



Just Off the Vine ...

The Ontario Wine Society's Newsletter

March 2006

Upcoming Events

Toronto Chapter

The Art of Pairing Wine & Cheese

March 14 - Reception: 6:00 p.m. Tasting: 6:30 p.m.
Ontario Club

SPECIAL DOOR PRIZE FOR THIS TASTING

To continue celebrating the 15th Anniversary of the Ontario Wine Society, the Toronto Chapter is offering it's first ever Wine & Cheese pairing. Discover the terroir of Ontario at a tutored cheese and wine tasting given by Maitre Fromager Kathy Guidi featuring numerous Ontario artisan cheese selections and 8 Ontario wines. For more information on Kathy, please check out her bio on the back of this flyer. The flavourful cheese selection is sponsored by Balderson Cheese and WinerytoHome.com and includes two of Balderson's best cheddars, and cheeses from 5 creameries across Ontario with cow, sheep, goat, young and old, raw and pasteurized, gentle to piquant. With Kathy's assistance, we have confirmed the following wines for us to pair with the various Ontario cheeses:

Joseph's Estate 2001 Off Dry Gewurztraminer
Willow Springs 2004 Testa Limited Reserve Pinot Grigio
Pillitteri Estates 2004 Unoaked Chardonnay
Hernder Estates 2004 Autumn Collection Chardonnay
Pillitteri Estates 2002 Cabernet Franc
Willow Springs 2003 Baco Cabernet
Huff Estates 2004 South Bay
Willow Springs 2004 Vidal Icewine

In conjunction with the theme of our tasting, Parmalat Canada, makers of Balderson cheese, are offering us, as a door prize, two complimentary passes to the Toronto Wine & Cheese Show being held on March 24, 25 and 26, 2006 at the Toronto International Centre an exciting event that no wine lover would want to miss.

Niagara Chapter Annual Social Event

Tour and Social at Henry of Pelham Winery

March 18 - Reception: 1:00 p.m. Tour - 1:30 p.m.
Henry of Pelham Winery

Come out and enjoy our first Saturday afternoon event! This year we will enjoy the daylight at Henry of Pelham. We will arrive to a 1:00pm reception where we will sample a refreshing estate wine prior to an escorted tour of the facility. Afterwards, we will retreat upstairs to the beautiful loft in this winery that now occupies a historical

building erected in 1842, originally known as the Henry Smith Tavern. There, a mini-wine fair and social will be waiting for us.

Don't forget, this is the day of our election, so if you're interested in helping out on the Niagara Chapter Executive, email or call Yvonne to inform her (yvonnehalliday@yahoo.com).

Other things happening on this afternoon are:

- Guess the wine competition
- Guest Speaker
- Sample wines from the OWS cellars
- Networking and chatting with fellow members
- Scrumptious nibblies

This will be a casual affair and the nature of our tour will depend largely on the weather. Please dress appropriately for the weather as we will be touring a working wine facility and may go outdoors.

Previous events

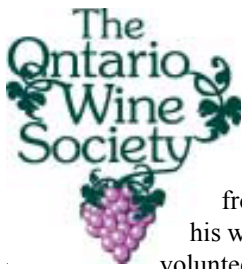
Toronto Chapter

A Special Anniversary Tasting

DEAN TUDOR

The Time and Date: Tuesday, February 21, 2006, 6 PM

The Event: "A Special Anniversary Tasting" of the Ontario Wine Society, celebrating 15 years of collegiality. The tasting was of Ontario VQA methode traditionnelle sparkling wines. This was, I think, the first time that an assortment of currently available MC VQA wines were shown off in Toronto - maybe even the first time any VQA MC sparklers were assembled for just the specific purpose of tasting VQA MC sparklers. Eight MC sparklers were tasted, as well as Inniskillin Sparkling Icewine 2003 (harvested January 2004, Charmat method, on lees for nine months: it was exciting, primarily because the dissolved carbon dioxide provide a bracing refreshing feel to offset the over-the-top sweetness on the palate). The reception wine was a lively Charmat from Colio CEV Sparkling Lily 2004 (\$14.95; some nutty crispness, quaffing wine). I spotted the Vineland Estate Brut, but when I tried it, I was underwhelmed; it did not taste like an MC. I checked the label and discovered that while the OWS was expecting the Brut Reserve MC, we actually tasted the Brut 2004 Charmat, a nice wine (slightly off-dry) but not MC quality. They must have sent the wrong wine. Unfortunately, I didn't get to it until near the end of the evening (I went alphabetically). Instead of a sitdown tasting format, it was a walk around with a few food



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stations. Angelo Pavan, the winemaker from Cave Spring Cellars, came to pour his wine. Other wines were poured by OWS volunteers.

The Venue: Ontario Club

The Target Audience: A great turnout of Ontario Wine Society members, friends, guests, the press. A pleasant surprise was the attendance of all the past and present and future presidents of the OWS. After 10 years, Bruce Barber was stepping down, and Robert Moore will be the incoming President for 2006/07.

The Availability/Catalogue: Most of these VQA wines can be obtained through Doug Tower who runs www.winerytohome.com (1-866-254-6075). I'd like to thank the Ontario Wine Society for inviting me to this — and other - functions, and to allow me to engage in the tastings of VQA Ontario wines.

The Quote: "I cannot wait for the historical dinner on April 25 at the U of T's Faculty Club. There'll be tons of great food, lectures on the meal, and Henry of Pelham wines - and all those Group of Seven paintings. What a great idea!"

The Wines: For me, the hands-down winner was Cave Spring Cellars Brut 2003, entirely pinot noir (from limestone soils), aged for 15 months on its lees, very French in style (\$27.95 at winery). The next level, down a notch, goes to both Chateau des Charmes Brut NV, aged on lees for three years, and a blend of chardonnay and pinot noir, \$21.95) and Thirteenth Street Funk Premier Cuvee 2001 (OWS notes say 5 years on the lees, all Chardonnay, but the back label says pinot noir and chardonnay [in that order]; it had off-dry complexity and fruit). Henry of Pelham contributed two MC sparklers - Cuvee Catherine Brut NV (30 months on lees; biscuits and baked apples; \$29.95) and Cuvee Catherine Rose Brut NV (30 months on lees; cherry-berry tones, pinot noir and chardonnay, great blush colour, \$29.95).

Hillebrand Estates Winery had its Trius Brut NV (70% chardonnay, 30% pinot noir, no pinot meunier anymore; 30 months on lees; good consistency and medium toast, off-dry on palate, not as crisp as previous versions, \$21.95).

Jackson-Triggs Vintners Proprietors' Grand Reserve NV (creamy with citric tones), and Peller Estates Founder's Series Cristalle NV, made with chardonnay, pinot noir and some added icewine, off-dry in a "sec" mode, \$29.95. The best buy of the evening was Chateau des Charmes Brut NV at only \$21.95.

The Food: cheese and liverwurst toasted spread, fresh fruit

The Effectiveness (numerical grade): 89.

Niagara Chapter

The New Kids on the Block

YVONNE HALLIDAY

January 17, 2006

At our January tasting, we tasted ten wines from five of the newest wineries in the Niagara Region including Stratus, Tawse, Fielding, Flat Rock and the "as of yet not open to the public" - Mike Weir Winery.

Representatives from each winery were there to talk about their wines and locations. It was a stellar line-up of premium wines that proved the future of wines in Niagara is strong.

As each of the representatives spoke, there emerged some commonalities. Many of the new wineries seemed very much focused on ecologically sound vineyards, buildings, procedures, or farming. Although it is not a requirement or government regulation, this environmental kindness seems to be a popular choice or mission of many new winery owners. These choices include features like gravity-fed processing systems, geothermal heating and cooling systems, environmentally sensitive waste management, minimal spray strategies & environmentally friendly farming practices. Today's emerging wineries seem to be more concerned about keeping it natural and the Niagara Region will have a stronger future because of it.

When asked what they felt was in store for the future of the Winescape in Niagara, many of the representatives mentioned a trend towards many smaller wineries, more focused on premium wines (even with their impressive buildings, the wineries present all seemed to fall within



These are 6 of the "new kids" involved in Niagara's ever-growing wine industry. Brad Gowland (Tawse); Andrzej Lipinski (Fielding); Curtis Fielding (Fielding); Suzanne Janke (Stratus); Ed Madronich (Flat Rock); Peter Jensen (Mike Weir) each presented excellent examples of their product.

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the cottage or small winery category). It was interesting to hear that they also noted an increased trend towards teamwork among wineries – as opposed to competition, thereby creating a healthy spirit in Niagara. It is my opinion that this will only help us gain a stronger position in the global market.

We'd like to thank Stratus Winery, Suzanne Janke, and her staff for hosting the tasting; and our speakers Brad Gowland (Tawse), Curtis Fielding and Andrzej Lipinski (Fielding), Ed Madronich (Flat Rock), and Peter Jensen (Mike Weir Winery). I'd also like to thank Peter Gill for planning this tasting, and Matt Hemmingsen for catering. Pictures of the event were taken by Bruce Jackson, and can be viewed on the web-site:

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/photoshopplake>

2005 Cuvée Winners – You be the Judge

YVONNE TROUT

February 23, 2006

With Cuvée fast approaching in March, it was the perfect time to learn what it was all about. Our evening started out with a short tour of the Magnotta facility. As Canada's 3rd largest producer of wine, it was an impressive facility with features like a Pot Still - awaiting transport to their Vaughn location - and two rotary fermenting tanks. We then made our way to our seats at the tasting.

First to say a few words was Liz Palmieri, from the Niagara Community Foundation (NCF). The NCF organizes Cuvée and she explained the features of the weekend including the touring passport and the Saturday gala. In addition, she informed us they are having a draw for three prizes of all the 2005 winners (over 35 bottles)! For tickets, go to: www.cuvee.ca.

Our guest speaker, Dr. Gary Pickering then led us through the tasting. Dr. Pickering is a Professor of Oenology at Brock University and the Chair of the Independent Review Board for Cuvée in 2005. He explained how the wines submitted to Cuvée are judged by the winemakers themselves. In a blind tasting, they are asked three questions.

1. How would you rate this wine out of 20 (3 for colour, 7 for nose, 10 for flavour)?
2. Does this wine represent excellence in Ontario Winemaking?
3. Does this wine deserve a Cuvée Gold status?

Once all the wines have been assessed, the results are checked by the Independent Review Board. The winners are then identified and Gold awards are granted.

As we assessed the wines in our own blind tasting, we tried to guess which one was selected as the 2005 winner. We were presented with 4 pairs of wine, each from a

different Cuvée category of judging, and each including one Cuvée winner, and one of its competitors. For the most part, our members were fairly accurate, as the majority of members selected the wines that won as their favourite of the pair. Of course there were all sorts of opinions flying across the room whenever someone strongly disagreed which made for a humorous night! The winners we tasted that night included:

Magnotta's 2003 Sauvignon Blanc Special Reserve – Best Sauvignon Blanc

Niagara College's 2003 Chardonnay Barrel Fermented/Barrel Aged – Best White

Lakeview's 2002 Baco Noir Reserve – Best Red Hybrid

Jackson Triggs's 2002 Proprietor's Grand Reserve Meritage – Best Red

We'd like to thank Magnotta Winery, Susan Wall, and her staff for hosting the tasting; and our speaker Dr. Gary Pickering for leading us through the tasting. I'd also like to thank Rob Berry for catering, and Liz Palmieri and Frank Caplan for speaking on the NCF. Pictures of the event were taken by Bruce Jackson, and can be viewed on the web-site: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/photoshopplake>

News from the Vines

FRED COUCH, OWS – NIAGARA CHAPTER

Congratulations to Lawrence Buhler who is now the new winemaker at Peller Estates Winery. Lawrence replaces Rob Summers. Chef Darren Stoute has joined Konzelman Estate Winery. Watch for Darren's special luncheons and other events. Check out the website at www.konzelmannwines.com. Frank Dodd is now the Executive Chef at Hillebrand's Vineyard Café. He was formerly the Chef at Langdon Hall Country House. Sue and Fred Couch are the recipients of the first Niagara Chapter President's Volunteer Award. This annual award goes to a Niagara Chapter executive or volunteer who has shown dedication and hard work throughout the year. Driving down to wine country? Be sure to check out the Upper Canada Cheese Company – 4159 Jordan Road in Jordan Station. Their website is www.uppercanadacheesecompany.com

From the OWS Website

The Webmaster has added these links to Ontario wineries:

Prince Edward County:

Thirty-Three Vines Vineyard

Erie North Shore:



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Viewpointe Winery
Wagner Orchards & Winery

Mastronardi Wines

Other Areas:

Carolinian Winery
Kawartha County Wines
Munro Honey & Meadery
Pine Farms Orchard & Winery

BY CHADSEY'S CAIRNS

<http://www.bychadseyscairns.com/>

Terroir Wine Celebration

May 20-21

The Prince Edward County Winegrowers are holding their first annual Terroir Wine Celebration on the Victoria Day Weekend, May 20- 21. On Saturday, there will be a wine and food celebration at the Crystal Palace in the Picton Fair Grounds where the wineries will offer some new releases and our local chefs will team up. We expect to have at least a couple of new offerings by then.

An exhibition of prints made from the soils of our vineyards by a well-known German artist will be another highlight of the event. On Sunday and Monday, the wineries will be open for follow-up visits. I will send out more information closer to the date. I expect it will be a very popular event, so contact me soon, if you would like the names of some of our best inns and B & B's.

CAVE SPRING CELLARS

<http://www.cavespringcellars.com/>

Get the Dirt!

March 11, 18, & 25 - 11:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m.

The limestone-rich Chinguacousy clays of the Beamsville Bench are the cornerstone of our finest estate wines. Taste the difference that soil and site can make.

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

\$15.00/person

20/20 Wine Weekend!

April 28-29

Celebrate Cave Spring's 20th anniversary with a weekend getaway at the Inn On The Twenty, including a Winemaker's dinner with founding winemaker Angelo Pavan & tastings of vintage highlights from over the past 20 years.

Call 1-800-701-8074 for details.

True or Fault?

April 1, 8, 15, 22 & 29 - 11:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m.

Faults in wine often lie undetected by the palate. Discover the nature of particular wine faults through wine tastings and sensory evaluation kits.

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

\$15.00/person

CHÂTEAU DES CHARMES

<http://www.chateaudescharmes.com/>

Connoisseur Series

Join us for a series of in-depth seminars and tastings for those as passionate about wine as we are. Thursdays and Sundays at 2pm. Space is limited to the first 12 people. Reservations required. \$15 per seminar.

March: Reds of the St. David's Bench Vineyard

The warmest sub appellation in Niagara boasts some of the most complex red wines made in the area. Taste sunshine in a glass.

April: Just Desserts

Learn about the similarities and differences in producing Late Harvest,

Totally Botrytis Affected (TBA) and Icewine. This seminar will be \$20.

EASTDELL ESTATES

<http://www.eastdell.com/>

Sugar Bush Blues at EastDell Estates

March 25 - 7:00 p.m. - 10:00 p.m.

Come...Listen Come...Taste Come...Play

A unique fundraiser in support of The Bruce Trail Association. Purchase your tickets now for an evening of food & wine tastings, live blues entertainment featuring The Johnny Max Band and live and silent auctions.

Dress code: Denim & Diamonds. Tickets are \$95p.p. with a \$50 tax receipt from The Bruce Trail Association. Call (905) 563-9463 or visit www.eastdell.com for tickets or more information .

Sugar Bush Family Fun

March 25 & 26

Daytime activities include: Scavenger hunts, Bruce Trail led hikes & Horse-drawn carriage rides. Saturday morning pancake breakfast and Sugar Bush Sunday Brunch. Call (905) 563-9463 for more information or visit www.eastdell.com

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Easter Brunch

April 16

Spend Easter with your family while enjoying a special Easter Brunch at The VIEW Restaurant at EastDell Estates. A delectable buffet setting of delicious brunch favourites including a hot carving station, poached salmon, bacon & eggs, Niagara fresh fruit, seasonal salads and a mouth watering sweets table. Reservations recommended. \$23.95 p.p. Children under 12 are \$12.95. Call (905) 563-9463 to reserve.

FIELDING ESTATES WINERY

<http://www.fieldingwines.com/>

Ultimate Insider Sample & Shop Experience

April 8 – 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

This exclusive personal shopping experience offers you the opportunity to taste and purchase special wines in a private setting. Each wine is showcased at a tasting station hosted by winemaking staff and the Fielding family, where you can sit down, relax, ask in-depth questions, and sample wines that are otherwise unavailable. Drop in any time during the hours of 11 a.m. and 5 p.m., and go home with something special for your cellar.

The event is by invitation only but is open to Ontario Wine Society members. Reserve your spot by calling 905.563-0668 (1.888.778.7758), or e-mailing heidi@fieldingwines.com before April 3, 2006 and mentioning this newsletter. As an ultimate insider, you are invited to bring along up to five friends to this special event. Please include the names of those in your party when you reserve.

JACKSON-TRIGGS NIAGARA ESTATE

<http://www.jacksontriggswinery.com/en/niagaraEstate/index.html>

Savour the Sights

April 1 - 6:30 p.m.

\$135.00 + taxes + gratuity

Enjoy an epicurean experience including five courses of fine food and wine served in picturesque locations throughout the winery.

Seating is limited, reservations required. 905-468-4637 ext 226 or 1-866-589-4637

MALIVOIRE WINE COMPANY

<http://www.malivoirewineco.com/>

Winemaker's Dinner

The Charles Inn,
209 Queen Street,
Niagara-on-the-Lake, ON
March 25

Join Shiraz Mottiar for his first official Winemaker's Dinner. Chef Bill Brunyansky has created a stunning five-course menu that will be paired with Malivoire wines and presented by Shiraz to an intimate group. Only 40 seats available and they are booking quickly.

\$110 per person (plus applicable taxes and service charges). For reservations, call 1-866-556-8883 or 905-468-4588.

PILLITTERI ESTATES WINERY

<http://www.pillitteri.com/>

Toronto Wine & Cheese

March 24 - 26

Toronto International Centre

The Toronto Wine & Cheese show is Canada's leading show of its kind. Now in its 23rd year, the show is known for its informative and refined selection of gourmet food and award-winning wines, Tutored Tastings, and Wine Seminars. Visit us at booth #420 and sample some of our fine wines...we look forward to your visit. For more information go to

<http://www.towineandcheese.com/>

Third Annual Comedy Night at Pillitteri Estates Winery

March 31

Charity fundraiser for Red Roof Retreat.

To purchase tickets and for more information contact Lucy Friesen at lucy@pillitteri.com

The Art of Wine Show

Thursday April 27th 7:00 p.m. - 10:00 p.m.

Museum London

The Art of Wine Show is a successful fundraising event for the Museum. It's a premier wine tasting event featuring award winning international and Ontario wines, fabulous food, specialty cheeses and live musical entertainment. Pillitteri Estates Winery will be pouring 'i baci' wines, featuring labels with artwork created by Montreal artist Niko.

For more information and to purchase tickets please call 519-661-0333.



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REIF WINERY

<http://www.reifwinery.com/>

First Growth Barrel Tasting

April 8 – 3:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Be among the first to experience a preview of Reif's 2002 First Growth Collection as winemaker Roberto DiDomenico guides you through a tasting of barrel samples of the First Growth Cabernet Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon, Pinot Noir and Merlot as well as our first Canadian Oak Barrel Fermented Icewine. -Wines will be accompanied by gourmet food pairings-

Reservations are required - Cost: \$39.95 per person.

Telephone 905-468-WINE or email events@reifwinery.com

Exclusive to Wine Club Members - Visit us on-line to find out how you can join

STRATUS VINEYARDS

<http://www.stratuswines.com/>

Itadakimasu

Stratus Vineyards and Edo on Eglinton present a Contemporary Kaiseki Ryori Winemaker's Dinner.

An extraordinary meeting of East meets Wine!

April 3 - 6:30 p.m.

Edo on Eglinton

484 Eglinton Avenue, Toronto

\$125.00 per person inclusive

Chef Ryo Ozawa of EDO on Eglinton, pairs a menu of contemporary Japanese cuisine with the highly acclaimed wines of Stratus presented by our own J-L Groux.

Reserve at 416-322-3033

Showcase of Chefs

Stratus Vineyards and Mai Vi Restaurant

March 21 - 6:30 p.m.

Niagara College Culinary Institute

Glendale Campus, Niagara-on-the-Lake

\$95 inclusive. Reserve at 905-641-2252

Lessons in the art of cooking – Best of LIV

March 23 - 6:00 p.m.

L'Escoffier

17 Lloyd Street, St. Catharines

\$100 per person. Reserve at 905-934-3924

Join Stratus and Chef Michael Price of LIV Restaurant for an evening of achievable and inspiring cuisine taught with style and simplicity. Proceeds will benefit Mainstream Niagara's client services.

55 at 20 – A Winemaker's Dinner at 20 King

April 5 - 6:30 p.m.

45 King Street West, Kitchener

\$95 per person plus taxes and gratuities. Reserve at 519-745-8939

Stratus Vineyards leaves Highway 55 in Niagara-on-the-Lake for a fabulous celebration of wine and food at renowned Kitchener restaurant, 20 King.

Santé – The Toronto Bloor-Yorkville Wine Festival

May 2– 7

Sip, Savour and Shop – Read Between the Wines – Chapter One

May 6 - 1:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.

The Cookbook Store

850 Yonge Street at Yorkville Avenue, Toronto

Drop into The Cookbook Store, Canada's neighborhood treasure, to sample the inaugural wines from Niagara's newest, ultra-premium and environmentally sustainable winery – Stratus Vineyards. Stratus' signature wines are based on the principle of *assemblage*. Assem-what? You will be sure to find books on the shelves that will explain all and help pick a dish to match. Local cheese expert Andy Shay will be selecting and serving a variety of artisanal cheeses to accompany the wines.

Sip, Savour and Dine - A "Green" Party

May 3 - 6:30 p.m.

Jamie Kennedy Restaurant

9 Church Street, Toronto

\$165 inclusive of taxes and gratuity

In keeping with the JK philosophy, we proudly present an intimate five course dinner designed by organic food advocate Chef Jamie Kennedy. With such focus on 'sustainability', it is no surprise that Jamie has teamed up with Niagara's newest, ultra-premium and "green" winery. Stratus Vineyards is the world's first LEED certified winery (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design). Celebrated Winemaker J-L Groux and Jamie Kennedy will present a night of eco-conscious culinary and vinous delights.

Reserve at 416.362.1957 x103



VINELAND ESTATES

<http://www.vineland.com/>

Dining Adventure Series 2006 Launch: "A Study in Maple"

The Restaurant @ Vineland Estates Winery

March 15 - Reception: 6:30 p.m. Dinner: 7:00 p.m.

Join us for the first installment in our 2006 Dining Adventure Series! Our passion for local product takes on a Patriotic flair as we celebrate our National Emblem.

Join us as we explore the traditional, as well as creative, crafting of maple, skillfully matched with premium wines. Starting at \$70 per person ++.

Please call 1-888-846-3526 x 33 for reservations.

Vineland Estates Winemaker's Dinner at Paradiso Restaurant

March 24 - 7:00 p.m.

Join our Winemaker Brian Schmidt at Paradiso Restaurant in Burlington as we present a five course wine pairing menu to tantalize the senses! Menu price (including wine pairings) is \$75 per person ++. For reservations please call 905.639.1176 or visit www.paradisorestaurant.com/burlington

Vineland Estates Winemaker's Dinner at Horseshoe Resort

April 8 - Reception: 6:30 pm. Dinner: 7:00 p.m.

Silks Restaurant at Horseshoe Resort

Join Allan Schmidt, President/Past Winemaker, and Executive Chef Paul Christiaansen at the premiere Horseshoe Resort as they present premium and reserve wines from our estate, skillfully matched with seasonally inspired creations. Menu Price (including wine pairings) is \$80 per person ++. For reservations please call 1-800-461-5627 x 5.

Escape the Everyday - Make it a Weekend Wine Experience!

Getaways include two nights' accommodation, breakfast both mornings, diner at Silks on Friday night and the Vineland Winemakers Dinner on Saturday night. Package Price is \$299 per person based on a two night stay, please add 12% tax. For details please call 1-888-846-3526 x 29 or email to bbonfoco@vineland.com.

The Best of 2006 Cuvée Ontario Wine Selections

HYRAR BERBEROGLU

The Cuvée gala, an elegant and popular fund raising event, at White Oaks Inn in Niagara is recognized as the "Oscars" of the Ontario wine industry. Recently, 37 winemakers gathered for an intense day of blind tasting, to select the best of 180 wines submitted by over 50 wineries. Ontario has 90 wineries.

This award is unique in that the wines are judged by peers in following categories:

Best White, Best Limited Quantity White, Best Red, Best Limited Quantity Red, Best General List Red, Best General List White, Best Sparkling, Best Sweet White, Best Limited Quantity Sweet, and Cuvée gold.

The award ceremony attracts 800 avid gourmets to taste delectable food offered by a number of local restaurants and the Niagara College Culinary students under the guidance of chef instructor Mark Hand. Winemakers and winery staff pour all award-winning wines.

Wine writers are invited to a tasting of all award-winning wines before release on March 6th.

Recently, during a sit-down tasting I had the opportunity to taste the 48 award winning wines, which represent the crème de la crème of Ontario wines. These efforts deserve the support of all Ontarians and people living in Canada.

You can buy them and proudly present to your business associates abroad or entertain them here with the best this province offers. They will be available in winery boutiques starting March 6.

Riesling, 2004 13th Street Wines - \$ 16.00 – Fine fruit, minerally flavours with great depth, balanced, and a long finish. 91/100

Limited Yield Riesling 2004 Thirty Bench Vineyards \$ 18.00 Refined aromas of peach, minerally flavours, superbly balanced and smooth, with a long satisfying aftertaste 90/100

Gewurztraminer 2004 Malivoire \$ 26.00 Perfumey with lychee nuts, elegant, medium-bodied. A refined wine for sipping or to pair with light foods. 90/100

Founder's reserve Chardonnay 2003 Inniskillin \$ 16.95 – Excellent apple/pear aromas, full bodied, refined and elegant, creamy texture, balanced with a little oak in the background. A truly fine wine from a difficult vintage 91/100



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Chardonnay Reserve 2002 Mountain Road Wine Company \$ 25.95 Pineapple/pear aromas waft out of the glass, creamy texture, full-body, and superb length and depth 90/100

Merlot Reserve 2002 Peninsula Ridge \$ 35.00 Aromas of plum with an excellent spicy mid-palate, restrained and elegant. Long finish. A food wine par excellence. 91/100

Syrah Reserve 2004 Lakeview Estate Winery \$ 69.95 Beautiful sweet ripe berry aromas, chocolaty flavours in mid-palate, spicy. A Rhone-style wine that would age gracefully for at least four years. 92/100

Cabernet Franc Family Reserve 2002 Pillitteri Estate Winery \$ 43.00 Sweet ripe berry aromas, full body, spicy with depth. Long finish 91/100

Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon 2002 Kacaba Vineyards \$ 35.00 Brilliant captivating crimson, perfumey, spicy mid-palate with fine ripe tannins. Excellent, long and elegant finish. 90/100

Three Terroir 2002 Strewn Winery \$ 28.95 Appealing fruit aromas, fine acid-backbone, refined with a long finish. A wine to match with roast leg of lamb or roast rack of lamb.

Meritage 2004 Coyote's Run Estate Winery \$ 24.00 Brilliant red, earthy, smoky smells, medium to full body, Balanced and elegant 89/100

Stratus Red 2002 Stratus Vineyards \$ 35.00 Finely balanced and brilliantly blended from a number of varieties. A refined mid palate, succulent and intriguing wine. 91/100

Cabernet Franc Icewine 2002 Birchwood Estate \$ 65.00 375 ml Concentrated strawberry aromas, with fine acidity that makes this superbly balanced sweet wine elegant. 91/100

Vidal Icewine 2004 East/Dell Estates \$ 39.95 375 ml Honeyed aromas intermingling with dried apricots and peaches. Long finish 91/100

Vidal Icewine 2004 Lailey Vineyard \$ 28.00 375 ml- Honeyed aromas of ripe fruit. Medium body with an excellent succulent texture. Balanced and refined. 89/100

New Regulations

MICHAEL PINKUS - GRAPE GUY

<http://www.ontariowinereview.com/>

It's late in the evening and I'm sitting here staring at my wine racks, paying special attention to all the VQA initials on capsules scattered throughout the rack – and I think to myself “I like VQA wine ... I like Ontario wine.” Not a revelation that should come as any surprise considering my website is devoted to the enjoyment of Ontario wine, but Ontario wine has been on my mind over the past few

weeks because of our grape crop and it's predicted shortfall this year.

As many of you know Ontario was hit with another harsh winter last year and many vines suffered losses and in some cases were killed completely, the loss was to such a degree that this year's crop is going to be somewhere in the vicinity of ~18,000 tons, instead of the usual ~52,000 tons. Combine that with the absolutely perfect grape growing weather, offered up to us by the grape Gods this spring and summer, and you have the makings of an incredibly interesting vintage - many fantastic wines will surely come out of it. But the shortfall is going to leave some of our wineries without the capacity to make those moneymaking wine blends – “cellared in Ontario” wines - (which do not require 100% Ontario grape content) while the pricier, and in my opinion, better, VQA stuff ages to perfection in barrel. To further clarify, by law, these blends are usually made from 30% Ontario grapes, the balance comes from off-shore grapes (Chile, Australia, Italy, etc) – of course this is an over-simplification but you understand the math. Because of this year's shortfall, the Wine Council and the Grape Growers petitioned the government to lower requirements for percentage of Ontario grapes in “cellared in Ontario” wines.

Recognizing the situation as dire, the government has granted a lowering of the percentage from 30% to 1% for this year only. A silly, arbitrary number to be sure, but 1% it is. That way those great Ontario VQA's that I am looking at on my wine racks can still be made from 100% Ontario grapes ... in limited quantities to be sure, but still 100% Ontario goodness.

Another upside is going to be the changes at the LCBO. Currently the signage at the liquor store does not differentiate between VQA wines and cellared in Ontario wines (which are those blends we discussed earlier). Most people never make the differentiation between the two – if it's in the Ontario section of the store then it's Ontario wine: Ontario made wine - yes, Ontario cellared wine -yes, but not 100% Ontario grapes. Now the LCBO is being asked to, and will comply with, regulations that will make it clear to consumers the wines born and bred in Ontario as compared to, for lack of a better term “mixed breed” wines – so now when you go to the LCBO you'll be able to differentiate between “cellared in” and 100% Ontario grown VQA wine. And truthfully that is the best thing to come out of these two rulings. The 1% Ontario grape inclusion does not matter, because it is an arbitrary and menial number just to keep “some” Ontario content ... but it's high-time the LCBO made it easier for people to know where their “Ontario” wine is really coming from.