

## 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 – 132**  
**April 29, 2010**

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### OntarioWineReview: *Looking Deeper: The Canadian Wine Awards 2010*

Back in January the Wine Access Canadian Wine Awards were announced. As is my custom, I poured over the results to see how Ontario made out this time round: looking at our bright spots and our deficiencies, though I prefer to focus on the highlights, no sense dwelling on the negatives. I use the term "we" because we are all in this together – it's provincial pride coming through.

I am glad to see we still hold the lead (decisively) in the Cabernet Franc department, winning twelve of fourteen awards in the category. We also held our dominance in Riesling, taking 23 of 36. We surprisingly took a category we rarely ever win, Cabernet Sauvignon, with a narrow 8 out of 14 awards, mainly due to the awesome 2007 vintage. Other bright spots in the red categories are the two wines that took top red honours such as Red of the Year: Kacaba 2007 Reserve Syrah and top Meritage (red blend) which went to Fielding for their 2007 Meritage – even though we only won 14 of 55 awards in this category, it's nice to see us on top.

We dominated both icewine categories: white (16 of 27) and red (8 of 9); the fruit wine category (14 of 23), although we only had 1 in the top 4 in the Wine of the Year placing; and we split the difference in both the Unoaked Chardonnay (4 of 8) and single vineyard (8 of 16), a category added this year to celebrate those single vineyard wines coming out.

We took home top honours in Sweet Wine of the Year (Coyote's Run 2007 Riesling Icewine), though only placing 2 in the top 9 spots; and kudos to Hillebrand for taking home the first gold medal ever handed out in the Sparkling wine category for their Hillebrand Trius Brut.

I was shocked to see that we showed so poorly in the White Wine of the Year honours – Ontario's highest position was 3rd and we usually do much better than that, and we only placed three of the top nine spots.

Winery of the Year, an award dominated by British Columbia year after year, proved not as elusive a category to break into this year. No, we did not get the top spot, that went to Sandhill of British Columbia, but we did nab second through fourth (Tawse, Thirty-Bench, Hillebrand) and five of the top ten (8. Inniskillin and 10. Fielding). Twenty wineries are recognized in this category, and in the bottom half we lost some of our momentum, taking only 3 more for a total of 8 out of 20.

So why does B.C. dominate Ontario at these awards? Some believe the deck is stacked by B.C. and Western judges, but a quick scan of this year's panel of 16 shows the dominance actually lies in the East (5 Ontario, 2 Quebec, 1 each from Nova Scotia and New Brunswick). I have heard mention that B.C. judges look for their own wines to mark higher. The difference in climate makes the hot climate B.C. wines easier to distinguish from their Cool Climate counterparts in Ontario (this might also have something to do with BCers pride in their wines), while Ontario judges seem to have a more global focus when it comes to the bi-products of fermented grapes. However, I think the answer lies within that sentence, but not with B.C. pride. It's the difference in the climate and growing conditions. Basically we're comparing apples to oranges here – B.C. has a mostly hot climate – their main region is, after all, Canada's only desert, while Ontario is pure cool climate, save of course the 2007 vintage which was an aberration. Just look at the 2008 and 2009 vintages as example. So the 2007

wines would have had more in common with their BC Brethren's wines

As the '07s make their way through the system and finally drop off the competition circuit, you'll notice our white medals will increase, because whites thrive in our climate, and our red haul will decrease, especially in single varietal categories (save for Cabernet Franc, which seems to do well each year). Don't despair fellow Ontarians, we have nothing to hang our heads about. Hotter climate wines show better on their own, while cool climate wines shine with food. Until they start handing out awards based on which wine goes with what dish (and serve the judges meals while judging) Ontario will continue to "lag" behind our West Coast counterparts. I use the word "lag" very loosely – those who drink Ontario wine know that our wine is second to no one, especially when dinner is served. So take heart Ontario, when the universal palate swings to cool climate again we'll be top of the world ma!



**Grape Guy's Picks of the Bunch:** *A High Priced Spread ... and more Chardonnay*

**Hillebrand 2007 Trius Grand Red - \$52.00 (W)**

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

If you liked the regular [2007 Trius Red](#), you're most likely gonna be a fan of the Grand version. Made from a blend of 53% Cabernet Sauvignon, 26% Merlot and 21% Cabernet Franc aged separately in French oak for 22 months, then "assemblaged" together to create the perfect mix, according to winemaker Darryl Brooker. I tried this wine back in the fall of 2009 and it was scheduled for release some 6 months-plus later to give the wine some bottle age and a chance to integrate and smooth out (you'll be happy to know it's now available). The nose is chocolate, blackberry, vanilla and crème de cassis with a lingering chocolate liqueur note, let's call it crème de cacao ... it's a nose that lures you in and keeps your attention. Flavours are all about black fruit and red fruit along with pepper, good acidity and firm tannins. This wine needs some time but when it's ready it's gonna have a long make-you-very-happy life. Price: \$52.00 – Rating: \*\*\*\*½

**Charles Baker 2008 Riesling - \$35.00 (on-line)**

[www.charlesbaker.ca](http://www.charlesbaker.ca)

I'm gonna come right out and say it, I like Charles Baker, he's a guy who's always there to greet you with a warm smile and a handshake. I also like Charles because he presented me with an award for [Promoting the Promoters at the Experts Tasting during Cuvee weekend](#) earlier this year (2010) – so how could you dislike a guy like that. His wine is also something to like. It's a cool customer this Riesling of his, the nose is green apple, unripe pineapple, floral, hint of petrol with some interesting baked apple notes; the palate delivers green apple skin, over-ripe pear, white peach and good acidity – it's a wine well worth drinking – as long as I don't have to pay for it. I find the price of \$35 a little steep for my budget, but I sure do like the wine. The price is like a little pinch on the backside ... Charles greets you with that warm handshake and smile, then he pinches you on the bum as you walk by – the good news is that pinch has a playful sauciness about it that's very welcome – if you can afford to take it that way. Price: \$35.00 – Rating: \*\*\*\*

**Huff Estates 2006 Cuvee Peter F. Huff - \$39.95 (W)**

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

This turned out to be a special bottle for me ... the day I opened it was the day I learned I had joined the "money pit club" (as my parents called it) – yes I now have a home to call my own. But that news didn't cloud my judgment about this wine – in fact it helped focus it, because now I can't afford bad bubbly, if any bubbly at all. This sparkler is made with 100% Chardonnay which spent 3 years on lees in the bottle. The nose is toasty, biscuity with fresh bread aromas, hints of citrus, apple and slightly floral notes. The palate is delicate and dry: crisp citrus, green apple, buttered toast, creamy through the mid-palate with a good acid finish helping to clean the palate and readying it for the next sip. The bubbles are also very fine and very persistent a good thing over the long haul of an evening. This wine ranks amongst some of the best Ontario sparkling I have tried. Winemaker Frederic Picard has raised the bar for sparkling wine, not only for County fizz, but for all of Ontario. This one is downright delicious and what good bubbly should be. Price: \$39.95 - Rating: \*\*\*\*½

**Favourites from the Cool Chardonnay Tasting** ...visit [coolchardonnay.ca](http://coolchardonnay.ca) for details:

Flight 3: 2007 - [Peninsula Ridge 2007 Chardonnay Reserve \(W\)](#)

[Tawse Winery 2007 Quarry Road Vineyard Chardonnay \(W\)](#)

[Peller Estates 2007 Signature Series Sur Lie Chardonnay \(W\)](#)

[Henry of Pelham 2007 Barrel Fermented Chardonnay \(W\)](#)

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

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### **Weekly Wine Notes and More:** *Vineland, The Chase and lots On the Road*

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):

**April 20, 2010** – Vineland 2007 Elevation Chardonnay ( [LISTEN](#) )

**April 27, 2010** – Closson Chase 2007 CCV Chardonnay ( [LISTEN](#) )

### **On the Road with the Grape Guy:**

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

[A Group of Seven from Churchill Cellars](#)  
[Hobbs & Co. Annual Portfolio Tasting](#)  
[Shooting the Poop Over a Few Glasses with Nick and Lloyd](#)  
[Dinner with Rosewood Wines at Treadwell](#)  
[The California Wine Fair](#)  
[Green Evolution Eco-Friendly Wine Tasting](#)  
[Discover the Flavours of Argentina](#)  
[Bio-Vino at the Green Living Show](#)  
[A Wine Soaked Saturday](#)  
[Vincor Exposé Tasting](#)

### **Lost and Found (blog)**

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

**Nothing new this week – but keep checking back**

### **Taste it Again Grape Guy (blog)**

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

[Ridgepoint Wines 2004 Meritage](#)  
[Angels Gate 2005 Single Vineyard Gewurztraminer](#)  
[Lailey Vineyard 2007 Gamay-Zweigelt](#)

### **What I'm drinking Tonight (blog)**

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

[8 New Reviews Added](#)

Including: a bunch of older stuff and some Bolivian wine

### **Vintages Release (blog)**

[May 1, 2010 Release Report](#)

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

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

**April 2010**

**Truth With No Rumour ...** If you have heard that Hillebrand winemaker, Darryl Brooker, is leaving, then you are not alone, and you are also not just hearing things. The rumour is true and was confirmed through a press release on April 12, 2010. In it the winery states: "After five successful years strengthening the wine program at Hillebrand Winery, one of Canada's leading producers of VQA wine, Brooker has chosen to head west to explore winemaking in British Columbia's Okanagan Valley. Brooker will take the reins as Winemaker at Cedar Creek Estate Winery." While we wish Darryl as much or more success on his next venture, I know I speak for many when I say that he will be truly missed.

**Is Colio the next Diamond in the Crown ...** An announcement taken directly from a weblink sent to me: "Diamond has a signed letter of intent to acquire an Ontario based winery. The brands are to be distributed by the Diamond sales force ... The acquisition target winery has been in business since 1981 and produces annual sales volume of approximately 240,000 cases of wine per year. Once Diamond acquires the target winery, it would expect to sell off the real estate in due course, subject to manufacturing, licensing and market considerations. The assets include real estate with an appraised value of approximately \$7 million, all located in Ontario. The target winery has a majority of its sales to the LCBO, but has a larger network of on-site retail stores Diamond will benefit from the addition of Diamond brands in the stores over time." Speculation is this is Colio Wines located in the Lake Erie North Shore.

**Talk about having your cake and eating it too ...** in the next few weeks, you will start noticing a new wine in the "Ontario" section of the LCBO – Sundance – a new line of wines produced using 100% homegrown grapes from Niagara's Diamond Estates Wines & Spirits Ltd, "The line will be displayed in the Cellared in Canada section, but Sundance is not a blend of international and local grapes; it is 100% locally grown." Says Murray Marshall, President & CEO. "We wanted to compete in the section that accounts for 80% of the volume sold of Canadian wine, but still wanted to support our local Ontario Grape Growers by making this wine using 100% homegrown grapes. In order to compete, we wanted to offer a wine that provides great everyday value to the consumer with an introductory price of \$8.95 for a 750ml bottle." There is speculation by a few sources that Diamond is using the "Cellared in" rules while still using Ontario grapes, namely the use of "stretch water". Others tell me that they have an over abundance of juice from the days of 20 Bees (before Diamond took over the facility) - either way both growers and customers benefit from these lower price wines.

**Cork vs Screwcap, the definitive answer ...** for those looking for insight into the Cork vs Screwcap debate and wondering which is better, a report released by Old Bridge Cellars in Napa, California shows the results from their ten year study, along with pictures to prove their points, check it out here: [http://www.oldbridgecellars.com/data/AWRI\\_10YrScrewcapTrial.pdf](http://www.oldbridgecellars.com/data/AWRI_10YrScrewcapTrial.pdf). I'm sure this will spark even more debate on the subject.

**A New Player ...** Although not exactly a new concept, some California producers are beginning to eye a closure that has been a favourite of some German and Austrian producers: Vino-Lok. A mushroom shaped glass stopper that has proven itself to be very effective, although more trial is needed – Vino-Lok has only been mass-produced since 2004 and can get as costly as top grade corks. Time will tell whether this stopper will also be a player in the stopper debate or an also ran.

**Wine is Up, Again ...** According to Statistics Canada we're drinking more wine at the expense of beer. In 1993, beer's market share was 53% and wine was a lowly 18% - but new numbers show a trend towards ditching the Suds for the Sauvs. Beer is down to 46% while wine finds itself in the loftier position of 29% of market share. How do you like them grapes?

**Stuff You Just Can't Make Up ...** For those of you with culinary skills and aspirations you might want to take heed of the newest recipe ingredient as proposed by The Pasta Bible – published by Penguin Australia. A recipe for tagliatelle with sardines and prosciutto suggests that the dish requires "salt and freshly ground black people". Obviously a misprint and one that'll cost the company \$20,000 to destroy the 7000 copies still left in their warehouse. There's a Klan joke to be made here, but I am not sure I want to be the one to make it.



**Wine Event Spotlight:** *Music, Tastings and the Grape Guy Cometh x 2*

**Jazz and Blues fans rejoice ...** Tickets for this year's Hillebrand Jazz (July 10, 2010) and Blues (August 14, 2010) festivals are now on sale – no line up announced yet, but you know it's gonna be a good time. Tickets and info is available at <http://www.hillebrand.com/Jazz-&-Blues-at-the-Winery.php>

**End of one tradition, beginning of a new one ...** The Archibald Fruit Wine and Food fair has been handed over to the Big Brothers and Sisters of Clarington. This year's event will be held on Saturday May 29, 2010 at the Bloom Field Garden Centre, 3745 Hwy # 2 in Newcastle – more info about ticket prices, location and other information can be found at <http://www.bigbrothersandsisters.ca/en/Home/Events/default.aspx> or by calling 905-623-6646.

**Café Taste has something Tasty ...** It's the 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Ontario Wine Fair, Toronto's one-stop tasting tour of local wines and cheeses, being held at café Taste, 1330 Queen Street West, on Saturday June 19th, 2010. This year they will feature some 20 wineries from Niagara and Prince Edward County, as well as 30 artesian cheeses from the exploding Ontario cheese industry. Tickets are \$55 in advance and \$65 at the door. More info will be up on their website soon: [www.cafetaste.ca](http://www.cafetaste.ca)

**The Salut wine Festival is coming May 8-15.** Details can be found on their website: <http://www.salutwinefestival.com/home.aspx>. Michael Pinkus, the Grape Guy, will be presenting: "Why Visit a Winery: What the LCBO isn't selling you" on May 8, 2010 from 3:30-5:00pm ... there are more seminars being presented all week. I think this is the most important not to be missed event.

**Discover the Fusion festival in Sarnia ...** this new wine event takes place June 18 and 19 – It's the 1st annual Fusion – A Discovery of Local Food & Wine which is bound to become Southwestern Ontario's premier food and wine event. It takes place over 2 days at the RBC Center in Sarnia. The festival features award-winning food and wines from all over Ontario, and showcases local and national attractions that are sure to entertain. Michael Pinkus, the Grape Guy, will also be there to present. Visit <http://www.discoverfusion.ca/> for all the details on how to get tickets, who'll be there and more.

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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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