

## 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 – 172**  
**December 1, 2011**

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### OntarioWineReview: *It's That Time of Year*

In a couple of weeks my wife and I will be having people over for what we hope will become an annual gathering of friends for the season. My wife, whose a big planner, has been combing her recipe books for the last 6 weeks trying to decide what to serve. Because this was originally a U.S. Thanksgiving celebration (my wife is American), it looks like turkey is still on the menu, but the "sides" have become about as important as the main, probably more. The problem with recipe books is that everything looks great ... of course those staged pictures look nothing like the finished product, but my wife loves her gastro-porn - bless her little heart. At one point we had 4 different kinds of potatoes, green bean casserole and a few other sides, that sure do sound great, set for the making - and that was even before we started talking about brie dips, spreads, crackers, meatballs, canapés and other appetizers to have laid out about the house - not to mention the grandma-style bowls of mixed nuts I'm told we'll have on the coffee and end tables. I sure do hope these folks come with an appetite ... I also find myself glad we don't have a dog (yet), because with all the food lying about I know I'd spend half my time chasing him away from potential Hoover incidents. Over the past couple of weeks my wife has also tried to corner me into finally settling on the final menu (which I am sure will change right up to baking / cooking day - so I'm trying to remain impartial, not wanting to get attached to a dish until it is actually made).

But I have bigger issues on my plate, and I'm sure y'all could see this coming ... my problem boils down to what wines to serve. You'll have many opportunities to make these decisions over the holidays, whether you're throwing or attending ... the wine you put on display will say a lot about you. Do you have the Hallmark bottle (when you care enough to serve the very best) or the Kmart bottle (the blue light special - a la Two Buck Chuck ... or actually maybe you're actually foregoing the wine and serving Blue Light). There are times you'll be pulling out the FuZion and Cellared in Canada blends and all will be happy to partake; and there will be other moments where something better will have to be presented. I'm not going to tell you what to serve, you know you're friends much better than I, but here are a few pointers to make the evening run smoothly.

Bubbly is Always Better ... nothing says holiday-season more appropriately than a bottle of bubbles, I have gone as far as to order more sparkling wine glasses from my friends at Schott Zwiesel just to have enough on hand for the occasion. Sparkling wine tingles and tickles the tastebuds and just puts everyone in a more festive mood. Giving or getting a bottle is always in good taste ... and if the bottle is chilled serve it right away, otherwise get it cold quickly ... 9 times out of ten your gifter is expecting you'll open that tastebud teaser ... and why not, what are you waiting for? Bubbles heal what ails you. I don't think I've ever seen anyone grumpy around a glass of sparkling wine.

Sauvignon Saves ... the worst part about the eating holidays (Thanksgiving, Christmas, Easter) are

all those leftovers. Sure turkey sandwiches are great on Monday and Tuesday, but by Friday you're ready to pitch the whole idea of ever hosting again. But save yourself from leftover hell by serving Sauvignon Blanc, preferably one with high acidity and citrus notes (not the tropical kind); the high acidity in the wine causes the mouth to salivate and tricks the brain into thinking you're hungrier than you are. Your guests over-eating will be inevitable, and you're not stuck with half a bird to finish on your own ... once these folks get home with their bellies full and aching it is no longer your problem.

Pinots Perfect ... sure Pinot Noir is the ultimate turkey wine (and also matches well with ham) but don't deny your inner mischief maker. I'm famous for wrongly paired plates. I have no problem yanking a big heavy Cab, Shiraz or even a Zinfandel out of the cellar on fish night ... just because that's what I feel like drinking. So yes, satisfy the conventions but also satisfy your inner demon and find something unconventional to pour - you might have more takers than you think.

Sweet is Neat ... after dinner drinks are often the norm at a dinner party, sure there's Scotch and such, but don't forget to pull out the Ports or sweet Sherries too. Or, how about something exotic from Spain, Greece or any of the other multitudes of countries making sweets ... or better yet, why not finally open that bottle of icewine you've been hanging onto since Aunt Helen gave it to you back in the early 90's ... what's the worst that can happen, you spark a conversation?

Well that's all I have time for, I see my wife looking wistfully at the cookbook shelf again and that can only mean one thing: the menu is about to change again, looks like I'm going to need something to drink to get thru the season ... which I guess would be my final pointer: the season is hectic so don't be afraid to take a little downtime with a glass of something good.

Gotta go, potato dish 5 and 6 have just been added ...



**Grape Guy's Picks of the Bunch:** *Feeling Bubbly About the Season and Gord's Gold*

**Tawse 2009 Spark Rosé - \$34.95 (W)**

[www.tawsewinery.ca](http://www.tawsewinery.ca)

When Tawse first entered the bubbly wine market it was with their 100% Chardonnay called Spark, released earlier this year and now currently sold out. Now comes Spark II, or the Rosé version, made from 100% Pinot Noir and aged two years on lees in bottle ... the traditional way. The grapes also come from a single source, the Laundry Vineyard - an unfortunately named vineyard where you expect to find hanging skivvies, not grapes. I remember liking the original Spark, but version 2.0 is even better. The nose is pretty and delicate with raspberry, red licorice and sweet strawberry aromas - very inviting ... the palate is something altogether different and with even more appeal. Flavours of almond extract, raspberry, brioche and something on the finish that is deliciously noticeable and really lingers there: croissant with pure raspberry spread. There's also lovely fresh acidity here to keep everything from clinging too long. This is one spot of Laundry you're going to love doing again and again - and one bottle you might want around for New Year's eve. Price: \$34.95 - Rating: \*\*\*\* 1/2

**Cave Spring 2004 Blanc de Blancs Brut - \$39.95 (W)**

[www.cavespring.ca](http://www.cavespring.ca)

If you've been paying attention lately, you'd have noticed the plethora of sparkling wines coming out in Ontario. Ontario winemakers are re-discovering bubbles and we're all the beneficiary of that discovery. There also seems to be a two pronged focus: on the different and unique (Riesling, Chenin Blanc, Sauvignon Blanc) and on the more traditional versions (Chardonnay, Pinot Noir). This Cave Spring version is 100% Chardonnay grapes taken from the old plot of the Cave Spring vineyard (planted between 1974 - 1976) and spent 6+ years on its lees in bottle. The result is a bubbly that's biscuity with lots of citrus aromas and something else that carries itself from start to finish: crisp green apple along with hints of lemon pith. The acidity keeps it fresh with some bite on

the tongue and there's even a long lingering almond cookie finish. Lovely. Great for breakfast on New Year's day. Price: \$39.95 - Rating: \*\*\*\*+

**Gord's Gold ...**

**Sprucewood Shores 2007 Meritage - \$21.95 (W)**

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

Tanya Mitchell continues her incredible run of success as winemaker at Sprucewood Shores. Having watched her winemaking skills evolve over the years I would say she is finally coming into her own and showing real finesse in the process. This 2007 Meritage is also a wine coming into its own, the fruit is beginning to blossom, the spice is adding backup and the barrel notes are toning back. Cassis, strawberry, black raspberry, spice and vanilla can all be found on both the nose and palate. Drinking well now and over the next 5 years. Price: \$21.95 - Rating: \*\*\*\* 1/2

**Sprucewood Shores 2010 Riesling - \$12.95 (W)**

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

Someone once asked me if it's the reds or whites from the Lake Erie North Shore that I prefer ... usually it's the reds and I have yet to be totally impressed by a Riesling from the region, until now. The Lake Erie North Shore is just a hotter clime than Niagara, being the most southerly in Ontario, and the Riesling grape just hasn't adjusted well to the temps. But Tanya Mitchell, winemaker, seems to have found herself some nice Riesling grapes to play with. This one has what Riesling lovers should like: lime, green apple and mineral stoniness right down the middle. Crisp, deliciously fruity and refreshing with just the right amount ofumph; and at a price that's as hard to resist as the wine. Price: \$12.95 - Rating: \*\*\*\*+

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



**Bi-Weekly OWR Updates:** *On the Road posts and Taste it Again wines*

**Weekly Ottawa Life Blog Entries:**

[Monterey, Part 1](#)  
[To Give and/or Receive](#)

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

Trips, tours and tastings – join me as I review the highs, and sometimes, the lows  
*For those who missed it - [NOTL Taste the Season](#)*

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

Wines that got "lost" in my cellar - some are Treasures others Trash ... Find out what happened  
**Nothing New This Week**

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

Find out what has happened to some of my favourites over the years  
**Nothing New This Week**

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

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

**[5 New Posts Added](#)**

**including wines from the Chile, Spain, Mexico and Australia**

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

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### **OntarioWineReview:** *Three Stunning Events*

**Here at Home ...** The wine industry was stunned to learn of the death of winery owner Gord Mitchell, Sprucewood Shores Estate Winery. Having met Gord on several occasions I can tell you that he was warm and passionate about the Lake Erie North Shore, his wines and loved what he was doing. He will be greatly missed. Our condolences go out to the Mitchell family. For more about Gord Mitchell you can see the Windsor Star article by Ted Whipp: <http://www.windsorstar.com/news/Winery+owner+Mitchell+great+passion+life/5671539/story.html>

**Internationally ...** The world of wine was stunned that Boisset pulled the trigger on the purchase of Skalli, their "French rival". It was reported that Skalli was shopping for a partner but Boisset was not the expected suitor. For those who don't know Boisset also partnered with (at the time) Canada's own Vincor to form Le Clos Jordanne. Read the article here to learn more about the Boisset acquisition and why it is such a big deal: <http://www.decanter.com/news/wine-news/529541/boisset-buys-skalli>

**Stunningly Stupid ...** and if you happened into the LCBO this past weekend you might have noticed a cartoon-style label on a bottle of Bombing Range Red with a red sticker adorning a certain part of the label. For those who were curious and intrepid enough to remove the sticker, expecting to find profanity or nudity you were disappointed to find a glass of red wine that (with the right amount of imagination) might have resembled a bomb - or at least a glass with a bomb-style fuse. Is this a case of political correctness gone amok? Or is the LCBO afraid we'll get bombed upon seeing the sight? Personally I am stunned at what the higher ups at the LCBO find offensive or what they think we are too ... I don't know ... childish, immature, delicate (you pick your word) to see?



### **Wine Event Spotlight:** *Yes ... it is that time of Season*

If I were to list all the goings on in wine country it would take up the whole newsletter ... so let's just say this: Check your favourite winery on the internet, it seems the Open House season is in full swing. From the Lake Erie North Shore to Prince Edward County (with Niagara sandwiched in-between) it would seem that every winery in every region is throwing open its doors in some way or the other to welcome you for the season and get you in the festive mood that December brings with it. Harvest is over (for most) and it is time to celebrate the season. So get in the car and take a trip to your nearest winery and see what fabulous wines and wine paraphernalia is available for gift getting and receiving this holiday season.

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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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