

## 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 – 124**  
**January 7, 2010**

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### OntarioWineReview: *Great Gewurztraminer Challenge Results*

As is the case with all our grape challenges in the past (Baco, Pinot, Franc), we asked our guests 3 questions: Do you like it? Would you buy it? Does it offer value? The first two questions are presented without knowledge of the price, because as we all know, price plays an important role in the consumers' mind. The value question is the only criteria determined after the price reveal ... and it can be the most telling of all questions we asked. The numbers always tell an interesting story. I have fun looking at the numbers to see which wine drops in the scoring because its value didn't match its delivery; it's also very telling how much Ontarians are willing to pay for a bottle of "local wine". But I can say without a doubt that if the product is deemed to be good they are willing to pay for it.

Another interesting aspect of this year's challenge were the poll questions asked on the back page of the scorecard. Some just didn't answer, it wasn't mandatory, the wine scores were our major interest, but some findings were a bit surprising. The vast majority of respondents have visited Ontario wine country (83%); but 25% of respondents (1/4 of them) could not tell me the percentage of grapes in either Cellared in Canada wine or VQA wine, and it wasn't always the same quarter; many knew one but not the other. For clarification, Cellared in Canada is either 30 or 40 % (depending if you go with the old regulations or the new ones) and VQA is always 100% Ontario product. It just goes to show that content of Ontario wine continues to confuse (see next article below in this newsletter) I'm kinda glad I didn't ask a question about fruit wine that would have confused consumers even further (maybe next time).

Now, the moment you've been waiting for, who won the OntarioWineReview Great Gewurztraminer Challenge. We invited average everyday wine drinkers to try 46 Gewurztraminers from all over Ontario. Over the course of 4 nights, 3 nights were dedicated to regular Gewurztraminer and 1 night we called "The Curiosities of Gewurztraminer" (which was composed of blends and dessert wines). Night 4 wines ended up being judged by folks experienced with our Challenge because they had been to the previous three nights. Each night people got to play reviewer for the evening, tasting a minimum of 10 wines per night. They learned what it was like first hand to be an Aspler, a Lawrason, a Parker, a Tanzer or even a Grape Guy such as myself ... and many agreed it was harder than it first seemed, once you had the wines and scorecard in front of you. One guest even said after the tasting was over, "I suddenly don't envy your job as much." Though many also admit it was a lot of fun and they had a great time having a say in picking Ontario's best Gewurztraminer.

As usual, there were some surprises along the way ... [see the website for other category](#) winners, like the 21 top value Gewurztraminers. But these are the ones you have been waiting all month for, the overall Top 10 Ontario Gewurztraminers in our People's Choice Great Gewurztraminer Challenge:

1. Calamus Estate Winery 2008 Gewurztraminer
2. Pillitteri Estates Winery 2008 Fusion Riesling/Gewurztraminer
3. Rosewood Estates 2008 Gewurztraminer
4. Pillitteri Estates 2008 Late Harvest Gewurztraminer
5. Cave Spring Cellars 2007 Gewurztraminer
6. Malivoire Wine Company 2008 Gewurztraminer

7. Strewn Winery 2008 Riesling/Gewurztraminer
8. Flat Rock Cellars 2008 Gewurztraminer
9. Smith & Wilson 2008 Gewurztraminer (Cherieau)
10. Pelee Island 2006 Gewurztraminer Reserve

A big thanks to our sponsors and partners for the Great Gewurztraminer Challenge: Starting with our venue, [Campbell House](#). Our glassware sponsor [Schott Zwiesel](#), provided by Lloyd of [Fortessa Canada](#), you are the man – anyone who knows Lloyd or has met him, knows that to be true. Thanks to [Hillebrand](#) and [Nyarai Cellars](#) for providing our guests with pre- and post-tasting wines. Speaking of tasting, I'd be remiss if I didn't thank [Upper Canada Cheese](#) for making this a delicious event with the addition of their Comfort Cream and Niagara Gold cheeses. Raymond Emes, of [Balluchon Café](#) (221 Sorauen Avenue in the Roncesvalles area), your coffee always delights, never fails to impress and helps to get everyone home safely. And finally, to [the wineries](#) who enter their wines into the Challenge – without you the above thank yous would not be necessary, nor as important.

[Be sure to check out the poll on the right-hand side of the website to vote for our next Challenge grape.](#)



**Grape Guy's Picks of the Bunch:** *Three Reds, one a 5-star Monster*

**Pillitteri Estates Winery 2007 Cabernet Franc - \$20.00 (W)**

[www.pillitteri.com](http://www.pillitteri.com)

Hopefully, by now, I don't have to tell you about my love for Ontario Cabernet Franc. It seems to be the red grape we do well with year-in and year-out. In a year like 2007, we got a glimpse of what this grape is capable of under optimal ripening conditions. Aussie winemaker Marc Bradshaw is no stranger to warm temps, so he knew exactly what to do to get the best out of this grape. This Franc delivers a sensory overload with a complexity of smells and flavours. Instead of providing you with my 'laundry lists of smells and flavours I will let you in on the most notable: raspberry, tobacco and pepper, hopefully all will pick up on those. It is smooth across the palate with that pepper really showing up on the mid-palate, leading into a lovely cherry-tobacco finish. Price: \$20.00 – Rating: \*\*\*\*½

**Sandbanks 2007 Cabernet Merlot Reserve - \$24.95 (W)**

[www.sandbankswinery.com](http://www.sandbankswinery.com)

When I asked winemaker/owner Catherine Langlois the make-up of this wine she froze, I could almost see the wheels of her mind turning. Then she looked me full in the face and with that wide smile of hers, she said, "I just finished harvest for 2009, you really expect me to remember 2007?" She laughed, as did I. This wine reflects the playful nature of the winemaker herself. The nose is raspberry-mocha, while the palate has plenty of fruitiness that play off of one another: cranberry, raspberry and other red berries, along with a nice spice to carry all that fruit to the finish. As for the make up of the wine: 50% Cabernet Franc and 10% Cabernet Sauvignon sourced from the County and the 40% Merlot from Niagara, which rested 2 years in a mix of old and new Hungarian oak. Only 10 barrels were made, approximately 200 cases. Price: \$24.95 – Rating: \*\*\*\*½

**Peller 2007 Andrew Peller Signature Cabernet Sauvignon - \$35.00 (W)**

[www.peller.com](http://www.peller.com)

Plenty of controversy surrounds Peller Estates these days. I'm talking of course about the Cellared in Canada issue, but there should be no controversy or confusion when discussing the VQA wines made on the property. Winemaker Lawrence Buhler is doing a fabulous job, especially with these top end bottlings. This Cab Sauv spent 22 months in mainly French oak, with just a wee bit in American to round it out. It's now bottled, but Lawrence is in no hurry to send it to market (though I suspect the marketing department is). This wine is a real beauty that should stand the test of a decade or more. The nose expresses raspberry, vanilla and cinnamon but promises much more in the future ... I can say that with some degree of confidence because the palate shows loads of complexity: a mix of red and black fruit, cinnamon, and mocha/chocolate notes. Nice and mouthfilling with delicious fruit and well established and balanced tannins. Alcohol is kept to the standard 13.5%. The wine might seem pricey now (\$35/bottle), but in ten years when you open it up and it's as smooth as a baby's bottom and twice as delicious, it'll seem like a steal (though I am not sure how many of you are in to eating baby's bottoms). Price: \$35.00 – Rating: \*\*\*\*\*

**Winter Time Means Icewine ...** this one is great for sipping in the cold weather:

[Lailey Vineyard 2008 Cabernet Sauvignon Icewine](#) – (W)

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

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**Weekly Wine Notes and More:** *A special message from Al's Liquor Store and more*

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 few weeks):

**December 15, 2009** – Featherstone Winery 2008 Red Tail Merlot ([READ](#)) ([LISTEN](#))

**December 22, 2009** – A Holiday Message from Al's Liquor Store ([READ](#)) ([LISTEN](#))

**January 5, 2010** – Vineland Estates 2007 Pinot Noir ([READ](#)) ([LISTEN](#))

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

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

[Appearance on BNN-TV](#)

[Ontario Wine Society Taste and Order Event](#)

[Prince Edward County 2<sup>nd</sup> Wave Dinner](#)

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

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

[Southbrook Winery 2001 Cabernet Sauvignon](#)

[Stonechurch 2006 Dry Riesling](#)

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

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

[Cave Spring Cellars 2006 Dolomite Riesling](#)

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

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

[18 New Reviews Added](#)

Including: Lots of wine from the holidays and the U.S.A

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

[January 9, 2010 Release Report](#)

[January 23, 2010 Release Report](#)

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<http://www.wineriesofniagaraonthelake.com/dowac.html>

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## In The News: *Hide and Go Seek: 3 Issues that Came Out Over the Holidays*

I was (and probably still am) a huge fan of the West Wing (TV show); I never missed an episode and I bought the DVDs the moment they came out so I could watch them again. However, my memory isn't always the best, especially when it comes to 10-year-old TV shows. There was a term used in the first season when they were hiding a news story that should have been more important than they wanted it to be. They would release said story in a package with other stories, I think they called it "Taking out the Trash" and if they decided to hide one of these juicy or embarrassing stories in the middle of said package, they would tell the spokesperson to "stick it in with the trash". Well, while you were gearing up for the holidays three important events appeared in local newspapers, but because you were busy doing other things you might have missed them. The stories came out on the 12th, 15th and 21st of December, and they went thusly ... in order:

**December 12, 2009** – Bill 192 was squashed; but that's not the real story here (I'll have more to say Bill 132 in an issue next month). This is the bill that would have allowed fruit winery owners to sell their wines at farmers' markets, in essence, selling the wine right next to the fruit that made it. Now everyone knew the LCBO was going to oppose such a move. Any time another source arises where wineries could sell their wines outside of the Liquor Control Board system, you just know the Control part kicks in, because they see it as their pockets being picked and profits being lost (more on that in two weeks, or check out the January 2010 issue of [Ottawa Life magazine](#)). The real reason this bill never became law was "political game playing" (according to Peterborough MPP Jeff Leal), "If the Conservatives hadn't killed my bill two weeks earlier at the same committee, [Bill 132] would have been approved ...". Yup, it's school yard rules at the Ontario legislature.

**December 15, 2009** – LCBO on the blocks? I guess that waits to be seen, but "two banks with experience in privatization" have been hired by the provincial government to look into the possible privatization of crown corporations and agencies, which includes the LCBO. In a couple of months, we'll know what the banks have to say, but these are interesting times we live in my friends. Those with big bucks ready to invest, or have aspirations of opening their own liquor store best hold off awhile. Back in 2005, [the BASR report](#) told the government to sell the Board and they would easily make an extra \$200 million a year – well, you see how quickly they moved on that recommendation.

**December 21, 2009** – "Cellared in Canada is Confusing". Well no shit Sherlock. A study performed by London, England based company Wine Intelligence has determined that 64% of Canadian wine drinkers (those who drank wine at least once per month) were not aware of the term Cellared in Canada. When informed of CiC wines and their content, then asked if they felt the wines had an 'appropriate label for this type of wine', 52% said "no". Of those 52%, 49% said the term CiC should be changed to something different, while 65% wanted to see a listed percentage of where the grapes came from, still others thought the placement of the wine in liquor stores was misleading (ie: next to the 100% Ontario/Canadian wines). Richard Halstead, COO of Wine Intelligence, was quoted as saying: "... it's fair to say that the term Cellared in Canada is currently not helping Canadian wine drinkers make a very informed choice. The sooner we see some clarification and reform in this area, the better off consumers will be." That change is supposedly coming this month (January) according to reports at the end of the brouhaha last year (in the fall) – we'll give them till February before we start pointing out that nothing significant has been done.



## Wine Event Spotlight: *Icewine, Chocolate and Cuvee*

Niagara-on-the-Lake comes alive in January with a full month of **Icewine & Jazz Celebrations!** Wineries, restaurants, accommodations and Heritage District merchants have put together an outstanding month with hundreds of events that offer something for all wine lovers! The 22 Wineries of Niagara-on-the-Lake have assembled an incredible lineup of icewine and jazz themed events for your touring experience – from icewine and food tastings to elegant receptions and winemakers' dinners. Check the website for details: [www.wineriesofniagaraonthelake.com](http://www.wineriesofniagaraonthelake.com).

Warm up your winter with this match made in heaven: **Wine and Chocolate**. The 22 Wineries of Niagara-on-the-Lake are staging this event again, this February. Each stop will feature a premium VQA wine matched to a decadent chocolate selection, from classic flavours to unexpected surprises. Check out our website [www.wineriesofniagaraonthelake.com](http://www.wineriesofniagaraonthelake.com) for the list of wine and chocolate pairings.

**Cuvée Weekend** is one of the most coveted tickets in the wine industry's event calendar, where guests taste the best that Ontario has to offer and have the opportunity to rub shoulders with winemakers and industry insiders. The 22nd annual red carpet celebration of excellence in Ontario winemaking kicks off early this year, taking place Friday through Sunday, February 19-21, 2010. Tickets include admission to the Cuvée Gala and all Cuvée En Route activities. For full details and ticket information go to [www.cuvee.ca](http://www.cuvee.ca) or by calling 905-684-8688.

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**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](mailto:michael@ontariowinereview.com). We look forward to hearing from you!

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