

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 – 122
November 26, 2009

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News ... *Holiday Publishing Schedule*

December 9, 2009 ... will be my annual mini-rants edition - the things that bewitched, bothered and bewildered me throughout the year.

January 7, 2010 ... results of the Gewurztraminer Challenge will be published.

Also look for the announcement and crowning of 2009's sexiest winemaker later in the month.

Last Newsletter of the year is December 9, 2009. The first Newsletter of 2010 will be January 7 ... have a great holiday season.



OntarioWineReview: *Grape Guy's Gift Giving and Getting Guide*

The old saying goes something like this: "It's better to give than it is to receive", I think the guy who came up with that one was trying to make himself feel better due to a lack of friends. As everybody knows, the best part of the holidays is receiving. Think about it, what's the first question you ask anybody: "What'dja get?" Opening up a package and finding out that somebody was actually listening to the hints you've been dropping all year, is one of the best feelings you can have. Well, it might only be November, but reports say that most people are going to get their holiday shopping done early this year and that the good sales will be happening well before the traditional Boxing Day deals – that awaits to be seen, but it's nice to scan those flyers. Every year, I put together a list of gifts worth giving and getting, usually comprised of stuff I have found over the past year and am impressed enough with to recommend to you. This year is no different. So without further ado, I present to you, the Grape Guy's Gift Giving and Getting Guide, 2009 edition.

Best Gadget of the Year (a must have) ... Only one gadget this year has impressed me sufficiently enough to make my list of the "must have" gadget of the year and it's one I think all wine lovers shouldn't be without: the [Vinturi](#) wine aerator. I reviewed it a few months ago ([Newsletter #119](#)) and continue to use mine to this day. It comes in two colours, black or white and the deluxe edition includes a nifty stand (for an extra cost of course). Search this out for your wine loving friends or for yourself; it's definitely something that should be on everybody's list.

Stemware of Choice ... As somebody who considers himself a glassware slut, I have tried all the crystal I can put my hands on: Riedel, Spiegelau, Eisch. You name it, I have at least a pair in some form or another. For the money, I throw my support behind Schott Zwiesel. Perhaps you've heard about their Triton technology glasses that use titanium instead of lead, no? Then I bet you've heard about the "unbreakable" glass ... that's them – although the glass is still breakable, it is after all crystal, but more people are impressed with the way you can whack these glasses around. I use them exclusively at my challenges. [The glass of the year from this manufacturer has got to be the Cru Classic line](#); search them out, you won't be disappointed.

For the Book Lover in you ... I mean on your list or course, but you should also have some reading material for the long cold nights ahead. Set a glass of wine beside you, curl up in front of the fire (fake or real) and enjoy

a good book. The book I most enjoyed this year (and am still enjoying) is Richard Mendelson's "From Demon to Darling: A legal history of wine in America". In it, you can see the struggle the U.S. went through trying to figure out what to do with booze on a legal level. Sounds dry but it isn't. Mendelson, a lawyer and winemaker himself, keeps it on a layman's level so that all can understand the trials and tribulations the U.S. went through from pre-prohibition times to now. The history is fascinating and mirrors most of our own here in Canada – though on some issues, the U.S. has come out of the dark ages while we still find ourselves floundering there. I'll have a full review of the book in an upcoming newsletter in the new year. Other books that should be of interest to the oenophile on your list come from names that are both familiar and new. Following on the same historical lines, there's Linda Bramble's new self-explanatory tome "Niagara Wine Visionaries: Profiles of the pioneering winemakers" (a full review in the new year). Marnie Old's "Wine Secrets: Advice from Winemakers, Sommeliers and Connoisseurs" is a quick read for those who want advice from those in the know. Tony Aspler has craft his new book about wine cellars, "Tony Aspler's Cellar Book: How to Design, Build, Stock and Manage Your Wine Cellar Wherever You Live". And finally, the newest book to hit my collection is from the pioneering winemaker Randall Graham, the man who brought us Bonny Doon, his book is an eclectic mix of essays, poems, lyric and much more: "Been Doon So Long" (look for the new year review).

Celebrate with Fizz ... Of course, I'd be remiss if I didn't mention the bubbly worth giving and consuming this year. Nothing says celebration like effervescent wine. You can stay local and get great sparkling at great prices (usually half the price of Champagne and made in much the same method). Annual favourites are Henry of Pelham Cuvee Catharine (Brut and Rosé); Chateau des Charmes has much the same selection (Brut and [Rosé](#)) although their Rosé is vintage dated, 2005 and was my wine of choice when getting engaged earlier this year in May. Hillebrand's Trius Brut is always an elegant looking (as well as tasting) winner on or off the table, and keep your eyes peeled for their Rosé coming in December. There's also a bottle of Old Vines Riesling Brut that Maleta makes, as well as a Cuvee Close from the same grape made by Konzelmann. In the coming years, you'll see bubbly appearing from many of your favourite wineries, as more jump on the Bubbly Bandwagon. New this year is the Huff offering (Prince Edward County) which was just released (have yet to try), and the newest Bandwagon jumper: [The Grange of Prince Edward County's new Pinot Noir/Chardonnay 2007 Brut](#), which I tried at the Gourmet Food and Wine Expo. Winemaker Jeff Innes was practically gleeful about it ... it's good wine at a very reasonable price.

Looking Outside Ontario for Your Bubbles ... These are my top 5 from a tasting of over 40 I did in October. All are available in Ontario at the you know where: G.H. Mumm Carte Classique – France (\$56.95 - #308064); Lanson Rose Label Brut Rosé – France (\$59.95 - #94458); Henkell Trocken Fine Sekt – Germany (\$13.65 - #122869); Bottega Vino dei Poeti Prosecco Brut – Italy (\$14.30 - #897702); and Bottega Petalo II Vino dell'Amore Moscato Sparkling (\$12.95 - #588780). For something a little different try Fresita (\$13.95 - #56697) the Chilean bubbly made from wine and strawberries, this is one not to be missed.

Other fun Libations for the Holidays ... A perennial favourite is Matt Passifume's brainchild over at Applewood Farm Winery in Stouffville: Crazy 8 Hard, Hard Raspberry Cider, an 8.8% cider that comes in a single serving beer bottle. The colour is a very festive red and the nectar inside the bottle acts as a party in the mouth with every sip, ingenious and delicious; try it once and you'll be hooked (\$3.00 / 341ml). Speaking of bottles of beer, Mill Street's Barley Wine (\$11.95 / 500ml) becomes available this time of year, but it sells out quickly. Also out this time of year is the Grate Lakes Brewing Company's Winter Ale, "combined with generous amounts of cinnamon, honey, ginger and orange peel" and inspired by the long cold Canadian winter. I gave it a taste just this past Sunday and would have to say it goes down so easy. A fruit, caramel and hops like nose with cinnamon and hops on the flavour – I don't usually reviews beers (though I love a good one) this is a good one (\$6.95 / 750ml). Icewine is always top of the mind come winter time and the giving of Ontario's contribution to the wine world is always in vogue, especially when Ontarian's travel abroad. It's not always something we drink ourselves, our biggest complaint: "it's too sweet". That's why I recommend getting the same flavours with half the sugar in a late harvest wine. My most recent find in this category comes is [EastDell's 2006 Late Harvest Vidal](#) (\$15.95 / 375ml) ... goes great with the sweetie in your life without inducing diabetic shock, which can really spoil, an evening. Finally, you can party just like your forefathers did with mead; Ontario's newest meadery, [Rosewood, has just released Mead Noir](#), a blend of mead (honey wine) and Pinot Noir. Mead dates back to about 7000 BC, while the first mention of it in scripture is around 1700 BC. It was also the preferred drink of Aristotle, and very popular in Medieval England. So pour yourself a grog full and dance the night away to that classic tune "Tonight we're gonna party like it's 1599" all with a French twist.



Grape Guy's Picks of the Bunch: Three Under \$20

Cattail Creek 2008 Gamay Noir - \$15.00 (W)

www.cattailcreek.ca

www.ontariowinereview.com

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On the wine trail, one can get very excited and wrapped up in the spirit of tasting: the mood of your surroundings, the hype of the winery staff, everything culminates into a willingness to buy anything put in front of us. Of course, it's the fear of any seasoned winery tour veteran to get home with his haul and wonder if his booty is actually fool's good. I have to admit this was what befell me then I returned from Taste the Season in Niagara-on-the-Lake. The food, the camaraderie, the energy, all gets one jazzed about wine and food pairings. It lulls us all into believing that that wine we have in our hand is the best we've ever tasted. Now, I'm a Gamay fan, I love the fruity nature of the wines this grape produces, the ease at which the wine sails over the palate and down the throat; it treats the palate like a partner not as the aggressor. This Cattail version did well at the winery with its sausage companions, but would it stand up to fiercer scrutiny at home? I'm happy to report that it did. The nose is beautiful with ripe cherries, while the palate is also lightly coated with cherry flavour. This is an easy to drink, immensely quaffable wine of which only 50% spent 3 months in older oak barrels, to better season the wine. And they priced this one attractively too. In this the season of Beaujolais Nouveau, with its bubble-gummy flavours, it's nice to find a homegrown Gamay with a little seriousness behind it. Chill for 30 minutes to a hour in the fridge and enjoy. Price: \$15.00 – Rating: ****

Jackson-Triggs 2007 Cabernet Franc/Cabernet Sauvignon - \$12.75 (W, L)

www.jacksontriggswinery.com

They may have pulled out of the wine council to promote and protect their CiC brands of wine, but when J-T puts their minds to it, they can really make some great VQA wines too. I tasted this 75% Cabernet Franc, 25% Cabernet Sauvignon beauty on the Niagara-on-the-Lake Taste the Season tour and was blown away on two fronts: the taste and the price. What we find here is an opulent, mouth-filling wine loaded with red and black fruit that's both smooth and juicy through the palate with a dry finish. Raspberries and cherries are prominent throughout making this a very tasty and enjoyable wine. Look at some short term ageing here (4-5 years), but also remember to enjoy some now. Price: \$12.95 – Rating: ****½

Rosewood Estates 2007 Merlot - \$18.00 (W)

www.rosewoodwine.com

A few months ago, I tried this wine at Rosewood in the presence of winemaker Natalie Spytkowski. I tried it alongside the 5-star Merlot Reserve Wild Ferment and I could see where the reserve got its pedigree, the "basic" Merlot was delicious too. She informed me at that time that sales of the Merlot were going gangbusters and that only 35 cases remained and they should be sold out of it very shortly. So I took my notes, gave the wine a score and moved on, realizing that by the time I got a chance to post the review the wine would be gone. Fast forward to last weekend and I find myself once again at Rosewood, this time no Natalie, and they ask if I've tried the 2007 Merlot, the same 2007 Merlot that was destined to be gone by now. It seems that an accounting error had occurred, and one that finally favours the wine lover in all of us. Someone had tucked a palette or two away in a corner, thus making it seem like there was less in the warehouse than there actually was ... now uncovered, I can dust off my own notes and tell you to make your way to Rosewood to buy some of this Merlot at a steal of a price. Twelve months in a mix of seasoned and new oak barrels brings out the black cherry, blackberry and chocolate smells in the wine; the mouth finds similar joy with ripe and juicy blackberry along with cinnamon and spices – a touch gritty with tannins but those will smooth out with a couple of years in the cellar. The good news is that this wonderful wine still holds the price tag of \$18 (the pre-finding amount) ... The accountant must have made an error here too, so best you take advantage of it "toute suite" as the French might say. Price: \$18.00 – Rating: ****½

Holiday Time Means Icewine ... this one is great for sipping and/or giving:

[Pillitteri 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon Icewine](#)

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



Weekly Wine Notes and More: 13th Gamay, Trius Franc and plenty of Road Weariness

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):

November 17, 2009 – 13th Street Winery 2007 Old Vines Gamay ([READ](#)) ([LISTEN](#))

November 24, 2009 – Hillebrand 2008 Trius Cabernet Franc ([READ](#)) ([LISTEN](#))

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

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

[Mazel Wines Tasting](#)

[Halpern Tasting](#)

[Bordeaux Under One Roof](#)

[Annual Italian Tasting](#)

[Celebrate Argentina](#)

[Taste the Season 2009](#)

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

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

[Vignoble Rancourt 2004 Cabernet Sauvignon](#)

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

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

[Vineland 2005 Semi-Dry Riesling](#)

[Henry of Pelham 2005 Reserve Riesling](#)

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

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

[7 New Reviews Added](#)

Including: a Torbreck blend, Ironstone Zin and a Kaiken Cab

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

December 5, 2009 Release Report coming soon

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<http://www.ontariowinesociety.com/flyers/Flyer-2009TasteandOrderPublic.pdf>

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

Quick Sips – November 2009

WCO Implodes ... Vincor, Peller and Colio are out, and soon to be joined by Magnotta, Kittling Ridge, Pelee Island and Diamond Estates as the Wine Council of Ontario splinters along big and little lines. The small and medium sized wineries, those who don't make Cellared in Canada wines, and can't are left in the Council, while the big guns have picked up their bats, balls and gloves and have gone off to fight another battle as the Winery and Grower Alliance of Ontario ... I am sure we have not heard the end of this and I'll have more to say next time – this was more of an FYI for you.

Other Ontario Industry News ... The selling of current and former Diamond Estates properties continues. Moray Tawse has just added to his holdings the vineyards and properties of Lakeview and Thomas & Vaughan, while a new group has picked up Birchwood, which will soon become Green Lane Winery. In the case of Lakeview and Birchwood, Diamond retains both the license and the rights to the label. In other industry news,

Paul Hobbs, famed California winemaker and consultant, has been hired to do consulting work with Stratus winery.

World's Greatest Wine 2009 ... Hails from Washington State, the Columbia Crest 2005 Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon hit the number one spot in Wine Spectator's annual list, started in 1988. This is the first time a Washington winery has taken the honour of top spot. Previously, the highest position was number 2 in 2006 grabbed by Quilceda Creek, also for a Cabernet.

Fishy Findings ... Are you one to stick to the mantra White with fish Red with meat? Well that might be a thing of the past. Researchers in Japan have found out what causes some red wines to unfish-friendly ... iron. Wines with a higher natural iron content were found to cause foul (not fowl) aftertastes when one was consuming fish. To read about these findings [check out the article in the Economist](#).

Survey Opportunity ... Brock University is currently doing a study on the wine business that could potentially help the wine trade sell more wine into local restaurants: "The Role of Local Wine in the Ontario Restaurant Industry: Challenges and Opportunities". I have provided a link below so that you can find out more about the survey and to see if you qualify: <http://www.bus.brocku.ca/winesurvey/>.



Wine Event Spotlight: *Taste and Buy Event*

Last call for the [The Ontario Wine Society Taste and Buy event](#) – November 30, 2009 ... wines to try and wines to buy for the holidays.

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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