



Just Off the Vine ...

The Ontario Wine Society's Newsletter

November 2007

Upcoming Events

Toronto Chapter

Wacko for Baco Night

Tuesday, November 27th, 2007,

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

Join the Ontario Wine Society for a light-hearted, entertaining, evening of Baco Noir tasting. Baco Noir is probably one of Ontario's best-kept secrets. It is a robust wine that can be paired with many different types of cuisines and cheeses. Or, it is smooth enough to be enjoyed on its own. To showcase its versatility, we will taste the wine with a homemade Baco sausage, and will also be serving a bowl of pasta in a rosé sauce.

We will be featuring wines from several different wineries including Fielding Estate, Henry of Pelham, Konzelmann, Pelee Island, Sandbanks, and Willow Springs. These samples of Baco's will range from everyday to reserves.

Billy Munnelly will be with us to host the evening's events. Billy has an extensive background in the wine industry and publishes Billy's Best Bottles. He is best known for being one of the most entertaining wine writers in the Canadian wine industry. Along with publishing an annual wine buying guide, Billy also does seminars, in-home wine tastings and various other food and wine events. We are in for a real treat.

Other Upcoming Events

Toronto Chapter

Lailey/Southbrook Chardonnay Vertical Tasting -
January 29, 2008

Icewine Weekend - February 2, 2008

Niagara Chapter

Cabernet Sauvignon Tasting at Chateau des Charmes -
December 6, 2007

Cooking with Wine demonstrations at Inniskillin in
conjunction with the Good Earth Cooking School -
January 23, 2008

Previous Events

Toronto Chapter

A Tribute Evening to Donald Ziraldo

PAT DINSMORE

It was a Tuesday night – October 30, 2007 – and the setting was Grano. The Ontario Wine Society had taken over most of the restaurant to spend the night honouring Donald Ziraldo and his multitude of contributions to the Ontario wine industry from the previous thirty plus years. Seated at intimate tables of 8, the menu, which was designed by Robert and Lucia Martella, owners of Grano, reflected Donald's northern Italian heritage perfectly.

We started out the evening with a glass of bubbly (Jackson Triggs 2002 Sparkling) along with a variety of passed appetizers. Once we were seated, out came Inniskillin's 2004 Riesling Reserve to accompany a plate of mixed seafood – scallops, calamari and shrimp. The second course was a very tasty squash ravioli with a nutmeg cream sauce drizzled on top. To pair with it, Inniskillin provided their 2006 Montague Vineyard Chardonnay and then came the main attraction – in terms of the food.

The main course was a combination of grilled quail along with a homemade sausage made by Angelo Dean. Angelo works by day as a LCBO consultant but makes a quite famous homemade sausage using no fillers, just a special kind of pork and Inniskillin's Marechal Foch. After finishing the main course, several murmurs could be heard about the tastiness of the sausage and, for my part, I will never be buying sausage at a grocery store or butcher again.

Once the main course had been removed from the table, it was time for us to hear from Bob Moore, our President, and Debi Pratt. Debi, being the first to speak, illustrated the choices in the wine pairings with the different courses and then it was time for Bob's big presentation to Donald himself. You see, Bob had been hunting for quite a few months for a couple of particular bottles of wine. It was not that he wanted specific bottles, but rather, that he wanted specific vintages. Bob found a 1974 Cabernet Sauvignon, George De Latour - Beaulieu Vineyards and a 1975 Bernkasteler Doktor Auslese - Dr Thanisch. The hunt for those two particular bottles was one from the 1974 vintage and one from the 1975 vintage. You see, for those who do not know the story, 1975 was the year that Donald and Karl were granted the first winery license in



*Angelo Bean, Bob Moore & Donald Ziraldo
Photograph by Pat Dinsmore*

the province of Ontario by our government since 1929. The reason why 1974 is significant is due to the fact that this is the first vintage that Karl made wine in. Once Donald had accepted the gifts from us, which I am sure have a place of honour in his and wife, Anna's, home, he spent the next few minutes telling us about his life, his career and his goals for the future including his latest achievement - the publishing of his book about Icewine which he co-wrote with fellow Inniskillin founder, Karl Kaiser. He even brought the first printing of the book for us that night having just unloaded them from the publisher's delivery truck earlier that day.

To finish off the night, dessert, which was a crostata tricolore made of white chocolate, raspberry and pistachio and the fig flan with lemon custard, was served along side Inniskillin's 1997 Vidal Icewine making it the perfect ending to a truly great evening. At the end of all the food, Donald could be found signing autographs and posing for pictures and even having a conversation with Toronto's mayor, David Miller, who, it turns out, was in the next room at Grano having a special event of his own.

Niagara Chapter

Blended Rosé Tasting – Roasted Pig Picnic

YVONNE HALLIDAY

Each year the August tasting event is casual and fun, to end the summer with a bang. This year was no different as we met at the Harbour Estates Winery, for a Roasted Pig Picnic and Blended Rosé tasting. We held the tasting under their octagonal tent set in the midst of the vineyard at the edge of the water. It was a beautiful setting.

The weather had threatened with blustery winds and gales of rain all week, but by the time the event came, we had a beautiful warm evening well into the twilight hours!

We were greeted with reception wines and some veggies and cheeses and we had a chance to meet and mingle before we got under way.

Our guest speaker for the evening was President of Harbour Estates Winery, Fraser Mowat. Fraser explained that the two more popular methods of making rosé wines are to either lightly soak the skins of a red grape until the juice is a light colour, or to blend white and red wines together (and in some cases two or three reds that are lightly soaked). Our focus for the evening was the latter, the blended variety. We had the opportunity to taste a

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*Fraser Mowat, President of Harbour Estates Winery,
Photograph by Bruce Jackson*

number of different blends of rosé, including some of the component wines that went into them. The blends we tried were: Riesling – Merlot, Sauvignon Blanc – Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc – Merlot – Pinot Noir, Zweigelt – Merlot, and Vidal – Gamay. It was interesting to experience the different flavours that resulted from each blend. Some members were even able to guess the blend before it was disclosed!

We took a break, part way through the tasting, to enjoy a delicious roasted pig, salads, and desserts and sampled them with the remainder of the rosés. On went the twinkle lights and candles, and we spent the rest of the evening finishing off bottles and chatting about our favourite blends.

The Niagara Chapter would like to thank Harbour Estate Winery for hosting the event and Darlene Mowat for helping to organize it. Thank you to our speaker Fraser Mowat for leading us through a fun and informative tasting and giving us information about Harbour Estates. We'd also like to thank all of our volunteers who prepared and brought the food and helped to pour the wine, the Parkhills for picking up the roasted pig, Adam Therrien our Niagara College student who carved the pig and served the food, and Yvonne Trout for planning the tasting. Pictures of the event were taken by Bruce Jackson, and can be viewed on the web site: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/photoshopplake>. Thank you Bruce.

News from the Vines

**FRED COUCH, OWS – NIAGARA
CHAPTER**

Watch for a possible move by 13th Street Winery. New investment brings the opportunity to develop and expand the winery. It is proposed that the winery will move to Fourth Avenue in the direction of St. Catharines on property formerly called Brucedale Gardens.

Treadwell Farm to Table Cuisine has opened what is being called Niagara's first "real" wine bar at 61 Lockport Road in Old Port Dalhousie. The wine bar will offer over 20 wines by the glass, mostly from the Niagara area, as well as interesting cheeses and charcuterie. For more information and hours of operation go to

www.treadwellcuisine.com.

Tom Green, winemaker for EastDell Estates, Birchwood Estate Wines and Lakeview Cellars has been appointed Vice President, Winemaking & Winery Operations for Diamond Estates Wines & Spirits Ltd. Way to go, Tom!

The Town of Lincoln has now given approval for the first stages of the Dan Aykroyd Winery project. The approval allows the winery to build a production facility and a temporary wine retail store, which will in the future be replaced by a permanent retail/hospitality building. The project will be built on the site currently occupied by Birchwood Estate Winery in Beamsville.

Congratulations to the following Niagara Wineries that won Gold Medals at the 2007 Canadian Wine Awards: Tawse, Hidden Bench, Creekside Estate, Magnotta, Chateau des Charmes, Jackson-Triggs, and Konzelmann Estate. For a complete list of medal winners go to:

www.canadianwineawards.ca

For the first time ever, Ontario Wines are now available by online order to US customers! Through their website <http://www.thecuvee.com> customers can order in US\$, from one of a number of Ontario Wineries for delivery anywhere in the U.S. In addition, Canadians can use the site to send bottles of Ontario Wine to a U.S. friend or relative!

So far, wines from the following wineries are available at "[TheCuvee.com](http://www.thecuvee.com)": Angel's Gate, Caroline Cellars, Chateau des Charmes, Coyote's Run, Creekside, Flat Rock, Frogpond Farms, Henry of Pelham, Joseph's Estate Wines, Konzelmann, Lailey Vineyard, Legends Estate Winery, Maleta Winery, Marynissen, Mike Weir, Palatine Hills, Rancourt Winery, Reif Estate Winery, Stonechurch, Stoney Ridge, Stratus, Tawse Winery, Twenty Bees, Vineland Estates Winery and Wayne Gretzky Estates



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Wine Events

WINERIES OF NIAGARA ON THE LAKE

Taste The Season

November 3 & 4, 10 & 11, 17 & 18 and 24 & 25

Experience fabulous wine and food pairings at the 17 Wineries of Niagara-on-the-Lake. Explore unique wine and gift selections and receive your collectible ornament.

Purchase your pass for one of four featured weekends in November. Touring passes are \$40 and are available online through the Niagara-on-the-Lake Chamber of Commerce by phone at 905.468.1950 or on the web at

www.niagaraonthelake.com

Proceeds from this pass provide enough fresh food for approximately 20 meals for those who would otherwise go hungry.

Participating wineries include: Château des Charmes, Coyote's Run, Hillebrand Estates, Inniskillin Wines, Jackson-Triggs Niagara Estate, Joseph's Estate, Konzelmann Estate, Lailey Vineyard, Marynissen Estate, Niagara College Teaching Winery, Palatine Hills Estate, Peller Estates, Pillitteri Estates, Reif Estate, Stonechurch Vineyards, Strewn Winery and Sunnybrook Farm Estate Winery

PRINCE EDWARD COUNTY WINEGROWERS

The First Annual Wassail Event

November 24 & 25 and December 1 & 2

The Prince Edward County Winegrowers Association (PECWA) is delighted to invite all and sundry to go a-wassailing amongst our wineries, cidery and brewery so fair to toast the end of another growing season with the burying of our vines before the full arrival of winter's chilly blast.

Adapting the olde English tradition of wassailing in apple orchards at the beginning of the winter season, drinking toasts, and asking blessings for next year's harvest seemed a natural thing to do in the county. We will even choose a King and/or Queen of the Wassail as was done in days of yore. Our first Wassail monarchs will be announced at Carmela Estates Winery, November 22, by our toastmaster. They are PEC wine pioneers who have led the way for our new Designated Viticultural Area. On the two weekends, the wineries, cidery and brewery will be festooned with lights and festive decor for the upcoming holiday season and will offer mulled wines, spiced ciders or special beers for tasting, provide comfort munchies, and present a broad array of diversions

including art and quilt exhibits, caroling, wreath making, and the like. Some are rumoured to be preparing some vin nouveau or releasing hitherto sequestered Pinot Noir for the occasion and all will be open to providing wassailers (customers) such wines and beverages as they may require for the upcoming holidays.

Participating wineries include: Bergeron Estate Winery, Black Prince Winery, By Chadsey's Cairns Winery, Waupoos Estate Winery, Carmela Estates Winery, County Cider Company, Closson Chase Vineyards, Huff Estates Winery and Inn, Barley Days Brewery, Norman Hardie Winery, Sugarbush Vineyard and Winery and Sandbanks Estate Winery

WINERIES OF TWENTY VALLEY

Wrapped Up in the Valley

November 24 & 25 and December 1 & 2

In its second year, participating wineries in Niagara's Twenty Valley invite you to join them in this fun and festive winery-touring event. Leave the malls and lineups behind for a wonderful holiday shopping experience in the tasting rooms of our various wineries. This experience will have you sampling delicious wines and treats as you check off those loved ones from your gift list!

"Wrapped Up in the Valley" passport holders will enjoy two perfectly paired wines with fine Canadian cheeses at each winery, coordinated in partnership with the Dairy Farmers of Canada. Upon the fourth winery visit, passport holders will receive a commemorative 4-bottle canvas wine tote as this year's special gift.

Passports are \$20.00 each and can be purchased at the twelve participating wineries or at the office of the Twenty Valley Tourism Association, 3720 19th Street, Jordan, Ontario. Please note that the passports are limited and are being sold on a first come, first served basis. More information about each individual venue's wine and cheese pairing and their hours of operation will be posted to the Twenty Valley Tourism website at www.20valley.ca by November 9.

12 Participating Wineries Include:

Angels Gate Winery; Cave Spring Cellars; Creekside Estate Winery; EastDell Estates Winery; Fielding Estates Winery; Flat Rock Cellars; Harbour Estates Winery; Lakeview Cellars Estate Winery; Mountain Road Wine Company; Peninsula Ridge Estates Winery; Stoney Ridge Estates Winery; Vineland Estates Winery

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Corporate Member Events

ANGELS GATE WINERY

Glass Painting Seminar

November 18 - 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Invite a friend and spend some time together creating your own unique designs on crystal glasses under the guidance of professional artist Beverly Sneath. Each participant will be provided with two crystal wine glasses. A catered lunch and wine tasting will also be provided.

Inclusive: Hand painted glasses / Lunch / Wine tasting.

Beverly Sneath @ Angels Gate

\$60 per person

Christmas in the Valley

November 24 & 25 - 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

December 1 & 2 - 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Wine & cheese pairing. Souvenir canvas bottle tote (Limit one tote / passport holder).

\$20 per passport. Passports available at winery and local participating 20 Valley members.

Please contact the winery to enroll for an event or sign up with one of our staff today!

Phone: 905-563-3942

Fax: 905-563-4127

Email: buywine@angelsgatewinery.com

BLACK PRINCE WINERY

Wassail

“A festive occasion on which toasts are drunk!”

November 24 & 25 and December 1 & 2

The Prince Edward County Wine Growers Association has done it again! Created a wine event that will have the county a buzz, and glowing with the festive spirit. The notion of enjoying the warmth of the season, mulled wine and slow food, visual bonbons that comfort the heart and remind us to take time for the finer things in life! Drop by Black Prince and feel the spirit of the season.

EASTDELL ESTATES WINERY

All Day Brunch with a VIEW

Every Sunday - 10:30 a.m., 12:30 p.m., 2:30 p.m.

Enjoy our splendid setting and a hearty buffet of delicious brunch favourites including hot carving & omelet stations, salmon, sausages, eggs, fruits, seasonal salads and desserts.

\$21.95 p.p., half price for children under 12 years. Festive brunch rate applies on holidays.

Family Night with a VIEW

Thursday Nights from 5:00 p.m.

Bring the family to EastDell on Thursday nights to enjoy a special 3-course homemade meal prepared with local ingredients of Niagara's Twenty Valley. \$21.95 for adults; \$11.95 for children.

Date Night with a VIEW

November 16

A special four course meal for two featuring Niagara game meats. \$80/couple or \$110/couple with Sommelier suggested wine pairings. Seatings from 5 p.m. Reservations are recommended.

New Year's Eve Dinner

Seatings from 4 p.m. to 7 p.m.

Warm up alongside The VIEW's two storey fireplace while savouring a memorable five course, wine inspired meal. \$95 p.p. for meal including Sommelier suggested wine pairings; \$75p.p. without.

New Year's Eve Menu Preview

-Smoked Duck Salad

-Surf n' Turf (beef tenderloin & lobster)

-Chocolate Icewine Pâté

*Five courses paired with a wine that inspired each recipe.

Call (905) 563-9463 or email TheVIEW@eastdell.com to reserve for all events.



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HUFF ESTATES

Sleighs and Chardonnays.....

Join in the festivities at Huff Estates during Prince Edward County's Wassail weekends - November 24/25 and December 1/2. An antique sleigh full of trinkets and treasures and a vast selection of custom-made yuletide baskets await you for your shopping pleasure highlighted the special release of our 2006 Lighthall Chardonnay. Wreaths and garlands will blanket the walls created by The Sheiling House in Consecon. Classic holiday canapés prepared by Cuisine Kathleen and paired with our award winning wines by resident sommelier Brian Hanna and served at the tasting bar. Special Wassail rates for guests available at the Inn at Huff Estates for more info call (613) 393-1414 or e-mail Karen Brunet at karen@huffestates.com

LAKEVIEW CELLARS ESTATE WINERY

Wine Tasting Party...Naked

November 18, 1:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.
It's about tasting wines naked - stripped down, with no labels or capsules showing. No expert opinions or prices, it all comes down to taste - your taste! The theme: Holiday entertaining. Six wines will be poured.
\$10 p.p. Reservations required.

Call (905) 562-5685 x227 or email
LVretail@lakeviewcellars.ca to reserve.

MOUNTAIN ROAD WINE COMPANY

Fifth Anniversary Celebration

November 24 - 10:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.
Join us for wine, food and fun as we celebrate our 5th Anniversary.

We will offer special new releases including:

- 2004 Barrel Fermented Chardonnay
 - 2004 Reserve Chardonnay
 - 2005 Unoaked Chardonnay
 - 2003 Maréchal Foch
 - 2003 Baco Noir
 - 2003 Gamay Noir
 - 2003 Mountain Road Red
 - 2005 Botrytis Affected Riesling
- and some library re-releases.

Don't miss the special pricing on some of our icewines and as usual, we offer complimentary tastings at our Wine Shop. Come by and help us celebrate!

PILLITTERI ESTATES WINERY

Taste the Season

November 3 & 4, 10 & 11, 17 & 18 or 24 & 25

Experience fabulous wine and food pairings at the 17 Wineries of Niagara-on-the-Lake during "Taste the Season". Pillitteri Estates will be featuring their 2004 Unoaked Chardonnay with a tartlet of Brie de Meaux with quince preserve.

Explore unique wine and gift selections and receive your collectible ornament.

Purchase your pass for one of four weekends in November online at www.niagaraonthelake.com or by calling 905-468-1950 or at Second Harvest 416-408-2594.

Wines To Warm Up To!

Weekends in December. 11:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

In the spirit of the season join us at for a taste of rare red Icewine along with a comparative tasting of our Bordeaux blends (Merlot, Cabernet Franc and Cabernet Sauvignon). \$5.00 per person. Reservations not required.

REIF ESTATE WINERY

4 Weekends – 4 First Growths

Open daily 10:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Join us any weekend in December to sample our award winning 2002 First Growth Collection which showcases the terroir of our oldest vineyards. These red wines retail for \$50 each and are limited to 200 cases per variety and due to limited production are not usually available for sampling. These wines are presented in a black gift box and are perfect for holiday giving or to be savoured at your festive meal.

\$4.00 per sample – No reservations required.

ENTERTAINING FOR CHRISTMAS

December 2 & 9 - 1:30 p.m. - 3:30 p.m.

Join resident sommelier to taste wines and artisan cheeses that will compliment Christmas dinner and create a lovely long lasting winter table arrangement for holiday entertaining. Join Hilary Bellis of 'It Can Be Arranged' and see why she was featured in the winter issue of Canadian Gardening magazine for her holiday decorating ideas. You will create a winter table arrangement using fresh evergreens, berries, cinnamon sticks and permanent roses; all materials will be supplied.

\$65.00 per person includes all materials and artisan wine and cheese tasting.

Limited seating so book early. Reservations required with a non-refundable deposit. Call 905-468-WINE (9463) to reserve or email events@reifwinery.com

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STONE RIDGE ESTATE WINERY

Holiday Gift Packaging

November 9 - 11

Holiday Open House with cheese and display of Corporate and Personal Gift packaging options.

Pre-Release Luncheon

November 24 - 12:00 noon - 2:00 p.m.

Come out and sample our 2006 Vintage wines from the Barrel. First opportunity for the general public to order on Pre-Release. \$40 pp limited to 30 people.

Twenty Valley Wrap Up

November 24 & 25, December 1 & 2

Annual 20 Valley weekend. Wine and packaging specials, food and wine pairing. Passport program - free wine tote bags.

Mulled Wine/Seasonal Open House

December 8 & 9

Mulled wine and shortbread. Display of seasonal gift items.

Other Winery Events

FEATHERSTONE ESTATE WINERY

Food Celebration: Holiday Open House

November 24 & 25 - 11:00 am-5:00 pm

Each year as the holiday season approaches, the folks at Featherstone pull out all the stops to make their Open House an event to remember. Newly released wines are poured by the winemaker and matched with house specialties — blue cheese shortbread; mushroom-ricotta tartlets; walnut-cranberry stuffed brie laced with Fabiana's pepper-berry blast; marinated olives; and seasoned nuts. We also create gift baskets that make beautiful presents (hint, hint). The neighbouring wineries and merchants of the Twenty Valley Tourism Association all hold their Holiday Open House the same weekend, so plan on making a day of it.

Other Ontario Wine Events

THE ONTARIO WINE REVIEW CABERNET FRANC CHALLENGE

Let's Be Franc ...

Wine and Cheese Reception 7:00p.m.

Tasting: 7:30p.m. ... After Party: 9:00-10:00pm

It's time to be Frank about Franc ... or at least pick the best. Over the course of five nights in November and into December (Nov. 8, 14, 20, 27 & Dec. 6), we'll convene at The Fine Wine Reserve in downtown Toronto where we'll taste over 62 different wines from 38 Ontario wineries. The wines will be broken down into 3 categories: Cabernet Franc, Franc Blends, and Franc Reserves. Each night, we'll taste between 7 and 10 different wines from that night's category; tasting will be done blind (you'll know the category but not the producer). Then, each taster will decide, based on a scale from 1 to 10, the following criteria: 1) do you like it; 2) would you buy it and 3) is it good value. There will also be a brief talk about Cabernet Franc, it's history and future in Ontario, all hosted by the Grape Guy himself, Michael Pinkus.

This is not a reviewers' challenge, it is a people's challenge - your votes and feedback will determine Ontario's Best Cabernet Franc.

Afterward we'll mix and mingle for coffee and dessert ... featuring some special bottles of wine from area fruit wineries, Balderson cheese, some sweet treats and coffees from Raymond Emes & Co. There will also be door prizes from The Original Grape Shirt Company.

Thurs. Nov. 8 – Regular Cabernet Franc ... Night 1

Wed. Nov. 14 – Regular Cabernet Franc ... Night 2

Tues. Nov. 20 – Cabernet Franc Blends

Tues. Nov. 27 – Cab Franc Reserve ... Night 1

Thurs. Dec. 6 – Cab Franc Reserve ... Night 2

Different wines in these categories are poured each night. Come to one or come to them all ... we'd love to have your opinion.

\$40 per person per night

Bonus: purchase any 3 nights and get an invite to the exclusive Cabernet Franc icewine tasting.

Visit www.ontariowinereview.com for all the details ... or call the Grape Line 416-346-2223.



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ROYAL DEMARIA WINES

Reprinted from: Ontario Wine Review

Talk about having that lonely feeling; there's no lonelier feeling in Niagara than driving down Cherry Avenue in Beamsville, towards Lake Ontario, and realizing there are no cars in front and none behind. If you travel south on Cherry (that's away from the lake in these parts) there's Lakeview, Ridgepoint, Tawse and you'll even see the top of Willow Heights as you head up the hill; but north of King Street (that's the main wine route strip) on Cherry, there isn't much there; and it can seem like a very long, lonely drive ... one in which you'd swear you were lost. You might even stop to recheck your map. So why make that drive? To pay a visit to Royal DeMaria, one of Ontario's most unique wineries; a winery devoted strictly to what Ontario (Canada for that matter) is best known for ... icewine. At Royal DeMaria, it's icewine all the time - eighteen different grapes and 24 different varieties.

In 1991, Joseph DeMaria, a hairdresser by trade, tasted icewine for the first time first and was completely blown away. He decided right there and then that he just had to try his hand at making this golden nectar, and in 1998 he made his very first icewine. It is said that Joseph made, what he considered at the time, a costly error in the making of his first wine, but he somehow was able to save this batch and went on to win five international gold medals for that very first vintage. Ever since, he has continued to make that "costly error" on-purpose. Now, in 2007, Royal DeMaria is open to the public so that you can see, and taste, what the world is raving about ... and yes I do mean the world. Royal DeMaria has continued year-after-year to win countless medals worldwide for their icewine creations. So what does this world record holding winery look like inside and outside? In two words: interesting and unfinished.

On your right hand side, as you drive north on Cherry, you'll come across a property with black gates in front which leads onto a long stone encrusted driveway and an orange house at the end. The house is quite peculiar. From first glance you'll notice it remains unfinished. The top floor (second level) has two balcony doors with no balcony to walk out onto.

Below those top "balcony doors" are two sets of ground level doors - of which only the right side set is open (there's also a sign that states the hours of operation and that if the doors are locked during these hours to please ring the doorbell). We were greeted very professionally by a young lady who identified herself as Ashley. She asked us if we had ever been there before ... we replied "no", and with that she launched into the history of the winery, its proprietor and a tour of the cluttered award room and makeshift storage room. This is the first room

you walk into and on the left side you'll see the awards while the right side is wine storage. Metals, trophies, plaques, cups and many other recognition awards hang from walls and line the tables ... if they win many more they'll have to build another room.

After that, it's on to the tasting room, which runs parallel to the trophy room, and is accessed through a doorway to the left of the entrance - it is the same size as the medal chamber with a small bar at the far end. Samples of many of their products are available. The price list behind the tasting bar is on a chalkboard and the prices listed range from \$64.95 to \$30,000 per 375ml bottle. A water cooler to the left of the tasting bar is there to help cleanse the palate of the sweetness you are about to partake in, and lining the walls, you'll see press clippings about Joseph, the winery and many of the "world-first" and "world-record" accomplishments they have achieved. Tastings are no more than a thimbleful of the lush liquids, so it's tough to really get an adequate taste, especially after your third or fourth sample; but the uniqueness of some of the varieties is what keeps you going; wondering what, say, a Baco Noir icewine will taste like or one made from Chenin or Sauvignon Blanc.

Royal DeMaria is truly "Canada's Icwine Specialists" as the brochures and website proclaim. The one word I continue to come back to in describing Royal DeMaria is "unique": one of Canada's most unique and specialized wineries. If you like icewine, or maybe you're just curious what a Shiraz icewine tastes like, this winery makes for a great visit and a sweet stop when you're out and about in Niagara.

Royal DeMaria Wines 2004 Cabernet Franc (sc 18.7) \$89.95

It seems like these days everybody and his dog is making Cab Franc icewine, and why not, it is perfect as a table wine, grows wonderfully well here in Ontario and we just do so well with it. The skin contact was minimized here to keep the colour a faint pink (hardly noticeable it was in my glass it was so light). Tons of berries, mainly raspberry and strawberry, with good acidity and a luscious finish.

Royal DeMaria Wines 2004 Baco Noir (sc 21.8) \$349.95

Here's something that might make the Kings of Baco (Henry of Pelham) brothers scratch their collective heads in wonderment as to why they didn't think of it. From someone who has tasted many Baco's of late, this wine was of great interest to me. The deep, dark red colour comes as no surprise considering the colour of the table wine Baco produces. The flavours are what you'd expect from Baco with the added bonus of kicked up sweetness: dark red berries, mainly black cherry with an earth intensity - peculiar at first because you aren't prepared for the sugar jolt, but wonderful results at the end. The finish is medium-short, but very tasty.