

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 – 134
May 27, 2010

In this Edition

- **OntarioWineReview:** *Not Far Enough*
 - **Grape Guy's Picks of the Bunch:** *Something Old, Something New ...*
 - **Weekly Wine Notes and More:** *J-T, Fielding, dinners and more*
 - **Quick Sips:** *LCBO / LDB Shenanigans, and much more ...*
 - **Wine Event Spotlight:** *How Much Time Do You Have on Your Hands*
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OntarioWineReview: *Not Far Enough*

In a recent Globe and Mail article ([New Tax on Cheap Wine Puts Ontario Vintners in a Sour Mood](#) – April 16, 2010), writer Martin Mittelstaedt explored the new tax that will be levied on Cellared in Canada wines come July 1st this year – and I'm not sure whether to feel sorry for the big wineries or not. I guess that's the sign of an unbiased writer, tell the story and let your readers decide. But I believe this is far too important an issue to let Tom, Dick, Harry, and Joe Blow-average-everyday-consumer make a decision like this without some guidance – otherwise they have no context about what is going on.

To read Mittelstaedt's article is to believe that Peller, Vincor (and their ilk) are opposed to adding 62 cents to their \$8 bottles of blended wine (Cellared in Canada) – the greenbelt, grape growers and Donna Lailey get thrown in for good measure too, just for added weight. He quotes Anthony Bristow, COO of Andrew Peller, who has an air of indignation to his words, like this beauty found a little over halfway down the article: "They're insulting 60 or 70 per cent of the consumers out there that buy wines under \$10." By "they're" I suspect Anthony is speaking of the government who's the levier of this tax. But what about all the consumers that were duped (and are still being duped) into believing they were buying real Canadian wine – Cellared in Canada sure gives the impression that these wines have a country of origin ... who stands indignant for them? Certainly not Anthony, who has made a mint off of this duplicity.

Mr. Bristow is also paraphrased saying, "the tax will encourage price-conscious drinkers to buy cheap foreign wines directly" thus harming the greenbelt because local grapes go unpurchased by companies like his. I would say this practice hurts Peller's bottom line more than it affect the greenbelt. In fact I would encourage people to buy true terroir driven, country of origin wines – not these bastardized blends the big boys are passing off – especially while they still do so under the auspice of being Canadian. I ask you this, if country didn't matter, why does the LCBO break their stores down by country and, in some places, such as in the France and Italy sections, by region within that country? It's not because you're looking to buy blended French wines (which are a different story all together).

Late in the article Mittelstaedt again uses paraphrasing to state Vincors stance: "Vincor, the biggest winery, is also irked that the government has earmarked the money from the new levy to fund programs supporting wines made entirely from local grapes. That will aid the small and medium-sized craft wineries specializing in the upscale end of the market." Sure sounds like a case of Wal-Mart being taxed to keep Zellers in business – but all is fair in that retail world. The big boys have had an unfair advantage since 1993. So why not make them share the wealth a little to help grow an industry and make it stronger? You have been reaping the benefits of this unfair system for years with your extra outlets and reduced taxes, all while the little wineries struggle to make ends meet.

Meanwhile, scare tactics are being used to frighten growers into siding with the big companies, contracts are being re-negotiated and in some cases long term deals are being cut short to take advantage of new Cellared laws that take effect in 2014, basically eliminating the use of local grapes all together.

There are so many issues surrounding the wine industry in this province, from growers who over crop and

believe they are getting screwed by wineries, to wineries cutting corners and making huge profits while the little guy struggles to make the best bottle of wine he can. Unless this industry gets together and fights the real fight that is plaguing them, the competition from the glut of cheap wine the LCBO pours into this market, we are simply going to implode and have nothing to show for our decades of effort to make a world class wine industry. One winery owner once said to me: "It's not the guy down the road that I should see as my competition, it's the Fusions and their ilk that come into my backyard and take my customers away, and they are helped and promoted by an unfair system, that's my major competition."

Do I have the answers? No – but I certainly know this is not the way to go about accomplishing what we want to get done.



Grape Guy's Picks of the Bunch: *Something Old, Something New ...*

Sandbanks 2008 Cabernet Franc - \$19.95 (W)

www.sandbankswinery.com

During the 2009 Artevino judging, I ranked this wine in my top three of Francs from the County – if memory serves it took home a Gold. As a lover of Franc I have a special place in my heart for wines made from this grape and it seems now that from coast-to-coast in Ontario (Prince Edward County to Lake Erie North Shore), we can do it well, making me more convinced that this is Ontario's grape. The nose has a pretty floral cherry note that lures you in by the nose hairs; the palate continues what the nose detects with the sweet fruitiness of cherry that's easy on the palate. Price: \$19.95 – Rating: ****½

Five Rows Craft Winery 2008 Sauvignon Blanc - \$25.00 (W)

www.fiverows.com

When word came out about this winery there were two stories told. First was about their high prices – price is always a factor in people's opinion; the second was the explanation: they only have 5 rows of vines, that's why the price is so high. The second part is a myth – as I heard it they have an experimental five rows before expanding their vineyard (or something like that). The reason the prices are high is because they only make wine in very small batches. This Sauvignon Blanc was French oak fermented and aged for about ten months; the nose is very pretty giving off both grassy and grapefruit smells, though more grassy than grapefruit. The palate lacks the crispness you've come to expect from Savvy B, that's because of the oak influence – but what it lacks in crisp it gains in finesse – grapefruit cocktail and loads of flavour. Price: \$25.00 – Rating: ****

Creekside 2008 Reserve Viognier - \$28.95 (W)

www.creeksidewine.com

When I tasted this wine at the pre-Cuvee tasting in February I really found this wine to be enticing and exciting, especially for an Ontario Viognier – a grape we see so little of, but I am certain, will be seeing more from in the future. I guess the panel at Cuvee also found it interesting and enticing because they honoured it with two awards: Best Viognier and Best Limited Edition White ... ever the folks at Creekside were surprised by these accolades (I was sitting behind them at the awards ceremony). Starting with the nose you'll discover pear, limeade, white smoke, vanilla, apple blossom and a pretty floral component. The palate is just as intriguing apple blossom continues in the mouth along with lemon-lime citrus notes, good acidity and soft vanilla nuances – delicious. Price: \$28.95 – Rating: ****

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



Weekly Wine Notes and More: *J-T, Fielding, dinners 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):

May 18, 2010 – Jackson-Triggs 2004 Brut Methode Classique ([LISTEN](#))

May 25, 2010 – Fielding 2009 Rosé ([LISTEN](#))

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

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

[The Annual New Zealand Wine Fair](#)
[Dinner at Mazaar in Windsor](#)
[Grandi Marchi Tasting Event](#)
[Dinner at Chanoso's in Windsor](#)
[The Tawse Tasting in Downtown T.O.](#)

[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

[Viewpointe Estate Winery 2005 Riesling](#)

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

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

[9 New Reviews Added](#)

Including: Zinfandels, Menages and Multiple Wine Evenings

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

[May 29, 2010 Release Report](#)

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

May 2010

Another Example of Your LCBO Hard at Work, Screwing You ... If you're feeling a pained sensation in your rear end, like a sandpaper wrapped glove entering your rectum, don't worry fellow wine drinkers, that's just the hand of the LCBO doing what they do best – sticking it to you. The LCBO has decided to take advantage of yet another potential money saving opportunity and has turned it into a money grab at your wallet. A recent article

in the Toronto Star ("[HST will lower tax on booze, but the price is going up](#)" – May 13, 2010) uncovered that the LCBO, instead of passing the HST savings on to you, which would have lowered the tax on booze from 12% to 8%, has decided to raise the price all in the name of "social responsibility". Oh happy day, thank you LCBO for keeping me on the straight and narrow while lighting my pockets and lining yours in the process. Oh thank you – thank you.

Response is not very forthcoming ... Speaking of the LCBO seems that they have responded to my January article in Ottawa Life Magazine ([LCBO Monopoly](#)) – if you would like to [see the response click here](#).

B.C. Follows LCBO Lead (as taken from WineLaw.ca) ... The BC Liquor Distribution Branch has announced that the "liquor board markup" on all products will be increased as of July 1, 2010 as part of the implementation of the HST. The introduction of the HST means that the provincial sales tax on alcohol will actually go down from its current 10% to the 7% provincial component of the HST (the 12% HST is made up of 7% provincial sales tax + 5% federal sales tax). In order to prevent consumers from actually receiving a break on the introduction of the HST ... the government had previously announced that they would increase liquor board markups to compensate. Today's announcements make changes to the markups across the board for all products. On wine, the liquor board markup will increase from 117% to 123%. On spirits, it goes from 163% to 170%. If you weren't aware of these staggeringly high "tax" rates ... yes, you are reading those numbers correctly.

What happened to Walker Hall ... a reader sent me in this first hand report: "Have you seen anything in the press about Walker Hall being in receivership? We certainly haven't seen anything written down this way. We dropped by [Walker Hall Winery] this afternoon just to check it out and [there is a] receiver's notice on the door. The glasses are still sitting on the table and the bottles are in the racks just as it was before the building was seized."

Hidden Bench Comes Up Big ... Hidden Bench entered 6 wines into the prestigious Decanter World Wine Awards and ended up getting a medal for all 6 wines: 1 Gold: 2007 La Brunante; 3 Silvers: 2007 Terroir Caché - Red Meritage, 2008 Nuit Blanche, 2007 Locust Lane Pinot Noir; and 2 Bronze: 2008 Estate Chardonnay, 2008 Roman's Block Riesling. Congratulations.

Triggs Finds a New Home on the Golden Mile ... We have a Donald Triggs sighting, he's in the Okanagan Valley. He and his wife Elaine have purchased a piece of property on the celebrated Golden Mile Bench on the western slopes of the south valley. Plans are moving ahead with extensive new plantings and a development permit is in process (all under the name Arise Ventures) for a gravity-feed winery, with an anticipated opening in late summer 2011. Heading the winemaking team is former Hidden Bench (Niagara) winemaker Jean-Martin Bouchard.

More Bottle Findings ... This time it's not the closure in dispute, it's the rest of the packaging. Researchers have found, after a year-long study, that wine stored in bottles made of polyethylene terephthalate (PET) begin oxidizing much earlier than originally expected. "The flavour and chemical composition of white wine changed within six months of being sealed in plastic bottles and bag-in-box packaging, researchers from the Institute of Vine and Wine Sciences (ISVV), in Bordeaux, reported." Turns out that the study also found the same wine remained stable when stored in glass bottles. Wonder how much money what into this earth shattering research?

Canadian Restaurants Make THE List ... Two Canadian restaurants have made the prestigious S. Pellegrino World's 100 Best Restaurants list for 2010 - the first time since 2003 a restaurant from our country has made the list. In 2003, Eigensinn Farm made the cut for the second consecutive year. And in 2002, Toronto's Susur also made the list. This year, Langdon Hall Country House Hotel & Spa (Cambridge, Ontario) is in 77th place and Calgary's Rouge is in 60th place.

Dan Donates ... Turns out that Diamond Estates and Dan Akyroyd wines have done some good for our troops in Afghanistan. Earlier this month the winery donated the wines for our troops to drink – who were getting free Canadian beer but paying \$9.00 for a half bottle of wine, and what's worse, it wasn't even Canadian wine. Now all that has changed.



Wine Event Spotlight: *How Much Time Do You Have on Your Hands*

Stoney Ridge is having a Mechoui ... sounds odd but it's actually a lamb and pork roast over an open fire

and it takes place Saturday June 5. [See the poster for details.](#)

Ontario Wine Awards ... This year's Awards Ceremony is being held at Toronto's Pantages Hotel (Thursday June 17, 2010), where the awards will be presented to the wineries and winemakers. Guests will be treated to an afternoon starting off with a sparkling wine reception, followed by the Gold Medal wines being matched with an exceptional luncheon menu created by Pantages' Executive Chef. For tickets and additional information, please contact Sandy Kurbis at sandy@forefrontcom.com, or 416-398-3335 ext. 2.

The 5th Annual Dionysus Festival at Mastronardi Estate Winery ... anyone who has attended will want to attend again. If you haven't gone you don't know what you missing – for more info: www.mastronardiwines.com/dionysus2010.php - that's all you need to know, except maybe the date: June 5, 2010.

Graze the Bench ... Graze the Bench is the premier event for great wine, great food and great music. 7 wineries are paired with 7 Chefs and hosting 7 bands. It all takes place the weekend of June 5 and 6. For details visit www.grazethebench.com.

Fiesta Buckhorn 2010 ... Looking to fill your calendar with wine events this summer? Then be sure to mark down your trip for the northern adventure of Fiesta Buckhorn – July 16-17, 2010. Details can be found at www.fiestabuckhorn.com.

Terroir 2010 in the County ... A record number of Prince Edward County wineries will be pouring their new spring releases at the fifth annual Terroir Wine Festival, May 29, at the Crystal Palace in Picton. Including a record number of new wineries. Entrance fee is \$20 while details can be found at: www.thecountywines.com.

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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