



Just Off the Vine ...

The Ontario Wine Society's Newsletter

November 2004

Ontario Wine Society Events

❖ Toronto Chapter

- **New Kids on the Block** , Monday, November 22, 2004
- **Unusual Grape Varieties**, Tuesday, January 18, 2005
- **Annual Ice Wine Weekend**, February 5,6 2005

❖ Niagara Chapter

- **Annual Dinner at EastDell Estates Winery**, Tuesday, November 9, 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

Cabernet Sauvignons of the World, September 28, 2004

By Dean Tudor

The third and final function for me this day was the Ontario Wine Society's "Cabernet Sauvignons of the World" grand tasting, one of the society's annual competitions wherein the best of Ontario are pitted against some of the best in the rest of the world. It was held, as usual, at Chris Boland's Tasting Rooms, First Canadian Place. It was an exercise in comparing New World and Old World cabernets, in comparing hot climate with cool climate wines, in comparing Ontario to other regions, in comparing different vintages (both within and without Ontario, and in comparing different origins of oak.

Everybody was instructed to bring along their own Qs and As while we were led through the exercise by wine writer Konrad Ejbich, also an expert on Ontario wines and vintages.

Nine wines were sampled, including one mystery wine. Konrad and the rest of us tried them blind. Only certain members of the OWS executive knew the correct order. After tasting, we were asked (by a show of hands) for each wine, to indicate whether it was Ontario or not, and whether we liked it best or worse. As with any winetasting with over 100 participants, raised hands were all over the map (so to speak), without any real agreement. Here were my thoughts on the wine (listed in

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tasting order):

-Frescobaldi Castiglioni 2001 (Italy, \$19): broad wood on nose, sweet vanillin, balanced, tannic length, definite Euro style. I picked it as the Italian entry.

-Cilento 1999 (Ontario, \$25): pruneey, didn't age all that well, some soy and veggies (bottle problem?), but picked up when retasted later. I picked it as Ontario, best I could do.

-Mystery wine, vintage 2002: a bit shrill, some activity on the finish, mainly high acid. I picked it as Ontario. It was revealed as Magnotta.

-Lakeview 1998 (Ontario, \$49.95): good new world feel, rich cabernet tones, great feel on the palate, lots of fruit and ripeness, older, some age development. Familiarity with the wine convinced me that it was Lakeview.

-Torres Mas La Plana 1997 (Spain, \$39): dusty nose, black fruit, broad flavours on palate, dense, chunky, better in a few more years. The nose convinced me it was the Beringer from California.



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-Wolf Blass Platinum label 2000 (Australia, \$80): deep, rich, enveloping, off dry on palate, unctuous, but modest finish. A crowd pleaser. It had to be the Oz wine. It was so obvious.

-Reif 2001 (Ontario, \$50): good integration of wood and flavours, Euro nose, Bordeaux-style. It had to be French – but France wasn't included. So maybe Ontario, but who??? Best I could do... This wine had won a Gold at Cuvee.

-Beringer Knight's Valley 1999 (California, \$45): raisins, fruit shy, tar, but long flavour and length. I opted for Torres.

-Lailey 2002 Canadian Oak (Ontario, \$45): prune, some almonds on the nose, modest features throughout (palate, finish), probably needs food. It had to be Ontario.

Hey, I did pretty good, considering that I'd been tasting over 100 wines since 2:15 that afternoon. Konrad nailed them all except for the Reif and the Lakeview (he switched them, in his mind) – he even IDed the Magnotta. The final tally, in choice of preference, was: the Wolf Blass first, Reif came second (a good showing for them by the OWS, especially since they provided some reception wine: a Gewurztraminer and their 1999 Chardonnay newly listed at the LCBO for only \$14.95), Beringer was third, Torres was fourth, and all the rest were too fragmented to count well.

The appetizer menu included tempura shrimp (best with the Reif Gewurztraminer), smoked salmon (Reif Chardonnay), asparagus (pass on the wine), spiced pork satay (Wolf Blass), and Brie (all the other wines).

Thanks to the OWS for continuing to promote Ontario wines; for more details, check out the website www.ontariowinesociety.com. Watch for their next compelling tasting, on October 26 (Southbrook Chardonnay vertical) and January 18 (Unusual varieties in Ontario, with the unusual Ed Finstein).

As a quality wine and food education event, this rates a 9 out of 10.

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

Southbrook Chardonnay Vertical Tasting, October 26, 2004

By Dean Tudor

This tasting, at the Tasting Rooms was a vertical tasting of Southbrook Chardonnays. Bill Redelmeier, who runs Southbrook, has just released the last of the winery's older chardonnays. The Triomphe and Triomphus labels are their premium wines. The Society assembled Triomphe Chardonnays from 1999, 2000, 2001, and 2002. They retail for \$19.95 a bottle. There was also a Southbrook Winery Chardonnay Lailey Vineyard 1999 (\$24.95), a bottling of wine from just that one vineyard.

The Triomphus Chardonnays tonight came from 1998, 2000, and 2002 (only the better years for this reserve label). They are priced at \$99.95 a magnum. These Triomphe-Triomphus wines are a blend from three different vineyards, to reflect the house style of higher acidity coupled with higher oak of 14 months or more. All had received 100% malolactic fermentation. Bill spoke to the wines after we all tasted on our own. The voting afterwards was not surprising: every wine was somebody's favourite wine, just about equally distributed. My own favourite was the Lailey single vineyard, although I liked all the wines. I had been drinking (indeed, even buying with my own nickel) these wines for several years, so I was familiar with them. Some notes:

-Triomphe 2002 – rich butter, clovey, thick, higher acidity, some ginger (as Bill noted)

-Triomphe 2001 – smooth nose, little aroma, closed somewhat but a long engaging finish, needed food.

-Triomphe 2000 – rich, integrated nose with fruit, a bit thin on finish.

-Lailey 2000 – oaky, broad sweetness, more perfume, more lactic tones, lower acidity, smooth on palate and on finish. My favourite of the night.

-Triomphus 2000 – sweet nose but older characteristics, some age showing, golden colour.

-Triomphe 1999 – bright perky nose, smooth on palate, some coconut tones.

-Triomphus 2002 – old, mellowing, a bit cloudy (this was a barrel sample)

-Triomphus 1998 – oak on the nose, broad palate, exceptionally long finish.

As usual, Tasting Rooms came up with its sterling assortment of seven appetizers to go with the wines (escargots, shrimp, French brie, prosciutto, duck spring roll, etc.).

As a gourmet wine and food event, this one rates a definite 8.9 out of 10.

Chimo!

Dean Tudor, owner of World Wine Watch, Professor Emeritus of Journalism, Ryerson University, Toronto <www.deantudor.com>

Ontario Winery Events

❖ Taste the Season

November 13/14 or November 20/21

'Taste the Season' with the 16 Wineries of Niagara-on-the-Lake

Purchase a passport for one of the two weekends - November 13/14 or November 20/21

Enjoy a sample of wine and a food pairing at each of the Wineries of Niagara-on-the-Lake. Proceeds go to Second Harvest and its programs to help feed those who



would otherwise go hungry. With proof of passport purchase, stop by the Niagara-on-the-Lake Chamber of Commerce and receive your 'Vintage 2004 Collectible Ornament' as a keepsake of your trip.

11am-5pm, \$30.00 per person, online at www.niagaraonthelake.com or 416-408-2594.

Please be sure to identify which weekend holds your interest, as passports are valid ONLY for the one weekend specified.

❖ Cave Springs

Release Weekend Winemaker's Dinner

November 19 and 20, 2004

Enjoy an overnight stay at our luxurious Inn On The Twenty, including a Winemaker's Dinner and tutored tasting with Cave Spring Winemaker Angelo Pavan. Take advantage of this unique opportunity to taste and purchase new releases and rare back vintages. Consider capping off your weekend with a visit to our Spa On The Twenty.

Contact Special Events at 905-562-3581 ext. 348 to make reservations. \$313.38 per person plus taxes

Sudden Exposure

November 6, 13, 20, & 27, 2004

Air alone is capable of bringing a wine to life, or oxidizing it to the point of being faulty. Expose yourself to the effect of O₂ on wine, and learn how wines can truly benefit from aeration.

Reservations Required - 905-562-3581, ext. 302

11a.m. and 2p.m., \$10.00 per person

❖ Creekside

November 26, 27 & 28

ATTENTION CELLAR DWELLERS!

Discover the hidden corners of Creekside's underground barrel cellar with your Creekside Winemaker guide. Barrel samples illustrate the merits of barrel ageing and Creekside's extensive barrel program.

Tour at 2 pm. \$5 per person. Call to reserve. Space is limited. 905-562-0035 ext. 224

❖ EastDell

November 10 & 24 - A GUY IN THE KITCHEN

Get cooking and tasting with Chef Guy Gnadinger-Harris in these fun, interactive and informative sessions. Nov. 10, The Three R's: Learn to prepare Risotto, Ragout and Ravioli from starter to dessert. Nov. 24, Niagara's Tuscany: Marry Niagara's rich food offerings into three courses of Tuscan-style cooking. 6 p.m.-9 p.m. Reservations required. \$50 p.p. with wine pairings.

November 26 - CHEF'S TABLE

Chef Guy Gnadinger-Harris brings the theatre of the kitchen to your table during this deliciously intimate evening of fine wine and food. Chef and your exclusive

wine expert share their culinary insights as you experience the progressive tastes (and part of the preparation) of a wine-paired five-course menu created and presented specially for this table. Minimum 6 people, maximum 12. Reservations required. \$95 p.p.

November 27 - A DAY OF WISHES

Raise a toast to the season and help launch our campaign in support of the local Women's Resource Center with a winemaker-led tasting of selected holiday wines in front of our celebration tree. As we flip the switch on our seasonal lighting, sit down to a special three-course supper of late harvest flavours. Tasting at 4 p.m., dinner seatings from 5 p.m. \$39.95 p.p. (From now until December 31st all proceeds from the tasting bar and purchase of Holiday Tree Wishes go to the Women's Resource Centre, an initiative of Lincoln Community Against Violence.)

❖ Huff

Winemakers dinners -Nov. 18 and Dec. 4.

These Autumn Winemakers Dinners pair food handcrafted by renowned Merrill Inn Chef Michael Sullivan, formerly of "the Fifth" Auberge du Pommier, Opus, Matisse and The Roof Restaurant at the Park Plaza Hotel. Frederic Picard will be hosting these evenings presenting his fine wines from Prince Edward County at the Merrill Inn, Picton, Ontario.

For more info contact karen@huffstates.com or (613) 393-5802, for reservations, special room rates and the evenings menu contact Edward at The Merrill Inn, merrillinn.com or (613)476-7451.

❖ Jackson Triggs

The Triggs International Premium Vinifera Lecture Series at the Cool Climate Oenology & Viticulture Institute presents, Pascal Marchand Regisseur du Domaine / Estate Manager Domaine de la Vougeraie, France

Understanding Pinot Noir via Terroir

Monday, November 22, 2004 7:30 p.m. Sean O'Sullivan Theatre Brock University

A special tasting of selected Pinot Noirs will be offered at Intermission

Admission is FREE but RSVP is required to reserve your place: 905-688-5550, ext. 4652 or email: ccovi@brocku.ca

❖ Legends

OTTAWA WINE AND FOOD SHOW - November 5 - 7

Legends Estates Winery will be taking part in this premier event to be held at the Ottawa Congress Centre. For show information, contact Robert and Halina Player at 613-567-6408 or email rplayer@sympatico.ca.



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GOURMET FOOD & WINE EXPO 2004 - November 25-28

This exciting event is being held at the Metro Toronto Convention Centre, South Building. A great way to spend the day! Visit our booth, try our wines, and learn why our name is prophetic!

BARREL CELLAR WINEMAKERS DINNER - Mark off the second Friday of each month!

Beginning in December, Legends Estates Winery will host a wine and food extravaganza in the raw, romantic ambience of our barrel cellar. Each dinner will be uniquely themed to seasonal or cultural cuisine and feature the talents of some of Niagara's most exciting chefs. What a great way to reward Corporate Excellence or simple self-indulgence alike! For more information, contact Debi McCord at the winery 905-563-6500 or email dmcord@LegendsEstates.com. Intimate seating for 32 guests, \$150.00 p.p. including taxes and gratuity.

❖ **Peninsula Ridge**

Riedel Seminar - Friday, November 26th, 2004 - 7:30pm

Taste for yourself how your favourite wine can show even more character when enjoyed from a glass made specifically to show off that wine. Riedel Crystal of Austria has done extensive research to develop specific glasses to complement a multitude of fine wines.

At Peninsula Ridge we are committed to being your Niagara Riedel Headquarters. We have an extensive inventory of Riedel products, and are the only Niagara winery to feature staff specially trained by Riedel Canada. Join us on the final Friday of every month as we offer an in depth Riedel tasting seminar featuring Peninsula Ridge Estates Wines along with discussions of these special glasses, while further delving into the various facets of viticulture, winemaking, and wine appreciation.

Reservations are required. Please call 905.563.0900 ext. 25. Cost is \$15 per person or \$25 per couple

All ticket prices will be deducted from any Riedel purchase that evening.

❖ **Pillitteri**

Pillitteri Estates Winery is participating in the Taste the Season event on Nov 13/14 & Nov 20/21 along with other winery members from the Wineries of Niagara-on-the-Lake committee.

Pillitteri Estates Winery will be featuring Insalata Della Pasta paired with our 2002 Merlot.

❖ **Reif**

November 13th, 14th and 20th, 21st

Select Late Harvest Chardonnay paired with Baked Stilton & Smoked Empire Apple Tartlet. \$30.00

Passports. Feature a food and wine pairing at each of the 16 Wineries of Niagara-on-the-Lake & a Hand-Blown Glass Ornament.

Passport Tickets available on-line www.niagaraonthelake.com

Winemaker's Dinner at Riverbend in Niagara-on-the-Lake

November 23, 2004

6:30 Reception and 7:30 Dinner. Reservations Required
Cost per person \$ 95.00 pp plus taxes and gratuity
Phone 905-468-8866 for menu details and reservations

❖ **Strewn**

November 1-November 30th -Terroir Bar Special Tasting - A Vertical of Strewn Three

Taste the very best! Our winemaker's specialty is Strewn Three- a classic blend that he makes only in the best years. Sample a flight of StrewnThree from 2002, 2001 and 1998 along with a complementary food nibbler.

\$8.00 p.p. 10:00 am - 6:00 pm

No reservations required

❖ **Thomas & Vaughan**

In the Tasting Room at Thomas & Vaughan November 6-14 - Catch a Cab

Delve into the bold world of Cabernets with a tasting of 2000 Cabernet Franc, 2001 Cabernet Sauvignon Estate and, as a pair, in the 2001 Cabernet Blend. Paired with Bundnerfleisch with fresh cracked pepper and onion. \$6.95 p.p.

❖ **Vineland**

A 4-course pairing menu showcasing Riedel's Vinum Extreme stemware line and our 4-Diamond winery cuisine.

Our celebrated Winemaker, Brian Schmidt and Wayne Bentley of Riedel ~ Makers of the finest Austrian Crystal wine glasses, will lead you on a culinary journey designed to demonstrate the unique attributes of Riedel stemware and increase your enjoyment of our premium wines. Guests take their collector's 4-glass set of Riedel Vinum Extreme stemware home to enhance their wine enjoyment.

Thursday, November 18th, 2004

4-course Winemaker's Dinner & Collector's 4-glass set of Riedel Vinum Extreme Glasses, Wine, Taxes & Gratuity Included
\$225 per person

\$180 Wine Collections Members Pricing
(*Riedel Stemware Retail Value \$210)

Limited Seating, Reserve Early
1-888-846-3526 ext. 33

❖ **Willow Heights**



Holiday Open House

November 26, 27, 28 11:00am to 5:00pm

To celebrate the holiday season, join us at Willow Heights to sample our favourite holiday cocktail..... The Icewine Martini

New releases for this special weekend include... 2003 Chardonnay, 2003 Chardonnay Reserve, 2003 Gamay Noir, 2003 Cabernet Sauvignon, 2002 Tresette Reserve and the 2003 Vidal Icewine.

Our third annual Bin End Sale is extended to our valued customers for this weekend only! In addition, present this notice and receive 25% off all giftware!

What better way to commence the Holiday Season... Good wine, good food and good friends!

Ontario Wine Events

❖ Toronto Gourmet Food & Wine Expo

This event offers a unique opportunity to sample some of the world's finest wines. The program takes place alongside Toronto's biggest and best consumer food and wine show located at the Metro Toronto Convention Centre, South Building, from November 25-28, 2004. This year's Tutored Tasting Program features over 20 sessions hosted by LCBO wine consultants, media personalities and winemaking experts. Designed for both the general enthusiast and connoisseur, participants will be easily directed to sessions that suit their level of interest as each session is coded as either beginner, intermediate or advanced. So whether you consider yourself wine-challenged or wine-refined, there is something here for you. Many of the wines featured in these sessions are available for the first time in Canada and can be purchased on-site.

November 25-28, 2004

Metro Toronto Convention Centre

South Building Exhibit Hall D

222 Bremner Blvd., Toronto

Thursday 6-10pm (VIP Evening)

Friday 2-10pm, Saturday 12-10pm & Sunday 12-6pm

Ontario Wine Industry News

❖ Corporate Changes and a New Direction

St. Catharines, October 22, 2004

Leaders in the grape and wine industry announced a new partnership today with an idea toward a unique growth strategy for the future. Peter Jensen, C.E.O., and Laura McCain-Jensen, Chair of Creekside Estate Winery and associated vineyard holdings in Ontario's Niagara Region and Blomodin Estate in Nova Scotia's Annapolis Valley have joined in partnership with Barry Katzman, who was most recently President of Stoney Ridge Estate Winery in Vineland.

Mr. Katzman, who will be President and C.O.O. of the new company, is a Director of the Wine Council of Ontario and Chair of its Tourism Committee. "After nine years in the wine industry I believe the best is yet to come," Katzman said, referring to the new venture. "I am extremely excited about the potential of this new partnership and specifically the strategy for growth that we have established."

The alliance is a unique idea for consolidation of small to medium size premium wine producers across Canada. This idea, currently being dubbed "Canadian Wine Partners" is a concept which would see quality wine producers banding together to effectively manage the challenges that face smaller producers ranging from vineyard issues to financial concerns, retailing, marketing and distribution.

For Inquiries please contact: Barry Katzman
T. (905) 562-0035 ext.225 or C. (905) 988-0087
E. bkatzman@creeksideestatewinery.comNew

Feature Article

❖ Ontario Fruit Wines

By Richard Best, The Frugal Oenophile

When Is a Wine Not a Wine?

According to a majority of the agencies that make up rules about wine, if it's not made from grapes then it's not really wine. Ignoring for the moment that grapes are themselves fruit, many wine jurisdictions reserve the

term "wine" exclusively for alcoholic beverages produced from the fermented juice of grapes. Anything else is simply not wine. So technically, rather than "Blackberry Wine" maybe we should be asking for "Fermented Blackberry Wine-Style Beverage."

There is a very good argument for making wine from grapes. The majority of grapes, i.e. Vinifera grapes, make good wine, and some -- the so-called "noble" grapes -- make wine that can last and improve for decades. Grapes rarely require any sort of assistance in the form of additives, and the result is usually a wine of quality. Yet the fact that other fruits can often produce equally good wines is mainly lost on those in charge of regulating wine. In effect, it means that a terrible wine made from grapes is a "real" wine in all its glory, whereas a good wine made from other fruits or berries is a non-entity.

N.I.M.B.Y.

It may come as no surprise that this exclusivity was created by the grape industry. The French adopted the rule when grape wines were being threatened by fruit wines. In the early 1800s, French winemakers lobbied to protect their industry from encroachment by other fruits. The result was the passing of a law that declared wine to be the fruit of the grape and nothing else. That preference has been incorporated into current European Union regulations so that fruit wines cannot be marketed simply as wines. In Ontario, neither the Vintners' Quality Alliance (VQA) nor the Wine Council of Ontario acknowledge fruit wines.

Technical Matters

Apart from the assumed superiority of the result, grapes are valued in winemaking because they are pretty much hands off. If all goes well during the growing season and harvest, grapes tend to have all the right ingredients to produce wine. Grapes have ample sugar to ferment the wine to an acceptable level of alcohol, they have enough acid to support the wine, and the skins of red grapes have the tannins that give red wines their distinctive structure.

Other fruits are not so fortunate. Most require, at the least, a topping up with sugar. Some require acid, and some even need to be filtered, boiled or watered down before they will ferment properly. Plus the pectin in most fruits hampers fermentation, so it too must be dealt with through the addition of enzymes.

Consumer Confusion

Wine is confusing enough without factoring the almost

limitless variety of fruit wines, and don't even mention the non-fruit wines: rhubarb, elderflower, parsnip...

I find that many people have trouble sorting through the plethora of grape wines available. With at least a dozen dominant grape names adorning labels, it's no wonder so many people latch onto one grape. Wading through all the Merlot on the shelves is hard enough without having to include wines that resemble Merlot. To add another dozen or so fruit and berry wines and their various combinations would just make matters that much worse. Perhaps the main problem with fruit wines is their image. People just don't know where fruit wines fit. The impression is that they are all sweet and that they are not useful as table wines. A glance at any bookstore shelf will turn up 50-100 books about grape wines, but nary a one about fruit wines. So the consumer must remain in the dark, perhaps reluctantly. And the enthusiastic fruit wine maker remains a voice in the wilderness. What these wines need a good PR person -- someone who can tell us what they're all about and how they fit into the already overcrowded world of wine.

Just wishful thinking?

One could argue that fruit winemakers make fruit wine because they don't have any option. Anyone who has tried will admit that growing good wine grapes isn't an easy task. And if the climate and soil are inappropriate, the effort is doomed. So it may be a case of making lemonade from your lemons, or in this case, apricot wine from your apricots. In Ontario, a number of fruit wineries have popped up in locations that don't stand a chance of growing good grapes, but where tender fruits and berries do just fine. For example, Muskoka Lakes Winery in Bala, Ontario specializes in cranberry wines for the simple reason that they live on a cranberry bog, and Archibald Orchards & Estate Winery in Bowmanville, Ontario is an active apple orchard, and so most of their wines are apple based.

But if lack of grapes was the deciding factor, then why do many of Niagara's wineries produce fruit wines when they would have no trouble growing suitable grapes? Indeed, Sunnybrook Farm Winery * in Niagara-on-the-Lake produces only fruit wines even though they could no doubt rip out a few acres of fruit trees and plant some vines. The enthusiasm for fruit wines in Ontario goes as far as creating Fruit Wines of Ontario, an organization which has laid down fruit wine standards as rigorous as those demanded by the VQA. Fruit wines that pass inspection get to display their Quality Certified (QC) seal.

* Sunnybrook did plant a few acres of grapes - enough to qualify for membership in the Ontario Wine Council - and then promptly abandoned them.



A Smorgasbord Of Flavours

As with grape-based wines, fruit wines come in many styles: sparkling, dry and off-dry table wines, sweet wines, dessert wines, even "Iced" and port-style wines. And beyond just working with a wine style, fruit wine makers can work with many different fruits within a style. Here is just a partial list of fruits and other ingredients being made into wine at Ontario wineries:

Apples
Apricots
Black Currants
Blackberries (Bramble)
Blueberries
Boysenberries
Cherries
Choke Berries
Choke Cherries
Cloudberry
Cranberries
Damson Plums
Elderberries
Gooseberries
Lingonberries
Loganberries
Maple Syrup
Partridgeberry
Peaches
Pears (Perry)
Plums
Raspberries
Red Currants
Rhubarb
Strawberries
Wild Grapes

A Little Reverse Engineering

Most of us are just beginning to get a handle on wine, and that is a pretty big job. Add to that the universe of wine & food matches and the task becomes something of a full-time occupation. And that's just the wines made from grapes. How can we possibly begin to understand the application of fruit wines?

Read any wine review and you'll see something along the lines of "aromas of apple, pear and tropical fruits," "redolent of blueberry, blackberry, blackcurrants, and plums," "apricots, peaches, and a hint of white raspberry on the nose." You'd think they were talking about fruit wine! So why not start with the aromas we look for in our usual wines as a basis for decoding fruit wines?

Merlot fans might find a good match in a Plum wine: deeply coloured with subtle plum flavours and just a touch of tannin. Cab lovers might enjoy a blackcurrant

wine -- rich, spicy and juicy with huge blackcurrant flavour. For whites, look for the same flavour comparisons. Chardonnay often shows apple and pear, so apple and pear wines could be good stand-ins. Sauvignon Blanc leans toward gooseberries, so why not lean toward a gooseberry wine? Riesling can show peach and apricot aromas, and wines made from those fruits can be just as enjoyable.

Another option is to look for blends. Wine with an apple base blended with the berry of choice can be very effective. One of our favourites is Archibald's Apple-blackberry.

Other fruits are not so straightforward. Northern Kiwi, with its intense spice, defies description, and I would be glad to have it on any occasion that called for roast pork. Strawberry table wines are an interesting sidebar. Although made from a red berry, they have a flavour profile similar to Riesling. Gooseberry can also substitute for Chablis. And blueberry...well it tends to mostly taste like blueberry. If you're looking for a good cordial or dessert wine, almost anything will do. Just pick your favourite fruit.

A Healthy Choice

Research has shown that fruit wines have many of the same health benefits as other wines because they are loaded with antioxidants, and they have more vitamins and minerals than grape wines. Plus fruit wines have no histamines and are often a good alternative for someone who gets "red wine headache".

Credibility

I did a tasting of unusual wines that included quite a few big reds. Just for fun, I threw in a Regal Blackcurrant from Scotch Block winery in Milton, Ontario. I had expected that people would do a double take and declare that there was something radically wrong here. I was pleasantly surprised, and a bit amused, when the Blackcurrant got the same warm reception as the other wines.

One of my standard objections to non-grape wines is that they often taste too much like their source. I value grape-based wines for the exotic transformation of aromas and flavours. A wine that merely tastes like peaches is, well, a bit boring. But fruit winemakers are pushing the envelope and getting more out of their wines these days. There will still be an underpinning of pear in a pear wine, but the flavours are less blatant and more complex (with some exceptions). On the other hand, some fruit wines are valued for keeping their flavour. Southbrook's



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Framboise, a fortified dessert wine made from raspberries, is one of Ontario's best selling fruit wines because of the intense hit of raspberry in every sip.

Something to keep in mind is that fruit wines do not age well. It's rare to see a vintage date on a fruit wine, so treat them as any other non-vintage wine and be sure to consume them within a year or two.

I recently attended a fruit wine tasting at Featherstone's Winery in Beamsville, hosted by the Niagara Chapter of the Ontario Wine Society. The tenor of the evening was that the audience would be sceptical of fruit wines and would need some convincing. The winemakers were well represented by an expert panel made up of urban legend Jim Warren, Sunnybrook winemaker Rebecca Goertz, Featherstone's David Johnson, and Paul Lizak from Legends Estates. Of these four, three are accomplished "conventional" winemakers and the Goertz family are fruit wine die-hards.

We sampled a number of wines ranging from a bone dry Gooseberry to a fortified Raspberry, with an astonishing array of styles within a mere eight wines. The Sparkling Mead was perhaps the most unexpected, but all the wines were enjoyable - Red currant-Apple, Cranberry, Goldrich Apricot, Black Raspberry and Spiced Winter Apple. While I won't admit to being a sceptic, I will admit that fruit wines are not at the top of my shopping list. Yet I was quickly able to decide which of these wines I wanted to accompany the food: Gooseberry from Downey's Estate Winery. It came across as a soul mate for an unoaked Chardonnay, and alongside the tasty noshes the Gooseberry wine didn't disappoint.

Current Members of "Fruit Wineries of Ontario"

Applewood Winery
Archibald Orchards & Estate Winery
Bellamere Country Market & Winery
Birtch Farms and Estate Winery
Cox Creek Cellars Estate Winery
Downey's Estate Winery
Legends Estates Winery
Magnotta Winery Corporation
Munro Honey & Meadery
Muskoka Lakes Winery
Norfolk Estate Winery
Rush Creek Wines
Scotch Block Winery
Southbrook Farm & Winery
Sunnybrook Farm Winery
Other Fruit Wineries in Ontario

Brus Orchards & Winery
Chateau Bourget/Pine Hills Orchards
Corcoran Berry Farm & Carolinian Winery - 4823
Dundas Street, Thorndale. (519) 268-2000
County Cider Company
Gould's Apple Orchard and Fruit Winery
Meadow Lane Winery
Ocala Orchards Farm Winery
Puddicombe Estate Winery
St. Jacob's Country Winery and Cider - 40 Benjamin
Rd. Waterloo. (519) 747-2337
Sanson Estate Winery
Strathmore Orchard and Winery - RR 1, Monkland.
(613) 932-1470
Willow Springs Winery

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