

## 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 – 190  
October 4, 2012

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### OntarioWineReview: *The Pittance of an Ill-Timed Petition*

Summer is a very interesting time. We all but shut out the rest of the world and concentrate on our own lives: our friends, our family, our hobbies, our interests, whatever makes us really come alive. The rest of the year we're tuned-in to the happenings of the world, but those days between the May two-four and Labour Day belong to us. Which is why I find the timing of the Vanessa-Petition so curious: Why would you submit a potential hot-button issue petition during the summer? Yes it did get some play in the media, but this powder keg should have blown a lot bigger, brighter and hotter than it did. What? You have no idea what I'm talking about? I see you took the summer off like everyone else ...

In late-July in a tiny town outside of Brantford (Vanessa, Ontario ) convenience store owner Joanne McMurphy submitted a petition to allow booze to be sold in corner stores (like most civilized places in the world, including Quebec) – she had 112,500 names on the petition, more than enough to at least start a fact-finding mission; heck, we've seen less of an outcry get more results in this province. Aly Vitunski, a spokesperson for finance minister Dwight Duncan said, "The current system balances access for both customers and suppliers with social responsibility ... the current system of selling liquor is an effective way to guard the public interest."

Really? An "effective way to guard the public interest"? We need guarding? From what? More Choice? Lower prices? Convenience? It's interesting to note that corner stores already sell a 'sin' product: tobacco; turns out that a mystery shopper study released by the Ontario Convenience Store Association (OCSA) showed that corner stores do a better job at checking for ID than the LCBO does. The simple reason why the stores would do better a job than the Board is simple: loss of livelihood. A convenience store owner/operator has much more to lose than a unionized LCBO employee, his business. An LCBO employee might get a slap on the wrist (if that). [Check out this little ruse writer and LCBO-critic David Menzies pulled on Sun-TV](#) when he had a 14-year-old boy go booze shopping at 3 different LCBO locations, and then you tell me this draconian institution is a better safe-guard of social responsibility – and in the back of my mind I'm wondering what punishment the employees suffered.

Of course the union bought-and-paid-for NDP wants nothing to do with anything that could affect unions. MPP Rosario Marchese said about the LCBO, it's actually funny in light of the Menzies-sting: "[they] protect minors from alcohol and contribute \$1.5 billion every year to running our alcohol and our hospitals" ... if I ran a booze monopoly I could bring in that kind of tax revenue too. The NDP just proves that they are totally out of touch with the liquor reality of the world – let alone this province. If the convenience stores of Ontario want NDP support they'd have to unionize. Plus, it's easy to ignore the government's own [unpublicized BASR report of 2005](#), which showed

privatization would lead to more money being raised ... but that report upset the LCBO union, MADD, plus other anti-drinking organizations in the province – God forbidden Big Brother should stop protecting us from ourselves and our own sinful ways. The way the government and these groups act you would think we are but one more LCBO location away from Sodom and Gomorrah; yet we are still one of the most under-serviced jurisdictions in the world when it comes to liquor stores per capita.

The Beer Store also chimed in with their thoughts on the issue, “Convenience stores are never going to be able to carry the selection we have,” said Jeff Newton ... well there’s another institution that has completely lost the plot: the point of the petition was about convenience. The people of Vanessa, Ontario have to drive 20-30 minutes to their nearest liquor store, instead they could hit a convenience store within five minutes, and they could do it by bike or walking – the name of the game is “convenience” – and I would also add safety (no drinking and driving when you run out of beer on a Sunday afternoon). Most of us live a lot closer to a convenience store than we do to a liquor store ... it just makes sense from a socially responsible aspect ... sorry I just said the bad “S”-word when it comes to booze in this province.

OCSA’s CEO Dave Bryans uses the same bad word in his comments, “Ontarians have spoken very clearly and they are not happy with the antiquated alcohol retailing system we have in Ontario. It makes no sense to anyone, and it’s actually just total control.” Bryans has hit the nail on the head here: the LCBO is about Big-C, control, and little-o Ontario in its thinking, always has and always will. But as much as we would like to lay the blame squarely at the feet of the LCBO it’s the government behind it that leads this myopic view of alcohol sales. Those who are interested in the booze-selling history of North America need look no further than Richard Mendelson’s book From Demon to Darling to see the route plotted by the USA (and Canada) and see how we have wildly diverged in our paths. We were once the wild ones, the law breakers, the bad boys defying Prohibition in the “aid” of our neighbours (and profiteering)... most of the US states have taken on a more open policy on booze, while Canada (for the most part) – and Ontario certainly, is stuck in a mire of mis-guidedness and rudderless leadership on the subject of booze access and sales. The ignoring of this petition is just another example of how our government sees us as children to be protected instead of adults with our own minds to be made up. I for one am offended by this assumption, and you should be too.



**Grape Guy’s Picks of the Bunch:** *Great New Sparkling, Reds and Hillebrand Notes*

**Chateau des Charmes 2009 Methode Tadtionelle Rosé - \$28.95 (W)**

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

I'll be completely honest here, I'm not sure how unbiased I am about this wine, after all the Rosé Brut is the wine I got engaged with (the inaugural 2005 edition) and have had a love affair with this wine ever since ... but that could also be because it's dang good. This one is a little more fruity than the 2008 and seems to have more acidity than previous versions. Still the same 3 years on lees in bottle. The nose kicks it all into gear with strawberry-rhubarb aromas followed by cherry-lemonade and a cookie dough-ish smell. The palate shows good complexity if you're willing to look for it, otherwise it can seem simplistic with red fruit: strawberry, byng cherry with other red fruits and berries along the way; there's also a fresh bread doughiness and nice biting acidity - especially on the first sip. It's all polished off with a lovely medium-length linger. Not as spectacular as the 2006 (5 stars) but definitely better than the 2008 (4+ stars) - this one sits right in the middle. Price: \$28.95 - Rating: \*\*\*\* 1/2

**BONUS:** [Chateau des Charmes 2010 Merlot, St. David's Bench - \\$29.95 \(W\)](#)

**BONUS:** [Chateau des Charmes 2010 Pinot Noir, Paul Bosc Vineyard - \\$35.00 \(W\)](#)

**Foreign Affair 2010 Conspiracy - \$19.95 (W, L)**

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

A bi-weekly newsletter dedicated to helping you discover Ontario's best Wines and Wineries.

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

Back in 2007 The Foreign Affair released its first and only Conspiracy - an appassimento-style wine: meaning they re-poured or re-passed the wine over Amarone-style wine skins, creating what the wineries in Veneto call Ripasso (Ripassa). The results are a fleshy fruity wine with the holding power of close to a decade. Lots of red and black fruit lead the charge on this nose here with hints of chocolate kicking around. This follows onto the palate with a lovely smoothness and silkiness of tannins ... and plenty of ripe fruit plays across the tongue. This one's very approachable and easy drinking now, but will be even better in 2-3 years and a real winner come 5-7. Price: \$19.95 - Rating: \*\*\*\*+

**Hillebrand 2010 Showcase Sauvignon Blanc, Wild Ferment - \$38.00 (W)**

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

A first from Hillebrand who usually do Chardonnay, Riesling and big reds in this line. Fruit was selected from 3 vineyards, all hand harvested, with 18 months of barrel aging in 30% new oak. The nose has got a funny "fuzzy" orange note (you know the one you find in the back of the fridge), while the palate proves to be beautifully layered with: vanilla, spiced-orange, grilled pineapple and an appealing melon rind finish. Lovely and clean, layered and weighty in the mouth with good length on the finish hinting of vanilla. I love what the wild fermenting aspect has down top this wine. Price: \$38.00 – Rating: \*\*\*\* ½+

**BONUS:** [Hillebrand 2009 Showcase Sparkling Sauvignon Blanc - \\$35.00 \(W\)](#)

**BONUS:** [Hillebrand 2009 Showcase Chardonnay, Wild Ferment, Oliveira Vineyard - \\$36.00 \(W\)](#)

**BONUS:** [Hillebrand 2010 Trius Cabernet Franc - \\$14.95 \(W, L\)](#)

**BONUS:** [Hillebrand 2010 Trius Cabernet Sauvignon - \\$14.95 \(W, L\)](#)

**BONUS:** [Hillebrand 2010 Trius Merlot - \\$14.95 \(W, L\)](#)

**BONUS:** [Hillebrand 2010 Showcase Cabernet Franc, Clark Farm - \\$38.00 \(W\)](#)

**BONUS:** [Hillebrand 2010 Showcase Cabernet Sauvignon, Clark Farm - \\$38.00 \(W\)](#)

**BONUS:** [Hillebrand 2011 Trius Pinot Grigio - \\$15.75 \(W\)](#)

**BONUS:** [Hillebrand 2012-Tasting NV Trius Brut - \\$24.95 \(W, L\)](#)

**Nyarai Cellars 2010 Cadence - \$19.95 (OL)**

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

What can you say about a virtual winery that expands and contracts its portfolio every year depending on the vintage. Nyarai started as a Sauvignon Blanc house, moved into Viognier and along the way has also made two wonderful red blends ... and now here comes a third, and its best yet. Cadence is a blend of Syrah, Cabernet Franc, Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot that over-delivers at its \$19.95 price point. The nose is smoky-blackberry, white pepper and spiced-raspberry ... the 34% Syrah really comes through here with all that spiciness. A lot of these great notes come through on the palate: smoky-spicy notes with a silky smoothness. Brambly-berry fruit, white pepper, black raspberry all ends with a vanilla, spice and cinnamon note. Only 270 cases made and it should go quickly at this price. Availability is through this virtual winery's website. Price: \$19.95 - Rating: \*\*\*\* 1/2

[also check out the Video Wine Review on WineFox.ca](#)

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



**Bi-Weekly OWR Updates:** *Video Wines of the Week – A Rant Against Plastic Cork*

**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:**

[Colio 2011 CEV Sauvignon Blanc](#)

[Flat Rock 2010 Pinot Noir](#)

[Hillebrand 2010 Trius Cabernet Sauvignon](#)

**On the Road with the Grape Guy:**

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

[Wines of Portugal Grand Tasting](#)

[An Evening with Aldofo Hurtado of Cono Sur](#)

[Victorian Regional Identity](#)

[Back for More Banfi](#)

**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

**Willow Springs 2005 Testa Limited Edition Cabernet Franc (see below)**

**Bottle 1 – Bottle 2**

**Featherstone 2006 Old Vines Riesling**

**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](#)

**Vintages Release (blog)**

**Vintages Report for October 13 coming soon**

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## **OntarioWineReview:** *An Afternoon with Craig McDonald of Hillebrand*

You might remember Craig McDonald as half of the dynamic duo that propelled Creekside to the top of many best of lists and awards, McDonald and Power were as synonymous as Abbott and Costello, Lewis and Martin, Brooks and Reiner ... but much less funny, they were more Lewis and Clark, discovering new ways to revive our old favorites of the wine world. Today Craig finds himself as the head of winemaking for Hillebrand and the Peller Group – a little more of an anonymous job, but one with many perks; but when you talk with him it's hard not to reference his past glories at his former place of employ.

Today I sat down with Craig and tried my damndest to keep Hillebrand top of mind – but questions like “How did you guys make such good Shiraz over at ...”? “Tell me the real story behind the Broken Press Shiraz”? Or even “do you have plans for a Shiraz in the Trius line”? seem to creep into conversation from time to time.

Craig has been head of winemaking at Hillebrand since July 2010, but never felt the wines going out the door were truly his until now. “The ‘11s are all mine,” he says, “before this I felt I was shepherding Daryl’s (his predecessor Daryl Brooker) work to completion.” Daryl was an accomplished winemaker in his own right and in his last year at Hillebrand won winemaker of the year honours at the Ontario Wine Awards. Being both Aussies on foreign soil Daryl and Craig are friends that keep I touch to this day, Craig also shows a lot of respect for Daryl’s accomplishments : “Daryl started a lot of new things here at Hillebrand,” says Craig, referring to the Trius white blend, the Rosé sparkling and the now infamously good inaugural '09 Trius Sauvignon Blanc, “it’s my turn to make my mark but still respect the past of this winery starting way back with JL (Groux, now with Stratus).” Funny story, the first Ontario wine Craig ever had was a Trius 1995 Red (a JL-made wine).

Which brings us to what Craig is doing now, “I feel we set the mark for a lot of great wines, now I want to see what we can do with Sauvignon Blanc – it’s one of my favourite varieties to work with,” he adds. With that he pours me his “experimental” 2010 Showcase Sauvignon Blanc – Wild Ferment (\$38.00) – an absolutely stunning wine that’s layered beautifully and lingers long-time on the palate (\*\*\*\* ½+). Later in our discussion, as we moved into the reds the inevitable question about Shiraz again rears its head. Craig was quite forthright about his wish to add a Shiraz into the Hillebrand line, but it’s all about finding the right site to grow the grape. “At Creekside we found a great site for Shiraz ... if we could find one as equally great I’d love to make one here.” With that we tried a number of the Trius single varietal wines, all from the 2010 vintage: Merlot, Cabernet Franc and the Cabernet Sauvignon, all lined priced a \$14.95. Each wine was delicious and well worth the price. The Cabernet Franc “punches above its weight class,” said Craig using a boxing analogy for his quality to price ratio comparison. The Franc is the drink now wine of the three, though it will age nicely 5+ years (\*\*\*\*+). The Merlot is typical Ontario – as it needs 3 or so years to mellow and come about (\*\*\*\*+). The Cabernet Sauvignon is the highlight of the line-up, drinking now would not be a problem but it will also hold wonderfully well for a decade or more (\*\*\*\* ½). For those who malign the single varietal Trius wines now’s the time to check them out again.

Some other highlight wines I tasted was the always impressive [Trius Brut](#) (\$24.95); the delightfully refreshing [2011 Pinot Grigio](#) (\$15.95) and a pre-release of the [2010 Showcase Cabernet Franc – Clark Farm](#) (\$38.00) and the hefty [2010 Showcase Cabernet Sauvignon](#), also from Clark Farm (\$38.00).



## **Wine Event Spotlight:** *Mastronardi is Grape and Wrapped Up in the Valley goes for 3*

**Mastronardi's Grape Escape Festival ...** October 13, 2012 at 8pm, for details do to:  
<http://www.mastronardiwines.com/>

**Wrapped Up in the Valley ...** Join the wineries of the Twenty Valley as they celebrate fall in their region for three weekends in November 10/11; 17/18 and 24/25. This passport program event program entitles visitors to sample premium VQA wines *paired with fresh warm winter flavours* from some of the area's finest chefs at 24 wineries. This year, take home a gift wrapped package of sinfully savoury cheese shortbreads crafted by Provisions Food Company as the wineries gift to you. See all the details at: [http://www.20valley.ca/page/twenty\\_valley\\_events](http://www.20valley.ca/page/twenty_valley_events)

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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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