

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 – 150 January 27, 2011

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OntarioWineReview: *Excuse me sir, where is your card?*

I just finished reading an article written by a friend and fellow wine writer Alan McGinty (<http://alanmcginty.com/article/424>). It had been passed along to me and I had been requested to comment on what Alan had written ... I read it over the holidays and filed it away for later comment. Now is later. A couple of days ago I picked it up again and read it as dispassionately as I possibly could.

The article is about the new initiative set out upon by the Ontario Wine Society (OWS), where in they (those members who choose to do so anyway) leave a tent card behind that reads: "The meal was great ... but where's the local Ontario VQA wine?" in any restaurant they deem to have an inadequate 'local wine list' ... by that I mean VQA wines, not the generic blends of international and Canadian wines some restaurants insist on throwing onto their menus under "Canada" or "Ontario" - but that's a pet peeve for another time.

Alan seems to have sparked a little stir by claiming the tent card campaign as "passive-aggressive", a term he took from the manager of Terroni on Adelaide. The manager went on to say, "Why not engage with us? It should be a dialogue."

Debbie Levere of the OWS says, "I plan to give a tent card to the waiter at the start of the meal ... If people want to talk to me about it while I am there, great."

So we have two schools of thought here: one that would talk openly about the issue to the staff, the other would prefer to quietly leave and let the card do the talking for them. It all depends on your personality, do you feel like 'getting into it' with staff, be it waiter, manager or owner; or would you like to show your dissent with a silent protest?

Not everyone is comfortable making a scene, not that I'm advising standing on the table and raising the roof over the matter, some people just want to eat and leave and to be as anonymous as possible. The manager of Terroni's makes it seem so easy to engage servers or principals in a dialogue, especially at a busy restaurant ... but I think the card speaks for itself, what more do you really want people to say. Sure they could recommend a wine or two (as Alan suggests later in his article), but customers' favourites might not go with the cuisine-du-maison.

Most OWS members are quiet types - until you get a few glasses into them - they prefer to enjoy their wine with as little controversy as possible. Having hosted a tasting or two I can personally vouch for their very Canadian reserve; many not looking for controversy ... the tent card seems right up the alley of the kind of stir they would like to make. Do I think someone would stop patronizing a

place because of their lack of local wine, in a majority of cases no; but they do want to get their point across. You're not going to lose a customer because you are not serving local wines, on the other hand, I think it's high time for restaurants to realize they do business in a province that makes wine, good, award winning wines, and visitors to the province should be exposed to these products. Be you a restaurant that serves Asian, Italian, Indian, Portuguese, Mediterranean, or whatever fare you specialize in. It's win-win. I can't count the number of times I've heard a winery owner, winemaker or staff member tell me their wines are now being served at so-and-so's restaurant ... for the sake of a case or two of wine you are getting some pretty good publicity that you probably weren't expecting. I have no idea how many times I have been to a restaurant and that courtesy is not reciprocated, ask your waiter where such-and-such a winery is and they shrug an 'I don't know' more often than not.

When a winery attends a wine show out of their region, such as Sarnia, London or Ottawa, one of the reasons they do it is to support the restaurants within that region that carry their wines. As many of you know, the unfortunate part about Ontario's wine shows is that you can't buy any wine at them, but a winery can do the next best thing; "our wines are available at Blank's Bistro here in town."

It's time for Ontario's restaurants to stand up and take notice of the industry that shares the province with them. Whatever your cuisine there's a local wine to match, give your customers a choice, not excuses. Don't call people "passive-aggressive" who want to eat at your establishment and then leave some comment behind. Some restaurants offer you a comment card at the end of your meal ... you don't call those who fill it out with some unflattering comments "passive-aggressive", do you? So think of the tent card as a comment card. There's just no need to get uppity about it, is there? After all it is just a suggestion, listen, don't listen, it's up to the individual restaurant; maybe if they get enough of them though ...

As for the Ontario Wine Society, it's a great start to raise the awareness, but help restaurants along, maybe they do need a push in the right direction, maybe the card should have a phone number or website address where restaurants can get more information about Ontario's great wines; OntarioWineReview.com is a great place to start (couldn't help but give that plug now could I?)

For more information about the tent card initiative visit: <http://www.ontariowinesociety.com/order-tent-cards.html>



Grape Guy's Picks of the Bunch: *Two Whites and a Red*

Creekside 2007 Reserve Sauvignon Blanc - \$26.95 (W)

www.creeksidewine.com

This is not your typical Sauvignon Blanc, so get those grapefruit and citrus acidity thoughts out of your head. This is a Sauvignon Blanc in the Fume style, which means it is made using oak, and in this case a generous helping of oak. These Sauvignon Blanc grapes were barrel fermented for 2 months then 40% went into stainless steel, while the other 60% was aged 9 months in French wood - of which 50% was new ... not the usual percentage of new found in this Creekside classic, but because of the vintage the grapes got an extra helping of wood because, "they could take it". The nose is vanilla and sweet grass while the palate is vanilla-grass with a touch of sweet caramelized oak ... this wine's unusual, different and very tasty. Price: \$26.95 - Rating: **** 1/2

Hidden Bench 2008 Estate Chardonnay - \$32.00 (W)

www.hiddenbench.com

Where 2007 was an abnormal year for whites, 2008 was a pretty typical year for whites, and Chardonnay, in particular, benefited from the growing conditions. This is, for lack of a better term, Hidden Bench's base model Chardonnay; at \$32 it doesn't seem so "base" but this is where you start if you want small lot, small quantity wines. Barrel fermented for 10 months in 100% French

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oak, this wine shows all kinds of signs of being age-worthy for the next 5+ years. Lots of juicy pear, apple with a restrained oak flavour and smell, meaning there's some butteriness but not overpoweringly so. Lovely wine with good balance fruit-to-acidity and finish. Price: \$32.00 - Rating: **** 1/2

Colaneri 2008 "Unita" Cabernet Franc - \$25.00 (W)
www.colaneriwines.com

Andrzej Lipinski is at it again, this roaming winemaker seems to be everywhere in Niagara, if you've got a new winery opening soon you've probably talked with Lipinsky about making the wines. And why not, the man has a proven track record for making wines of quality ... it used to be that those wines were all white but lately the reds are starting to catch up. This Cabernet Franc has a lovely nose with raspberry-vanilla, some nutmeg and a hint of sweet tobacco. Palate is a mix of red and black fruit with tobacco notes, fiesty tannins and a spiced-cassis fruit finish. Price: \$25.00 - Rating: ****

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



Weekly Wine Notes and More: *Looking Ahead, Lailey SB 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):

January 17, 2011 – [Looking Ahead to 2011 \(LISTEN\)](#)

January 24, 2011 – [Lailey Vineyard 2009 Sauvignon Blanc \(LISTEN\)](#)

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

Trips, tours and tastings – join me as I review the highs, and sometimes, the lows
[Ontario Breaks a Record](#)
[The Icewine Gala](#)

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

Wines that got "lost" in my cellar - some are Treasures others Trash ... Find out what happened
[Inniskillin 2004 Klose Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon](#)

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

Find out what has happened to some of my favourites over the years
[Calamus Estate Winery 2005 Red](#)

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

When it's not an Ontario wine, here's what I'm pulling out of the cellar
[6 New Reviews Added](#)

Including: Baby Mitolo, Ninquen Syrah and more

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

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OntarioWineReview: Gift Getting Grinch

Oooo Mama, did I stir up some controversy of my own with my last newsletter ([#149 - What I Didn't Want for Christmas](#)). I got quite a few emails from readers who couldn't agree with me more, but refused to go as far as telling me what they received because, "my friends read your newsletter too." On the other hand, my family let me know their thoughts: My wife called me up and said (in that tone), "I hope my parents don't read your newsletter." While my own mother called me an "ingrate".

In speaking with a few readers at the London Wine and Food Show (January 14-16) and in some other corners of the province, many suggested their giftees give them gift certificates, "they might not be as personal, but at least they'd be used." One went as far as telling me a gift certificate from the LCBO would be ideal, "one year I got \$200 worth, that was a good year."

"Instead of the kitsch they should just give wine," another wrote in, "my best gifts are one's I can open with them."

There are some gifters who are afraid of giving full wine bottles to their wine-loving friends, "they know more than I do, I don't want to seem like an idiot." Let me set your mind at ease: no bottle of wine is idiotic to a wine fan, especially because it was bought with your hard earned money and not their own. My brother had a saying when someone would offer him a beer that 'wasn't his brand': "The best beer is a free beer." So keep that in mind when the chose is between the coasters and the Cote-du-Rhone.

Signing off from the dog house, I'm the Grape Guy Michael Pinkus ... Honey, can I come out now?



Wine Event Spotlight: *Two in NOTL*

Fabulicious ... March 3 to 7 - An opportunity to dine at some of Niagara-on-the-Lake's finest restaurants with special three course menus at amazing prices! For details (still to come) go to www.Niagaraonthelake.com and type "Fabulicious" in the search box.

Days of Wine and Chocolate ... Warm up your winter with this match made in heaven! Explore pairings of two of your favourite indulgences - wine and chocolate, as you tour the 25 Wineries of Niagara-on-the-Lake in February. Each stop will feature premium VQA wine matched to a decadent chocolate selection. Tour Passes are \$30 per person (plus tax) and can be used any of the four

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weekends. See this year's pairings at <http://www.niagaraonthelake.com/displaywineevent/jpage/1/p/de/id/569/content.do>

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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