

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 – 195
December 18, 2012

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OntarioWineReview: *One Last Push to Drink Ontario*

Holidays. End of the Year. Family Reunions. Get Togethers. Parties. Gifts. You are going to have plenty of opportunities to drink a little booze this time of year – be it the office Christmas party or the Holiday dinner at home; the neighbours' throwing an open house or just to survive the in-laws – 'tis the season for a drink in the hand. And since I have your attention for the next few minutes allow me to make a final push as to why you should make Ontario wine at least a part of your holiday festivities. No one is telling you to make it the centerpiece nor the one and only wine you serve, but I have a really good feeling that if you showcase at least one Ontario wine alongside some of your other international favourites, you'll not only be pleasantly surprised by what's in the bottle but also how well the Ontario product will hold its own against the foreign competition.

Let's face it, families are spread far and wide these days, and those far off friends come in once a year to get together and relive old times and make new memories. As someone who at least has a passing curiosity about Ontario wine (after all you are reading this publication) you can become an ambassador for Ontario wines with your guests and introduce them to some of the fabulous, and award winning wines that have come to define our wine industry over the past few years – and no I'm not talking about icewine. Instead of being apologetic as many find themselves being when putting a bottle of Ontario wine on the table ("Sorry it's only an Ontario"; "It's all they had at the Loblaws"; or "Hope you're okay with Ontario, I can always open something else") – show your pride for your homegrown bevvy, after all, every other country that makes wine has a strangle-hold on their customer base and their populace is fiercely proud of their wines, shouldn't we be also? If you don't believe me ask any Italian, Frenchman, Spaniard or Portuguese you meet – even if they don't drink wine their home country is where they best fermented grape juice is made – and they'll tell you that to your face.

The same sentiments can apply about wine made here in Ontario, you just have to jump on the bandwagon (come on people of Toronto, you did it for the Argos). We have winemakers that come from as far as Australia (and everywhere in between) to make wines here because they want the extreme cool climate experience – it makes them better at their craft ... and as consumers we benefit from their learning experience.

Ontario is making stellar wines these days – some of the best in our history (and I know we started off with some nasty stuff, but you don't have to remind everybody about it all the time). 2009 was a lovely high acid year, which made for some wonderful Rieslings, Sauvignon Blancs, Pinot Grises and other aromatic whites with great palate cleansing acidity; it was also a great year for Pinot Noir, our winemakers could barely contain their joy and enthusiasm when talking about the heartbreak grape. 2010 was the red year that had everyone was talking about, until 2012 happened of course, (but these wines will have to wait for an appearance on your table for at least the next year or more

– meanwhile (and thankfully) we have the beauty of 2010 to hold us over. And 2011 was no slouch of a year either – nice well-rounded wines for drinking and enjoying now ... the bigger reserves have yet to make an appearance but according to one winemaker I spoke with he thinks good things are on the way: “2011 was a much better year than many give it credit for – I hope it doesn’t get lost between the perceived greatness of 2010 and 2012.”

There is good news on the horizon for those of us who have stuck with Ontario wines all these years: local (meaning Ontario) wines are trending with the younger generation; they are more interested and are more open to their homegrown wine products than their parents or grandparents ever were, and they are willing to give their provincially made wines more of a chance ... so pulling a bottle of Ontario wine out has become hip and cool (although the words I have used have lost their appeal with the same generation I am talking about).

So this season put Ontario on your table, on the sideboard, in the kitchen or on the card table – and do it proudly ... whatever and wherever you’re serving make sure to represent some local flavor. And if you’re just gifting, remember to think Ontario also, because as the motto says “Ontario, Yours to Discover” and it has never been more apropos then right now, especially when it comes to our wines.

Here’s wishing all of you the best of the season with health, happiness and nothing but good things for the New Year – Cheers.

Correction: In Newsletter #194 I gave the date of 1993 as the year a moratorium was put on off-site winery store licenses ... I was contacted by Southbrook owner Bill Redelmeier who called to say, “Off-site winery licenses were frozen on the same day as free trade came in effect in 1988, so it’s even worse.” Thanks Bill.

Have You Seen This: A certain female wine writer is in some hot water over improper citation of other writers works – [see the article in The Palate Press](#).



Grape Guy's Picks of the Bunch: *Ending the Year with a Bang ... and a Flurry*

Stratus 2008 Cabernet Franc - \$38.00 (W)

www.stratuswines.com

To look at JL Groux you’d think you were witnessing a mad scientist hard at work, instead of one of Niagara’s most accomplished winemakers ... and in some cases you might be right. Here’s a guy who lets his Cabernet Franc vines hang till late November. 2008 was not a fantastic vintage by any stretch of the imagination, but to let them hang that long you know you’ve just gotta have a pair (or a screw loose). Smoky, black raspberry and black cherry are de rigueur but you’ll also find tobacco and cigar box spice. This is a layered and complex wine that has more finesse than the monster 2007. Price: \$38.00 – Rating: **** ½

Ravine Vineyard 2010 Cabernet Franc – Picone Vineyard - \$40.00 (W)

www.ravinevineyard.com

The Ravine winery usually gets their fruit from their St. David’s property, but something has lured their winemaker, Shauna White to Vinemount Ridge’s Picone Vineyard to work with this handpicked/hand sorted fruit ... she then popped it into barrels for 10 months (72% French – 28% American – 10% New) giving this wine the kiss of oak it required to show its full potential. The aromas are black cherry, white pepper and a touch smoky, while the palate shows real depth of fruit

and flavor starting with plum and black cherry, moving on to white pepper , tobacco, smoke, cran-cherry and anise seed ... add to that a long finish and you've got yourself a beauty in the glass. Price: \$40.00 – Rating: ****+

BONUS: [Ravine Vineyard 2010 Cabernet Franc Estate](#)

Reif Estate 2010 Cabernet Sauvignon Reserve - \$25.95 (W)

www.reifwinery.com

Reif Estate's Reserve Cab is made from vines planted in 1989 and spends 14 months in a blend of French and Hungarian oak – the result is complexity of both aromas and flavours: the nose gives off aromas of coffee, new leather, mocha and some herbal notes ... the palate is loaded with all kinds of wonderful flavours: raspberry, licorice, sweet vanilla bean, strawberry jam, spiced black cherry and dark chocolate – and there's to come, more you'll just have to wait for it be it a few hours in a decanter or 5 years in your cellar. Price: \$24.95 – Rating: ****+

BONUS: [Reif Estate 2010 Cabernet Merlot](#)

BONUS: [Reif Estate 2010 Meritage](#)

BONUS: [Reif Estate 2010 Merlot Reserve](#)

BONUS: [Reif Estate 2010 The Magician](#)

Rosehall Run 2010 Cuvee County Pinot Noir - \$24.95 (W)

www.rosehallrun.com

This is the Rosehall blended-batch of Pinot Noir, which means the grapes come from all over the county to show 'County Terroir' instead of the more de-rigueur single vineyard. The nose is cranberry and sour cherry with and underlying sweet spice ... these aromas follow as flavours on to the palate, adding smoke and vanilla notes with those sweet spices carrying from beginning to end, there's also a hint of white pepper on the finish. Good acidity helps clean the palate, readying it for the next sip. Price: \$24.95 – Rating: ****

BONUS: [Rosehall Run 2011 SZ Red](#)

BONUS: [Rosehall Run 2011 SZ White](#)

Thirty Bench 2010 Small Lot Merlot - \$40.00 (W)

www.thirtybench.com

For a winery known for its stellar multi-vineyard and single vineyard Rieslings I always find it amazing how great their small lot reds are. And this year my favourite of the bunch (by just a hair) was this Merlot, which had plenty of blueberry and raspberry on the nose ... but the palate was incredibly soft and approachable for such a big ripe vintage as 2010. Smooth with smoky dark fruit that roles over the tongue effortlessly and ends with some vanilla-smoky notes. Price: \$40.00 – Rating: **** ½

BONUS: [Thirty Bench 2010 Small Lot Cabernet Franc](#)

BONUS: [Thirty Bench 2010 Small Lot Cabernet Sauvignon](#)

Viewpointe 2010 Auxerrois - \$14.95 (W)

www.viewpointwinery.com

Auxerrois has really fallen out of fashion in Ontario. I remember when I first began to explore Ontario wine country, Auxerrois was made well by a handful of producers and I thought it made a

lovely wine. But due to its name and lack of popularity it was replaced by more favorable, and easier to pronounce, grape varieties. Thankfully Viewpointe hasn't yet fallen into the rip-it-out trap and continues to work with the grape. A single note nose of bosc pear leads to a palate that's got tart and tang along with peach and pear ... good acidity balances the sweetness and green apple and lemon pith/zest appears on the fresh and lively finish. Price: \$14.95 – Rating: ****+

BONUS: [Viewpointe 2007 Cabernet Franc](#)

BONUS: [Viewpointe 2007 Cabernet-Merlot-Petit Verdot](#)

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



Bi-Weekly OWR Updates: *Ending the Year with a Bang ... and a Flurry*

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:

[Tawse 2010 Growers Blend Pinot Noir](#)
[Henry of Pelham NV Cuvee Catharine Rose](#)

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

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

[New articles coming soon ...](#)

[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

[New Posts Added](#)

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

[Vintages Report for December 8, 2012](#)

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*Join me at the London Wine and Food Show this January
for an amazing glassware tasting brought to you by Schott Zwiesel
Each participant will receive a set of glasses to take home.*

[Find tickets to the show here](#)

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OntarioWineReview: *Ontario Bubbles – Not just for lunch anymore*

Not exactly the message being given out by Wine Country Ontario – they want to promote Ontario sparkling as an any day, any time beverage – and many who drink sparkling on a regular basis know that it's a drink to just celebrate being alive: on a Friday night to toast the weekend, on Sunday morning to start a lazy day off right, on a Monday to combat the song "I Don't Like Mondays" or on a Wednesday because it's Wednesday ... any day should be ripe and ready for sparkling wine and Ontario is making some outstanding examples of the style in many different methods – but mainly in the traditional way.

According to the numbers 107,301 cases of bubbly have been made in Ontario over the past two years, of which roughly two-thirds are made in the traditional method (the way they make it in Champagne). And like in Champagne the main grapes we use in Ontario are Chardonnay and Pinot Noir.

All these numbers come from a luncheon Wine Country Ontario put on to promote Ontario bubbles held at Stock Restaurant in Trump Tower Toronto, all hosted by Angelo Pavan, long time winemaker for Cave Spring Cellars. He talked about the history of Ontario sparkling starting with the pioneers like Chateau des Charmes and Hillebrand Trius, then about Henry of Pelham coming along with their sparkling program in the 90's and as the popularity of making this kind of wine grew more and more wineries jumped into the fray in the 2000's. Angelo pointed out that Ontario has the longest harvest in the world (4+ months) starting in August/September for sparkling wine and ending in December/January for icewine.

Two choice quotes from Angelo:

On the beauty of the 2008 vintage for the production of bubbly, "I'll take '08 every year for sparkling"
On when he likes to drink sparkling: "I don't drink sparkling wine on New Year's because I drink it every weekend."

Some of the delicious Sparklings tried (in total 18 were poured) – perfect for anytime:

[13th Street 2008 Premier Cuvee Brut](#)
[Angles Gate 2010 Archangel Chardonnay](#)
[Cave Spring NV Blanc de Blancs](#)
[Chateau des Charmes 2009 Rosé Brut](#)
[Henry of Pelham 2007 'Carte Blanche'](#)
[Henry of Pelham NV Cuvee Catharine Brut](#)
[Henry of Pelham NV Cuvee Catharine Rosé Brut](#)
[Hillebrand NV Trius Brut](#)
[Huff Estates 2008 Cuvee Peter F. Huff](#)
[Mike Weir 2008 Sparkling Brut](#)
[Tawse 2009 David's Block Spark](#)



Wine Event Spotlight: *NOTL Finally Gets the Message*

Days of Wine & Chocolate ... Explore the decadently sweet and savoury art of wine and chocolate pairing. Visit the wineries of Niagara-on-the-Lake to taste up to 28 VQA wines matched with chocolate-infused dishes – from classically sweet flavour combinations to unexpected surprises. Notice the “chocolate infused dishes” - that finally sounds like something worth attending – kudos to the wineries of NOTL. Weekends in February. [Visit here for details and to get tickets.](#)

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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