



Just Off the Vine ...

Ontario Wine Society Events

❖ Toronto Chapter

- **Summer Bin End Dinner, Thursday, August 19, 2004**

This year we're heading to the patio at the Tasting Rooms Restaurant with wines from the OWS cellar.

- **Ontario Cabernet Sauvignon vs. the World, Tuesday, September 28, 2004**
- **Southbrook, Chardonnay Vertical, October, 2004**
- **Canadian Wine Awards, November, 2004**
- **Unusual Grape Varieties, January, 2005**

❖ Niagara Chapter

- **Fruit Wines, Monday, August 30, 2004**

We'll enjoy another al fresco tasting on the verandah of Featherstone Winery, weather-permitting, as we taste wines made of everything from gooseberries to raspberries to apricots.

- **Annual Dinner at EastDell Estates Winery, November, 2004**

Guest speaker, Tim Hudak, will talk about the latest political issues surrounding the wine industry and answer your questions.

Recent OWS Tastings

❖ Toronto Chapter

Ontario Wine Awards, June 3, 2004

By Dean Tudor

The Ontario Wine Awards had booked into the newly opened Miller Tavern in Hogg's Hollow to show OWA medal winners to consumers. But the Wine Council of Ontario added an afternoon presenting "the first annual best Wines of Ontario tasting for media and trade professionals". The afternoon show featured wines from WCO members (whether they won any awards or not). Some confusion resulted as some wineries in the afternoon show were not at the evening show and vice versa

Ontario wineries, and the Awards were presented at Queen's Landing, NOTL on April 30. Tonight, there were 29 wineries pouring 72 gold, silver and bronze winners. I tasted mainly whites during the afternoon because we were outdoors on the patio, with glorious

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Tony Aspler and Tasters at The OWA Tasting. Photo Dianne Thomas



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sunshine and umbrellas, plus it seemed that most of the food plates favoured white wines. Miller Tavern is a seafood place. Cheeses were offered – all from Quebec, none from Ontario – by the Dairy Farmers of Canada. They included Sir Laurier, Chateauguay, Delice des Appalaches, and Cru Clocher raw milk cheddar.

Some of my wine favourites from the afternoon included Angels Gate Chardonnay 2002 (\$16.95, basic light but delicious), Cave Spring Chardonnay Reserve 2002 (still tight), Cilento Chardonnay Reserve 2000 (a delicious blend of fruit and wood spices), Lailey 2002 Chardonnay, Lakeview Cellars Chardonnay Reserve 2002, Legends Chardonnay Reserve 2002 (scrumptious) and its Cabernet Sauvignon/Merlot Reserve 2002 (not available at night show, \$22 for a mouthful for ripeness and fruit), the Mountain Road Chardonnay 2000 Barrel Aged (one of the better wines this afternoon), the Southbrook Triomphe Chardonnay 2000 (\$19.95, still evolving), and the Strewn Terroir Chardonnay French Oak 2002. And yes, I did taste other white grape varieties....

In the evening, it was on to the OWA winners. I avoided the sweet wines. There was plenty of opportunity to taste since most of the consumers were lined up for the food. I had forgotten that the food goes first at consumer shows. At any rate this gives a healthy platform for wine absorption later; I hardly noticed anybody spitting. I must get out more often...

Some faves included Angels Gate Gewurztraminer 2003 (silver, off-dry, good patio wine, some muscat character), Chateau des Charmes Chardonnay St. David's Bench 2000 (gold, off-dry fruity), Chateau des Charmes Cabernet-Merlot Estate 1999 (gold, ripe Bordeaux style), Cilento Merlot Reserve 1999 (gold, good aging, soft complexity), Creekside Signature Merlot 2001 (bronze, fruity ripeness), Henry of Pelham Cuvée Catharine Brut Rose (bronze, fabulous), Jackson-Triggs Proprietors' Grand Reserve Chardonnay 2002 (silver, brilliant balance and length), Konzelmann Late Harvest Dry Riesling Traminer 2002 (gold, concentrated but dry flavours), Niagara College Teaching Winery Chardonnay 2002 (bronze, but it should have been higher), Niagara College Teaching Winery Pinot Noir 2002 (2004 OWA Wine of the Year, gold, \$18.95), Peninsula Ridge Sauvignon Blanc 2003 (gold, \$18.95 September 2004 Vintages), Southbrook Triomphe Chardonnay 1998 (gold, their top of the line model), Stoney Ridge Founder's Signature Collection Chardonnay 2002 (bronze, light, off-dry) and its Meritage 2002 in the same series (bronze, light but fruity), Thomas & Vaughan Meritage 2000 (gold), Vineland Estate Cabernet Franc 2002 (gold, deliciously fruity), and Willow Heights Cabernet Sauvignon 2001

(bronze, but a juicy Lucy wine).

The event was managed by Forefront Communications, and both David and Sandy get a quality rating of 9/10.

Dean Tudor, Wine Writer and Professor Emeritus of Journalism, Ryerson University, Toronto, www.ryerson.ca/~dtudor.

❖Niagara Chapter

Terroir Series - "Single-Vineyard Chardonnay", Tasting Inniskillin Winery - June 24, 2004

Yvonne Halliday

This being the second of our Terroir Series tastings we focused on discovering some of the different terroirs that could be found in a single growing region. We tried 8 samples from 5 separate Chardonnay vineyards each with a different terroir claim. We had a broad selection from Inniskillin Winery's "Single Vineyard" line, as Inniskillin specializes in single vineyard bottlings. This allowed us to keep the playing field even, as Inniskillin tries to keep their oaking and fermentation as consistent as possible. So with two samples ('00 & '02) from each terroir, it was interesting to see how they produced certain characteristics with reasonable reliability (the only significant difference being the quality of the growing year). Samples from two other wineries (Caves Springs and Chateau des Charmes) were also included to show typical results from Beamsville Bench plantings, and lower escarpment plantings.

Our guest speaker Philip Dowell, Inniskillin's winemaker, explained the soil types and climates of the vineyards we'd sample from. All within the Niagara Region, the terroirs differed, from heavy clay in a hot inland area, to pea gravel and clay in a temperate area by the river, to light loam in a cool area by the lake.

From my own perspective, the results seemed to be more pronounced in terms of the different micro-climates showing lighter for cooler areas, and riper for hotter areas, etc. The results of the soil types seemed less pronounced, but perhaps it's because I'm still learning how the soil types affect the growth of the vines and am thus, still unable to distinguish it. Generally speaking, however, the members seemed to prefer the samples grown in the hotter, inland vineyards.

Terroir, for me, is becoming a more significant factor when looking for a wine, or at the very least, helpful in explaining reasons why I like or dislike certain selections.

A special thank you goes to Philip Dowell for leading the tasting, to Inniskillin Winery for hosting the event, and to Debi Pratt, Trish Armstrong and Lynn McDonough for their assistance in organizing and arranging the event.



Matching Wine and Barbecue Tasting, Creekside Winery - July 23, 2004

By Yvonne Halliday

Our evening started off with a short self-guided walking tour around the grounds of Creekside, where there was a "lemon tasting" station, waiting for us to see first-hand how food can affect the flavour of your wine. With a sample of Sauvignon Blanc in hand, guests were requested to take a sip of wine, then bite into the lemon, and then take another sip of the wine to see if it had changed; and boy did it! Our dry, crisp wine suddenly turned sweet and flat! Of course most of us don't sit down to a nice bowl of lemons and a glass of wine, but it sure made a point on how extremely food can affect wine.



Barbara Leslie and David Paquet. Photo Yvonne Halliday

Following a tour through the beautiful barrel cellar, we were escorted back up to the patio, where we enjoyed our tasting al fresco in the beautiful summer air. After most of us admitted to experiencing some pretty poorly paired food and wine in the past, our guest speaker, Barbara Leslie, Niagara College wine educator, went on to explain some important aspects of sensory perception, as, in the background, Chef David Paquet began barbecuing the shrimp skewers for our first pairing.

Barbara went through how to match food that was salty, fatty, acidic, light, gamey, and the whole gamut, but it quickly became apparent that a significant trick to good food-wine matches involved pairing similar foods with similar wines i.e. acidic food with acidic wine, sweet food with sweeter wine, rich food with big wine, smoky

food with smoky wine, etc. Although most people would agree that there were no "bad" matches, some were better than others, and achieving that perfect union is what we sought after. Not surprisingly, the Signature wines from Creekside took home rave reviews. A quick poll at the end of the tasting showed that our guests were most impressed with David's "Duck Breast, Wilted Cabbage and Pancetta" and Merlot pairing, followed closely by the "Grilled Honey Marinated Portobello" and Pinot Noir pairing. We laughingly noticed it also showed that people weren't afraid to raise their hands twice, so percentages may be a little off.

A special thank you goes to Barbara Leslie for leading the tasting, to Creekside Winery for hosting the event, to David Paquet and his staff for preparing the delicious food, and to Virginia Marks and her staff for their assistance in organizing and arranging the event.

Ontario Winery Events

❖ Cave Spring

Red Review of '02

Weekends in August, 11:00a.m. and 2:00pm

With the '02 vintage Niagara can boast of its best red wine vintage ever. Taste our full range of '02 reds, some from the barrel, from Gamay and Pinot, to Syrah and Cabernet/Merlot.

\$10 per person. Reservations required. Call 905 562 3581, ext. 302.

Wine Tasting Series

Tuesday, August 10, 7:00 pm

An expert from Cave Spring Cellars will speak about the history and development of the wines and winery, as s/he leads you through a sampling of their products. After the tasting, you're invited to stay and enjoy the hors d'oeuvres provided by our preferred caterers.

Tickets are \$2. For more information call 905 632 7809, ext. 3.

Paletta Mansion, Burlington.

❖ Chateau des Charmes

Art Exhibit

To October, daily at 11:00am to 5:00pm

Experience the talent Niagara has to offer. Chateau des Charmes is pleased to showcase artists from the St. Catharines Art Association. Selected works will be featured throughout spring, summer and fall seasons in our St. David's Bench Vineyard Room.

Complimentary. Reservations are not required.



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Strings in the Vineyard

Sunday, August 8, 2:00pm

Tune your ears to the fine chamber orchestra music of the Niagara Symphony. Music Director, Daniel Swift, leads the string ensemble through a performance of light classics amidst the vines of our St. David's Bench Vineyard. A Sunday afternoon of acoustic and visual harmony.

\$30 per person. Reservations required.

The Niagara International Chamber Music Festival

Sunday, August 15, 2:00pm

The Niagara International Chamber Music Festival presents an afternoon performance in wine country. The concert will also feature demonstrations in both bow making and wine making.

\$20.00 per person. For ticket information contact the Niagara-on-the-Lake Chamber of Commerce at 905 468 1950 or www.niagaraonthelake.com.

Vineyard Smoker IX

Friday, August 20, 7:00pm

Château des Charmes' renowned Vineyard Smoker returns for the 9th time to celebrate the Bosc family's passion for artisanal winemaking, fine cigars and extraordinary Niagara cuisine. Back by popular demand, this evening is guaranteed to please the senses.

\$125 per person plus taxes and gratuity. Reservations required.

❖ **Colio**

3rd Annual Take-a-Trip-South, Customer Appreciation Day

Saturday, August 14, 12:00pm to 4:00pm

Free tours, wonderful wine, fabulous food, magical music, fun, prizes.

Reservations only.

❖ **EastDell**

Benchberry Run

Saturday, August 14

Hit the country roads running in this annual 5K race that starts and ends at EastDell. Kids can join the 1K Yummi Bears challenge.

Call 905 562 8669 or www.instride.ca for registration.

❖ **Hillebrand**

Blues at the Winery

Saturday, August 14

Hillebrand Blues at the Winery is the second instalment of the concert series that was kicked off with Hillebrand Jazz at the Winery in July. Hillebrand Blues promises nothing less than great wine, great food and great music. Chef Tony de Luca returns with an outdoor culinary booth, where he serves favourites including Rosemary and Cabernet Glazed Baby Back Ribs, full Rack \$18, ½

Rack \$10, and Grilled Mushroom and Oka Cheese Focaccia Sandwiches, \$8. The outdoor wine list boasts impressive variety and range from Vineyard Select Muscat, \$16 per bottle, to Trius Brut, \$27 per bottle.

This year's memorable line-up includes recent collaborators Shakura S'Aida and Bill King's Saturday Nite Fish Fry, who have released an album that celebrates the roots of blues and who are all veterans in the blues music industry. Suzie Vinnick, a singer-songwriter who performs with great depth and versatility, has been tagged "the one to watch" on the Canadian music scene. Over the past 25 years, Jack de Keyzer has performed his brand of rockin' blues throughout North America and will appear with the Jack de Keyzer Band. Steve Payne's reputation as one of the most talented blues guitar players in England is complemented by his singing and song writing abilities. He will be accompanied by Al Lerman. Hillebrand Winery is looking forward to welcoming these performers to the stage.

The Wine Country Picnic for Two will be making an encore at this event and is available for pre-purchase at \$69.50 plus tax and includes culinary delights from Chef de Luca, such as fingerling potato salad with double smoked bacon and corn dressing, asparagus salad with caramelized shallot dressing and peppercorn roasted beef striploin. The Wine Country Silent Auction will capture guests' attention with unique packages such as Shaw Festival and overnight accommodation in Niagara-on-the-Lake. All proceeds raised during the silent auction will be donated to the Niagara-on-the-Lake Culinary School Scholarship Fund. The Niagara-on-the-Lake Culinary School ensures students receive practical, hands-on training which is necessary for a successful career in foodservice and hospitality.

Hillebrand Blues at the Winery tickets are \$25 per guest per day and may be purchased by calling Hillebrand at 1 800 582 8412 or online at www.hillebrand.com or www.niagaraonthelake.com. Grass seating is available and guests are encouraged to bring a favourite lawn chair.

❖ **Huff**

Sundays in August

We will have a live jazz band on the patio every Sunday.

❖ **Jackson-Triggs**

Twilight in the Vineyard

Celebrating its third season, this year's programme brings back popular favourites, but also introduces several new genres. With seven diversified shows in an intimate setting unlike any other, this year's line-up is sure to please live performance enthusiasts of all types. The next three shows are listed here.

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The Iron Mask (Silent Film, 1929)

Saturday, August 7, 8:00pm

Score composed and performed by Graham Hargrove and Nicholas Coulter. The last silent swashbuckler for Douglas Fairbanks has him re-creating his Three Musketeers role of D'Artagnan, joining with his old comrades to protect the King of France from a plan by evil Cardinal Richelieu to put an impostor on the throne. Dynamic Marimba Duo, Graham Hargrove and Nicholas Coulter, received rave reviews last year with their silent film score for the Mark of Zorro. According to one admirer, "The combination of percussion, piano, keyboard, sound effects and occasional human voice lifted the occasion into high art."

\$29 per person.

Jesse Cook

Saturday, August 14, 8:00pm

Beloved as a virtuoso guitarist across the country, Jesse Cook is a walking, pickin' melting pot of musical influence. Having travelled around the world in search of inspiration, Cook combines his signature rumba flamenco arrangements with captivating sounds discovered in Spain, Africa, Cuba, Egypt, France and Brazil and is best known for his current best selling album, "Nomad."

\$49 per person.

Amy Sky and Marc Jordan

Saturday, August 21, 8:00pm

Beloved across the country for her smash hit CD's 'Cool Rain' and 'Burnt Sun,' Juno nominated songstress Amy sky teams up with her equally talented husband, Marc Jordan, an internationally renowned songwriter and performer who has written for Cher and Joe Cocker and penned Rod Stewart's 1992 hit 'Rhythm of My Heart.' The result is a memorable evening of music, in which both artists perform solo and team up for a set of heart-rending duets that verily crackle with romance.

\$49 per person.

Bloomer Girl

Sunday, August 29, 7:30pm

Music by Harold Arlen, lyrics by Yip Harburg, directed by Jackie Maxwell. Performed by members of the Shaw Festival Ensemble.

Bloomer Girl is a wonderful comedy about the lovely Evelina, her romance with the good-hearted scoundrel Jefferson Lightfoot Calhoun and her alliance with her aunt, Dolly Bloomer, a mid 19th century women's reform crusader. Written in 1944, the original production of Bloomer Girl ran for over 650 performances on Broadway. With music and lyrics written by Buffalo born Harold Arlen and Yip Harburg (best known for their collaboration on The Wizard of Oz), Bloomer Girl features such memorable songs as

"Right as the Rain", "Evelina" and the haunting "The Eagle and Me".

\$25 per person.

Savour the Sights will be held August 20th, but is sold out.

❖ **Konzelmann**

Sushi and Sunset

Saturday, August 21, 6:30pm - Champagne reception, 7:00pm to 10:00pm - dinner/sunset.

Niagara's exclusive lakefront winery invites you to savour an array of Asian cuisine paired with Konzelmann Estate Wines. Be amongst the first to enjoy the sunset from Konzelmann's Lakeview Platform.

\$65 per person. Reservations required.

❖ **Peninsula Ridge**

Riedel Glass Demonstration

To September, daily at 11:00am and 2:30pm

Join us at our new Riedel tasting bar in our winery retail loft for an introduction to the Riedel line of fine stemware. A specially-selected Riedel glass will be highlighted during each tasting featuring our Peninsula Ridge Reserve wines. Discover for yourself the difference a glass can make.

\$3 per person.

❖ **Reif**

Peaches in Icewine

Sunday, August 15, 11:00pm to 5:00pm

Come celebrate the Peach Festival. Peach "Fruits in Icewine" paired with Vidal Icewine.

\$4 per sample. No reservation required.

Herbal Wine Cuisine Tasting and Seminar

Sunday, August 29, 1:00pm to 3:00pm

Reif Estate Winery welcomes Arlene Mills of the "Niagara Herb Farm" to present a seminar on Herbal Wine Cuisine. The seminar is hosted on-site and followed by a wine tasting complemented by some of Arlene's dips and cheeses.

\$5 per person. Reservations required. E-mail andrea.nelson@reifwinery.com or phone 905 468 7738. Seating is limited.

❖ **Stoney Ridge**

Fine Cheese, Fabulous Wine

August 7, 8

Experience and learn about the classic pairing of wine and cheese. Stoney Ridge will be pairing a selection of premium wines including our Founder's series with delectable premium cheeses from our on-site Cheese boutique The Cheese Board.

\$5 per person.

Chardonnay Fanatics

August 14, 15

Long considered a leading producer of some of Canada's finest Chardonnay, Stoney Ridge opens some of its classic vintages in this unique four-wine tasting. Included is our acclaimed 1997 Old Vines Chardonnay from the Lenko Vineyard. This multiple gold medal winning wine was served to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II during her last Canadian visit in 2002. Also in the tasting is the acclaimed Charlotte's Chardonnay from the Founder's Collection Series. All wines tasted will be available for purchase.

\$3 per person.

Gourmet Day

August 21, 22

Stoney Ridge carries a fabulous selection of unique, premium gourmet foods, from specialty cocktail olives, gourmet dips, specialty marinades and wine-infused pastas and sauces. Stoney Ridge will be sampling a wide array of these exciting food items, paired with our premium wines.

A Salute to our Founder

August 28, 29

In recognition of Stoney Ridge founder and winemaker, Jim Warren, there will be a free tasting of the Founder's Signature Collection Series. These wines represent a winemaking partnership with Chief Winemaker Liubomir Popovici and Founder Jim Warren. Come and try the Charlotte's Unoaked Chardonnay and Meritage.

Ontario Restaurant Events

❖ Allen's

Summer Wine (VQA, of Course!) Events in Our Backyard

This evening will feature four complimentary wines for sampling. Glasses and bottles of the featured wines will be offered at introductory prices.

- Wednesday, August 18 - Steve Gill, Manager, Wine and Viticulture and Jim Warren, professor and winemaker, **Niagara College Teaching Winery**.

Your dinner reservation will ensure a table.

Allen's, 143 Danforth Ave., Toronto. Phone 416 463 3086 or check the website at www.allens.to

❖ Wigamog Inn

Wigamog Inn Resort will be continuing its support of Ontario wineries throughout the summer by featuring the wines of a different Ontario winery each week. The week will include tastings and advice on food pairing, as well as the opportunity to meet with some of Ontario's truly world class winemakers. Each Wednesday, key staff from the winery will be present to meet with the

guests and answer any questions they may have.

Featured wineries will be as follows:

- August 4, **Lailey Vineyards**, Derek Barnett
- August 11, **Peninsula Ridge Estates Winery**, Jean Pierre Colas
- August 18, **Maleta Estate Winery**, Daniel Pambianchi
- August 25, **Lakeview Cellars Estate Winery**, Tom Green
- September 1, **EastDell Estates**, Ken Burford

Wigamog Inn Resort is a four-season, full-service recreational resort and country inn overlooking Lake Kashagawigamog and surrounded by the rolling hills of the Haliburton Highlands. We pride ourselves in providing an intimate atmosphere, charming accommodation and superb dining in beautiful surroundings.

For more details or reservations please contact the Wigamog Inn Resort at 1 800 661 2010 or email at reservations@wigamoginn.com. Visit the Wigamog Inn Resort at www.wigamoginn.com.

Ontario Wine Industry News

❖ Gold at Selections Mondiales Des Vins

Montreal, Quebec

Inniskillin is pleased to announce the winning of three Gold Medals at the 2004 Selections Mondiales. This international competition held June 3-7 in Montreal gives wine producers from around the world the opportunity to come and present their products.

Selections Mondiales des Vins celebrated its 21st anniversary this year, making it one of the oldest international competitions in the world.

- Pinot Noir Reserve Niagara 2002: Médaille d'or / Gold Medal Vignobles nationaux Les Amériques, Canada rouge / Winery from America, Canada red
- Chardonnay Reserve Niagara 2002: Médaille d'or / Gold Medal Vignobles nationaux Les Amériques, Canada blanc / Winery from America, Canada white
- Vidal Ice wine Niagara 2002: Médaille d'or / Gold Medal Vignobles nationaux Les Amériques, Canada vin de glace / Winery from America, Ice wine Canada

Congratulations to the joint efforts at Inniskillin of the winemaking team Philip Dowell on his Pinot Noir Reserve and Chardonnay Reserve; Karl Kaiser on his Vidal Icewine; and Gerald Klose, Vineyard Manger and the viticultural team.

❖ New Chef Takes the Helm at EastDell's Bench Bistro

Beamsville, Ontario,

On May 17, Niagara's wine and regional cuisine will meet a taste of rustic Italian, a dash of classic French with a measure of European influence when Executive



Chef Guy Gnadinger-Harris steps into the kitchen of EastDell Estates' Bench Bistro.

"I can't wait to create using first-crops of the season right in their place of origin," says Gnadinger-Harris, himself fresh from Biagio Ristorante, a 4-star Italian restaurant in Toronto. "There's a green specialty pumpkin grown in Niagara that will make an excellent gnocchi! The inspiration is incredible, right down to the view. Wine-country gorgeous versus city congestion will certainly not be hard to get used to!"

Following Gnadinger-Harris to Niagara's rich food-belt is his stellar reputation earned in a city known for its ardent foodies. During his three-year tenure at Biagio, Gnadinger-Harris's hand-made pastas and regional dishes earned him a loyal celebrity following, including Pat Quinn, coach of the Toronto Maple Leafs. Under his culinary hand, the Italian press deemed Biagio's Best Restaurant in Canada.

Perhaps his move to Niagara is destiny; as Executive Chef for the public and private dining rooms at Queen's Park, Gnadinger-Harris was the first to truly promote Ontario wines among the powers that be, bringing in Niagara's wineries for educational tastings and creating specialty menus around the wines.

"The region was in its infancy then but you could taste the promise of today's high-calibre wines," observes Gnadinger-Harris, who, during his 12 years at Queen's Park, served the governments of three Premiers and visiting dignitaries and political leaders from around the world.

A Red Seal Executive Chef, Gnadinger-Harris has headed up the dining facilities at Glen Abbey Golf and Country Club in Oakville, and is currently a part-time instructor in the new food and hospitality program at Liaison College in Brampton.

Once settled, Gnadinger-Harris plans to share his recipes and talent through on-site cooking classes and themed food and wine dinners.

Born in Zurich, Switzerland, Gnadinger-Harris is a second-generation chef. His father brought the family to Quebec City where he was chef at the Chateau Laurier. The family eventually settled in Toronto where a 14-year-old Guy was handed an apron in his father's kitchen at a large country club.

"What can I say, I was born unto the culinary world!" says Gnadinger-Harris. Once you discover the magic of food and wine it never leaves you.

❖ Youngest Winemaker in Canada Sees Double...again!

Jordan Station, Ontario, July 5, 2004,

After winning a double gold medal in the 2003 International Eastern Wine Competition for his first wine released as a commercial winemaker, the 2002

Riesling, Ken Mowat, winemaker for Harbour Estates Winery of Jordan Station, thought it couldn't get much better. But Ken saw "double" once again. In the 2004 All Canadian Wine Championships, he picked up the "best of category" for two of his 2003 vintage wines. Harbour Sunrise, a blend of Vidal and Chardonnay won best in the White Hybrid blend category. Baco Noir won best in the Baco Noir category, surpassing a number of reserve Baco Noirs. Both wines sell for only \$10.95 per bottle. He also garnered a silver for his 2002 Chardonnay Reserve, silver for his 2002 Cabernet Sauvignon icewine, bronze for his 2002 Premier Vintage, and bronze for his 2002 Merlot Reserve in the same competition.

"This is phenomenal", says Mowat, who, at age 24, is considered to be the youngest commercial winemaker in Canada. "I was stunned by last year's award, these awards top that. It's great to win at home." Mowat's parents, Fraser and Darlene, are the proprietors of Harbour Estates.

John Howard, former proprietor of Vineland Estates Winery agrees and adds, "If you're wondering where Niagara estate wines are going, look to the youngest winemaker in Canada, Ken Mowat. His unique style crafts supple, elegant and highly valued vintages, which optimize the vineyards that his family has planted over the past number of years in Jordan Station, Ontario. Because of the effort and passion of young people like Ken, people should be really excited about the future of Niagara wines."

The All Canadian Wine Championship was established in 1981. The ACWC is the oldest and largest judging event solely for Canadian wines. 2004 marked the 24th year of the competition, with 878 entries from 106 wineries across the country.

Feature Article

❖ Ridgepoint Wines

By Glen C. Siegel

Last February, I spent a couple of hours at Ridgepoint Wines with owner Mauro Scarsellone talking about Ridgepoint, his wines and his plans for the future. We also tasted his currently released wines and talked about his future releases. Mauro, a CPA in his previous life, really seems to enjoy what he is doing at Ridgepoint. Conversations are sprinkled with laughter and the phrase I heard most often when describing releases of his wines was "When it's ready!"

The Ridgepoint winery and vineyards are located on top of the escarpment on the west side of Cherry Avenue in Vineland, south of Highway 8. The property is just above the Beamsville bench and is located beside a

quarry. The winery is currently housed in a small building that serves as the winery, barrel room and tasting area. Just across the parking lot, the new winery is under construction. It has been delayed but plans are to have it open in 2004.



The 18 acres of vineyards surround the buildings. The vines were planted starting in 1995, shortly after the property was purchased. Currently Vidal, Riesling, both Cabernets, Merlot, Chardonnay, Pinot Noir, Nebbiolo and Sangiovese are planted. Future plans call for pulling out the Vidal and replacing it with Riesling. The Riesling is being grown from cuttings taken from the vines currently in production to maintain the quality of the wines. Before the vines produced enough grapes for wine, the grapes were sold to some of the local wineries. Now, most of the grapes are used by Ridgepoint.

OWS: Why these grapes?

MS: I'm determined, or stubborn! I was told that the area was best suited to white wines but I wanted to make some traditional Italian reds so I planted Sangiovese and Nebbiolo.

OWS: What would you do differently if you were starting over?

MS: Well, some of the grapes are in the wrong place. After a few seasons you figure out where the various microclimates are, the wet spots, the areas that get the most frost and so on. Some of our reds and whites should be switched but since they are just maturing, we will leave them where they are. The Vidal, however, is coming out. We are replacing it with Riesling grown from our own cuttings. This way takes a couple of years longer as we have to get the cuttings grafted onto root stock and then wait for them to grow for a year before planting. Buying young Riesling vines would be faster but this way, we will have exactly the same vines as we have now.

OWS: Which grapes have given you the most trouble?

MS: The reds, in general. They need the most attention and they are the most susceptible to frost damage. They need thinning to get the best quality grapes. The Merlot always ripens but they aren't winter-hardy. The Cabernet Sauvignon, on the other hand, is winter hardy but they

don't always ripen fully.

The first time I picked Pinot Noir, I didn't know that all the grapes in the bunch didn't ripen at the same time so many of the grapes on the bottom were under-ripe. The winemaker made me throw that batch out.

OWS: Why are some of your wines VQA and others aren't?

MS: Timing and the quantity of wines. In the future, all of our wines will be VQA but we had such small quantities of some of our wines, it wasn't really worth sending them out for the analysis. For example, we only had one barrel of our first Nebbiolo and 3 of the Merlot.

OWS: Any thoughts of producing a Meritage Blend since you have all the components?

MS: Definitely, once we get the production up. As members of the VQA, we are also members of the Meritage Association.

OWS: What do you have planned for the future?

MS: Right now, we are testing two different yeasts for our Riesling. One is giving us pear-like notes while the other is more citrusy. We aren't sure if we are going to bottle these separately or if we are going to blend them. We also have a Pinot Noir that we are waiting on. Right now, the tannins are really high but we will bottle it when it's ready.

Tasting Notes: All the wines I tasted were excellent. I was there with three friends and we were reasonably unanimous in our opinions.

Riesling - Available in Dry and Medium Dry - Quite possibly the best Ontario Riesling I've had: incredible nose, minerals and citrus fruits. The Medium Dry has great balance between the acids and the sugars.

Cabernet Sauvignon - Well balanced, great flavours with an interesting "smoky" note.

Nebbiolo - Not a Barolo but a really good wine. Fruit forward with medium dark cherry flavours. With the tannins the way they are, this wine would stand up to a really rare steak. Lay it down for a year or so and this wine would be perfect with roast beef.

Vidal Ice Wine - Flavours of burnt sugars and bitter orange. Very long finish.

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