

Upcoming Events

Toronto Chapter

3rd Annual New Kids on the Block tasting

Monday, March 12, 2007

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

Registration Deadline: March 8th

We are pleased to announce the Toronto chapter's 3rd New Kids on the Block tasting. To make this tasting even better, Zoltan Szabo has agreed to lead us through this exciting adventure showcasing some of Ontario's newest wineries.

Voted "Sommelier of the Year" in 2003 by the Toronto Sun, Zoltan was one of the four finalists in the Best in Ontario Sommelier Championship 2004 & had emerged victorious in the Ontario Wine Awards' – Riedel Crystal Sommelier Blind Tasting competition in 2005. To further deepen his wine knowledge, Zoltan will soon begin the Diploma Program of the WSET, the Wine and Spirit Education Trust's highest level program and had already passed the Court of Master Sommeliers Introductory Course examination. His newest venture is Szabo & Szabo Drinks Trade Consultants. With partner John Szabo, MS, Zoltan runs the Wine Council of Ontario's Licensee Training Program, also offering consultancy services to top notch establishments across the province. Zoltan is contributing editor of City Bites Magazine, contributor to Vines Magazine, co-signs a monthly column for Restaurant News Magazine and sits on the panel of judges at several wine competitions in Canada and abroad.



This year's lineup includes wines from:

- 20 Bees Winery (Four Mile Creek)
- Calamus Estate Winery (Twenty Mile Bench)
- Caroline Cellars (Four Mile Creek)
- Frogpond Farm (Four Mile Creek)
- Hidden Bench Winery (Beamsville Bench)
- Rosehall Run Vineyards (Prince Edward County)

NOTE: The change in venue has been postponed. We are still meeting at the Ontario Club, Commerce Court at the southeast corner of King and Bay Streets.

Niagara Chapter

3rd Annual General Meeting & Social

Saturday, March 31, 2007

Once again, it's time to kick-start Spring with a day in Wine Country! We will also take time to look at another successful year in review of the Niagara Chapter - Ontario Wine Society (OWS-NC). Your OWS-NC Event Planning Committee will open the members' wine cellar and share some of the best wines Ontario has to offer.

Each year Niagara Chapter members are fortunate to have so many wonderful winery settings in which to enjoy the events and this one is no different. We will socialize in style at the tastefully refurbished Stonechurch Vineyards winery in picturesque Niagara-on-the-Lake. Stonechurch has emerged as an award-winning winery and continues to offer products of outstanding quality. Come out and meet fellow club members and be the first to sample some new vintages produced by the winery in the spacious retail tasting bar. Then nibble your way through the gourmet goodies at several food stations and sample more delicious wines. You will be offered everything from rosés to decadent dessert wines during an enjoyable afternoon of fine food, people, and of course, wine!

Prizes! Each person registered for this event will automatically be entered into a draw for door prizes. In addition, you'll be able to sharpen your sensory evaluation skills as you participate in the Iron "Sommelier" Wine Competition for great prizes.

Please note: this will be the forum for the Annual General Meeting, including the Elections. A short meeting will be held at 1:45 when we will take care of business as we wrap up another year with words from the President and Treasurer. Members will be asked to approve the updated By-laws and five Officers will be elected for 2007/2008. The Elected Officer positions on the Operating Committee are: President, Vice-President, Treasurer, Secretary, and Director of Events.

If you're interested in becoming an Elected Officer or volunteering on the Operating Committee, contact Yvonne Trout at yvonnehalliday@yahoo.com prior to the event date or call the Niagara Wine Line at 905-685-7623.



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Past Events

Niagara Chapter

Niagara vs Bordeaux

On January 27, 2007 at Lakeview Cellars, the Niagara Chapter of the Ontario Wine Society held a Niagara vs Bordeaux taste off. The blind tasting was lead by Lakeview founder Eddie Gurinskas.

Eddie began by instructing the sell-out gathering on the facts regarding the winemaking industry in Ontario and which grape varieties are used in the production of four of the Ontario "Meritage" (pronounced like Heritage) wines, three French Bordeaux and one "Ringer" (similar style wine from a different region). All wines were priced in the \$16 – 35 range, were selected from vintages between 1999 and 2003, and had received good reviews in the past. The wines were poured blind (bottles were concealed from the participants) and placed in random order, so not to influence tasters' assessments. After tasting and note writing, guests were asked to rate each wine on a 20 point scale, then to rank and denote each wine as either French Bordeaux or Ontario Meritage.

Six out of the eight wines were correctly identified by the majority of tasters as either Bordeaux or Meritage. Every wine got at least one "favourite" vote and the winner got 14. There were 45 tasters voting.

Niagara wines took the top 3 places:

- 02 Creekside Reserve Meritage - \$34 – sold out
- 02 Jackson Triggs "Delaine" Cab Merlot - \$30 – 04 is available
- 02 Lakeview Meritage - \$16 – in the LCBO

The Ringer wine, a 2002 Bedell Meritage, Long Island (\$25 US) placed 5th and one participant won a free future tasting by identifying (with a little help from some friends) its correct place of origin.

This was another clear victory for Ontario reds in their quest to be held in the same esteem as their European counterparts, which was facilitated on a level playing field with no bias to any one product.

For all of us who support and enjoy VQA wines, please tell your friends about this tasting, especially those who say that Ontario wines are overpriced and of inferior value to the French Bordeaux.

For more information about this event, contact Larry Horne at horneland@msn.com

News from the Vines

FRED COUCH, OWS – NIAGARA CHAPTER

Featherstone Estate Winery & Vineyard in Vineland has been named Business of the Year by Community Care of West Niagara for its generous support of work done to help local needy families. Proprietors Louise Engel and David Johnson have provided enthusiastic support, including donating \$4,000 from tasting fees at the winery.

Winemakers on the move: Bruce Nicholson has been named Senior Winemaker at Inniskillin. Bruce was previously Senior Winemaker at Jackson-Triggs, Okanagan. Angels Gate Winery has appointed winemaker Philip Dowell to the newly created position of VP Production and New Ventures.

Angels Gate has acquired a new property in Beamsville next door to Peninsula Ridge. The winery will be planting a new vineyard this spring to add to its well-established estate portfolio. Watch for the opening of the Ice House Winery in May of this year. The Ice House is located in Niagara-on-the-Lake. Check out the website for more information on the opening: www.theicehouse.ca.

Two recent Niagara College graduates captured first-place honours at the recent third annual wine Tasting Challenge held at the Air Canada Centre in Toronto. Congratulations to Sara d'Amato and Paul Pender

Corporate Member Events

EASTDELL ESTATES

Irish Date Night at The VIEW

Friday, March 16

This month is Irish-themed to celebrate St. Patrick's Day. \$80/couple for meal or \$110/couple for meal with Sommelier suggested wine pairings. Reservations recommended. Seatings from 5 p.m.

Sugar Bush Sunday Brunch

Sunday, March 25

A special Brunch in support of the Bruce Trail Association. Enjoy your usual brunch favourites with some Sugar Bush flare! \$3 from each brunch will be donated to a fund in support of preserving the Bruce Trail, which runs directly through EastDell's property. Two Seatings: 10:30 a.m. & 12:30 p.m. \$24.95 p.p. Half price for children under 12 years. Guided hikes along the Bruce Trail will take place at 2 p.m. & 4 p.m. with donations accepted on behalf of the Bruce Trail Association.

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Easter Brunch with a VIEW

Sunday, April 8

Spend Easter morning with family while The VIEW Restaurant takes care of the cooking.

\$24.95 p.p. Half price for children under 12 years.
Reservations recommended.

Superstitious Date Night at The VIEW

Friday, April 13

This month's theme ties into Friday the 13th and superstitions around food. \$80/couple for meal or \$110/couple for meal with Sommelier suggested wine pairings. Reservations recommended.

Chef & Sommelier's Table with a VIEW

Friday, April 27 at 7:00 p.m.

Chef Kent Deal and Sommelier Robert W. Paul of The VIEW Restaurant will lead you through an educational evening of food and wine samplings. Chef Kent will create dishes in the dining room for you to try while our Sommelier, Robert explains which wines predominantly enhance the flavours in each dish.

\$75 p.p. Reservations required.

For all EastDell events, please call (905) 563-9463 or email EDretail@eastdell.com to reserve.

LAKEVIEW CELLARS

For the Love of the Irish

Be spotted wearing green in any of our wine boutiques (Lakeview, EastDell, Birchwood or Thomas & Vaughan) and receive a complimentary icewine tasting.

Visit www.lakeviewcellars.ca for winter hours or call (905) 562-5685 x227.

Easter's in the Air

For the month of April, purchase wines at any of our wine boutiques (Lakeview, EastDell, Birchwood or Thomas & Vaughan) and receive a complimentary Easter-themed recipe.

What do you like in the newsletter??

Reviews of wineries

Press Releases

Event Listings - more detail

Event Listings - less detail

Interviews and book reviews

Email us at owsnews@rogers.com and let us know.

VINELAND ESTATES

The Restaurant @ Vineland Estates Winery

To celebrate the "Oscars" of the Wine World Chef Jan-Willem Stulp and his culinary team have assembled a \$39 ~ Midday and \$70 ~ 5-course Dinner menu featuring succulent braised meats with rich and hearty hand-made pastas.

The Restaurant will also structure a Dining Adventure on March 21st around some excellent Cuvée wines for \$70 plus wine.

The Iron Chef

April 18 at 6:00 p.m.

In the theme of the Iron Chef television show, The Vineland culinary experts get put to the test...against each other! Multiple courses, a judging panel of industry experts and you, the discerning diner! This evening has all the right ingredients for spirited competition! Two teams. One Kitchen. Final outcome: You decide!

For all Vineland Estates event please contact: reservations@vineland.com or call 1-888-846-3526 x33 for more information.

Other Winery Events

FEATHERSTONE ESTATE WINERY

Featherstone re-opens its tasting room for the season on Saturday April 7 at 11:00 am. There will be 6 exciting new releases available- all of them aromatic white wines from the 2006 vintage and all of them in Stelvin screwcaps for the first time.

HARBOUR ESTATES WINERY

New Releases

Weekends in March - 12:00 noon ~ 5:00 p.m.

March is a busy month for new releases and bottling. Come and try our first Pinot Grigio as well as old favourites like Sunrise and Baco Noir, all from the 2006 vintage. No charge for First in Line club members or members of the OWS. Just mention your affiliation.

The Amazing Harbour Wine Race

Weekends in April 12:00 noon ~ 5:00 p.m.

Inspired by the Easter tradition of hunting for chocolate eggs and the new TV reality of racing around the world doing weird things, we've developed a wine oriented race of our own. This race won't take you around the world,



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but it will take you around our property, help you think about and learn the wine making process and viticulture, test your tasting skills and wine knowledge and add some fun to your life. Grand prize package will be given to the team scoring the highest points overall for the month. Team challenge prizes for groups that come and challenge each other. Full details at www.harbourestateswinery.com
\$10 per team of two

Wine and Food Pairing- Indian Cuisine

April 21 - 12:00 noon ~ 2:00 p.m.

Join us as we welcome Parshotam Dhiman of India Gate Restaurant in Newmarket to talk about Indian Cuisine. You'll learn about spices, the basics of putting an Indian themed menu together and of course, about the wines to pair with the meal. Come ready to taste!

\$10 per person, limited space available.

STONECHURCH VINEYARDS

Green Beer - I don't think so....

Saturday, March 17.

Happy St. Patricks Day - come by and pair all things green with your wine tastings today! (minimal tasting fee)

Continue to check the website for event updates or changes.

Fundraising Awareness Evening for the Brock Niagara Penguins.

Monday, April 2

Niagara's premier swim and gym team for children and young adults with physical disability. Vicki Keith, Canada's most successful marathon swimmer will share her stories and experiences of exhaustion, sharks and jellyfish to awe you and help you to understand with a positive attitude & determination – dreams can become a reality.

Door Prizes, Draws and cash BBQ - \$5.00 admission – call to purchase tickets 905-359-6283.

Girls Night Out

Thursday, April 19 – details to follow

Speakers Spotlight

Wednesday, April 25 – details to follow

Stargazing in the Vineyards

Saturday, April 28

Who knows what the night sky will bring?? Join us from 7:00 p.m. ~ 10:00 p.m. as the Royal Astronomical Society puts on an informative, interesting and exciting presentation about our galaxy. See the absolutely fantastic photos show on the big screen inside the winery before the night sky is upon us and we head outside. Treat yourself to a tasty and well priced meal while listening to the expertise and guidance from the experts. When the sun is down and you head outside to see the stars you will be amazed and delighted by the view through the RAS telescopes. Sample our Award Winning Wines in the Retail Wine Boutique while waiting for your turn. \$5.00 admission at the door – registration suggested. 905-935-3535 x228

STONEY RIDGE ESTATES

Canada Blooms Gala Opening Night

March 6

\$175.00- contact Canada Blooms

Visit us at Canada Blooms

March 7-11

Join the party and savour the tastes of four special Stoney Ridge Estate wines: the 2004 Bench Chardonnay, a 2005 Pinot Grigio, the jammy 2004 Bench Cabernet Franc or the silky 2003 Merlot. Dress up a classic white conservatory in hot-mamma reds and basic black and you have the perfect place to sip 'n chill during a time-out at the show. Lipstick red tulips vamp at the door in soignier containers, a flirtatious mobile beckons and wanton white ottomans are invitations to lounge a while.

Canada Blooms at the Metro Convention Centre Toronto - tickets at the door \$16.00 each

Gala Customer Evening and The Launch of our Proprietors Reserve Sparkling Wine

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

By invitation only

Niagara Vs Prince Edward County Taste off

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

Hosted by Founding Winemaker Jim Warren

Lunch included - \$40.00perperson

Winemakers Dinner in the barrel Room

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

\$125.00 per person



Charles Pillitteri Recognized For Entrepreneurial Spirit

Wins Two Niagara Entrepreneur of the Year Awards
Niagara Falls, Canada- Charles Pillitteri, C.E.O. President of Sales at Pillitteri Estates Winery was the 'star' of the night after receiving two top awards at the 13th Annual Niagara Entrepreneur of the Year Awards gala awards presentation.

Pillitteri Estates Winery was honored with two awards, Family Enterprise and International Trade. It is the second time in the history of the ceremony that a business garners multiple awards. The Family Enterprise Award recognizes an individual in a family-owned business of two successive generations or more who sustains the company's vigour and competitiveness and is able to take it to new heights of success.

Pillitteri Estates, a leader in the industry is a family operated business with three generations of Pillitteri's working at the winery. Since its opening, the winery has evolved in great part to Charlie's endless drive and passion, into a respected and acclaimed producer of premium VQA (Vintners Quality Alliance) wines. The winery was founded by Gary Pillitteri and wife Lena, who continue to play major roles. Daughters Connie Slingerland and Lucy Friesen also hold key Executive positions and are instrumental in the operation of the winery.

The International Trade award acknowledges successful entrance into the international marketplace or significant increase in export sales through entrepreneurial activity. Charles was not able to accept the award personally as he was abroad on a six week business trip promoting Icewine throughout Asia and Europe. Sisters Connie and Lucy were present at the gala to accept on his behalf.

While accepting the award Lucy conveyed that "Charles spends more than 200 days of the year outside of Canada promoting the Pillitteri brand and Icewine. Pillitteri's image as a producer of premium VQA Icewine and Niagara's ability to consistently produce a distinctive wine that is recognized and acclaimed globally is the message that Charles brings to the world." The winery currently exports to 26 countries with export sales accounting for a third of total sales.

On the phone from Japan, Charles was "Honored to receive this highly-esteemed award, which truly attests to Pillitteri's success as a leader in the production of Icewine. Entrepreneurial ideas and practices are fundamental to our vision, and we are extremely proud to be recognized for our commitment and dedication. I share this achievement with my family and our employees, who

continually demonstrate their dedication to Pillitteri's success."

2007 marks the fourteenth anniversary of the Niagara Entrepreneur of the Year Awards (NEYA) established to celebrate the entrepreneurial spirit and the successes and accomplishments of Niagara's best and brightest leaders. The awards are a symbol of achievement for those innovative entrepreneurs who provide inspiration, exemplify excellence and carry out their unique vision. The NEYA award recipients are selected by a panel of independent judges comprised of community and business leaders.

Ontario vs. Bordeaux Tasting

Recently a major wine tasting pitted 15 Ontario Cabernet Merlots against 15 classed-growth Bordeaux. The prices of the French wines ranged from \$42 to \$349, including two 1st growths - Chateau Lafite Rothschild and Chateau Margaux. As you may have read in the Globe & Mail last weekend, our **Southbrook 2002 Triumphus Cabernet Merlot** was the critics' number one choice!

The tasting's organizer, Larry Patterson, is a committed Ontario wine lover. He modeled this tasting after a landmark event that took place in Paris in 1976, where "upstart" California wines were tasted blind with established French wines. Organized by Steven Spurrier, that tasting is credited as the single most important event in the evolution of the recognition of the quality of Californian wine. Before Spurrier's tasting, American consumers generally didn't recognize the excellent quality of the wines being produced "in their own backyard." After the tasting, Americans, and the rest of the world, knew that California was producing world-class wines. Similarly, Patterson's tasting has now demonstrated to Ontario consumers, and the world, that Ontario not only has potential, but is currently producing wines that can rival and exceed their Bordeaux benchmarks!

The results of Patterson's tasting have been fast and furious. We've been juggling press enquiries - including a very gratifying request for a sample from internationally-respected wine writer Jancis Robinson in the U.K. (she likes it, as well as our Chardonnay). The aforementioned Globe & Mail article by Beppi Crosariol underlines just how much of an upset Southbrook's win is. He calls the wine "quite impressive and exceedingly polished" and also refers to our "bold new chapter" as we prepare to open in Niagara this fall. Have a look for yourself: theGlobeandMail.com. Tony Aspler, one of the experts at the event, lists the complete results at TonyAspler.com



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(scroll down to Jan. 23). Another taster, Michael Pinkus, details the event at OntarioWineReview.com.

The 2002 Triomphus Cabernet Merlot, the winning wine, is roughly a third each of Cabernet Franc, Merlot and Cabernet Sauvignon, from an outstanding year. The wine spent about 20 months in a mix of French and American oak barrels. It was bottled in August 2004 and released in October 2005. A great classic blackcurrant nose is matched by intense fruit and cedar on the palate. It is (obviously!) showing very well now and it is also a great cellaring candidate.

These tasting results are another proud moment for Southbrook, and indeed for the whole Ontario industry. We are glad to share this excitement with you.

Proudly yours,
Bill Redelmeier

Southbrook Winery

Wine Related Charity Events

Enjoy "A Taste Of The Good Life" In Mississauga

Mississauga, ON — Unwind mid-week and indulge in life's simple pleasures. Let the colours & flavours of wine, the aromas of delicious hors d'oeuvres all intertwined with music from the Mississauga Symphony, tantalize your senses. Orchestras Mississauga is poised to embark on its 14th Annual Wine Tasting & Silent Auction event, A Taste of the Good Life on Thursday, March 29th, 2007 at Mississauga's Living Arts Centre. This exciting and popular event will encompass food, wine and live classical music. An added bonus for the event will be featured booths from local businesses with displays and information about the various pleasures of the "Good Life" such as travel and spa treatments. With everything from [yellow tail] Wine presentations to silent auction items, ranging from unique paintings to VIP winery tour packages, it will be an evening of enjoyment for wine connoisseurs and shopping enthusiasts. The event is from 6 p.m. to 10 p.m. and is restricted to 19 years and over. Tickets are \$15 in advance or \$20 at the door. To buy tickets in advance, please call (905) 615-4405.

Supporting the Mississauga Symphony, this signature event features a great selection of wine from around the world. Live classical music will be provided by members of the Mississauga Symphony Orchestra. Proudly featured for tasting are wines from select wineries. This year's wine tasting hosts are: Colio Estate Wines, Joseph's Estate Wines, Kittling Ridge Winery, Mountain

Road Wine Company, Stonechurch Vineyards and [yellow tail] Wines - The Kirkwood Group.

We are happy to announce that The Kirkwood Group will be sponsoring some exciting presentations. Located in Oakville, The Kirkwood Group is a national sales and marketing agency representing independent producers of premium and prestige spirits, wines and fine quality beer. For this event, they will feature the delicious and popular [yellow tail] brand from the successful Casella Estates. Come and taste this exquisite wine, and find out what makes it so special!

A silent auction, featuring several wine and non-wine related items generously supplied by corporate partners and various donors, will continue throughout the evening. Highlighted items include gift certificates from area restaurants (including Snug Harbour, Stage West, The Waterside Inn, Bistro Matisse, Rosewood Bistro Inc. and Delta Meadowvale Resort and Conference Centre) along with winery tours (Fielding Estate Winery, Joseph's Estate Wines), private cooking (Greedy Jack's Catering), travel certificate (Cruisenet Travel), Designer Evening gowns (American Romance) and private music sessions (Paul Weston/violist from the Mississauga Symphony Orchestra) and many more generous donations from local businesses.

Events like A Taste of the Good Life assist the Mississauga Symphony, one of Canada's top community orchestras to continue to provide high-calibre orchestral music. What a great way to see & taste all the good things in life that the city of Mississauga has to offer! To order tickets to A Taste of the Good Life, call 905.615.4405 or email susan.grohmann@livingarts.on.ca. For additional information visit us online at www.mississaugasymphony.com. Free indoor parking is available at the Living Arts Centre.

A Taste of the Good Life

14th Annual Wine Tasting and Silent Auction Event
Thursday, March 29th, 2007 6:00 p.m. – 10:00 p.m.
Living Arts Centre
4141 Living Arts Drive,
Mississauga

Tickets: \$15 (advance) or \$20 at the door
Call 905.615.4405 for Tickets

Orchestras Mississauga strives to celebrate the art of live
For additional information, please contact:
Arlene Duval at 905.615.4406 or
arlene.duval@livingarts.on.ca



Ottawa Chamber Music Society Vintage Wine Auction

May 9, 2007

The OCMS Vintage Wine Auction is one of the major fundraising events for the Ottawa Chamber Music Society, a non-profit organization dedicated to making chamber music of the highest calibre readily available and accessible.

This year's event will be held on May 9, 2007 at Christ Church Cathedral, 420 Sparks Street in Ottawa.

Admission to the auction is by ticket only, at a cost of \$50. The ticket price will be credited towards the purchase of items at the auction. Tickets may be purchased through the OCMS office at 613.234.8008. Further information and the auction catalogue may be found at www.chamberfest.com.

For further information, please contact Karen St. Aubin at 613.234.8008, x244.

Are We Looking-Through the LENS, or is that Overlooking?

MICHAEL PINKUS

Reprinted from www.ontariowinereview.com

Back in September of 2005, I wrote an article touting the Lake Erie North Shore wine region of Ontario (LENS) (What's the Deal? – Newsletter 12). After my second visit to the area, in as many years, I am still of that same opinion – now, even more so. In August '06, I traveled to some of the old places I had visited before: Sanson, Colio, Erie Shore; and some of the new: Viewpointe, Muscedere, Mastronardi, Aleksander ... and tried some wines from some up and comers: Colchester, Sprucewood, Smith and Wilson ... and from all indications, I still believe this region to be Ontario's hidden gem, and here are some of the reasons why.

For starters there's Colio Estate, with master winemaker Carlo Negri at the helm; they consistently turn out great wine year after year. This year's current releases include a fruity 2005 Gewurztraminer and a 2002 Reserve Cabernet Franc ... with great fruit and wood integration. Sanson Estate still had their Shiraz and Merlot on the shelves, but supply was dwindling fast. These customer favourites may never be made again (part of Dennis Sanson's eccentric winemaking style), too bad; they were seductive complex wines worth buying, drinking and/or cellaring. Their newest Cabernet Merlot blend called "Barn Cat Red", named after the cats that inhabit the building across from the wine store, has a 10 % tipple of Pinot Noir added into the blend; big, bold, spicy flavours, which is just what I expect from this winery. Dennis Sanson continues

to impress me with his winemaking ability and his "renegade" approach of trying anything at least once. Another LENS old guard, Erie Shore, seduced my tastebuds with their 2005 Riesling and fruit forward 2005 Cabernet Franc (just called "Cabernet"), it spent only a month in oak so the fruit shows through fully with little to no woody interference. My traveling companion was also a fan of their 2005 Duets, a blend of Zweigelt and Gamay – this time the percentage of the blend is reversed – see review.

During our visit to some of the newer wineries, like Muscedere, not only were we witness to a winery starting out on the ground floor (in this case, literally in a basement), but they showed style and vision towards the future and some interesting architecture to boot. They were also pouring some great Cabernet Franc: a fruit driven unoaked effort and an oaked reserve, both reasonably priced, 13.99 and 16.99 respectively, both with lush mouth feel, but very different with respect to taste and ageability; for the price it's well worth buying one of each to test them out side by side. Mastronardi Estate Winery won a silver and a gold medal for their merlot, but the wine I selected to highlight is another Cab Franc, which is definitely one for all you vegetarians out there. By reducing the tannins and enhancing the fruit and vegetal characteristics they're saying "leave the meat to graze in the field, pick up what's growing there and throw it on the grill instead." And how about Aleksander's? They have come a long way since my last visit. Last year, four wines peppered the shelves (1 red, 1 white, 2 fruit); this year, many different wines crowded those same shelves, including an interesting Shiraz. The tastes that really tickled my fancy were, once again, the fruity 2005 Franc and the delicious 2005 Late Autumn Riesling.

Speaking of fancy – John Fancybox has opened up his spectacular Viewpointe Estates, and the wines are as spectacular as the building and the view; from the affordable 2004 Cabernet Franc (16.95); 2004 Cab-Merlot (16.95); and 2005 Auxerrois (14.95) to the reserve 2002 Focal Pointe Cab Franc (\$32.95), which was the highlight of the tasting flights.

Both Colchester Ridge and Smith & Wilson have opened their doors – moving themselves from the up-and-coming category to the here-and-now. Colchester Ridge Estate Winery (CREW) with their current line-up of 3 wines: Cabernet Sauvignon/Merlot (13.95), Chardonnay and Gewurztraminer (12.95) are making wines with all estate grown fruit, and located, literally, a stone's throw away from Viewpointe. Smith & Wilson, located along Highway 3 near Blenheim (and I whole-heartedly recommend making the drive), is a fruit and grape winery with some



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pretty outstanding stuff of their own.

Their Three Belles Sour Cherry wine is delicious and their double entendre Double Barrel (Smith & Wilson // Smith & Wesson)

Franc-Merlot blend is well worth the \$14 price tag.

Finally, the last one to open, Sprucewood Shores, scheduled to open in November 2006, just in time for Christmas (and they opened on time), has been growing grapes for the past 16 years and finally decided to start their own winery. The building is another stunner for the region, a real showpiece, and their wines ain't bad either. "We're trying some different things," owner Gord Mitchell told me. Check out my Report from the London Wine and Food Show for details on the wines being made there – it's going to be a definite must visit this year.

What a region ... Lake Erie North Shore is truly a wine-world unto its own. The wineries work together and share knowledge, giving helpful advice and know how to the ones just opening. They know that by working together they can only strengthen their industry as a whole. I highly recommend taking the trip. And if you are looking for places to stay, you'll find some of the best accommodations down there. During my two visits over the course of two months I stayed in a couple of places that were truly worth every penny I paid for them. I should, by all rights, keep them my little secret, but that would not be fair. If you're planning a trip to the area, then check out the Duck Pond or Our House in the Woods, or even www.bbcanada.com to make your own selection.

Grape Guy's Pick of the Bunch : Late Autumn Cat – you'll see what I mean

Visit the winery or their website for more information on how to purchase these wines.

Aleksander Estates 2005 Late Autumn Riesling - \$12.45

www.aleksanderesatate.com

A relatively new winery on the South Western Ontario scene, owner and winemaker Aleksander Bemben worked for Pelee Island Winery since the early 80's before fulfilling his dream of opening his own place in May of 2005. This sweet little number is a party in the mouth, but it's all about timing and as with most parties, it begins slowly, so bare with it. Right from the pop of the cork (when the door opens) it has a strong petrol nose. 15 minutes later, apple starts to peak through the petrol curtain. After about 30 minutes, citrus shows up for the party. By this time, you have already been introduced to the flavours (the invited guests) that are going to appear at this nose party. Petrol is the host, while citrus, honey and apple play in a minor key behind the scenes (like the piano player in a dimly-lit lounge bar). There's a slightly sweet note on the tongue and the finish brings a cabbie

named pineapple-banana for the ride home. Delicious, and a wonderful sipping wine. Over the course of an evening it does develop into something recognizable, a big fruity kitchen party, but, as with most get togethers, the first hour is a slow meet and greet – but the rest of the gathering is a real fun time.

Sanson Estates 2001 Barn Cat Red - \$16.95

www.sansonestatewinery.com

Dennis Sanson has once again crafted a very interesting and delicious wine. The blend is 50% Merlot, 40% Cabernet Franc and 10% Pinot Noir and on the nose all three grapes show their influence. Licorice (merlot); green pepper (franc); and earth (pinot noir) along with some burnt wood (toasted oak barrels) and white pepper spiciness. The taste is even more interesting, and inviting, with the licorice and earth following through from the nose, but with some black fruit companions along for the ride. Blueberry and a sweet cherry core show up about mid-palate and follow through to the end. Another stellar effort by this little known winery, but with wines like this, they should be better known. Your assignment this year, if you chose to accept it, is to get to know the wines of Sanson Estate.

The Toronto Wine & Cheese Show

The International Centre

6900 Airport Road, Mississauga

Friday, March 23: 12noon – 10:00pm

Saturday, March 24: 12noon – 9:00pm

Sunday, March 25: 12noon – 6pm

The Toronto Wine & Cheese Show is Canada's largest and leading show of its kind. In 2007, the show will have reached 24 years of continued success and you can be a part of it.

The Toronto Wine & Cheese Show is known worldwide for its informative and refined selection of gourmet food and award-winning wines. It also features cuisine from renowned restaurants, exciting seminars, beers, single malt whiskies, forthcoming vintages and industry-regarded wine and beer competitions. It's a show that has a consistent loyal following, whose fan base grows every year.

Enjoy the Show... Please don't drink and drive.

Must be 19 years of age or older. No children, no infants.