

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 – 115
August 20, 2009

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News ... *New Grape to be Challenged / Bringing Sexy Back*

The Challenge has been Issued ... It would seem that the masses have spoken and Gewurztraminer it will be. [In a stunning victory](#), Gewurztraminer took 27.8% of the vote, besting the next most voted for wine, Riesling, who took 16% of the popular vote. That means this November, OntarioWineReview will be hosting the Great Gewurztraminer Challenge. Look for details coming in September.

I need your Nominee for Ontario's "Sexiest" Winemaker ... It's time to have a little fun. OntarioWineReview is looking for Ontario's "sexiest" winemaker. A recent email to my inbox had one reader admitting a little fixation on a certain winemaker: "I've been known to have a not so secret and persistent crush on ...". Which got me thinking – who is Ontario's sexiest winemaker (male and female). So from now till the end of September, I'll be accepting nominees for the male and female "sexiest winemaker" – top nominees will find their way to the poll section at the right of the homepage and then the voting will continue thru to December. Who knows, maybe we'll spark a calendar or something. Send nominees to michael@ontariowinereview.com.

To see pictures of Ontario's winemakers consult your Official Wine Route Map, [Download the PDF of the guide](#), or visit these pages from the Wines of Ontario Website and click on individual wineries located at the bottom of the page:

Lake Erie North Shore: http://winesofontario.org/region_erie.php
Niagara Escarpment: http://winesofontario.org/region_niagesc.php
Niagara-on-the-Lake: http://winesofontario.org/region_niag.php
Prince Edward County: http://winesofontario.org/region_pec.php
Toronto and Area: http://winesofontario.org/region_tory.php



OntarioWineReview: *The Great Grape Debate*

Here I go again causing problems. The only people who will not be shocked by that last statement are my mother, my fiancée and anybody who has followed my columns for the last year (or two). This time, I think I'd like to weigh in on the grape issue – more specifically, how we sell grapes here in Ontario.

Just last week, it was announced that wineries will pay less for their grapes in 2009 than they did in 2008. For example: a tonne of Chardonnay would have cost you \$1509 last year, this year that same tonne will set you back \$1396. Pinot Gris will run winery owners \$1563, as oppose to the \$1672 you were out of pocket last year. And the big three: Cabernet Sauvignon, Franc and Merlot will be worth \$1875, \$1676 and \$1894 respectively (last year: \$2038, \$1822 and \$2059). And yes I did say by the tonne. Does anybody see anything wrong with this picture? I sure do – but then maybe I'm just off-base with my thinking. Let me explain my thought process here:

For years, we have been hearing that winemakers want more concentrated fruit, that means less fruit per vine, less tonnage and that in turn means that growers would have to drop valuable (to them anyway) grapes to the ground to make winemakers happy. But (let's say) I'm a grape grower, I want to get maximum value out of my vineyard – I want tonnage, as much as possible. So screw the winemaker, I'll grow more grapes so I can make more money ... why? Because I'm selling by the tonne. This philosophy is contrary to how wineries want their grapes grown – and counter-productive to good wine production. Wineries want concentrated fruit, which means dropping fruit to the ground in order to concentrate the vines' grape ripening ability into a select bunch of grapes. On the other hand, growers want as much fruit on that vine as possible, because tonnage (more grapes) means more money. Sure I may just have repeated myself, but I think it's worth repeating so we all get a handle on what is happening. Do you see how these two philosophies contradict one another and what a vicious circle it can be?

Here in Ontario the GGO (Grape Growers of Ontario) fix minimum prices by the tonne, they have for years and they doggedly will continue to do so until someone comes along and gives them a better alternative, well here it is: Screw the 'by the tonnage' selling and sell by the acre. Imagine this scenario: I'm a winemaker from ABC Winery – I need some Merlot grapes, but I want them grown a certain way, say one bunch per shoot (vine tendril). A grower selling by the tonne won't be happy to do that, but a guy selling by the acre is thrilled. This way the winemaker and the grower get together and discuss terms, thinning methods, etc.

The winemaker says, "I like this 5 acre block and I want only 1.5 tonnes to the acre."
The grower would then say, "Well, for the work you want done I want X-dollars for my fruit."

Negotiation ensues and hopefully a deal is struck. The winemaker gets the fruit he wants, grown to his specifications and the grower doesn't feel he's losing money by dropping fruit to the ground because he's getting the price he wants. Instead of being dictated to as to a set price, a negotiation has taken place to strike a mutually agreed upon price benefiting both parties. That's called a free-market system. My thought is that it would get growers on-board and make them feel part of the process instead of an expendable piece. After all we all have to work together to make a better industry, do we not? I think this way we would also see less waste and surplus, and it would weed out those growers growing on tonnage alone. Yes, I am advocating a free-market system – one in which the good grower's grapes get bought and the over-croppers change their ways or get out. But then again this is Ontario, home of the LCBO, where booze is price-fixed and not freely sold. Ontario, where it is proscribed what we can buy, and thus what we can ultimately drink ... history has shown that free-market enterprise has no place in Ontario's alcohol system. That's my two-cents a tonne opinion anyway.

As I said before, maybe I'm way off base with my thoughts, if you have a better theory let me hear it – after all they can take away our free market, and our freedom of choice, but they can't take away our free speech.



Grape Guy's Picks of the Bunch: *Ya gotta like white*

Rosewood Estates 2008 Semillon - \$18.00 (W)

www.rosewoodwine.com

In a conversation with winemaker Natalie Spykowsky about this wine, I asked "When will you release it?" She answered with vague remarks and cryptic nuances about still having past vintages of a "similar" wine (a Semillon/Sauvignon Blanc) on the shelf. Well I'll argue right here on paper, that these two wines are not similar, in fact they are worlds apart, and that it's time to release this wine while the weather is hot (here's hoping it remains that way). The wine is made from 100% Semillon grapes taken from the Rosewood estate vineyard, it's fresh, fruit driven and ready for release right now. The nose delivers rather simplistic aromas of melon rind and grass, but on the palate, this wine really does turn into something spectacular. The melon and grassiness are there, along with citrus and a delightful seam of minerality (which is also found in their Reserve Riesling). Excellent mouth feel, good acidity and a long persistent green apple finish – a perfect summer wine waiting for you to come along and pick it up ... and at this price is it very pick-up-able. Now, wander in and demand a taste – tell 'em Pinkus sent you. Price: \$18.00 – Rating: ****½

13th Street 2007 Sandstone Vineyard Old Vines Chardonnay – \$TBA (W)

www.13thstreetwinery.com

Speaking of wines yet to be released, this 13th Street staple is going to launch the official opening of the new location for this long running cult winery located 2km from its old haunt on 13th Street (now at: 1776 4th Avenue). This is a beauty of a Chardonnay from their 26-year-old vines. Because it's from the hot '07 vintage,

the alcohol level is up in the 14% range, but that does not deter from this beauty's elegance. Butterscotch, vanilla and peach fill up the nose, while the palate really shows the nice expressions of a well-made Chardonnay – aged 12 months on lees in French oak. Buttery, vanilla, tree fruit: apple and pear among them, and a steady seam of butterscotch rocks the tongue. Sounds sweet, but it's not, unless you count the creamy sweet vanilla mid palate. This one ends on a dry note with great balancing acidity and a long pleasant finish ... set for release September 12, 2009. Price: \$TBA – Rating: ****½

Hot Fun in the Summertime – (Spotlight on concoction wines):

Two wines that should bring pleasure to your taste buds in the heat of summer

[Hernder Estate Wines 2006 "Pink"](#)

[Rosewood Estates 2007 Mon Cherie](#)

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



Weekly Wine Notes and More: *Malivoire x2, Ray's last Inspiration 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

August 11, 2009 – Malivoire Wine Company 2008 White & 2008 Red ([read](#)) ([listen](#))

August 18, 2009 – Stoney Ridge 2008 Inspiration ([read](#)) ([listen](#))

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

[The Wines of Scott Harvey](#)

[SWOVA New Vintages Tasting](#)

[Dinner at Rundles in Stratford](#)

[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

[Cave Spring Cellars 1999 Indian Summer Riesling](#)

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

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

[Marynissen Estates 2002 Cabernet Merlot](#)

[Chateau des Charmes 2002 Estate Cabernet Merlot](#)

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

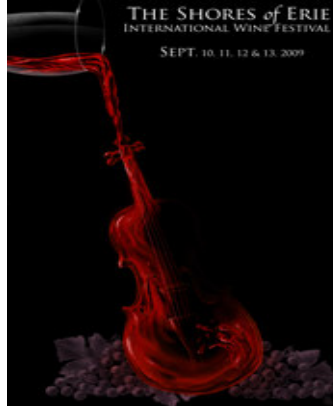
When it's not an Ontario wine, here's what I'm pulling out of the cellar

[6 New Reviews Added](#)

Including: wines from Michigan, Argentina, California and British Columbia

Vintages Release: August 29 release coming soon

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The Shores of Erie International Wine Festival – September 10-13, 2009

www.soewinefestival.com

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

Quick Sips – August 2009

Truth or Rumour – Industry Movements ... Jean-Pierre Cola has left Peninsula Ridge, rumour is he is either back in France or has gone to Rancourt Winery. Jamie Evans, from Stonechurch, has taken over at Peninsula Ridge. Colin Ferguson was let go from Flat Rock Cellars, just weeks before his wedding was to take place there, but he's landed on his feet at Cattail Creek Family Estate Winery where Tatiana Cuk was recently let go. I guess to complete the circle Tatiana should find her way to Stonechurch. And finally, from the "what the hell were you thinking" file, Ray Cornell was let go from Stoney Ridge, reason is rumoured to be for cost cutting measures (see the [Weekly Wine Note for one of Ray's last Inspirations](#)). And one more, just in, (what would a truth and rumours column be without a last minute rumour): Natalie Reynolds has left Thirty Bench for parts unknown. This last rumour has subsequently proven to be completely untrue. Natalie is still with Thirty Bench ... can't get 'em all right.

12 Million, Really? ... It has been brought to my attention that Legends Estates Winery is up for sale on the Sotheby's website. If you have a cool \$12.9 million, it's yours. [Details can be found right here.](#)

David vs. Goliath, I mean Jancis ... Miss Robinson launched her latest arrows at Cellared in Canada wine on August 17, 2009 in a little piece entitled "[The Canadian con contd](#)" - if you then look below, a fellow by the name of David Churchill (obviously an Ontarian) has a few things to say about his and other countries blending practices; Jancis then responds. If you don't want to read the whole thing here is a synopsis: David: Sure Canada is doing it, but what about France, they're doing it too. Jancis: Never mind France, worry about your own backyard. Moral: Those in glass houses should not throw stones.

Favourite Quote of the Month ... In an article dated June 29, 2009, Neil MacDonald was comparing his experience with a US liquor retailer to that of the LCBO whistfully hoping the LCBO was more like his US seller of choice. All this while watching the brouhaha happening at LCBO stores just before the strike deadline in June, on CBC Newsworld from his current residence in Washington. His observation goes like this: "Ontarians, with no more options than lobsters in a trap, had to stand patiently in line, carts piled with bottles, waiting their turn to pay whatever the LCBO felt like charging them." How's that for being succinct. ([Full commentary here](#))

Nova Scotia Flexes its Wine Muscles ... Did you know that Nova Scotia took home 28 awards at the 2009 All Canadian Wine Championships? Including double gold for Marechal Foch, Baco Noir, their first ever gold-medal in the Chardonnay category and a silver in the sparkling category. Could the East Coast be the next Canadian wine Mecca? Keep your eyes peeled folks.

Economic Downturn Means Napa is Seeing Red ... The recession in the United States is playing havoc with Napa Valley's blue chip wines, sales of those \$50-\$100+ bottles have slowed dramatically ... on the flip side \$5-\$10 wines are on the rise, especially Argentinean wines, which have seen a jump of 29% based on value and 13% in volume. Besides California, France, Italy and Spain have also seen a downturn in their market share in the US.

'M' comes to market ... At a time when world wine prices are falling to record lows, and people are buying less luxury wine, Michael Mondavi launches a new wine in the hopes of restoring his family's name as a fine wine producer. 'M' a new 100% Cabernet Sauvignon wine sold for \$200 a bottle. But even in this economy, he still managed to sell through its first 700 case production. According to Michael, "M is bold but not overpowering. It's not your typical California cabernet. And while I think it's ready to be enjoyed today, M can easily be laid down for 30 years."

1945, it was a very good year – 2009, not so much ... Boston police have recovered a bottle of wine valued at \$20,000 four days after it was stolen. The wine, a bottle of 1945 Chateau Mouton Rothschild, was swiped from a store called Hopkinton Wine and Spirits. Thieves distracted the shopkeeper while they stashed the wine in their pants. Three other bottles were stolen, but were not recovered. The '45 Mouton wine is valued at nearly \$800 per ounce. "Hey, pal, is that a Mouton in your pants or are you just glad to see me?"



Wine Event Spotlight: A Plethora of Big Events

The Shores of Erie International Wine Festival combines the perfect blend of regional wines, fine cuisine and live entertainment. Set along the magnificent, waterfront grounds of Fort Malden National Historic Site of Canada, the festival has become a signature event, anticipated by many visitors in Southwestern Ontario and Michigan. This year's festival runs from Thursday September 10 to Sunday September 13 ... [Full details can be found here.](#)

See the Grape Guy ... I will be giving two seminars this year: one on Saturday at noon (Why Visit a Winery), the other on Sunday at 3:00pm (VQA is A-OK) – be sure to stop by and say "hi", look forward to seeing you at the show.

Ticket Giveaway ... Always one of my favourite festivals, and because of that I will be holding two seminars at this year's Shores of Erie Festival. I am also passing out 5 pairs of tickets to this year's show. **Deadline for entry is Tuesday August 25** – here's all you need to do: Send me (michael@ontariowinereview.com) your name, address (with postal code), and phone number along with your nominee for sexiest Ontario winemaker (see above in the news section) ... I will randomly draw winners – 15 other entries will receive an OntarioWineReview limited edition Drop Stop. **Please put Sexy Shores in the subject line.**

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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