



# Just Off the Vine ...

The Ontario Wine Society's Newsletter

August 2005

## Upcoming Events

### Toronto Chapter

#### **PINOT NOIR - A 2002 HORIZONTAL TASTING**

October 17 - Reception: 6:00 p.m., Tasting: 6:30 p.m.  
The Ontario Club, Commerce Court South, 5th floor  
(South East Corner King & Bay Streets.)

Ontario Club dress code: Casual, but no jeans or running shoes please. \$ 30 Member; \$ 40 Non-member

“The quest for a Pinot Noir wine which comes near to matching a Cote d’Or Grand Crus has become like a Holy Grail, especially for New World wine makers ... It is the most capricious of all grape varieties, demanding forbearance and respect from the grower, winemaker and drinker. It is highly sensitive to climate, soil, training and vinification. At its best it produces wines that are sensuous, magnificently perfumed and seductively fleshy. At its worst, it is meager with angular offerings of charmless, raw, stinky flavours and enough acidity to run a car battery.” (Remington Norman – The Great Domains of Burgundy)

Come taste for yourself how well the New World winemakers are doing. We’ve chosen to showcase the Ontario Pinot Noirs from the outstanding 2002 vintage and see how they compare with their same-vintage contemporaries around the world.

Konrad Ejbich, (“the palate that walks”) the author of the recently released “A Pocket Guide to Ontario Wines, Vineyards And Vines”, will lead the tasting. Konrad has led many Ontario Wine Society and other tasting events. He is the “resident wine expert” on CBC-Radio, with monthly appearances on Ontario Today. He is a correspondent for the Wine Spectator and writes a column for Style at Home. Editor’s Note See Dean Tudor’s review of Konrad’s book in this Newsletter.

The wines will be tasted semi-blind, that is, we will know the wines that we are tasting, but we won’t know which one is in which glass. The wines include 2002 Henry of Pelham, Ontario, 2002 Inniskillin, Ontario, 2002 Jackson Triggs, Delaine Vineyard, Ontario, 2002 Malivoire, Ontario, 2002 Thirty Bench, Ontario, 2002 Parent, Burgundy, France, 2002 Oyster Bay, Marlborough, New Zealand, 2002 Hamilton Russel, Walker Bay, South Africa and the perennial favourite Mystery Wine

#### **NEW KIDS ON THE BLOCK**

November 22 - Reception: 6:00 p.m., Tasting: 6:30 p.m.  
Members: \$30, Non-members: \$40  
The Ontario Club, Commerce Court South, 5th Floor.

Last year’s “New Kids” was a sell out! This popular event is now an annual staple for the OWS. This year, eleven wines from five of Ontario’s newest wineries will be showcased. Representatives from the wineries, including most of the winemakers themselves, will lead us through samples of their wines and talk about their wineries.

**Ridgepoint Wines** - 04 Riesling and ’02 Nebbiolo  
**Fielding Estate Winery** - ’04 Gewürztraminer and ’02 Cabernet/Merlot

**Stratus Vineyards** - 02 Wildass Red and ’02 Cabernet Franc

**Flat Rock Cellars** - ’03 Pinot Noir and ’04 Nadja’s Vineyard Riesling

**Mountain Road** - 01 Barrel Aged Chardonnay, ’01 Cabernet Franc and a special treat of their ’99 Vidal Ice wine!

#### **OTHER UPCOMING EVENTS**

Bordeaux Blends January 17, 2006

Icewine Weekend February 4-5, 2006

Sparkling Wines February 21, 2006

Wine & Cheese March 14, 2006

Annual Dinner April 25, 2006

Sauvignon Blanc Tasting May 16, 2006

### Niagara Chapter

#### **NIAGARA CHAPTER’S - ANNUAL DINNER**

La Cchette Restaurant at Strewn Winery

November 11 - Terroir ‘La Cchette’ Restaurant  
Strewn Winery, 1339 Lakeshore Rd., Niagara on the Lake  
Reception - 6:30 p.m., Dinner - 7:00 p.m.

\$ 85 Members / \$ 95 Non-Members (price includes all food, wine, taxes, & gratuities)

This year’s Annual Dinner will be held at Terroir ‘La Cchette’ Restaurant at Strewn Winery. La Cchette is a colourful, warm, and contemporary dining room featuring fanciful artwork from the artisans of Ontario. Their French Provençal style of food, prepared by Chef Alain Levesque, is a local favourite.

Our guest speaker will be Sandy Ward; founder of the BYOW website [www.BringMyWine.ca](http://www.BringMyWine.ca). He will speak to us on the new Bring Your Own Wine (BYOW) and Take The Rest Home (TTRH) legislations that have recently



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been passed. Sandy has been building Internet applications since 1996 and currently works at Yahoo! Canada as an Engineering Manager. His love of wine started while living in Ottawa but it became an obsession during the six years he lived in San Francisco; where he also discovered BYOW.

Ontario passed their new BYOW law shortly after Sandy moved to Toronto. Frustrated by the lack of information on BYOW restaurants, he created [www.BringMyWine.ca](http://www.BringMyWine.ca) to share information with his friends. Within a couple of months many other people found the site and it is now the leading site for BYOW information in Ontario.

Our dinner will feature the wines of Strewn Winery. Established in 1997, Strewn made its home in what used to be Niagara Shores Canning Company. Built circa 1930's, this newly renovated building now houses Strewn Winery, Terroir La Cachette Restaurant, and The Wine Country Cooking School (Canada's only winery cooking school). Owner and winemaker of Strewn Winery, Joe Will, will be on hand to describe his wines and to talk a bit about Strewn Winery.

The menu for the evening will be:

Sweet Pepper Cream Soup w/ Basil Aioli paired with Strewn Estates Riesling Terroir 2002

Seared Sea Scallop w/ Watercress & Celeric Purée paired with Strewn Estates chardonnay Terroir 2001

House Smoked Duck Magret w/ Lentil Salad paired with Strewn Estates Cabernet Franc Terroir 2000

Venison Medallions w/ Roasted Garlic & Olives Niçoise paired with Strewn Estates Strewn 3 2002

Apple & Maple Tatin paired with Strewn Estates Select late harvest Vidal 1998

For local directions or a map, visit [www.strewnwinery.com](http://www.strewnwinery.com) (map) or [www.lacachette.com](http://www.lacachette.com).

## OTHER UPCOMING EVENTS

December (TBA) - Blending Wines

January 17 - New Kids on the Block Tasting (featuring 4 of Niagara's newest wineries) - held at Stratus Winery

February - "You be the Judge" tasting - sampling Cuvee Winners

March - Annual Social Night

April - "Cork VS Screw Cap"

May - "Women in Wine"

## Previous Events

### 25TH ANNIVERSARY OF COLIO ESTATE WINES

September 12, 2005

It was a treat to be at the Ontario Club for the next round of monthly tastings of the Ontario Wine Society ([www.ontariowinesociety.com](http://www.ontariowinesociety.com)). For the past several years, the society was at Tasting Rooms, but that venue was sold over the summer. There is much more room at the Ontario Club, along with the faux decadence. This will allow the society to expand its Toronto base of operations. Sadly, the free parking is gone (hint: take the TTC, especially if you have had a drink or two), and there are some issues with the food. But the dress code helps (casual, but no jeans or running shoes) and gives a more upscale tone to the proceedings. Tonight we helped to celebrate the 25th Anniversary of Colio Estate Wines (Lake Erie North Shore), which now produces over 200,000 cases of wine annually. Jim Clarke, Manager, and Carlo Negri (OWA Winemaker of the Year for 2005) presented a wide variety of wines to the society. They commented on all of the wines. Jim told us all a bit about their future Niagara plans (they've bought a place on the Niagara Parkway, they'll put up a showcase winery, they'll also produce NOTL wines in addition to the LENS series). We began with a sparkler reception in the Lounge (talk about space!!) in decent sparkling wine glasses. It was Lily CEV 2003, Gold Medalist at the OWA. At one time it was all riesling; now, it is 85% pinot noir and 15% riesling (off-dry, slightly perfumed and doughy, modest finish, +509083, \$14.95). We then had a sitdown tasting of three whites and three reds and one icewine:

Colio Estate CEV Pinot Grigio 2004: 12.4%, Italianate nose but soft, fruity, slightly bitter, some anise, aromatic finish. Good body, lower acidity. \$14.95, +503391.

Colio Estate CEV Gewurztraminer 2002: light nose, not at all Alsatian, good body but light finish, some anise. Peaches? Like a riesling. \$14.95, +432104.

Colio Estate CEV Chardonnay 2002 Unoaked: again, some anise. Off-dry finish, aging well, good body of apples and pears. \$13.95, +503383.

Colio Estate CEV Merlot Reserve 2002: 13%, my favourite red of the evening, approachable, currants, more cabernet sauvignon-like in flavours, pepper, fruity. \$24.95, +500447.

Colio Estate CEV Cabernet Sauvignon 2002: 12.7%, very soft, very merlot-like (I hope the winery didn't mixup the labels and the batches!), but leaner finish. \$21.95, +619510.

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Colio Estate CEV Carlo Negri Signature Meritage 2002: 12.7%, one-third each of both cabernets and of merlot. Aged 22 months in new Euro oak, lots going on (mocha tones, vanilla, cedar, lead pencils) but in a tight framework. Needs cellaring. Long finish, distinguished wine. \$69.95.

Colio Estate CEV Vidal Icewine 2004: quality apricot-peachy nose and follow through. \$39.95 half-bottle.

For more information, check out the website [www.coliowines.com](http://www.coliowines.com) for Colio store locations, or call 1-866-254-6075 for by the case purchases from Winerytohome.

As a quality wine society event, the Colio tasting rates a 8.5 out of 10.

Chimo!

**DEAN TUDOR**

## “HOW TO TASTE WINE LIKE A PRO” TASTING AT FLAT ROCK CELLARS

August 18, 2005

What a great summer evening for our annual BBQ event. After a short mingling, we followed Ed Madronich (President of Flat Rock Cellars) up to his panoramic loft above the boutique where we would sample the wines.

Our guest speaker, Colleen Rivard – (Owner of The Home AdVintage - Custom Wine Tasting Events) ([www.homeadvintage.com](http://www.homeadvintage.com)) lead us through a flight of 8 wines, exploring the different flavours and aromas of each. Rivard makes a living out of teaching people how to discover the flavours in wines in the privacy of their own homes. She conducted her Wine Sensory Evaluation seminar: “Learn to taste and assess wines like the ‘pros’ using all five of your senses.

Rivard provided a wonderfully broad selection of wines to sample. Among them were a Riesling, Chardonnay, Cabernet Franc, Morio Muscat, Nectarine Peach wine and a sparkling, in addition to Flat Rock Cellars Pinot Noir and Pinot Noir Rose. Colleen provided a wine aroma wheel for each of

us to use as a guide. The wheel has three circles; the inner circle indicates major families of aromas like “fruity” or “woody”. The middle circle narrowed down the aromas to more specific smells like “tropical fruit” or “burned wood”, and finally the outer circle narrowed it down even further to aromas like “pineapple” or “smoky”. When polled before the tasting, the majority of the members attending said they considered themselves only able to identify the inner circle of aromas in wine. The challenge then was to test yourself and try to identify aromas in your wine from the next circle out. After plenty of lip smacking and swishing, there were a few revelations that night.

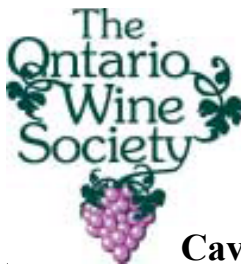
After the tasting, we were lead back down stairs where Madronich took those who were interested on a guided tour of his facility, while the more leisurely of us lazed around the open air boutique and the panoramic balcony overlooking the Toronto skyline on this clear, warm night, with the smell of campfire in the air. Meanwhile, Rob Trout was outside by the ornate fire pit that Madronich set ablaze, barbecuing some delicious chicken and beef morsels on the grill.

We’d like to thank Flat Rock Cellars, Ed Madronich, and his staff for hosting the tasting. Special thanks go to Colleen Rivard for leading the tasting. Thanks also to Lynda Jurgenson for planning the tasting and to Robert Trout for catering the food.

**YVONNE HALLIDAY**



Flat Rock Cellars - Picture: Yvonne Halliday Trout



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## Winery Events

### **Cave Springs Winery**

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

#### **CRUSH 101**

October 15-16, 22-23, and 29-30 at 11:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m.

Brix, pH, titratable acidity, ... it all sounds complicated, but is really quite simple. During harvest, learn the ABCs of how grapes are crushed and fermented into wine.

Reservations Required 905-562-3581, ext. 302., \$12.00/person

#### **BY THE GLASS**

November 12-13, 19-20, and 26-27 at 11:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m.

It's a well known fact that the shape of the glass dramatically affects our appreciation of wine. Discover just how by tasting a range of grape varieties in their proper stemware.

Reservations Required 905-562-3581, ext. 302, \$15.00/person

#### **RELEASE WEEKEND!**

November 18 - 19.

Enjoy a weekend getaway at our Inn On The Twenty, including a Winemaker's dinner & tasting featuring new & back vintage releases.

For details, call 1-800-701-8074.

### **Coyote's Run Estate Winery**

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

#### **TASTE THE SEASON ~ TOURING PASSPORT PROGRAM**

November 12-13, 19-20, 26-27 from 10:00a.m. to 6:00p.m.

Visit Coyote's Run and enjoy a tasting of our 2004 Reserve Chardonnay paired with a Shitake Mushroom and Leek Fricassee. Present your passport at the Niagara-On-The-Lake Chamber of Commerce and receive your "vintage 2005 collectable ornament" as a keepsake of your trip. Passport are \$30 and are available by calling Second Harvest at (416) 408-2594 or online at [www.niagaraonthelake.com](http://www.niagaraonthelake.com).

#### **NEW RELEASE TASTING**

Monday – Sunday from 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.

Coyote's Run is pleased to announce the release of three new fabulous wines; join us for a tasting of our 2004 Merlot, 2004 Cabernet Franc and 2004 Riesling Icewine.

### **Inniskillin Wines**

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

#### **PERCEPTIONS OF SWEETNESS**

October 15-16, 22-23, 29-30 from 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Taste the versatility of Riesling through various levels of sweetness. Riesling is one of the best examples and we have some wines that will make your palate tip the scale. Accompanied by a bakery delight from the Pie Plate in Virgil. This tasting is not to be missed!

\$8 per person. No Reservation Needed

### **Konzelmann Estate Winery**

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

#### **TASTE THE SEASON 2005 PASSPORT PROGRAM**

November 12-13, 19-20 and 26-27 from 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Enjoy a wine and food pairing at each of the 17 wineries of Niagara-on-the-Lake AND discover great holiday gift selections, wines for your seasonal entertaining, and wines to cellar for enjoyment later. Present your passport at the Niagara-on-the-Lake Chamber of Commerce at 26 Queen Street in the Historical Shopping District and receive your "Vintage 2005 Collectible Ornament" as a keepsake of your trip. Your touring passport also supports Second Harvest and its programs to help feed those who would otherwise go hungry.

Passports are \$30 and available by calling Second Harvest at 416-408-2594. Passports and accommodation bookings are available online at [www.niagaraonthelake.com](http://www.niagaraonthelake.com). Wine and Food pairings can be viewed at [www.wineriesofniagaraonthelake.com](http://www.wineriesofniagaraonthelake.com).

### **Mountain Road Wine Company**

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

#### **THIRD ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION!**

November 27 from 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Mountain Road Wine Company would like to invite you to celebrate with us the successes of our past year and share our new releases including the 2004 Botrytis Affected Riesling, four red Icewines, our 2002 Chardonnays; unoaked, barrel fermented and reserve.

We will be offering complimentary tastings of all of our currently available wines including our Reserve Cabernet Franc, Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon (the big brother of our sold out 2005 Ontario Wine Award Gold winning regular 2001 Cabernet Sauvignon) and our 2001 Reserve Chardonnay.

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A limited number of our Vintage Library Collection will be re-released, including our Gold winning 2000 Maréchal Foch, 2000 Barrel Aged Chardonnay, 2000 Cabernet Sauvignon Vintner's Reserve and yes a few squirreled away bottles of our 2001 Cabernet Sauvignon.

Join us for food, fun and wine; all for free! We will be accepting donations for the local Women's Shelter.

## Pillitteri Estates Winery

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

### TASTE THE SEASON PASSPORT PROGRAM

November 12-13, 19-20 and 26-27

Enjoy a wine and food pairing at Pillitteri Estates Winery as part of the "Taste of the Season" programming. Discover great holiday gift selections, wines for your seasonal entertaining, and wines to cellar for enjoyment later. Proceeds go to Second Harvest programs. Pillitteri will be pairing their Cabernet Select Late Harvest with a decadent Cranberry Chocolate Combo. Visit us at [www.pillitteri.com](http://www.pillitteri.com)

Passports are \$30.00 Canadian, and are available online at [www.niagaraonthelake.com](http://www.niagaraonthelake.com) or at Second Harvest at 416-408-2594. Please be sure to identify which weekend holds your interest, as passports are valid ONLY for the one weekend specified

## Reif Estate Winery

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

### WINE AND CHEESE PAIRING 101T

October 15 from 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.

For years home entertainers, chefs and event planners have propagated the idea that Wine and Cheese are perfect partners. However, like many 'marriages', some matches work better than others. Kathy Guidi, founder of Artisan Cheese Marketing joins Reif Estate's Sommelier, Carol LePage to present this unique tasting with wine & cheese pairing tips.

\$20 per person. Email [events@reifwinery.com](mailto:events@reifwinery.com) for ticket.

## Southbrook Winery

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

### PINOT NOIR COMPARISONS

October 22 - 23 from 10.00 a.m. - 5.00 p.m.,

Join us to explore the fascinating world of Pinot Noir. We'll be comparing one of Southbrook's Pinot Noirs against two Burgundies available at the L.C.B.O. Pinot Noir is one of the hardest grapes to grow and produce wine from, but under the right conditions, the finished products are amazing!

The cost for this tasting is \$4 per person. We'd love to see you there.

## Vineland Estates Winery

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

### DINING ADVENTURE SERIES OCTOBER DINNER

#### "CHOCOLATE, CHOCOLATE, CHOCOLATE"

October 19 - Reception 6:30 p.m. Dinner 7:00 p.m.

Join us for our monthly dining series as we celebrate the sweet tooth with a 6-course gourmet dinner designed to showcase chocolate and our premium wines. Winemaker Brian Schmidt will lead this informative yet relaxing harvest occasion.

Dinner pricing includes a special chocolate treat package for each guest.

Wine Club Special Price \$70, Regular Pricing \$100 per person plus taxes and gratuities. For reservations or more information, call (905) 562-7088 x33

For information on joining our Wine Club, call Blayne at x29.

Wine Club members receive our wines to your door every month with recipes and cellaring tips plus special discounts on all dining events held at our estate.

### THE FINE WINE RESERVE'S TASTING ROOM

November 2 at 4:00 p.m. or 6:00 p.m.

Vineland Estates Winery has teamed with Flat Rock Cellars and Tawse Winery for this exclusive tasting at the Fine Wine Reserve led by Zoltan Szabo and John Szabo (Canada's only certified Master Sommelier).

Choose between two sittings of 90 minutes each at 4pm or 6pm. Limited to 25 seats per seating. Reservations Required. Price: No Charge To reserve or for information, call Marc at (416) 593-9463

## The Asthma Society of Canada

### ESSENTIA: AN EVENING OF FINE WINE AND CUISINE

The Asthma Society of Canada is presenting an exclusive wine tasting event will take place at The Eglinton Grand (400 Eglinton Avenue West) on Thursday, October 27, 2005 from 6-10 pm. The evening's highlights include an engaging interactive wine tasting created and led by acclaimed Sommelier David Farnell. David has designed a fascinating wine tasting which will captivate your senses, excite your palate and show you how to taste the essence of wine. Delicious cuisine will be prepared by Toronto's finest chefs including Bistro 990, Doku15 and Thuet Cuisine, whose culinary art makes stops around the world and returns to Canada to shine brightly. They will marry their exotic cuisine with the delicious wines David



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has chosen. This evening ends with a Live Auction conducted by Christie's. All funds raised through Essentia will enable the Asthma Society of Canada to continue delivering French and English materials, at no cost, to thousands of individuals across the country and to continue developing The Four Seasons of Asthma website. Tax receipts will be available for all ticket and table purchases. Admission is \$175/person, Table of 10 is \$1500. For information, call Rossana Figuera at 416-787-4050 ext 105, e-mail [rossanaf@asthma.ca](mailto:rossanaf@asthma.ca) or visit <http://www.asthma.ca/corp/events/essentia.php>

## ***Restaurant Events***

### **Waring House**

#### **CUTTING EDGE COUNTY NO. 3**

October 27 at 6:30 p.m.

Prince Edward County wines in the context of Ontario VQA and wines of the world.

Price: \$69.96 per person, plus taxes and gratuities  
For reservations, please call The Waring House at 613-476-7492 or 800-621-4956

#### **CUTTING EDGE COUNTY NO. 4**

November 25 at 6:30 p.m.

Prince Edward County wines in the context of Ontario VQA and wines of the world.

\$69.96 per person, plus taxes and gratuities  
For reservations, please call The Waring House at 613-476-7492 or 800-621-4956

The Waring House, Hwy 33 & County Rd 1, 1.5 km west of Picton

## ***Book Review***

### **A POCKET GUIDE TO ONTARIO WINES, WINERIES, VINEYARDS & VINES**

(McClelland & Stewart, 2005, 272 pages, ISBN 0-7710-3055-X, \$22.99. Paper covers with French leaves)

by Konrad Ejbich

Konrad Ejbich, a Wine Writers' Circle of Canada colleague who appears on CBC radio monthly and writes a wine column for Style at Home. He is also a Canadian correspondent for the Wine Spectator.

In setup, the book is modeled on Hugh Johnson's pocket book approach, with details about the history and development of all the wineries in Ontario, which will number 125 in 2006. It is alphabetically arranged, with the usual names and numbers to access the winery.

Interspersed are valuable details of vineyard names, estates and designations, as well as general wine topics of interest. Thus, "Asian Lady Beetle" follows "Angels Gate Winery", and it comes before "Atalick Vineyard". But in this case, there is no cross-reference from "Ladybug" to "Asian Lady Beetle", and since the only index is to names of "Industry People" (very useful, by the way), you won't find ladybug indexed anywhere. You have to know that "Asian" is the opening word.

After the descriptive material about each winery Konrad gives a variety of tasting notes. He evaluates older vintages of wines no longer available for sale, and this is a boon for collectors and for those who wish to see at a glance the ongoing development of a particular wine. He gives probable dates for drinking peaks (check the legend on the French leaf). For current vintages, he requested samples from the winery (I have mixed feelings about this since bottles can be tampered with: it has happened to me at least once). Some wines have been tasted in less than ideal conditions and these have been noted as such. He gives ratings for each wine (there is a legend on the front French leaf) but doesn't give any production runs, just totals of cases for each winery. Gold prize winners have their medal identified. When a wine is dreck, he says so. Incredibly, some wineries did not want to participate. They are listed as such, so his directory remains inclusive, even if he was unable to rate their wines. Some fruit wines are covered, but here he is inconsistent. For example, there is nothing for Sunnybrook Farms, which is all non-grape fruit. And while he has rated the five fortified fruit wines from Southbrook, he doesn't mention the Cranberry table wine at Stoney Ridge, nor the fruit wines at Konzelmann (great peach) or Hernder (great rhubarb), nor the fruit-flavoured and fruit icewines that do exist. He covers some apple ciders from Prince Edward County, but no apple wines or ciders from Archibald. Indeed, there is even no entry for "Fruit Wines" or "QC", through which he could have explained all these things. Near the end of the book he has VQA Vintage Charts, 2004 - 1988, which are based on surveys of winemakers. And this is a great chart.

When I review a book, I always dip into it and begin reading. What to make of this description of a Viognier wine on p.55: "Good body, balance, supple texture, and refreshing acidity are overshadowed by sheer charm"? Doesn't he mean "enhanced"? Overshadowed implies a negative assessment. A Colio Gewurztraminer is described: "Rich gold with a mildly plastic overtone". What does that mean, beyond excessive usage of the prefix "over"? What does plastic look like? "Filmy" might be a better word.

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Nevertheless, a good first edition that will improve as the years go by. I cannot wait for the 2006 version.

Audience and level of use: the passionate wine lover who wants to discover more about Ontario wines, wine schools.

Some interesting or unusual facts: it is hard to believe that Konrad writes almost a whole book about Ontario VQA wines, but only spends FOUR LINES telling us what VQA is! We need to know about grape percentages allowed, tasting panel work, the 2003 short harvest and the subsequent General List protection racket, and the like. It needs a whole section.

What I don't like about this book: it desperately needs an index by varietal, so readers can cross-check from one winery to another, to compare varietal offerings. Also, the French leaves are difficult to keep closed, and prove a hindrance when constantly being placed in a pocket. No prices, not even price ranges, are given, and there is no explanation for this omission. Sales availability of the wines is not offered: some of these wines are on the General List of the LCBO and this should be noted.

What I do like about this book: I like the fact that there are no photos, logos, labels, etc. No illustrations mean that the costs can be kept down. He has excellent, hard-to-find details on the vineyards in Ontario, and a good discussion on the ladybug problem. But while it is nice to have reviews of non-VQA wines, I think he needs to give us a rationale for their inclusion. Most of his nonVQA tasting notes say "plonk", "dreck", "grapey", "generic", "simple", "sauvignon bland", and many have no stars. Since he picked and chose his way among the fruit wines, then he could have done the same with the nonVQA wines. He does provide some sharp and good notes for the better "Cellared in Canada" wines.

Quality/Price Ratio: hey, despite my carping, this book has to be a 93.

Chimo!

**DEAN TUDOR**

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

## ***Press Releases***

### **HILLEBRAND WINERY RESTAURANT RECEIVES TORONTO LIFE 4-STARS**

Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario (September 2005)

Hillebrand Winery Restaurant has been awarded 4-stars in the October 2005 issue of Toronto Life magazine. This is the first time that a winery restaurant or a Niagara Peninsula dining establishment has received such an honour. Toronto Life rates restaurants on a five-star system by anonymous restaurant reviewers who are

required to be honest, accurate and fair. The five-star rating system reflects the quality a diner can reasonably expect to find, taking into account the kitchen's ambitions. Each reviewer's visit is unannounced and paid for by Toronto Life.

Currently there are over 450 restaurants that have been reviewed using these criteria. Of these only twelve were awarded a 4-star rating including Hillebrand Winery Restaurant. No restaurant currently has 5-stars. Hillebrand Winery Restaurant is among some of the province's most regarded culinary destinations, those currently enjoying four-star status include; Avalon, Canoe, Chiado, Inn at Manitou, Perigee, Rundles, Scaramouche, Splendido, Sushi Kaji, Susur and Via Allegro. The Toronto Life review states that 'all dishes are artfully composed, with stunning details.' 'Nothing's superfluous.'

Hillebrand Winery Restaurant is led by Executive Chef Tony de Luca and Restaurant Managers Amy Gibbs and Christopher Gee. The restaurant is situated in the heart of the winery with views of the vineyards and barrel cellar. Featuring a vast wine list, that is exclusive to the award winning wines of Hillebrand, current vintage and back vintage wines are available from the winery's extensive Wine Library that dates back twenty-five years. Open daily year round, for lunch and dinner.

For more information on Hillebrand products, its popular Jazz and Blues at the Winery and the many other wine related activities, call the winery at (800) 582-8412 or visit [hillebrand.com](http://hillebrand.com).

### **WILLOW SPRINGS WINERY ANNOUNCES NEW PARTNERSHIP WITH THE LCBO**

Stouffville, Ontario

Willow Springs Winery is proud to announce its participation in the launch of the LCBO's Craft Winery Program throughout Ontario. The Craft Winery Program allows smaller Ontario wineries such as Willow Springs to work with the LCBO. This launch will see two premium VQA wines from Willow Springs initially available in 60 pre-selected LCBO stores commencing October 15th and an additional 60 LCBO stores over the next several years.

"Now in our fifth year of business, this program represents an enormous marketing and sales partnership opportunity with the LCBO," stated Willow Springs' owner Mario Testa. "All this has evolved due to the tremendous support and encouragement we have received from both the Wine Council of Ontario and the staff at the LCBO's Head Office."



# Just Off the Vine ...

The Ontario Wine Society's Newsletter

August 2005

The two VQA Ontario wines from Willow Springs Winery being released are the 2003 Baco Noir (#620112) and the 2003 Chardonnay (#620120). Both wines are from Willow Springs' Stouffville Vineyard situated atop the Oak Ridges Moraine in Stouffville, Ontario. "Our focus at Willow Springs is quality, affordability and value," said Mario Testa, "and our two wines going into the LCBO are outstanding on all counts."

## TO CORK OR NOT TO CORK

*Reprinted from The Highland's Courier – April 2005*

I recently inadvertently found myself involved in the philosophical debate surrounding corks or screw-caps for wine bottles. A last minute trip to the local liquor store before closing on this last long weekend provided my first exposure to this relatively new method of bottle closure in the guise of a moderately priced Australian Chardonnay. I must confess that in the past my "wine snobbery" has equated wine in screw-top bottles with inferior product. Fortunately while this may have been the case in the past I am happy to report it is now longer true.

Winemakers have been sealing wine bottles with the bark of cork oak trees for hundreds of years. For those same hundreds of years we have been throwing out bottles of our favourite wines due to cork taint and oxidation.

A "Corked" wine is a wine that has been bottled with a cork that is contaminated with TCA (2,4,6-Trichloroanisole for those who care!!). Consumers can detect the wine industry estimates that as much as 10% of all wines have TCA contamination at levels that. It takes only a minute amount of TCA (6 parts per TRILLION) to taint a bottle of wine! So far no cork producer has been able to eliminate TCA as the chemicals that contribute to cork taint are found in cork that is still on the tree!

Because cork is a natural product each cork is slightly different and so forms an imperfect seal. As well, cork can allow air to seep into the bottle either through the cork or around it. Wines can age prematurely or oxidize, and become flat or dull tasting. As a result, every bottle of cork topped wine ages differently and the consumer can't be confident that an aged wine won't be oxidized or tainted.

A great deal of work continues in the cork industry as well as at wineries to develop methods to eliminate corked wine. So far, no completely reliable method has been found. As well it is unfortunate that to keep up with increase demand for cork used in wine bottles cork producers are using substandard cork from bark that in the past would have been used for gaskets or flooring. (There are 101 uses for cork – not just in a wine bottle) Some wine producers feel that the most effective solution to this problem may lie with screw-cap closures.

This new closure method was approved in 2004 by Vintners Quality Alliance Ontario for use on Ontario-grown-and-made wines. A number of Ontario wineries have begun to use screw-caps with wines bottled this last fall. Among them is one of my favourite Niagara area wineries, Malivoire Wine Company. A chance visit last fall provided the opportunity to talk briefly on the subject with 2004 Ontario Winemaker of the year Ann Sperling on the eve of their first bottling session using this new method. Ann feels that the biggest advantages of screw-caps are the consistency and predictability they bring to the wine the consumer tastes. In fact extensive quality testing within the industry indicates that aging is more controlled and measured in wines closed with screw-caps than the same wines closed with traditional cork. Screw-capped wines retain their aromatics longer, while complexity can continue to develop. Tasters have consistently noted that fruit levels hold better in wines with screw-caps, and wines taste "fresher" longer.

Until Malivoire has the opportunity to conduct more research using their own wines they are using screw-caps only on those wines that they expect to be consumed within 5 years. Their signature Moira Vineyard wines will continue to be bottled with cork until the research has been finalized. For this first bottling they have selected their 2003 Estate bottled Pinot Noir, Gamay and Gewürztraminer. This past weekend I also had the opportunity to taste the first two wines and found them to be (at the very least) equal to the 2002 vintages.

As for the wine at the centre of the original Easter Brunch debate ...RH Phillips Chardonnay. It was well worth the money and made an excellent companion for our Easter Brunch. (For the aficionado.... lively "apple pie a la mode" notes mingle with citrus and pear aromas. The wine feels rich in the mouth with a touch of vanilla and spice from the barrel fermentation. Crisp acidity and a clean citrus finish make this a great wine to serve with food or sip alone. In my view well worth the price!)

In closing, for those of you wondering how to serve this or any other screw-cap wine. I would suggest that you treat a screw-capped wine as you would a bottle of sparkling wine. Grasp the cap and the base of the bottle firmly, and gently twist the bottle in a counter clockwise motion. (It is also recommended that you check any new bottle of wines closure before you try to open it in front of company lest you look like an ass trying to jam a cork-screw into the cap!)

As for the debate itself, only time will tell if screw-cap wines go the way of the ill-fated American two dollar bill or will it gain widespread acceptance and use as did our own "twoonie"!

**BILL YOUNG**