

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 – 143
September 30, 2010

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News ... *Weekly Wine Note is on the Air*

The **Weekly Wine Note** has been picked up by [CHOK-FM](#) and [FOX-FM](#) - Sarnia - and will be sponsored by [Shott Zwiesel stemware \(Fortessa Canada\)](#). OntarioWineReview is thrilled by this news, as you can well imagine.

The Weekly Wine Note will now be heard on Thursdays on [CHOK-FM](#) (and [CHOK 1070 AM](#)) at 12:40 pm and 5:40 pm, as well on [FOX-FM](#) at 9:40 pm; 1:24 pm and 4:40 pm also on Thursdays. The Weekly Wine Note will also be posted in its usual places on the [OntarioWineReview website](#), [blog](#) and [podcast page](#), as well as on the [CHOK-FM](#) and [FOX-FM](#) web pages.

Interviews ... Michael Pinkus, The Grape Guy, will also be speaking about wine weekly on [CHOK-FM](#) at 8:40 in the morning every Thursday - so be sure to listen in.

A big thanks to our friends at the radio stations in Sarnia and to [Schott Zwiesel \(Fortessa Canada\)](#) for making this possible.



OntarioWineReview: *The Sound of Silence*

Earlier this week I was forwarded a [real estate listing for a winery property in Niagara](#) and my heart sank. No wine drinker likes to see the failure of a winery, and especially not in his own country / province or state, it means that the system finally got 'em. It was once told to me by a reliable source that a full third of all Ontario wineries are "up for sale" and half are holding on by the skin of their teeth. "Up for sale" doesn't mean they have a visible sign on their front lawn, it means that if the right guy with the right price came along the current owners with gladly pack their bags and be gone.

The wine business is a tough one to be in at the best of times – like any farming job you are reliant on the weather; but unlike the apple farmer or the corn farmer, who picks, packs and ships – usually the same day – or sells by the side of the road, the grape grower / winery owner has to wait to see return on his investment. There's the planting of grapes and the three-year wait before they're fit to make wine from. If you're lucky enough to have wine ready grapes you still have to wait to ferment and bottle. Let's say you pick Riesling in October – your bottle most likely won't hit store shelves until February or March at the earliest, and that's a wine that doesn't need oak aging or time to mature in bottle, those wines can take years to release onto the shelf. Just look at the number of wines hitting shelves with the vintage date of 2007 and 2008, it's the end of 2010, that's already 2 or 3 years ago, and still wineries haven't seen dime one in revenue from these bottles ... yet they've paid for the growing, making and storing of these grapes / wines.

Now it's time to sell the wine. A vast majority of wineries have one venue from which to sell; their own retail store, that's it, that's all. If you're lucky, the LCBO will acquiesce to take a few hundred cases off your hands –

but you pay them handsomely for the privilege, and trust me when I say they never take enough.

There's also the government red tape called paperwork, which makes you feel like an indentured servant to your desk, especially at a time when you should be out making sales calls, growing grapes or checking on the wine. You're selling a regulated product and you have to be inspected, you have to jump through hoops, pay through the nose 2, 3, or even 4 times just to get your VQA designation because you wine didn't meet "typicity standards" ... if you wanna make something different and unique, you'd better be ready to explain why.

Restrictions, red tape, government bureaucracy, trouble getting it to market ... it's all part of the way of life for a winery owner / maker – so it's no wonder some of them go belly up; but it's sad. We live in a "free society" where deregulation has seen the break up of many monopolies (Bell comes immediately to mind) for the sake of better competition within the marketplace and giving the consumer choice – yet Ontario, when it comes to alcohol, so heavily regulates that it's amazing anybody gets into the business at all. But that's where passion comes into play.

It's not about making a million dollars (it would be nice though), it's not about the fancy cars, the big house and the newest in hi-tech tractors (is there such a thing?). It's about wanting to make the best bottle of wine from grapes you grew yourself. From the planting to the picking, from the fermenting to the bottling ... it's all about passion, that's what drives the wine industry, because it sure ain't the cash. One heavily in-debt winemaker told me, "If I won the lottery tomorrow I'd pay off my debts and keep on making wine" – that's passion.

To see a winery on the blocks is a head hanging occurrence – we all should feel for the proprietor – a dream has died – a passion snuffed out ... and the Ontario wine landscape is poorer for the loss. How many of these will have to occur before laws and regulations become more hospitable to our domestic wine industry?



Grape Guy's Picks of the Bunch: *A Trifecta of Whites*

Casa Dea Estates 2009 Pinot Gris - \$18.95 (W)

www.casadeaestates.com

Some wines defy the usual description of fruit flavours and smells – not because they don't have them, but because they seamlessly meld together to make a really tasty wine. At times like that you throw away the flavour wheel and talk more about the feeling that you get over and above the smells and flavours. For those traditionalists out there, here's what you're looking for: there's a slight floral note to the wine with melon and citrus backing it; the palate is crisp and clean with apple, melon and great palate cleansing acidity that really wakes up the mouth – there's also a hint of sweetness in here, fighting with the acidity for dominance (acidity wins). For you liberal minded drinkers this one's tasty and tingly on the tongue and is a real pleasure to sip on. Summer may be coming to a close but no reason not to relive it with this wine. Price: \$18.95 – Rating: ****½

Fielding Estate 2009 Riesling - \$15.95 (W, L)

www.fieldingwines.com

This review has been sitting around for too long, so it's time to let you in on this wonderful Riesling that I've unintentionally been keeping a secret from you. 2009 was a great growing season for aromatic whites – and none more so than Niagara Riesling – and here's a wonderful example of one you should have on hand when the heat of summer rolls around (told you I have been sitting on this one too long – cause now that heat is rolling out). It starts with a nose loaded with candied lime, apple and peach; this is one of those wines you could simply sniff at all day long. At first, the palate hits you with acidity, but underneath all that bite is green apple, white peach and a dry tart finish, with just a titch of sweetness to balance it all out. Then there's the lovely lingering finish that'll have you pausing between sips to prolong enjoyment. Price: \$15.95 – Rating: ****½

Fielding 2009 Lot 17 Riesling - \$25.95 (W)

www.fieldingwines.com

Here's a very well balanced Riesling that's equal parts sweetness and acidity, and delivers a delicious finish. The nose has a candied apple sweetness to it, while the palate has nice balancing acidity that counteracts what could have been all sweet ... think of it this way: it delivers a candied peach with a green apple and lime squirt. Sure it's a little more on the sweet side, but it's a delicious summer quencher for the patio – and isn't that what Fielding Winery stands for: 'Hot fun in the summertime' by the lake or on the deck – their logo is a Muskoka

chair after all. And speaking of drinking it mid-afternoon (did I say that?) the nice part is the 9% alcohol, which means two bottles is better than one – and it won't fill you up, or knock you out, before that BBQ dinner. Price: \$25.95 – Rating: ****

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



Weekly Wine Notes and More: *Wine Note Announcement 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):

September 23, 2010 – Malivoire 2009 Guilty Men White ([LISTEN](#))

September 21, 2010 - [Weekly Wine Note News – We're on the Air](#)

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

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

[Taste Ontario at the AGO](#)

[Tango in Argentina at the Delta Chelsea](#)

[TASTE 2010 – Prince Edward County](#)

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

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

With the move the only I lost was my sanity - Check back again soon

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

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

Nothing new this week – but keep checking back

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

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

[New Reviews Added](#)

Including: British Columbia and Chilean blends and more

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

[Next Up October 30th release](#)

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THE *Season*

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

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

September 2010

Magnotta Winery reports Q2 profit of \$682K ... Magnotta Winery Corp. has reported earnings in its latest quarter compared with a loss a year ago. The Ontario-based wine maker said it earned \$682,000 or five cents per share for the quarter ending July 31 compared with a loss of \$186,000 or a penny per share a year ago.

From the 'Little Fat Wino' ... "They [the LCBO] are so proud of Ontario wine at Vintages that right now, 7:44 pm today, there are still ZERO Ontario wines in the Classics [catalogue], and the \$113 magnum of Stratus Red 2005 is still the ONLY Ontario wine available through Vintages online ... real local heroes, right?"

Meritage Will No Longer Have the Same Meaning ... A federal judge in San Francisco ruled that 'Meritage' wines may no longer discriminate against wines made entirely from the same variety. The case stems from a 1988 ruling by the Meritage Association, a wine trade and marketing group, that says in order to qualify for a "Meritage" designation, a red or white wine must be made from a blend of designated grape varieties traditionally used in Bordeaux, France. Six years ago, that rule was challenged by a Napa Valley winery, Chateau Newsom, which put the word "Meritage" on the label of a wine made from a blend of 100% Malbec grapes ... [read about the ruling and the rest of the case here.](#)

Harvest Begins at Home ... From a Henry of Pelham press release: "Hand picking of Pinot Noir grapes began this morning [August 30] to mark the official beginning of harvest at the vineyards of Henry of Pelham Family Estate winery. This year's start is almost 2 weeks earlier than normal due to the fantastic conditions of the spring and summer."

For Those of Us in the Know ... On Tuesday September 21 Vintages held Taste Ontario at the AGO (Art Gallery of Ontario). There were two tastings: the afternoon, which was for trade and media, and then the consumer show in the evening. You can read my notes from the [Trade Show here](#). The Consumer show was a mighty different affair, with different wines being poured. Click through to read what some folks were saying on a [Wine Spectator forum page devoted to the tasting](#), it is not very flattering and somewhat ill-informed ... my favourite line is from a person in Buffalo, New York: "What was presented was the best of the best. Vintages would not have it any other way." Followed closely by: "Clos Jordanne (formerly Jordan Wines) makes Pinot Noir that is barely passable" Oh brother.

Check Your Drinking ... here's a survey to keep your imbibing honest ... no cheating now: http://checkyourdrinking.net/cyd/CYDScreenerP1_0.aspx

Recipe of the Month ... from Jamie Macfarlane of the Ice House Winery: How to make **N'icewine Slushies**: In a blender, gradually add 6 to 10 ice cubes to 200 ml (6 oz) Northern Ice Vidal Icewine, mix until frothy. Toasts 8 to 10 happy people.



Wine Event Spotlight: *Taste the Gourmet*

Taste the Season ... Don't miss out as the 22 Wineries of Niagara-on-the-Lake get set for another wine and food extravaganza. Hailed as the 'go-to' event of the season (ed. note: I think I said that), this popular touring and tasting program showcases the unique VQA wines and Niagara-on-the-Lake Wine Country cuisine available in the region. It is also a great time to explore the different wine and gift selections available at each winery and stock up for your holiday entertaining. Visit www.wineriesofniagaraonthelake.com for a complete list of all of the 22 wine and food pairings.

Gourmet Food and Wine ... Does this event need any introduction? November 18-21 and all the details can be found at: <http://www.foodandwineexpo.ca/sitepages/>

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. We look forward to hearing from you!

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