

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 – 118

October 1, 2009

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News ... *Who Do You Find Sexy / Gewurztraminer Tickets on Sale*

Who do you find "Sexy"? ... After a month of nominations for the "Sexiest" Ontario Winemaker, we have our finalists, 6 women and 6 men, they are ...

MEN: Daniel Lenko (Lenko Estate Winery), Derek Barnett (Lailey Vineyard), Frederic Picard (Huff Estates), Marc Bradshaw (Pillitteri), Serge Papineau (Legends), and Shiraz Mottiar (Malivoire).

WOMEN: Lydia Tomek (Hernder), Lyse LeBlanc (Mastronardi), Natalie Spytkowski (Rosewood), Shauna White (Ravine), Sue-Ann Staff (Megalomaniac), and Tanya Mitchell (Sprucewood).

Now it's time for you to vote. Visit www.ontariowinereview.com and look for the poll on the right hand side of the page. There you'll find the top 6 male and female winemakers (in alphabetical order) as nominated by readers of OntarioWineReview. May the sexiest winemaker win.

Great Gewurztraminer Challenge ... Tickets for the OntarioWineReview Gewurztraminer challenge are now on sale. Visit www.ontariowinereview.com for all the details of how you can get your tickets.



OntarioWineReview: *Cellared in Canada Goes Boom – so what's next?*

Tick ... Tick ... Tick ... Boom. Well, the Cellared in Canada (CIC) debate has really hit a boiling point over the past couple of weeks. I subscribe to a news forwarding service I lovingly refer to as the "DT Newswire" and I must have been forwarded about 2 dozen articles about CIC wine in the last week alone. These articles aren't just from obscure sources like Lindsay and North Bay, they come from major Canadian newspapers from coast to coast and international press like Jancis Robinson, who seems to be championing the cause, and the Economist, who seem to be just pissing Canadians off by calling us "the nanny state" and referring to our wine as "passable plonk".

I also received forwarded links from you, my readers, and I thank you for them. It would seem in the last year and a half ([coincidentally when Esprit hit the market](#)) we have gone from a country that didn't care less about our homegrown wines, to a country that has started a rallying cry against CIC wines; as usual, there are two sides to this issue: the ones that want to ban it outright and the ones that want to keep it ... Where we're going is very Canadianly, somewhere in the middle.

First, let me say that I am not in favour of banning it because I don't like championing unwinnable causes. People think I want it abolished, truth is, just like the Wine Rack and Vineyard retail outlets you find in your local grocery store (run by Canada's two largest wine companies), [which I thought should be turned into VQA stores](#) (no chance), we will never see the end of CIC wine. That stuff's a moneymaker; for the winery, the government, the LCBO and the countries that supple the wine. Everyone down the row makes dough, and if I have learned anything from listening to Neil Diamond, it's that "Money talks" ("but it don't sing and dance and it don't walk" – Forever in Blue Jeans); and as long as CIC makes money it will continue to be made, no matter how many websites or petitions are circulated asking for its demise. Folks, let's be honest, and a little crude,

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for a second: people have been railing against porn since the dawning of the camera, and yet it is still around for one simple reason: it makes oodles of money. And why? Because sooner or later everyone wants to “try” it, so they can make an informed opinion. Some are repulsed, others are fascinated, some really enjoy it, while others are consumed by it. So you see Cellared in Canada is a form of Canadian porn.

So what’s the next step for CIC wine now that the debate is rolling along? The answer here certainly isn’t falling back to the argument I keep hearing about other countries doing it so why can’t we? (Wines like Piat D’or and Kressman are also “blended brews” from their assumed country of origin). We are, for lack of a better term, a “reactionary country”; we so rarely lead the way, especially in the wine industry. The cork vs. screwcap debate is a perfect example. We wanted to see what other countries did before committing to it ourselves. Whereas a country like New Zealand, embraced it whole hog. In a country where conformity is king, it’s time to step out of the shadows of “other countries” and lead, because it is our country that’s on the hot seat about this blending topic, and deflecting isn’t going to work this time. We can’t wait to see what other countries are going to do because they’re not being bombarded in the press like we are. They are not under the microscope. What was once just a local issue, has now exploded to an international issue as the world press steps in.

The answer seems simple, it’s time to change the CIC rules and make what’s in the bottle transparent ... all of it. A high-profile wine writer suggested these three changes for a start:

I would like to see the provenance and percentage of off-shore blends stated clearly on the back label.

I would like to see a distinctive capsule that must be used by all producers for CIC bottlings, so that visually it’s immediately apparent to the consumer that it’s not a VQA wine.

There should be a special international section for CIC wines in LCBO stores, well away from VQA shelves.

I think we should go one step further and take a page out of Magnotta’s book, a winery that makes CIC wines and yet has seen little in the way of protest against them. That’s because they have clearly identified their CIC wines as international blends for years, with the main country of origin right on the front label, in bold lettering. Using that model for labeling, we now look to the LCBO. CIC wines should be completely removed from the Ontario section and placed in their own special section called “International Blends”. And why should the LCBO get involved here? Because, make no mistake about it, the LCBO is a branch of your Ontario government, and if the government monopoly (LCBO) was established to protect us from the evils of alcohol, then it should protect us from all the evils, including deceptive labeling practices.

The other rule that has to change is the “stretching rule”, where, in effect, wineries that make CIC wines can add 20% water to the blend. One winery owner, who has made CIC in the past, told me that from one ton of grapes you can roughly get 750L of juice and yet the Wine Content Act allows you, as a winery, to stretch it to 902L with water ... but the question that begs to be asked here, does the water have to be local?

Through this whole media storm, what we really have to avoid here is the hysteria of this situation. It seems that every 4 years, a crisis comes along that taints the Ontario industry in the consumer’s mind (2001: Ladybug; 2005: 99/1; 2009: CIC). What must not get lost here is the gospel of VQA, which is and always will be 100% Ontario product ... The only thing we are talking about here, when we refer to Cellared in Canada, is a handful of wineries that make a specific type of wine: Cellared in Canada wines. Do not allow this new boon of publicity to get in the way of what is truly 100% Canadian wine (VQA). My biggest fear is that everyone will read about CIC and think all Canadian wine is blended with international wine, and that we water down our wines. Please keep in mind, dear reader, as you continue to read press clippings from home and abroad about Canada’s “wine fraud”, that VQA is still 100% Ontario (Canadian) – always has been, always will be. Now let’s change those rules and prove to the world that we can be leaders in the wine industry, instead of passive followers.

To hear three CBC interviews – Jancis Robinson, John Peller and Seaton McLean discuss the Cellared in Canada issue visit: [the CBC show The Current, from September 25, 2009](#) and listen to Part 2.



Grape Guy’s Picks of the Bunch: *How about 3 from 2007 ...*

Riverview Cellars 2007 Merlot - \$20.95 (W)

www.rivercellars.com

Recently, I paid a visit to Riverview Cellars and while the name behind it may seem familiar, it’s not owned by whom you might think. The name Pillitteri might ring some bells in your head, but this winery has nothing to do with the busy Pillitteri winery on Hwy 55, otherwise known as Niagara Stone Road, in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

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This is the quieter place run by cousin Mike Pillitteri on the Niagara Parkway. The front is a little fruit, vegetable and farmers market, but tucked away in the back, you'll find Riverview ... a quaint little tasting room and winery where winemaker Angela Kasimos toils away making wines from their estate fruit. 2007 was a bonanza for Ontario winemakers, as one winemaker once told me, "we got to see how the other half lives", by that I can only assume he meant hot climate winemakers. This wine has that warm climate feel with an Ontario touch. The nose is black fruit, mainly cassis and blackberry; on the palate, there's black licorice, blackberry, blueberry and dark cocoa, with nice supple tannins and a good acid backbone that will find it pairing well with heartier foods (waiter, get me a steak). The finish is long and loaded with oak, cinnamon and blackberry. This wine will need some time; give it a few years to fully blossom. Price: \$20.95 – Rating: ****½

Lailey Vineyard 2007 Niagara Peninsula Pinot Noir - \$30.00 (W)

www.laileyvineyard.com

Since its inception, this wine has been winemaker Derek Barnett's baby. The fruit comes from "up on the bench" from some secret location where only good Pinot grows. When Derek brought it to the winery, he knew he had something special – so he babied this one along. First, it resided in a mix of new and 1 year old oak for 10 months – all French of course, then another 10 months in "seasoned" oak (old oak barrels) and finally, bottled, unfiltered, and laid to rest a few months before release. This wine is huge for a Pinot, heck it'd be considered huge for a Cabernet ... the colour is deep red, the nose is cherry, licorice, vanilla with a pretty perfumed note of violets – but what's on the nose is currently lacking on the palate. Instead big tannins take center stage with back up players of sour cherry and big black fruit along with a mouth-drying sensation that kicks the tongue into submission. This may sound quite hearty, but there is elegance and finesse to come from this bottle – I continued to re-taste it over the course of an evening and as it opened it continued to evolve, proving that this wine will require some patience. The usually conservative Barnett recommends 10 years of ageing; this is a perfect candidate for my Taste it Again program, so we'll see what has happened in about 5 years. Currently the wine shows a ton of potential. Price: \$30.00 – Rating: ****½

Organized Crime 2007 The Download - \$36.00 (W)

www.organizedcrimewine.com

Winemaker Andrzej Lipinski has crafted quite the beauty in the bottle here, one that seems to improve and become more complex the longer it is open ... the other amazing part is how smooth it continues to be from beginning to end. Andrzej downloaded Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, Merlot and Petit Verdot (64%, 18%, 9% and 9%) into this wine and let it rest in barrel for 17 months in a medium toast French oak barrel. What has emerged is quite the big, fruity, enjoyable ensemble. The nose has strawberries, raspberries, spice, black pepper, sweet licorice, herbal notes and many more aromas to keep you occupied. The palate proves to be just as complex, matching the nose flavour for smell, while doling out a smoky-coffee note not found on the nose. Oh so yummy and oh so good. Price: \$36.00 – Rating: *****

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



Weekly Wine Notes and More: 33 Vines, Coyote's Run, 4 Road reports and Vinatges

A new Ontario wine is reviewed every Tuesday ... take two minutes to listen to the [Podcast](#) or read the tasting notes on the [Blog](#).

[Weekly Wine Notes](#) (added to the Blog and Pod in the past two weeks):

September 22, 2009 – 33 Vines 2007 Cabernet Franc ([READ](#)) ([LISTEN](#))
September 29, 2009 – Coyote's Run 2007 Red Paw Syrah ([READ](#)) ([LISTEN](#))

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

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

[Chilean Preview Tasting](#)
[Francois Lurton at Le Select Bistro](#)
[Wines of Catena \(Laura and Ernesto\)](#)
[The Taste Ontario Lunch](#)

[Lost and Found \(blog\)](#)

Wines that got "lost" in my cellar - some are Treasures others Trash ... Find out what happened

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Nothing new this week – keep checking back

[Taste it Again Grape Guy \(blog\)](#)

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

Nothing new this week – keep checking back

[What I'm drinking Tonight \(blog\)](#)

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

[6 New Reviews Added](#)

Including: a 1999 Californian blend, a couple from Juan Gil and a Scrubby Rise

[Vintages Release \(blog\)](#)

[Saturday October 10, 2009 – now on-line](#)

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<http://www.iyellowwineclub.com/2009/08/nightlife.html>

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Beautiful Bottles: *Taking a look at some great 2008s ... so far, so good*

Ladies and gentlemen of the jury, it has come to my attention that some of the wine press is already starting to bemoan the state of the 2008 vintage here in Ontario; how it was inferior to 2007 and that the wines won't be as good. They are painting the vintage with a broad brush as being sub-par. Well keep in mind that 2007, as Thomas Bachelder of Le Clos Jordanne told me, "was an aberration" of a vintage in Ontario. I sat with three winery principals at the [Taste Ontario lunch](#), two were winemakers, and each had nothing but positive things to say about the 2008 wines; one even went as far as to say his colour extraction was just as good in 2008 as it was in 2007 and the flavours were even better. Let's face it, as our industry get older and our winemakers gain more experience, our wines can only improve. There are vintages like 2002, 2005 and 2007, when the wines literally make themselves, but there are the tougher vintages like 2003, 2004, and 2006, that defines the winemaker and separates the good ones from the bad. In those vintages you really have to work and ply at your chosen trade. Make no mistake, 2008 was a "tough vintage" everyone agrees on that, but before we write it off as inferior let's take a look at what's come out so far, and tip our collective hats to these 14 winemakers who put something special in the bottle from 2008 (so far) with more sure to come:

Angelo Pavan: [Cave Spring 2008 Dolomite Riesling](#)

Arthur Harder: [Ridgepoint 2008 Riesling](#)

Brian Schmidt: [Vineland 2008 Cabernet Franc](#)

Colin Ferguson: [Cattail Creek 2008 Off-Dry Riesling](#)

Darryl Brooker: [Hillebrand 2008 Ghost Creek Riesling](#)

Frederic Picard: [Huff Estates 2008 Pinot Gris](#)

Herb Jacobson: [13th Street Winery 2008 Cabernet Rosé](#)

Kevin Panagapka: 20-27 Cellars [Featherstone Riesling](#) and [Falls Vineyard Riesling](#)

Marco Piccoli: [Jackson-Triggs 2008 Sauvignon Blanc Proprietors' Reserve](#)

Natalie Spytkowski: [Rosewood Estates 2008 Semillon](#)

Ray Cornell: [Stoney Ridge 2008 Inspiration](#)

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Richie Roberts: [Fielding Estate 2008 Riesling](#)
Shiraz Mottiar: [Malivoire 2008 Gamay](#) and [Malivoire 2008 Red](#)
Steve Byfield: [Nyarai Cellars 2008 Sauvignon Blanc](#)



Wine Event Spotlight: *A Plethora of Events*

The [Toronto Chapter of the Ontario Wine Society](#) decided that there is a need for a no-frills, serious, but, at the same time fun, tasting event in Toronto that brings together as many Ontario wineries as possible for the sole purpose of tasting their VQA wines with the intent to order. In Ontario, the wineries, by law, are not allowed to physically provide you with bottles of their wines at this event. You will be able to order the wines for delivery to your home or office. Also available to order at this event, by cheque or cash only, will be Eisch breathable glasses and Schott Zwiesel, titanium-crystal break-resistant glasses at a 15% discount from retail prices. Here's a great opportunity to do some holiday season shopping. The **OWS Taste and Order Event** happens Monday November 30, 2009

The Gourmet Food & Wine Expo is coming - November 19-22, 2009 ... keep your eyes right here for your chance to win tickets in an upcoming newsletter. [You can check out what's happening at this year's show here.](#)

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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