look at it through fresh eyes) ... but if Fiesta Buckhorn is sitting on the fence trying to figure out which way the wind is blowing, then I fear the festival will not see a 20th Anniversary year ... I think the former organizer speaks for all the wine-loving residence of Ontario and more specifically, attendees of Buckhorn, be you a vendor or a visitor when he says: “Please Buckhorn, tell us where you want to go.”

Let me know your thoughts on the issue by emailing me at michael@ontariowinereview.com or send them directly to the organizers of Fiesta Buckhorn: questions@fiestabuckhorn.com.



Grape Guy’s Picks of the Bunch: *Two that should wow - and two summer bonuses*
See winery’s individual website for details

Vineland 2008 Chardonnay - \$12.65 (W, L)
www.vineland.com

The 2008 whites are starting to emerge, and '08 looks like a beauty of a year for the pale wines. This LCBO general list Vineland unoaked Chardonnay is perfect for summer, and if August can give us the heat June and July could not, then this wine’ll be the one to search out. The nose smells of pear, pineapple, mac apple and hints of lime; the palate delivers crisp, clean, delicious flavours that follow from the nose and give a great fruity limeade-like finish with mouthwatering acidity that’ll have you sipping again and again – all at a great price. Price: \$12.65 - Rating: ****½

Hidden Bench 2007 Roman’s Block Riesling - \$34.00 (W)
www.hiddenbench.com

What makes this Riesling worth \$34? Talk to Harold Thiel (owner of Hidden Bench) and he’ll tell you it’s about hand harvesting, hand sorting and hand selecting and other meticulous ways the grapes are shepherded from field to bottle. The wine also goes through a natural fermentation, which is a riskier way to make wine. But also consider this, the Roman’s Block vineyard is comprised of 35 year old Weiss clone Riesling (one of the oldest planting in Ontario) and has produced 5 of Ontario’s top Riesling of the past 10 years (by different producers) and you begin to see the pedigree of this wine – we’ll call it the Northern Dancer of vineyards. The nose plays it close to the vest when it comes to revealing how this wine is going to taste, giving up little in the smells. But once you sip you’ll be amazed. Stony-mineral, with light petrol and green apple notes – it’s soft and smooth through the mouth, though it provides zing to the side of the tongue with citrus-like acidity ... and then there’s the great stony-flinty finish that keeps coming back over and over again. Only 230 cases made, so it’s also in fairly limited supply. Price: \$34.00 – Rating: ****

Summer Selections – two wines to help you get the most out of summer

[Featherstone 2008 Old Vines Riesling \(W\)](#)
[Fielding 2008 Rock Pile Pinot Gris \(W\)](#)

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



Weekly Wine Notes and More: *Erie Shore Cabernet, Pillitteri Blonde and 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 or 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

July 28, 2009 – Erie Shore Vineyard 2007 Cabernet ([read](#)) ([listen](#))
August 4, 2009 – Pillitteri 2007 Bradshaw's Bottled Blonde Reserve ([read](#)) ([listen](#))

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

[Santa Rita "Memorable Every Time" Tasting](#)
[Andeluna Cellars Tasting](#)
[VICE Martini Launch Party](#)

Coming Soon: Adventures in Michigan Wine Country – [preview the wines here](#)

[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 – Keeping 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 2004 Botrytis Affected Riesling](#)
[Muscedere Vineyards 2004 Cabernet Franc Reserve](#)
[Sanson Estates 2002 Bird Dog Red](#)
[Colio Estate Winery 2002 Barrel Aged Cabernet Franc Reserve](#)
[Coyote's Run 2005 Cabernet](#)

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

When it's not an Ontario wine, here's what I'm pulling out of the cellar
[5 New Reviews Added](#)

Including: A 4-wine dinner party, Vintages latest from France and more

[Vintages Release:](#) *Next Vintages release: August 29, 2009 – coming soon*

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The **2010 Women in Wine Calendar** photographed by Steven Elphick
in support of Grapes for Humanity:

Contact Lindsay Groves for Details: lindsaygroves@hotmail.com.

Advertisement



Uncorked and Decanted:

Nifty gadgets, accessories and other things that enhance wine enjoyment.

GoVino "Glassware"

I believe the old saying is: "With gas in van we'll travel", or something like that; for me it's "with glass in hand will travel". I have spoken about my glassware fanaticism on a few occasions, most notably just this past new year's eve in Newsletter #99. On July 18th I found myself at [Fiesta Buckhorn](#) with the typical ISO glass in my hand thinking "there's got to be something better for me to use", and I found it. A friend of mine had just purchased a box of GoVino glasses ... I have some myself back

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home and have been trying to figure out when and where to use them all summer, but never got the opportunity. The GoVino "glass" is actually made of plastic, looks like a Riedel 'O' stemless glass and has a special notch in the side for easy manipulation (or to rest your thumb in). The plastic is so clear that even with a lingering stare it looks like crystal, and best of all it lacks that typical plastic smell you usually associate with plastic-ware, which typically makes plastic unacceptable as a quality wine sampling vessel. The GoVino proved incredibly easy to use. No winery turned me away or insisted I use and the ISO glass. I could stick it in my pocket when eating (and not full) without fear I would bump into something and break it. And on a few occasions pourers commented on the glass by saying "I love those glasses, I have some at home" at which point I would "accidentally" drop the glass to their surprise and horror ... but when it bounced on the table instead of shattering they were even more astonished, because as it turned out it was nothing like what they had at home.

Now, would I recommend GoVino for a dinner party? No - but for a wine tasting event, backyard party or get-together, picnic, boating tour or countless other outdoor activities where unbreakable glassware is a bonus -you'd better believe it ... this just might turn into my permanent wine event glass 'cause it replicates the style of glass you or I would use at home better than the ISO ever would. After all wine tasting (and drinking) is not about finding the faults, it's about enjoying the wine and finding the pleasure.

To see the GoVino glass and/or for more information go to: www.govinowine.com.



Wine Event Spotlight: *SWOVA has the News – Hillebrand has the Blues*

15th Annual SWOVA Tasting ... This Sunday, [Sprucewood Shores Estate Winery](#) will be hosting the wineries of the Lake Erie North Shore for their annual SWOVA Tasting here they showcase the region's best vintage, limited release and new vintage wines, along with providing unlimited delicious food and entertainment. The date: Sunday August 9th 2009 from 1-5pm. Call (866) 938-9253 to get your tickets.

Hillebrand has Another Show ... This time it's Blues at the Winery this Saturday August 8, 2009 – from 4-8pm. Johnny Max Band will be headlining this year's concert alongside Treasa Levasseur, Julian Fauth and Loco Zydeco. Bring your own lawn chair or sit in the exclusive Backstage Pass area, listen to Canada's finest blues artists, all while overlooking the vineyards. Tickets start at \$30 and are available from the winery by calling 1-800-582-8412 or visiting the [Hillebrand website](#).

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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