



Just Off the Vine ...

The Ontario Wine Society's Newsletter

February 2007

Upcoming Events

Toronto Chapter

Wine Tasting 101

February 20th, 2007

Reception 6:00 p.m. Tasting 6:30 p.m.

\$39 for Members and Non Members

You may be a wine expert, but what about your friends? Have you ever wanted to bring a friend out to an OWS event, but they politely said "no thank you"? Here's your opportunity to bring your friends out to an event where they can learn to appreciate wine as much as you do.

Featured at this event is Linda Bramble. She has designed many courses for the Ontario Wine and Hospitality Industry to teach Wine Appreciation at the beginner and advanced level. Linda is a certified sommelier who hosts a weekly wine show, is a columnist for several magazines, and contributes to several industry publications. As if that weren't enough, Linda has also published several books, her latest entitled, *Touring Niagara Wine Country*. Linda has also hosted a wine and food pairing for our Society

With Linda's extensive background in the wine industry she will share with us the spirit and intrigue of the world of wine. Linda is going to teach how to taste, what to look for and why. With the use of varying degrees of quality of wines, she will demonstrate what one looks for and can expect in a quality wine.

Please see the web site for the event flyer.

Niagara Chapter

The Great Clone Debate

A Hands-on Pinot Noir Blending Exercise

February 22, 2007

Reception 6:30 p.m., Tasting 7:00 p.m.

\$ 35 Members, \$ 45 Non-Members

Cloning: not just for sheep anymore! Long before the world was introduced to Dolly, grape growers were practicing cloning in the vineyards. Cloning is one way to improve consistency of quality and/or characteristics of the fruit from the vineyard, vintage after vintage.

We wine lovers are privileged to reside near Flat Rock Cellars, a winery demonstrating the subtle nuances of different cloned plants. President, Ed Madronich and Winemaker, Marlice Beyers invite us to get up close and personal with three Pinot Noir clones which they use to produce their stunning Pinots. Not only will they share their knowledge, they will share their lab, as you become winemaker for a day. Sip and sample each of the three wines and blend your idea of the perfect Pinot.

This is a hands-on exercise so dress accordingly and bring your well-honed taste buds because at the end of the evening each team will be asked to submit a blend for judging. The winners will be honoured with a prize.

Please see the web site for the event flyer.

News from the Vines

FRED COUCH, OWS – NIAGARA CHAPTER

Linda Franklin has resigned from the Wine Council of Ontario to take on the position of President and Chief Executive Officer of the Association of Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology of Ontario. Under her leadership at the Wine Council, the Ontario wine industry has partnered with the LCBO and the government to develop a 20-year strategic plan, supported by \$40 million in government and industry funding.

The Niagara Regional committee has approved the operating of a winery on a permanent basis by Le Clos Jordanne. The current location at South Service Road and Fifteenth Street in Jordan was supposed to be a temporary location until a multi-million dollar building

was built further south. Since Constellation Brands, Inc. of New York now partly owns Le Clos Jordanne, the decision to build the new winery has been put on hold.

About Thyme Bistro has now opened at 3457 King St, just west of Victoria Ave., Vineland, 905-562-3457. You can bring your own wine. Corkage is \$10 for local Lincoln wines and \$15 for all others. Their wine list features mainly Lincoln wines.

The Ontario Wine Society recently received some great publicity on Hamilton's CH television station. Larry Horne of Calamus Estate Winery and member of the Niagara Chapter's Operating Committee was interviewed for "Niagara Express" by Dan McLean. Larry spoke about the OWS and a tasting event put on by the Niagara Chapter – Bordeaux vs. Ontario.



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Previous Events

Toronto Chapter

Cabernet Franc Tasting

The Time and Date: January 23, 2007, 6 PM

The Event: The Ontario Wine Society presented a 2002 Ontario Cabernet Franc tasting, with Konrad Ejbich as speaker.

The Venue: Ontario Club

The Target Audience: club members, the press, winemakers, prospective members

The Availability/Catalogue: all of the wines are available somewhere. The Ontario wines can be found at the winery. The foreign wines are at the LCBO. The reception wines were Willow Springs Riesling 2003 Niagara (\$12.95), off-dry, aromatic, lots of body, and slightly oxidized (three bottles sampled); and the Grange Estate's Trompou Mill Pinot Gris 2005 Prince Edward County, \$16.95, which will soon be in the 2006 vintage. The 2005 was very tidy and refreshing, again off-dry.

The Quote: "The Society has a lot of activity coming up, including the 25th anniversary celebration of Reif Winery (Feb 20), a new wineries feature (March 12), an Ontario Wine Fair of 100 – 200 bottles (April 2), a dinner at the Bangkok Gardens (April 24), and a Niagara Winery bus trip (June 9)."

The Wines: Konrad had rated the 2002 Cabernet Franc vintage at 91, and several Ontario wines had scored high in the markings. Nine wines were sampled, including three foreigners from South Africa, France, and California). We all tasted the wines blind, not knowing which wine was which. Here are some notes, along with guesses, etc. All wines were Cabernet Franc from 2002.

1. Lailey: \$29, but a bit green and lean, somewhat weedy, definite Eurostyle. 82 points by me. I had no idea whose wine this was, except that it was Niagara.
2. Willow Springs: \$14.95, vanilla tones, mouth-filling palate, long length. 89 points. I rated it First, and at the price, it must also be rated as BEST BUY. Snap it all up...I had no idea whose Ontario wine this was.
3. Kacaba: \$35, hot, thick, chewy with a substantial finish, 86 points. The Society ranked it second, while I placed it third. I thought it was the Pillitteri.
4. Pillitteri: \$50, weedy, well-structured, typical MVC with bell pepper, better with food. 85 points. I picked it as the Kacaba.
5. Bellingham, South Africa: maybe the extra six months gave it a raisinated nose, aging well, a bit dried

out, rustic complexity. 84 points, and I nailed it from South Africa.

6. Colio: \$19.95, more MVC but smooth and soft tannins, atypical, big fruit, not Niagara. Colio? 85 points.

7. St.Nicolas: \$24.95, but a bit shrill from an off-year in Europe. Definite Euro-style, must be the Loire version. Tart opening expanded, but too little too late. 82 points.

8. Ironstone: OK, here's where the betting begins – anybody who could NOT identify this wine needs to turn in his/her card in the palate fraternity/sorority. It hits you over the head with California coconut, chocolate, chewiness, cherries, overly ripe fruit. Hey, guess what? It was the Society's favourite (First). Even I ranked it Second.

9. Angels Gate: \$18.95, and smoky, toasty, massive MVC, rated 85. I had no idea whose Ontario wine this was. Good value for the price.

So I nailed four wines, and mixed up two more...Not bad, since I had just tasted 34 Bordeaux and Ontario blends a few hours before (so had Konrad).

The Food: a serious attempt by the Ontario Club to upgrade the food seemed welcomed: cheeses, terrines, and cocktail food.

The Effectiveness (numerical grade): 91.

Corporate Member Winery Events

COLIO ESTATE WINE

7th Annual Festival of Ice

February 10 11:00 a.m. ~ 3:00 p.m.

An Exhibition of Ice Carving, Wood Carving and Chocolate Carving with Icewine and Chocolate Treats

This years ice carving theme is Animal Kingdom. Come join us for a fun day and see what the carvers create! You get to vote on the carving you like best. For further information call 1-800-263-0802

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EASTDELL ESTATES WINERY

February 16

Valentine's Date Night at The VIEW - Part V of The VIEW monthly dining series. Each month brings a different themed meal for two. For this special date night, love is in the air and on the menu with a specially designed wine-paired Valentine's dinner featuring Aphrodite's secret ingredients. \$80/couple for meal or \$110/couple for meal with suggested wine pairings. Seatings from 5pm. Reservations recommended, call (905) 563-9463 or TheVIEW@eastdell.com to reserve.

Cuvée En Route Passport Event

Winemaker's Choice Tasting

11:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. with Cuvée En Route Passport: Red Cab, Black Cab & Cabernet Merlot. Visit www.cuvee.ca for passport details.

Cuvée Inspired Winemaker's Dinner

March 2 at 7:00 p.m.

Join our winemaker at The VIEW Restaurant at EastDell Estates Winery as he guides you through an exquisite 5 course meal showcasing previous Cuvée award winning wines from EastDell Estates and Lakeview Cellars. Our comfortable dining room with its majestic stone fireplace and windows overlooking rolling vineyards and Lake Ontario provides just the right setting for casual wine country dining! \$95 p.p. not including taxes and gratuities.

Reservations required: 905 563 9463 or email TheVIEW@eastdell.com

Irish Date Night

March 16

Irish Date Night with a VIEW - Part VI of The VIEW monthly dining series. This month brings an Irish theme to celebrate St. Patrick's Day. \$110/couple for meal with suggested wine pairings or \$80/couple for meal without suggested pairings. Seatings from 5pm. Reservations recommended. Call 905 563 9463 or email TheVIEW@eastdell.com to reserve.

Sugar Bush Sunday Brunch

March 25 - Two seatings: 10:30 a.m. & 12:30 p.m.

A special Sunday Brunch in support of the Bruce Trail Association. Enjoy your usual brunch favourites with some Sugar Bush flare! \$3 from each brunch will go towards preserving the Bruce Trail. \$24.95 p.p.. Half price for children under 12 years and no charge for children under 5 years. Guided Bruce Trail hikes through EastDell's property will take place at 2 pm & 4

pm with donations accepted for the Bruce Trail Association. Call 905 563 9463 to reserve.

KONZELMANN ESTATE WINES

St. Patrick's Day Dinner

March 17 at 7:00 p.m.

Konzelmann Estate Wines with in-house Chef Darren Stoute presents the March St. Patrick's Day Dinner... part of the WineMasters Dinner Series at the winery.

This four course dinner with matching wines will be held on St. Patrick's Day. Limited amount of tickets will be sold!

Cost \$70.00/person plus taxes. Contact us at 905-935-2866 or by email at wine@konzelmannwines.com

LAKEVIEW CELLARS

How to Stock Your Home Wine Cellar

February 24

Join our cellar expert for an afternoon session covering the answers to the 5 W's of cellaring. Includes an exclusive wine tasting of three vintage library wines from Lakeview's private cellar. Reservations required call (905) 562-5685 x227 or email Lvretail@lakeviewcellars.ca \$10 p.p.

Throughout the Month of February

Follow the hear line of Lakeview, EastDell, Birchwood and Thomas & Vaughan for different complimentary red wine features! Call (905) 562-5685 x227 or email Lvretail@lakeviewcellars.ca for details.

Cuvée En Route Passport Event

Lakeview's Limited Edition Wine Tasting

11:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. with Cuvée En Route Passport 2004 Syrah Reserve (15th Anniversary Edition), 2005 Starboard (Port-style) & 2004 Baco Noir Reserve. Visit www.cuvee.ca for passport details.

Throughout the Month of March

Be spotted wearing green at any one of our wineries (Lakeview, EastDell, Birchwood and Thomas & Vaughan) and receive a complimentary icewine tasting! Call (905) 562-5685 x227 or email Lvretail@lakeviewcellars.ca for details.



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NIAGARA COLLEGE TEACHING WINERY

Days of Wine and Romance and

Seductions of wine

Special offerings at Niagara College Teaching Winery
Daily from 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Increase your knowledge of wine and viticulture and experience the love of wine and chocolate. During the Month of February receive an exquisite Swiss Chocolate made by Bernhard Sauter, authentic Swiss Chocolatier and Professor at Niagara College, with the purchase of a flight of our featured wines (Cost \$3.00).

Saturdays only: 2:00 p.m.

Take a free tour of the production facility and receive a structured tasting lesson by our knowledgeable guides. This gives you the rare opportunity to ask detailed wine-related questions to students of the wine and viticulture program.

Reservations recommended. Call Tel: 905-641-2252, Ext. 4079

PILLITTERI ESTATES WINERY

A Marriage of Merlot & Dark Chocolate

Four Weekends in February 11:00 a.m. ~ 5:00 p.m.
Cost of Event \$6.00 per person
Reservations Not Required

Discover the delights of Merlot. The Pillitteri Experience offers this beloved grape variety crafted in four unique wine styles: Pillitteri Estates 2004 Merlot, 2002 Merlot Reserve, 2002 Merlot Family Reserve, 2004 Merlot Icewine. Marrying these wines with dark chocolate will please your palate with each successive sip as you progress to taste the best the Pillitteri family has to offer.

Cuvee EnRoute

March 2 - 4 - 11:00 a.m. ~ 5:00 p.m.

During Cuvée EnRoute Pillitteri Estate offers a horizontal flight of our 2004 Cabernet-Merlot, 2004 Cabernet Select Late Harvest, 2004 Cabernet Franc Icewine.

Available complimentary to Cuvee Gala ticket holders or those with a Cuvee Enroute Pass.

Pillitteri Estates
1696 Niagara Stone Road
Niagara-on-the-lake, ON
March 2-4th - 11:00 a.m. ~ 5:00 p.m.

REIF WINERY

“The Romance Collection” - The Days of Wine and Roses at Reif Estate Winery

Weekends in February - 11:00 a.m. ~ 4:30 p.m.

Join us for the Days of Wines and Roses in Niagara-on-the-Lake and experience the first wines from a unique collection featuring the art of renowned local artist Trish Romance. The wines from this year's Romance Collection include a Chardonnay and Cabernet Sauvignon. For the Days of Wines and Roses guests are invited to pair these fine wines with a Du Village Triple Cream Brie in our romantic candlelit Barrel Cellar.

No Reservation Required - Cost \$5.00 per person

“Merlot Times Three” - Cuvee en Route at Reif Estate Winery

March 2, 3, & 4 - 11:00 a.m. ~ 4:30 p.m.

Cuvee is a celebration of the Niagara Wine Industry and its partners. Enjoy an exclusive wine tasting of our Merlot Reserve and First Growth Merlot which are produced from some of our oldest vineyard blocks in the Niagara River Appellation.

Enjoy an exclusive vertical wine tasting showcased in the Estate's German Oak Barrel Cellar.

Complimentary to Cuvee en Route passport holders or \$10.00 for non-passport holders - No reservation required.

Southbrook Wines

Valentine's Barrel Cellar Dinner

February 10 - Cocktails 7:00 p.m. - Dinner 7:30 p.m.

We invite you to join us for and ultimate Valentine's Barrel Cellar Dinner Saturday, Feb. 10th, 2007

Dinner includes Hors D'Oeuvres, 5 Course meal with wine pairing with each course. Menu is available on Southbrook Winery's web site: www.southbrook.com or call Cathy at (905) 832-2548 ext. 242 for more information. As our Cellar dinners are very popular and space is limited, please make your reservations promptly.

Cost: \$75.00/+gst/pst

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STREWN WINERY

Chocolate and Wine:

February 10 - Sessions at 11:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m.
Just in time for Valentine's, we present a special seminar featuring wine and chocolate. Bernard Callebaut Chocolates and the Strewn team up to lead you through the pairing of different wines and chocolate. Taste, sip and pick your favorites.

\$20.00 per person. Reservations Required. 905-468-1229

STONEY RIDGE CELLARS

Valentine's Luncheon in the barrel Room

February 10 - 12:00 noon ~ 2:00 p.m.

\$45 per person

Cupids Valentines Event

February 14 - 6:00 p.m. ~ 8:00pm

Singles meeting singles a cupids wine tasting event

\$25.00

Library Wine Tasting and Luncheon

February 17- 12:00 noon ~ 2:00 p.m.

Join our Wine maker Liubomir Popovici over lunch as we open and taste some rare vintage Stoney Ridge wines

\$40.00

Winemakers Dinner

February 24 - 6:00 pm – 10:00 pm

Second of the season "elegant barrel room dinner"

\$125.00 per person (30 people max)

Mediterranean food and Wine

February 24 - 25

Royal Botanical Gardens

Hamilton

Cuvee Weekend

March 2 - 4 - 10:00 a.m. ~5:00 p.m.

Special tastings at the Winery

Canada Blooms Gala opening night

March 6

Canada Blooms Metro Convention Centre

Toronto

March 7-11

Gala Evening and Launch of our Proprietors Reserve sparkling Wine

March 8 - 7:00 p.m. ~ 10:00 p.m.

Niagara Vs Prince Edward County Taste off

Hosted by Founding Winemaker Jim Warren

March 17 - 12:00 noon ~ 2:00 p.m.

Lunch included. \$40.00perperson

Winemakers Dinner In the Barrel Room

March 24 - 6:00 p.m. ~ 10:00 p.m.

\$125.00 per person

For more information or to reserve your place at all Stoney Ridge Events, please call 905 562 1324 x 25 or toll free 1 866 778 6639 x 25

Other Winery Events

ARCHIBALD ORCHARDS & ESTATE WINERY

A Valentine's Day Gift from Archibalds to you!

Free Gift Wrapping and A Box of French Truffles with every Wine purchase*

*Present this message to receive a 34g box of Dusted French Truffles

Wine, Chocolate, Gourmet Foods & Cheeses... lots of gift ideas for your Sweetheart!

Archibald Orchards & Estate Winery

6275 Liberty Street North, Bowmanville, ON

(905)263-2396

Email: archibalds@idirect.com

Winter Hours are: Friday to Sunday from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.



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CALAMUS WINERY

Our 1st Winemaker's Dinner

CALAMUS Winery & About Thyme Bistro will co-host our 1st Winemaker's Dinner

February 24 at the "About Thyme Bistro" in Vineland
Each fabulous food course paired with the perfect Calamus wine.

It will be an intimate group (maximum 40 guests). Our Winemaker, Arthur Harder, our Assistant Winemaker, Steve Byfield, Larry Horne, General Sales Manager, Derek and Pat, Calamus owners will each head up a table of 8.

Ryan, Imant and Donna at About Thyme Bistro are receiving raves for their menus and we expect to book the 40 spots quickly. A \$20 non-refundable deposit is required to hold each reservation.

\$70 includes 5 food courses, 5 wines and all taxes & gratuities. If you opt to pay the entire amount in advance take \$5 off each ticket, \$65.

For reservations or more info:

Call Calamus Wines at 905-562-9303 or 416-693-9303
or Fax: 416-693-9498

Call About Thyme Bistro at 905-562-3457

FLAT ROCK CELLARS

In The Winemaker's Boots

Flat Rock Cellars invites you to walk "in the winemaker's boots". To experience first hand the magic of life at the winery. We are offering a series of 4 one-day long sessions at key times throughout the year that will allow you to get your hands dirty and live the life of a winemaker for a day.

Book one or all four. Cost per session: \$200 or book all 4 for \$700. Details regarding what to wear and what will specifically be covered during your session will be provided prior to the actual date. For more information or to book, call us at 905.562.8994 or email info@flatrockcellars.com.

KAWARTHA COUNTRY WINES

Kawartha Country Wines has teamed up with Shambhala, an outstanding B&B next to the winery. We are offering wine tasting, tours, dining, and accommodation packages though out February and March. Valentine's packages still available.

Contact: www.shambhala-bedandbreakfast.com or
705-657-8664 for information.

QUAI DU VIN ESTATE WINERY

Bottle Deposit Refund Policy

On Monday, February 5, 2007 the new LCBO bottle return policy will take effect. LCBOs and winery retailers will be charging an additional \$0.10 or \$0.20 deposit on all bottle (depending on size). You will now be able to return liquor and wine bottles to The Beer Store for a full bottle deposit refund. We applaud this multi-billion dollar monopoly on its insightfulness. Their goal is to divert these products from landfills to alternative uses. However, in their infinite wisdom, they failed to recognize that re-using the bottle is an alternative - at present, (According to the LCBO:) "The Beer Store will work with the government to find economically viable ways to support winery's refillable objectives". Quai du Vin has not been informed of any present plan from the LCBO to re-use bottles. Their policy actually discourage those of us with existing recycling programs and make it less feasible for our operation.

As you are aware, Quai du Vin Estate Winery was the first winery in Canada to offer a \$0.25 return deposit on all of our bottles. We are proud of the fact that for 17 years we have reused virtually all bottles returned to the winery, with the exception of broken, damaged or bottles sold to amateur winemakers.

We have made the decision, despite the reduced feasibility of re-using our bottles, that we will continue our own recycling program. Effective Monday, February 5, 2007, Quai du Vin will be reducing the current bottle refund deposit charge to \$0.10 and \$0.20 to match the LCBO deposit mandates. However, Quai du Vin will now be open to receiving any and all wine bottles from any winery. The LCBO mandated rate of exchange will apply, with one exception, all Quai du Vin bottles will continue to be refunded \$0.25. We wish to encourage our customers to return our bottle in that we can continue our re-use policy. Please note that QDV bottles will be refunded with cash or in-store credit. All other wine bottle will only receive in-store credit, redeemable upon that visit. We thank you in advance for your understanding, and we eagerly look forward to receiving all of your wine bottles.

Valentine's Open House

February 10 & 11

Drop in and sample wine, chocolate and our famous crepes

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Maple Madness

March 10 through 18

Drop in and sample a number of maple products including Maple Wine Ice Cream Crepes. Visit some of the local Maple Syrup Shacks.

STRATUS WINES

Cheese@Stratus

February 11 - 2:00 pm

Join us for a seminar and tasting focusing on the principles of pairing wine and cheese. This ultimate 'how to', led by Auberge du Pommier's Maître Fromager, Scott McKenzie, will explore the nuances of pairing through a comprehensive selection of Stratus wines and distinctive Canadian and International cheeses. \$35.00 per person

Stratus Vineyards

2059 Niagara Stone Road, Niagara-on-the-Lake

Ph:905-468-1806 ext 232 or www.stratuswines.com

SUNNYBROOK FARM ESTATE WINERY

Cherry & Chocolate

Thursdays through Mondays in February

Enjoy one of our seductive chocolates with Iced Cherry wine.

\$1.25 per person. No reservations

Sunnybrook Farm Estate Winery

1425 Lakeshore Road, RR.3, Niagara-on-the-Lake Ph.

905-468-1122, Fx. 905-468-1068

www.sunnybrookfarmwinery.com

Other Events of Interest

Grapes for Humanity's fund-raiser dinner:

May 10 - 6.30 p.m. reception

The Four Seasons Hotel, Toronto

Special guest: Stanislas Henriot, President and Director General of Champagne Henriot

Please join Tony Aspler, President and CEO of Grapes for Humanity (Canada), for an exclusive Fine Wine Dinner and Fine Wine Auction featuring the premium wines of the Henriot Group. We are honoured to have Stanislas Henriot as our special guest. The funds raised at this event will be directed to the Polus Centre to help landmine victims in Colombia. Coffee workers in Colombia put themselves at daily risk in their efforts to feed their families and build up the local economy.

Grapes for Humanity's funds will help support landmine survivors with prosthetic and economic rehabilitation.

Wines to be served with the dinner are:

Henriot Souverain Brut Champagne

William Fèvre Chablis Bougerots 2004

Bouchard Père et Fils Meursault Genevières 2004

Bouchard Père et Fils Beaune du Château 2003

Bouchard Père et Fils Volnay Caillerets 1999

Bouchard Père et Fils Beaune de L'Enfant Jésus 2001

Château des Charmes Riesling Icewine 2002

Limited Seating - phone 1-416-922-7776 or email: tony.aspler@sympatico.ca.

Tickets: \$500 each. Corporate tables for 8 persons - \$6000.

If you can't attend please consider a donation to Grapes for Humanity. Call 416-922-7776,

For information on Grapes for Humanity, visit: www.grapesforhumanity.com.

The Baco Noir Challenge - the Search for Ontario's Best Baco Noir

February 5, 12, 19, 26 2007 - 7:00 p.m. ~ 10:00 p.m.

Southbrook Winery Tasting Room - 1061 Major Mackenzie Drive Richmond Hill

The Challenge Continues ... throughout the month of February (Monday nights) OntarioWineReview is holding a Baco Noir Challenge to find Ontario's Best Baco Noir. Full details can be found on the website - www.ontariowinereview.com - including wines being poured, which nights and the cost of the event.

This is the first time so many wineries (24) have entered this many wines (37) for the crown of a hybrid grape (Baco Noir). Don't miss your chance to have your say in picking Ontario's Best Baco.

The cost. - \$30 per person, per night ... discounts available for multiple nights and groups.

Any other special instructions. - payment is accepted by Cheque, Visa, Mastercard, and American Express ... contact Michael Pinkus by phone 416-346-2223 or by email michael@ontariowinereview.com with any questions, to book a night or to make credit card purchase for tickets.



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CUVÉE WEEKEND 2007 EVENT LISTINGS

Cuvée Gala at the Fallsview Casino Resort

March 3, 2007

Price: \$200.00 per person, includes Gala admission and En Route Passport

Tickets: www.cuvee.ca or (905) 684-8688

Celebrate the best of the Ontario wine industry in red carpet style. This black tie optional gala, known as the "Oscars" of Ontario wine, is the not-to-be missed event of the wine and food enthusiast's calendar. After the Cuvée awards are announced, taste the winners and specially selected wines from fifty wineries while sampling the creations of Canada's leading chefs. Participating wineries and chefs can be found at www.cuvee.ca.

Cuvée En Route

March 2 ~ 4 at Niagara wineries

Price: \$30.00 per person for passport only, or included with Gala admission

Tickets: www.cuvee.ca or (905) 684-8688; sold on site at participating wineries throughout the weekend

Tour and taste along the wine route throughout the weekend, when the wineries roll out the red carpet to feature themed tasting flights of specially chosen wines and restaurant events. On Sunday, shop for the highly prized Cuvée award-winning wines direct from the wineries. Details of tastings and events are found at www.cuvee.ca.

CANADIAN CLUB OF HALTON PEEL

Guest Speaker Dinner

Jim Warren – "Niagara Wines: Terroir to Tetrapack"

April 19 – Registration 6:00 pm; Dinner 7:00 pm

Jim Warren, Winemaker & Professor, Niagara College Teaching Winery, and Founder, Stoney Ridge Winery, in his after-dinner remarks will give us an update on the progress and successes of the Niagara College Teaching Winery and what's now, what's new, & what's next in the Ontario wine industry. Members \$30; Non-Members \$40; Students \$15. Oakville Conference Centre, Oakville (QEW & Bronte Road). For information and reservations call Barry Wylie at 905-827-6302 or e-mail bwylie@globalserve.net.

An Interview with Natalie MacLean

GLEN C. SIEGEL

I spoke with Natalie MacLean on the telephone from her home in Ottawa, Ontario one afternoon in early January about her new book "Red, White and Drunk All Over, A Wine-Soaked Journey from Grape to Glass". What doesn't come across in these words is the laughter and fun that followed.



OWS: Some of the chapters from your book are related to the content on your website and electronic Newsletter. Is it harder to write for a book as opposed to the website? How is it different?

NM: It is different but not harder to write a chapter in a book instead of an article for a website. I think of it as being similar to the difference between a sprint and a marathon: both are running but you have to approach the two events quite differently. An article is about 1000 words, more or less. With a chapter for a book you can go 6000 to 12000 words which allows you to dig deeper into the subject. You can cover have more layers of content and you can get more deeply involved with your subject matter. You can have more character development; address more issues such as the history and the food of the area. It's not harder or better, it's just different. You also have to adjust when you go back to writing articles.

OWS: This book could also have been called "Adventures On the Wine Route" if Kermit Lynch hadn't already used the title. Which came first – the idea of writing a book or the ideas for the various adventures?

NM: It was half and half. I've been writing for 8 years for my website and electronic newsletter. The articles that interested me most were about stories where I participated

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directly in them, where I was learning something. The experience is richer when you are writing, the closer you can get to real life. In addition, it was always these articles where I got the best feedback from my readers. When the editor approached me about writing a book, I started to consider what I wanted to write about. I realized that it was the story telling that was interesting and more fun.

OWS: In the Afterward, you mention that you didn't want to write a book that needed to be updated. Is this why there are no specific time references in this book although there are some time markers such as your reference to the movie "Sideways"?

NM: Part of that is for the shelf-life of the book. I wanted it to age well. It was part of the narrative process that the stories be timeless. I might update this eventually, but there is no real reason to do this.

OWS: In the book, you jump from Burgundy to California and then back to Champagne. Why did you use this order? I'm assuming that you traveled to both Burgundy and Champagne at the same time.

NM: Yes, I did. I considered starting with California but decided to start in the old world, where wine making started. I started with an old world red wine region, Burgundy, and then went to the new world wine region of California to show the differences in the attitudes and approaches to wine-making. I wanted to compare still wines before I went on to sparkling wines, wine critics and the wine business. When I was speaking with California's Randall Grahm from Bonny Doon Vineyards, he references old world wines and attitudes. It only made sense to start in the old world to give his comments some context.

OWS: Speaking of the old world, how do you get to go into places like Domaine de la Romanée-Conti (DRC) and Domaine Leroy? I'm sure you don't just call them up and ask if you can drop in.

NM: No, you don't! I worked through SOPEXA, the marketing firm for many French companies. I'm extremely grateful to DRC and Madame Bize-Leroy for taking the time to see me. They don't need the publicity and they can't open their places to everyone as they don't have enough wine available to do that. But, like so many people in the wine business, they are very hospitable and very generous with their time. By welcoming me into their wineries, I think they really welcomed all my readers into their lives.

OWS: The Introduction and the first chapter "The Good Earth" are more sensual than the rest. For example, you describe Burgundy's Côte D'Or as being "a graceful arc, like the curve between a woman's shoulders and hips".

You also mention the suppleness of the 2003 Nuits-St-Georges as feeling like unseen hands pulling "a velvet dress over my head and down over my breast and hips, until the hem brushes my thighs." I was reading this on the subway and I blushed!! Do you have a special affinity for Burgundy, both the place and the wine?

NM: (A great deal of laughter followed my question.) Yes!! Pinot Noir is my favourite wine but I found that the Burgundy region resonated with me even though it was the dead of winter. It's truly special! I also write from a woman's perspective. Some writers, like Robert Parker, tend to be over analytical while other, like Jancis Robinson and myself, write about how the wine makes them feel. Some things can't be, or shouldn't be, analyzed. They should be experienced.

OWS: In one chapter you talk about a feud between Robert Parker and Jancis Robinson about a specific wine, the 2003 Château Pavie. It seems that Parker rated with wine very highly, between 96 and 100, while Robinson gave the wine a 12 out of 20. Have you tried this wine? If so, what did you think of it?

NM: I tried earlier vintages. I couldn't try the 2003 as my manuscript was due before the 2003 was bottled. It's definitely a turbo wine, very fruit driven. As 2003 was a very hot year, I would expect that it was even more fruit driven.

OWS: While talking about food and wine and dinner parties, you talk about "decantists", those who feel that most or all wines benefit from being exposed to oxygen by being poured into a decanter before drinking, and "bottlists", those who feel that decanting can be harmful. You seem to be a decantist. Was there a specific incident or wine that triggered this?

NM: It was an evolutionary process that reflects my personal preferences. I experimented with decanting wines and now I decant big reds like Cabs. I don't decant Pinot Noir. Really big reds not only get decanted, but they might get double-decanted, that is, decanted and then decanted into another decanter. For a really huge red, I will pour the first glass well before dinner so that it gets the full effect of the oxygen in the wine glasses.

OWS: There is not a lot of mention of Canadian wines in this book although you talk about them on your website. Where do you see Canadian wines in relation to the rest of the world? Are our best good enough?

NM: Yes, we rate up there with the best internationally. The quality of our wines is right up there where they should be. Speaking of Canadian wines, did you see my article on Icewine in the December issue of *Bon Appetit* magazine?



Just Off the Vine ...

The Ontario Wine Society's Newsletter

February 2007

Ed. Note: this article was emailed to subscribers of Nat Decants.

OWS: Do you have a secret, or not so secret, desire to make wine or did it get burned out of your system in California?

NM: No, I don't but if I did, picking grapes in the California sun certainly would have cured me of it.

OWS: Now for the Desert Island question. If you had only one wine, or the wine from one grape to drink forever, which would it be?

NM: DRC! Having met the winemaker, I feel a more personal involvement with the wine. I think that actually going to the wine making regions, meeting the people, seeing the vines, tasting the grapes, gives you a whole new perspective on wine. It gives you a much deeper appreciation of the wine. – Wait a second.... Do I have to pay for the wine? If so, pinot noir. If not, DRC!

OWS: Do you have another book project in mind? If so, what is it?

NM: Yes but with a much longer time line. This book was written in two years. I had to give up writing for everything but my regular writing to focus on the book. I really love journalism as it is a deeply satisfying experience although you spend 80% of your time alone. My website newsletter has over 62,000 readers. With that, I get wonderful feedback which gives me a real and immediate connection to my readers. I'm not sure what my next book project will be but I expect that it will take around 5 years.

RED, WHITE AND DRUNK ALL OVER

A Wine-Soaked Journey from Grape to Glass

By Natalie MacLean

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REVIEWED BY GLEN SIEGEL

Natalie MacLean's book is an account of her adventures in the wine world over the past few years. She takes us into Domaine de le Romanée-Conti to look at traditional, old world wine making and then next door to discuss bio-dynamics with Lalou Bize-Leroy and Anne-Clause Laflaive. After that, she's off to California to talk to new world vintners and to bake in the California sun while picking grapes.

MacLean also takes us with her while she visits "The Jug Shop", a wine store in San Francisco where she meets Chuck Hayward, one of the area's most knowledgeable wine experts and then she's off to actually work in

Discovery Wines, a wine store in the upscale Village in New York City. In between the two stores, she also talks about selling wine, the changing attitudes towards wine and the trend away from corks.

She discusses, in one chapter, correct glassware, why you need it and how to hold a wine-tasting in your home. Although this might sound a little unfocused, it's more like good conversation, one topic flows into the next and the ideas connect effortlessly.

MacLean's account of her day as an "undercover sommelier" at La Baccara, an award winning restaurant in Québec will bring a tired smile to many sommeliers' faces as MacLean admits that the job is not nearly as easy as a good sommelier makes the job look. She points out sommeliers are the "gentle persuaders" of the wine world whose job is to convince the customer that "she is worth treating herself to that special bottle."

When you share a special bottle of wine with friends, you tell them a story about your visit to the winery or when you met the winemaker. This book is a story book. Each chapter stands by itself which makes this an easy book to read. You can read one chapter and put the book down, then come back to it later.

Natalie MacLean's website can be found at <http://www.nataliemaclean.com> where you can sign up for the Nat Decants Newsletter.

