

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 – 187
August 16, 2012

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OntarioWineReview: *Tasting Old Wines from the Chateau*

Some people poo-poo the idea of old wines because they lack the fresh fruit they expect to have in their wines. I for one embrace older wines, if for nothing else you're tasting a piece of history. Hopefully by now you've seen the movie Sideways think back, to Maya and Miles sitting on her porch talking about old wines: "I like to think about the life of wine ... How it's a living thing. I like to think about what was going on the year the grapes were growing; how the sun was shining; if it rained. I like to think about all the people who tended and picked the grapes. And if it's an old wine, how many of them must be dead by now. I like how wine continues to evolve, like if I opened a bottle of wine today it would taste different than if I'd opened it on any other day, because a bottle of wine is actually alive. And it's constantly evolving and gaining complexity. That is, until it peaks ... And then it begins its steady, inevitable decline."

One of the oldest wines I can remember drinking was a 1970 Chateau Haut Bailly ... it sticks in my mind cause it has special meaning in a couple of ways. It was the first time I had tried a wine from the year of my birth, and two I had it on the occasion of my engagement when my family had gathered around for a dinner to celebrate. I thought there was no better time to show off something old from a great Bordeaux vintage. Most dismissed the brownish liquid in their glass and turned their nose up at the interesting, and admittedly, odd smells emanating from the glass; but I relished in it and more people should learn and understand that if you spent X number of years cooped up in a bottle (in this case some 38 years +) you'd be a little crabby when you emerged too; but with a little time and a little air I'm sure you'd come around - start feeling like a more mature version of your old self ... the same can be said for wine.

Recently, like last winter, I paid a visit to Chateau des Charmes to try some new wines and caught the eye of the matriarch, "Madame", who was just trying a few vintage bottles to see how the wines were holding up - or if they were drinkable at all, "quality control" she called it. She invited me to sit and sample some past favourites with her (four wines in total), but none as old as my 1970.

We started with the bottle that already sat opened on her desk: a 1995 Paul Bosc Vineyard Cabernet Franc, from, at the time, 10 year old vines. This wine at first whiff showed mainly wood character, but delving a little deeper revealed blackberry and cassis fruit - dried but still vibrant. The wine was quite smooth, the tannins had dropped out and that wood nose seemed to fade on the palate, being replaced by vanilla and spice ... this wine still had the power to seduce, especially on the tongue.

We ping-ponged between red and white as we went onto a 1997 Auxerrois, a very misunderstood grape from Madame's point of view. I remember tasting a few Ontario Auxerrois when I first started drinking Ontario whites and loved them, but it seems to have fallen out of favour, some say it's

because its pronunciation was so difficult, a la Gewurztraminer, it simply just didn't roll off the tongue like Chardonnay and Pinot Gris, so the public ceased to accept it. The wine was an interesting mix of smells and flavours: aromas of beeswax, honey and dried peach lead to a palate full of canned pineapple (you know, where you can just taste the hint of tin in the juice), but it was still a wine I would not be embarrassed to serve as it did have nice flavour and stunningly appealing aromas.

Back we went to red, another Cabernet Franc this time from another good vintage, but different side of the road: 1998 St. David's Cabernet Franc - this is the estate vineyard fruit and still showed incredible complexity. The nose was cassis, pipe tobacco, cigar smoke, cinnamon spice, and mocha/coffee; a lot from the nose followed onto the palate: smoky tobacco, cassis with a slight mocha note, while the finish left us with dried raspberry and blackberry - the wine was smooth and lovely with a lack of tannin grit to encumber any of the other terrific bits.

Madame eyed her list and made a curious choice: 2000 Pinot Gris, she inquire, having already made up her mind - I balked a little at the suggestion but curiosity got the better of me as I agreed (after-all, it was her show). The colour was golden yellow - a sure sign of an aged white wine - my question is, would I have ever laid down a Pinot Gris? And if so, for this long? Probably not. I guess this is all part of the quality control process. The aromas were of dried white fruit with hints of dried flowers - it actually was extremely pleasant to sniff. The palate shows off the wine's odd side: over-ripe and dried apple with a perplexing Vaseline finish. If you were to ask if Pinot Gris ages I would have to say "yes ... but not very well", though it was still an incredibly interesting wine that showed depth and delicacy in its autumn years (or is a 12 year old Pinot Gris considered to be in the winter-months?)

A huge thanks to Madame Bosc for sharing her time, knowledge and wine with me - proving that even those oddball varieties have honour in the bottle - you just have to give them the chance to express themselves ... So don't poo-poo that old bottle in the cellar (if you even have one), it might reveal itself to be a hidden gem, all you have to do is give it a try.



Grape Guy's Picks of the Bunch: *Highlight Rosé ... and 11 other wines*

Am I late to the Rosé party? I don't think so, there's still plenty of hot weather to come and as the old saying goes, "you gotta kiss a lot of frogs to find a prince."

Casa-Dea Estates 2011 Dea's Rosé - \$19.95 (W)

www.casadeaestates.com

Here's a Charmat bubbly made from 100% estate Gamay Noir. There's a hint of sweetness, lots of berry flavour and just a touch of acidity to bring it all together ... if you pushed me for a more accurate flavour profile it's primarily raspberry with a backing of cherry. A perfect summer patio wine with the "soda bubbles" already added. Price: \$19.95 - Rating: *** 1/2

BONUS: [Casa-Dea Estates 2010 Gamay - \\$14.95](#) (W) - *** 1/2+

BONUS: [Casa-Dea Estates 2009 Pinot Noir - \\$19.95](#) (W) - ****

BONUS: [Casa-Dea Estates 2009 Unoaked Chardonnay - \\$15.95](#) (W) - *** 1/2+

Chateau des Charmes 2011 Rosé - Cuvée d'Andrée - \$13.95 (W)

www.chateaudescharmes.com

It seems that everyone is making rosé this summer - everybody has one on there tasting menu ... but at the moment none is as exciting (or as well priced) as this 100% Pinot Noir version (the first 100% Pinot rosé for the Chateau. This is just a beauty of a fruit-forward pink - with raspberries and cherries all over the place and the merest hint of fruit sweetness along with a great long finish ... it's like sucking on a raspberry Jolly Rancher with a cherry finish. Only 500 (or so) cases were made,

and from what I hear the family and staff are really digging on this one - so best hurry in to get your bottles soon. Price: \$13.95 - Rating: ****+

BONUS: [Chateau des Charmes 2010 Chardonnay Musque - \\$ 16.95](#) (W) - *** 1/2+

BONUS: [Chateau des Charmes 2010 Equuleus - \\$40.00](#) (W) - **** 1/2

BONUS: [Chateau des Charmes 2010 "Old Vines" Riesling - \\$16.95](#) (W) - *** 1/2+

Hidden Bench 2011 Bistro Rosé - \$... Licensee Only ... (W)

www.hiddenbench.com

I'm a big fan of this wine ... previous vintages and this current model ... it really is a truly delightful rosé. Lovely cherry and raspberry aromas and flavours lead the way, then on the finish, there's a cran-raspberry-esque note that delights the tongue and keeps things dry on the finish - while keeping things fruity in the middle. Great with food or on its own while sitting on the patio. Price: \$... you'll have to beg ... or go to a restaurant - Rating: *** 1/2+

Kacaba 2011 Rebecca Rosé - \$14.95 (W)

www.kacaba.com

A rosé made in the saignée style (bleed off juice from red grapes) named after my sister ... alright, maybe not, but that does not stop me from telling my sister that. It's made from (mostly) Cabernet Franc and 14% of barely ripe Petite Sirah, which gives this rosé a bit of an edginess in the mouth. Good fruit character with a touch of a dried spiced pepper note mid-palate to the finish. Price: \$14.95 - Rating: *** 1/2

BONUS: [Kacaba 2011 Reserve Riesling - \\$17.95](#) (W) - ****

Southbrook 2011 Triomphe Cabernet Franc Rosé - \$19.95 (W, L)

www.southbrook.com

Southbrook is trumpeting their first rosé under the Triomphe moniker, and it's fully organic and biodynamic. A saignee (bleed off) method rosé made from mainly Cabernet Franc (85%) with a splash of Cabernet Sauvignon (14%) and Syrah (1%) that was bled off after just 24 hours of skin contact. The nose is fragrantly raspberry and strawberry with an excellent dry mouth-feel and playful acidity. This is quite the food-friendly rosé or it's a great sipper all on its own because of its long black cherry finish. 834 cases produced of which 168 will see Vintages in July. Price: \$19.95 - Rating: ****

BONUS: [Southbrook 2011 Connect White - \\$14.95](#) (W, L) - *** 1/2+

BONUS: [Southbrook 2010 Whimsy! Uncloaked Merlot - \\$34.95](#) (W) - ****

BONUS: [Southbrook 2009 Poetica Chardonnay - \\$49.95](#) (W) - ****+

Staff 2011 Rosé - \$15.00 (W)

www.staffwines.com

Rosés can be simple and fun wines, especially for summer sipping. This Sue-Ann Staff version is what I consider made in the blush style (embarrassing white by adding red, thus), using Riesling and Baco Noir. Fresh and lively with a little bit of grit to keep things serious. Cherry and raspberry face-off with lemon and lime for supremacy, but all can be found in the nice long finish. Price: \$15.00 - Rating: *** 1/2+

BONUS: [Staff 2011 Robert's Block Riesling - \\$21.00](#) (W) - **** 1/2

Availability legend: W (Winery) – L (LCBO/Vintages) - OL (On-Line).



Bi-Weekly OWR Updates: *Video Wines of the Week - Taste it Again Viognier and more*

NEW - Video Wine of the Week:

WineFox.ca and the Grape Guy have teamed up to bring you the Ontario Wine of the Week

This week's videos:

[Cattail Creek 2011 Chardonnay Musque](#)

[Vineland Estates 2010 Dry Riesling](#)

On the Road with the Grape Guy:

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

Stuff coming in the following weeks

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

[Chateau des Charmes 2006 St. David's Bench Viognier](#)

What I'm drinking Tonight (blog)

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

New Posts Added

Old Vines Zin from Smoking Loon, a Maycas Syrah from Chile and more

Vintages Release (blog)

[*Vintages Release for Saturday August 18, 2012*](#)

Humor

Sometimes when I reflect back on all the wine I drink I feel shame. Then I look into the glass and think about the workers in the vineyards and all of their hopes and dreams. If I didn't drink this wine, they might be out of work and their dreams would be shattered. Then I say to myself, "It is better that I drink this wine and let their dreams come true than be selfish and worry about my liver."
~ Jack Handy

Humor



Quick Sips: *News from around the World of Wine and Here at Home*

August 2012 - part 2

Hitler's Image Does Not Sell Wine ... imagine that:

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/italy/9462729/Italian-Hitler-wine-bottles-offensive.html>

Soon the Stereotypical Mexican in the Vineyard Might be a Thing of the Past ...

<http://www.forbes.com/sites/jenniferhicks/2012/08/06/intelligent-sensing-agriculture-robots-to-harvest-crops/>

California's Custom CrushPad goes Under the Gavel ...

<http://insidescoop.sfgate.com/blog/2012/08/06/crushpad-auctions-off-its-assets/>

Chile's Concha y Toro is a Hot Commodity in the Stock World ...

<http://www.thestreet.com/story/11637411/1/concha-y-toro-winery-inc-stock-upgraded-vco.html>

Outsiders Buying Into California ...

<http://www.northbaybusinessjournal.com/55827/for-foreign-investors-u-s-winery-assets-look-increasingly-attractive/>

Foreign Interest in India's Wineries is Reaching Fever Pitch ...

http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2012-07-20/news/32764322_1_moncaro-riana-wines-sula-winery

Losing the Label in the Ice Bucket Might be Come to a Stickier End ...

<http://www.labelsandlabeling.com/news/new-products/avery-dennison-unveils-%E2%80%98paper-like%E2%80%99-wine-label-film>



Wine Event Spotlight: *Rosewood Has All-Stars in their Vineyard & a Pinot Reminder*

All Stars in the Vineyard at Rosewood ... Sunday August 19, 2012

This unique feasting winemaker's dinner will showcase 8 award winning and new wines with dishes specially prepared by Top Chef Canada Season 2 Winner - Chef Carl Heinrich of Richmond Station, Chef Nick Benninger of Nick & Nat's Uptown 21, Ortolan's creative talents, and Chef Luis Valenzuela of Torito Tapas Bar. The chefs have handpicked their favourite wines to pair with their dishes. Details at: <http://www.rosewoodwine.com/pages/1327074411/EVENTS?eID=9>

The Pinot Affair ... 2nd Annual ... October 13 & 14, 2012 - tickets on sale now ... find out all you need to know at www.thepinotaffair.com

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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