

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 – 149
January 13, 2011

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OntarioWineReview: *What I Didn't Want For Christmas*

In a bout of extreme laziness I wrote this article before the holiday festivities began ... now that I look it over I had no idea how right I would be. It was written with tongue planted firmly in cheek, but as the gifts from friends and family rolled in I was noticing a trend and that my article's prediction would indeed come to fruition. This is a true cautionary tale: be careful not only for what you wish for, but also what you say.

I thought it would be a hoot to mention all the things that I did not want or need for Christmas (two front teeth are optional in this case - because after friends and family read this list I may need some new ones):

I am a wine writer, I write about wine, that does not mean that wine completely consumes my life (no matter what my wife may say), I consume wine, not the other way around. Therefore I don't need napkin rings with grapes on them, nor do I want cute little spreading knives with grape clusters adorning them. I'm not in the market for wine bottle napkins, the last thing I want is another opener, and I certainly don't need an automatic one, I'm not infirmed, I can still twist the waiter kind. Uh, but wait a second, I'll save this one in a box for my later life when it might come in handy, when arthritis has taken away the mobility in my hands and turning a corkscrew is painful ... then again my luck would see all bottles moving to Stelvin screwcaps and no way to open them, and what if they stop making 'D' batteries, then what?

Trust me when I tell you I don't need a serving plate with wine bottles, glasses and grapes painted on it, and I am positive I have enough stem- and stemless- ware to host an army. Those pottery wine gobblers are so nice, especially because they can only hold a few drops, that will totally cut down on my drinking, so thank you very much, wherever did you get them?

I don't need a magnet to remove tannins from my wine and I don't require special wine stain remover either. The beads and the brushes to wash out decanters are wasted on me, as is the need for yet another decanter. Truth is I went through my decanter phase years ago and purchased every style that caught my eye (except for the Riedel Amadeo - that one is just too expensive, but so cool).

Metal wine stoppers are another popular gift, there are the ones with animals, grapes, figurines and countless other things on top. How many bottles do you think I open at one time? And how long do you think they will keep with this metal and rubber thing poking into it? Only George Thorogood drinks alone, and then he's drinking the hard stuff, I open with friends and the missus and we can usually finish what we started.

Yes, I'm a wine writer, I consume wine and write about it, but you'll have to trust me when I tell you that I have plenty of pads, pens and other writing paraphernalia - a memo pad with grapes at the corners really doesn't make me any more or less effective as a scribe. The ink that smells like grape is cute, but I'm not a sixteen year old girl. But these gifts aren't just for those who are writers, I speak to plenty of wine fanatics, and they too have the same problem with their friends and family members: the majority of their gifts are wine-themed as well, and most of these tokens languish unused, unopened, untouched and unloved in their basement, waiting for their heirs to find them and wonder why they were keeping this crap.

I, like you, have other interests and hobbies ... I like theatre, music, movies, long walks in the park, moonlit canoe rides, candlelit dinners, midget porn (just seeing if you're paying attention) - but seriously, there are other things in our lives besides wine; and when I emerge from my wine-induced holiday stupor I'll tell you what they are.

I just want to make it clear to our gifters that us wine buffs are people too, we have enough wine-kitsch in our lives already (when I moved late last year I packed 5 boxes of the stuff, 2 remain unopened to this day). If you are a fanatic of the fermented grape you've probably bought all the gadgets and gizmos could ever you want, and when you see one worthwhile you snap it up, because you know the law of nature states that you'll never find it again, especially if you pass it up the first time.

If I have to open another box, rip open another package or look inside another gift bag and think to myself "what is it?" while holding it up and saying "it's perfect, just what I wanted, thanks", I might just scream myself hoarse, that way I won't have to be vocally grateful anymore.

Amongst this year's crop of wine related gifts that I did enjoy receiving was a bottle of Taylor Fladgate 10 Year Old Tawny and a book called Exploring Wine by Koplan, Smith and Weiss (which I bought for myself). As for the rest of you, dear readers, I'd love to hear about your best gift and the useless kitsch you got this year and I'll put the description of your "fabulous" wine related gifts in a February newsletter, when we'll all need a reminder, and a good laugh, to chase away those February blahs. (Send your favourite, and non-favourite gift story to michael@ontariowinereview.com, I promise to protect your name, no sense in us all needing new front teeth next year).

Finally, to all those who did get me a wine-related gift and feel slighted by this article, I'm sorry, though I'm sure you'll forget all about it come November when you are cruising the shops looking for my wine-a-phanalia present - but if I could ask one small favour, next year include the gift receipt, especially for my other wine loving friends who will undoubtedly beg to know where they too can get one just like it. (wink wink, nudge nudge)



Grape Guy's Picks of the Bunch: *Two Chardonnays and a New Winery Red*

Malivoire 2008 Moira Vineyard Chardonnay - \$39.95 (W)

www.malivoire.com

At first the nose seems shy, but then with a little coaxing it opens up to reveal apple, a touch of vanilla, some buttery notes and a certain amount of delicacy. That delicate nature continues into the mouth with apple, vanilla and a hint of mineralness in the mid-palate. There's some really good length to the finish, it sits lightly on the tongue and continues to replay its flavours long after you've swallowed. Not as big as the 2007 model, but with a better chance at longevity. Price: \$39.95 - Rating: **** 1/2

Closson Chase 2008 South Clos Chardonnay - \$39.95 (W)

www.clossonchase.com

Those who love their Chardonnay big and in your face will enjoy this ballsy version of the grape. From the toasted nuts and vanilla that gets right up your nose and stays there to the vanilla, burnt butter, toasted apple, caramel, almonds and over the top wood notes that seem to be the hallmark of winemaker Deborah Paskus' work ... this one mellows out nicely on the finish so that the linger isn't as rough and tumble as the entrance - sure it bullies its way through the mouth, but it ends with a softening mellowness that's unexpected, but very welcome. Price: \$39.95 - Rating: **** +

Between the Lines 2009 Cabernet Franc - \$15.95 (W)

www.betweenthelineswinery.com

Full of fruit without the intrusiveness of oak, that's what this wine brings to the table - that and a price tag that'll have you buying it by the case. An absolutely beautiful nose loaded with raspberry, cherry and a hint of vanilla (your guess is as good as mine as to where this comes from). The flavours will wake the mouth like a bowl of fruit in the morning with cherry taking the lead followed by some seasoning of tobacco and a touch of spice. The fruit is the star here, front and centre, with a stand up and take notice quality to it ... it's in your face, without being confrontational, and very delicious - worth trying and definitely worth buying. Price: \$15.95 - Rating: **** 1/2

Sneak Peak: [Tawse 2010 Sketches Rosé](#)

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



Weekly Wine Notes and More: *Mama's Delight, Pinot Noir and Lots of Returns*

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 10, 2010 – [Black Bear Farms 2007 Mama's Delight \(LISTEN \)](#)

December 17, 2010 – [Flat Rock Cellars 2009 Pinot Noir \(LISTEN \)](#)

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

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

[Busy Times are coming - for now, nothing new](#)

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

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

[Aleksander Estates 2003 Riesling](#)

[Cave Spring Cellars 2004 Estate Bottled Riesling](#)

[Hillebrand 1997 Red](#)

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

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

[Thirty Bench Winemakers 2005 Red](#)

[Maleta Estate Winery 2005 Cabernets](#)

[Featherstone 2006 Old Vines Riesling](#)

[Chateau des Charmes 2002 Cabernet Sauvignon - Paul Bosc Vineyard](#)

[Vineland 2006 Dry Riesling](#)

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

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

[21 New Reviews Added](#)

Including: Chardonnays, Monster Reds, Rieslings and more

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

Now available - [January 22, 2011](#)

Advertisement



<http://www.westernfair.com/shows/winefood.html>

This year the Grape Guy - Michael Pinkus - has teamed up with Schott Zwiesel to bring you a glassware tasting ... see what the right glass does for your drinking enjoyment.

Saturday January 15, 2011 - 3:30pm

Advertisement



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

January 2011

Is that all there is, we want more ... On November 27, the Federal Agriculture Minister Gerry Ritz announced nearly \$500,000 to promote south Okanagan wine around the world. But many Okanagan vintners say they are disappointed the minister did not announce the elimination of inter-provincial trade barriers. Currently a law that dates back to 1928 prevents wine from being moved across provincial borders. It forces wineries to ship their product through provincial liquor boards rather than directly shipping wine to consumers. Many wineries say that gives them very little to no profit. They argue the law should be changed so Canadians can have access to Canadian wine. <http://www.globallethbridge.com/Wine+barriers/3897261/story.html>

Pick up the baton and Run with it ... Related to the story above is the creation of a website that allows you to get involved in the Great Grape Debate. Check out FreeMyGrapes.ca to sign the petition and learn more about the 1928 law that stops you from ordering wine from other provinces. [Also see my article from October 2008, "Confessions of an Importer"](#).

On the Same topic ... Kelowna Lake Country MP, Ron Cannan, has tabled a motion in the House of Commons to end Canada's silly interprovincial wine shipping prohibition by creating a personal use exemption. The motion reads as follows: "That, in the opinion of the House, the Canadian wine industry, the Canadian tourism industry and Canadian consumers would benefit from an amendment to the Importation of Intoxicating Liquors Act to allow any person to import, send, take or transport Canadian wine into any province or territory directly from a winery, liquor board, liquor commission

or similar outlet for the sale of wine located in any other province or territory within Canada for consumption by that person and not for resale, further distribution, sale or for any use other than personal consumption." CBC has also covered this story: [Wine should flow across provincial borders](#)

Need to Buy a Champagne House ... French drinks group Rémy Cointreau has put its Piper-Heidsieck and Charles Heidsieck Champagne brands up for sale. It is understood that Piper has never been profitable in the 20 years that Rémy Cointreau has owned it, which is in stark contrast to the money-making power of the company's Rémy Martin Cognac business. <http://www.decanter.com/news/wine-news/508393/piper-heidsieck-and-charles-heidsieck-for-sale>

Where Have all the Bottles Gone ... Officials say Ontario residents have returned one billion wine and spirit bottles to beer stores for recycling. In other words 370,000 tonnes of glass have been diverted from landfills, enough to fill 54,000 garbage trucks. More than 90 per cent of recovered glass is used for products like bottles, carpeting and fibreglass insulation.

Somewhereness to expand ... The event called Somewhereness will be holding its 5th event in 2011. It was started by 6 premium wineries (Stratus, Malivoire, Flat Rock, Norman Hardie, Tawse and Charles Baker) "to expose the Toronto market to Ontario wineries whose wines display a strong sense of place." This year, the Somewhereness group has expanded to welcome Hidden Bench, Southbrook, Cave Spring Cellars and 13th Street. Date still to be confirmed.

Selling some of the Constellation ... Constellation Brands Inc, the world's No. 1 winemaker, will sell most of its operations in Australia, Britain and South Africa to focus on its most profitable brands and shore up its balance sheet. Brands on the block include Hardys in Australia, Fish Hoek in South Africa and Stowells in the United Kingdom. In the most recent quarter, Constellation reported an operating loss of \$3 million in the Australia and Europe wine segment. <http://www.reuters.com/article/idUSTRE6BN05C20101224>

Do you read blogs about wine? There is a study being conducted about wine blogs and the people who read them. A survey has been set up designed to collect the opinions of people interested in wine blogs at <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/SZ76K86>. To encourage participation the name of everyone who completes the survey by January 15 will go into a draw with the winner receiving a \$500 gift certificate at the wine store of their choice (here in Ontario we have very little choice as to where that would be but still, it's \$500 worth of wine).



Wine Event Spotlight: *New Year With Lots Going On*

The Canadian Wine & Food Institute at Niagara College with Wine Country Ontario is hosting the **Winery Sales and Profitability Symposium** on March 1, 2011 at Niagara College, Niagara-on-the-Lake campus. You will learn Innovative Ways to Increase your Sales at the Cellar Door and Beyond. Topics include: Selling, Public Relations, Customer Relations, and Social Media. More details can be found at <http://www.winerysalesandprofitability.ca/>

Winter street festival featuring 33 Twenty Valley wineries will kick-off of the **Niagara Icewine Festival on Main Street in Jordan Village**, Ontario. It takes place Saturday, January 15 and Sunday, January 16, 2011. Hours are 11:00am – 5:00pm daily. In attendance will be 33 Twenty Valley wineries pouring over 90 VQA wines, 11 local culinary partners and more. Details to be found at http://www.twentyvalley.ca/files/Winter_WineFest2011.pdf

Saturday January 22nd, is the 3rd annual **Konzelmann Winter BBQ**, serving from 11:00 am to 3:00 pm, chose from a selection of Chicken on a bun, Wild Boar Sausage, Chili and more. Wine will be served by the glass. Check out <http://konzelmann.ca/events.php>

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 23rd annual red carpet celebration of excellence in Ontario winemaking takes place March 4 - 6, 2011. Tickets are now on sale to the public at \$200 per person, which includes admission to the Cuvée Gala and all Cuvée en Route activities. Cuvée en Route admission passports can be purchased separately for \$30.00 per person, via the same outlets or at participating wineries on Cuvée Weekend. www.cuvee.ca

Two at Flat Rock ... Skate & Bake at Flat Rock Cellars, weekends in January (15-16, 22-23, 29-30) from 11:00am - 4:00pm. Skate on the pond and warm up by the open fire, where you can taste freshly made Icewine marshmallows. Eat them from the box or roast them over the fire! Skating is free. Small fee applies for the marshmallows. **Porky's Revenge at Flat Rock Cellars**, weekends in January (15-16, 22-23, 29-30) from 11:00am - 6:00pm. Winemaker Ross Wise is out of the cellar and into the kitchen to cook up a crowd pleasing pulled pork icewine infused slider. Paired with 2007 Sweet Revenge Vidal Icewine. Price: \$10 (Free with Niagara Icewine Discovery Passport). For more information about either event please call Flat Rock Cellars, 905 562 8994. Or email tours@flatrockcellars.com.

One of a Kind Auction ... Iron Gate – Private Wine Management, in association with Stephen Ranger Fine Art Valuation and Consultancy, is pleased to announce the sale by auction of the cellar from the Estate of Ian Grant, Toronto. The auction is being held under a special occasion permit issued by the AGCO that allows for the sale by auction of wine from private estates. The auction will be held on Saturday, January 22, 2011 at 2 pm at the exclusive Spoke Club, 600 King Street West, Toronto. [For details of the event click here.](#)

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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