

## 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 – 139**  
**August 3, 2010**

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### OntarioWineReview: *A New Fresh Union*

The two wine brands that I am going to be talking about today have absolutely nothing to do with each other, except they arrived at my door within days of each other. 'Fresh' arrived with a bouquet of flowers, paralleling the motif on the label. 'Union' arrived with the fanfare of a press release with a familiar name attached to it. Both these wines indicate a new focus for VQA wines showing quality for less and a willingness to make familiar blends as well as more creative ones.

To say they have absolutely nothing in common is a bit of a misnomer. All these wines retail for under \$14, all are a blend (Fresh is a blend of a minimum of 2 grapes; Union a blend of 4 – the only exception is the Rosé, which is a blend of red and white wines).

'Fresh' is the brainchild of Diamond Estates, who have relaunched their Birchwood brand with a fresh new look. For those familiar with the Niagara region, you might remember Birchwood as the little hut of a winery, which could be seen from the QEW. They were noted for making one of the province's best Gewurztraminer/Riesling blends. The Birchwood property has now been sold and renamed Greenlane, but the Birchwood name lives and will now be synonymous with Fresh Wines.

Fresh's inaugural releases are [2008 Sauvignon Blanc/Chardonnay](#) (\$11.95 - \*\*\*½); [2008 Gewurztraminer / Riesling](#) (\$11.95 - \*\*\*\*); 2008 Rosé (\$11.95 – Riesling, Sauvignon Blanc, Gamay); [2008 Cabernet / Gamay](#) (\$11.95 - \*\*\*½) and [2008 Merlot / Syrah](#) (\$11.95 - \*\*\*\*).

'Union' is the wine label you start in retirement, after you've conquered the world of wine and want to begin again. This is a union between the winemaker and the marketer: Allan Jackson, formerly of Jackson-Triggs fame, teams up with Andrew von Teichman to form this duo. Their initial releases are a red and a white from 2007 and 2009 vintages respectively. Each is a blend of four grapes, those that both partners believe are best suited to Ontario's climate.

Union's inaugural releases are [2009 White](#) (\$13.95 - \*\*\*\*½) and [2007 Red](#) (\$13.95 - \*\*\*\*½).

I tasted both these wines with a group of friends on a deck around a table in the confines of an island near North Bay. It was important to tell them that these were wines that I had never tasted and that this was an impromptu tasting of new wines coming to market. At first, the folks around the table were a little taken aback by the lack of complexity in the Fresh wine line but it is also important to note off the record, that the folks at Diamond were not looking to lure the aficionados or the sophisticates to the table with these wines. What they are doing is bringing affordable, easy drinking wines to the masses, wines which will compete favourably with low end marketed wines such as FuZion and their ilk – wines which sit at the 7 to 9 dollar mark on LCBO shelves. These wines are unoaked, offer loads of fruit flavours and are drinkable right now; you'll also find that each wine is good with a little chill on it (the reds as well as the whites). If you're looking for sophisticated, then look elsewhere, these are just what the label claims them to be: Fresh, as well as clean, affordable and tasty.

As for the 'Union' wines, the same group tried them as well. One, a former marketing exec, commented that the label was incredibly boring and did not inspire him to pick up, let alone buy, a bottle. This was also the same person who helped polish off the two bottles of Union wine once the tasting was over, commenting that the wine inside did not match the label, "it was terrific". You must remember that these wines are made by one of the pre-eminent pioneers and visionary winemakers in Ontario. Before he became part of the axis of evil known as Constellation, he was heading Canada's largest wine company, Vincor; now he has come back to his roots as a winemaker. These wines show a complexity that is well beyond their \$13.95 price point.

In conclusion, the quality of wine in both the Fresh and the Union bottles should not be a surprise, Ontario makes great wine, and grows quality grapes; what might come as a surprise to you is the price tag this quality comes at ... they are welcome competition to the "cheap" (or as my mom prefers I say, "inexpensive") bottles coming in from off-shore. 100% Ontario just can't compete with the FuZions of the world at the \$7 price level and still make a quality wine, but we certainly can for under \$15; Fresh and Union prove it beyond a shadow of a doubt. Going local does not have to be expensive; in fact these wines make it quite cost effective. In a perfect system these wines will get more people into the local aisles and out of the import and Cellared in Canada sections, introduce the masses to Ontario, and show them what they have been missing; they have to start somewhere and Fresh and Union are great places to start. So spend a few extra bucks, break out of your FuZion rut, and support a 100% local product.



### **Grape Guy's Picks of the Bunch: *The New and the Interesting***

#### **Coyote's Run 2009 Pinot Blanc - \$17.95 (W)**

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

Winemaker Dave Sheppard has a way with Pinot Blanc – this is interesting because the Coyote folks don't grow the grapes on the property – it's one of the very few grapes they purchase (from Henry of Pelham and Vineland) and is consistently becoming one of their top summer sippers. The nose is largely pear and mac apple, but it's the palate that keeps you sipping away with the likes of sweet tropical fruit along with pear and crisp apple. The medium length linger on the tongue which might mean you'll take sips less often, but I doubt that ... this one's delicious and will have you sipping again long before the taste runs out of your mouth – so my advice is to buy a bunch, you're gonna need the extras especially if you decide to share. Price: \$17.95 – Rating: \*\*\*\*½

#### **Peller Estates 2009 Signature Series Sauv Blanc - \$30.00 (W)**

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

The key word about this wine is "egg" – not the finish kind but the fermenting kind. Winemaker Lawrence Buhler was thrilled to talk about his concrete egg fermenter – the benefit is that the lees doesn't just settle to the bottom but continue to move around giving the wine more complexity and a rounder mouthfeel. But that's not the only unique aspect of this wine. Two-thirds of the wine also saw its way into older (1-2 year old) French oak barrels for 7 months (one of these 13 barrels was new). Lawrence says he ended up with two very different wines; tropical fruit from the oak and mineral finesse from his egg. All this is rightfully apparent in the wine. The nose has lovely tropical fruit with a touch of vanilla, while on the palate, the tropical drops out leaving behind lemon and lime with great minerality. Only 450 cases were produced. Price: \$30.00 – Rating: \*\*\*\*½

#### **Ridgepoint Wines 2006 Nebbiolo - \$40.00 (W)**

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

Nebbiolo? In Ontario? You bet, but it's a real rarity, only a few wineries are growing it and far fewer are making it into its own wine. Nebbiolo is the grape of Piedmont, the grape of Barolo and Barbaresco, it's not a grape associated with Beamsville or the Bench in Niagara, until now. Owner Mauro Scarsellone's Italian roots really come out here when he had the plan to grow some on his Vineland property. However, if you are looking for an Italian copy of the grape, best go back to Italy, but the Ontario version has its own charm: sour cherry, woody and spicy notes that really stick around with a decent amount of acidity. This is a wine in search of a food match, get a bottle or two and start cooking, see what combinations you can discover. Price: \$40.00 Rating: \*\*\*\*½

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



**Weekly Wine Notes and More:** *Pine Island Pleasure, Muscat, Gamay 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):

**July 27, 2010** – Hillebrand 2009 Artist Series Muscat ( [LISTEN](#) )

**August 3, 2010** – Huff Estates 2008 Gamay Reserve ( [LISTEN](#) )

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

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

[3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Pine Island Tasting - Italy](#)

[2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Pine Island "Scotch on the Rock" Tasting](#)

[California / Trinchero Dinner at Bb33](#)

[Flat Rock Gourmet Street Truck Launch](#)

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

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

**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

[Henry of Pelham 2005 Cabernet Franc](#)

[Vineland Estates 2005 Cabernet Franc](#)

**[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 Posts, lots of wine Reviews](#)

Including: What I drank on my Pine Island excursion

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

[August 7, 2010 Release Report](#)

[August 21, 2010 Release Report](#)

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## **OntarioWineReview:** *Francly my Dear, I Think it's in the Soil ...*

In 2006, owner Jeff Aubry and winemaker Dave Sheppard decided to try something with Cabernet Franc that they had previously been doing with Pinot Noir for years: bottle their separate soil offering (Black vs Red). The Black Paw and Red Paw Pinot Noirs have their fans all over Ontario and elsewhere. People who try them say they can definitely taste the difference in these soil specific wines; but Pinot Noir is a grape known for taking on the characteristics of its terroir. So the question the principals of Coyote's Run wanted the answer to was: how does a grape like Cabernet Franc fare under these same conditions?

Before we go any further, it's important to understand that the Black Paw and Red Paw designation refers to the colour of the soil these grapes are grown in, there is a definite delineation on the Coyote's Run property. If you stand on the back deck and look out over the vineyard on a clear, dry day, you can make out the line where the black soil stops and the red soil begins. The Black Paw Franc was planted in 1996, while the Red Paw vines were planted some 7 years later in 2003 – it's time to let the experimenting begin.

The grapes from both blocks are picked at the same time and each go through exactly the same treatment in tank and cellar: 12 months of mostly French oak along with some American and Hungarian thrown in for extra complexity. The results are two very different, yet equally enjoyable wines. The Red Paw smells juicy with lots of red fruit along with hints of cranberry and tobacco; while the Black Paw Franc is radically different, offering up spice and pepper aromas. It's on the palate where these wines really show their unique attributes: Red is juicy, again with lots of red fruit, namely raspberry and strawberry, along with some really good lingering mouthwatering acidity on the finish. Black Paw Cabernet Franc shows its namesake with darker fruit, fresh tobacco, and white pepper with toned down acidity and much more complexity and elegance on the finish. Both are the same price and both are enjoyable in their own right – for me it was hard to pick between the two. Being the lover of Franc that I am, I found this experiment fascinating and one worth experiencing for yourself – this is the perfect example of how soil, microclimate and terroir do matter in the finished wine. In the end, if you're like me (or want to take my advice) you'll buy a couple of bottles of each to perform the experiment at home with friends, family or with some of your favourite foods – time to fire up the grill and give the Francs a go.

Full reviews of the [2008 Black Paw](#) and the [2008 Red Paw](#) Cabernet Francs can be found by clicking the above links.

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## **Wine Event Spotlight:** *A Summer Send Off*

**Creekside Summer Send-Off ...** Great Canadian food, great Canadian wine, and great Canadian past times come together on August 21st, 2010 to send off the summer season in true Creekside style. Chef J. Mark Hand, the man behind the very popular weekend lunch menu at Creekside, makes an evening appearance on The Deck to help squeeze the last bit of delicious diversion out of what has been an amazing summer. This is a night of food, wine and some friendly competition with classic summer games: bocce, horseshoes, croquet and anything that they can dig out of the garage. Seating will be available on The Deck, but feel free to bring lawn chairs or picnic blankets if you want to set up camp on the grass. Tickets for this fantastic summer evening are \$40 for Creekside Cellar Club members and \$45 for the general public. Price includes all food samples, and the first glass of wine is on them. For further information or to pre-order your tickets (recommended), call 905-562-0035 x227, or email [aurquhart@creeksidewine.com](mailto:aurquhart@creeksidewine.com)

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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.



**Socially Speaking ...**

Follow Michael Pinkus, the Grape Guy's (almost) daily *Tweets* at <http://twitter.com/TheGrapeGuy>.  
You can become a friend on **facebook**: <http://www.facebook.com/?ref=home#!/mepinkus>.  
“**Linked In**” folks can find Michael at <http://ca.linkedin.com/pub/michael-pinkus/14/704/4b8>

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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