



Just Off the Vine...

OWS NEWS

Reif Lifetime Achievement Award

Klaus Reif and his uncle, Ewald Reif, have been presented with a Lifetime Achievement Award for their pioneering efforts and contributions to winemaking in Ontario.

The Ontario Wine Society's annual winter and wine getaway was hosted at Reif Estate Winery recently, where members enjoyed a winery tour and special wine tasting with winemaker Roberto DiDomenico.

Klaus, was not aware that the evening had been planned with a special purpose in mind—a surprise presentation of the prestigious award.

"It was such a pleasant surprise and an honour to receive this award from long standing supporters of the Ontario Wine Industry and to be in such great company of past recipients," said Reif.

"The society has also been pioneers in the education and promotion of Ontario wines to their members."

The Ontario Wine Society has presented the award on select occasions to others in the industry such as Karl Kaiser, Paul Bosc Sr., and John Marynissen. The award itself is a specially commissioned

piece of multi-media artwork created by artist Tom Grella who currently resides in Argentina.



Klaus Reif of Reif Estate Winery accepts his Lifetime Achievement Award from Wendy Muir of the Ontario Wine Society
Photo By: Andy McCraw

OWS, 20th Anniversary Glasses

Embossed, Schott Zwiesel, Cru Classic glasses are available to purchase. \$8.95 each. Email: contact@ontariowinesociety.com

Special Winemaker's Feature

This issue's interview is with Richie Roberts from Fielding Estates.

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UPCOMING EVENTS

Niagara Chapter

Sat., March 26 – Annual Social Event at Stonechurch Vineyards

May 2011 – Commemorating Ontario Wines – TBA

April 2011- Fruit Wines of Ontario

Tues., June 21 – Three Region Wine Challenge with Michael Pinkus at Flat Rock Cellars

July 2011 – Pig Roast with Miata Club at GreenLane Winery

Oakville Chapter

Wed., March 30 - Cellaring your Wines with Tony Aspler at Cucci

Toronto Chapter

Tues., March 22 - Quebec Cheese & Ontario Wine at Taste of Quebec Shop in the Distillery District

Mon., April 11 – Virtual Wineries at the U of T Faculty Club

Thurs., May 19 - OWS 20th Anniversary Special Event - Classic Pinot Noir: Burgundy and Ontario at Casa Loma

Sat., June 11 - Annual Bus Trip - Niagara Escarpment

Wed., August 17 – Bin End at Woodbine Racetrack

September 2011 – Amarone Style Wines feat. Foreign Affair Winery

Thurs., Oct 20 – Special 200th Anniversary of Ontario Wine Event - TBA

www.ontariowinesociety.com/events

PRESSING TO SELL NIAGARA WINE IN CANADA

By **MONIQUE BEECH/QMI Agency**
Courtesy of the Welland Tribune

ST. CATHARINES — National and international wine competitions are a reminder to Sharon Marks of just how silly Canada's archaic interprovincial trade rules really are.

So what if a British Columbia winery won accolades for its Gewurztraminer? Unless the LCBO — which holds a monopoly on liquor sales in the province — sells it, Marks and all other wine consumers in Ontario won't be able to get it.

Rules dating to the 1928 Importation of Intoxicating Liquors Act make it illegal for alcohol to be shipped across provincial lines unless given explicit permission from the province's liquor board.

"It's nice to see all the winners (of award competitions), but the only winners we can actually try are Ontario ones," said Marks, director of marketing and promotions for Nyarai Cellars in Jordan. "We can't purchase the B.C. ones. They may be gold medal winners, but how can we ever try them? And see them and compare to our wines?"

So Marks has decided take up the FreeMyGrapes challenge. Started by Shirley-Ann George, an Ottawa resident and former senior vice-president of policy at the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, the online campaign encourages wine consumers to

pressure local members of Parliament to change the country's liquor laws.

The Winona-area resident came across George's blog last November and decided to send out eight letters to area MPs. She recently met Wayne Marston, the NDP MP for Hamilton East-Stoney Creek.

"I decided this is something I want to stand on my soapbox for, too," said Marks, who has also requested a meeting with Dean Allison, the MP for Niagara West-Glanbrook.

Marks said Marston seemed keen to help change the old alcohol legislation.

"He said this was one of those laws that someone's put into place and no one's really looked at or done anything about it and haven't realized it's so outdated," she said.

Marks said she thinks opening up provincial borders to wine sales could make a big difference to small wineries like Nyarai, a "virtual winery" that produced about 1,000 cases last year to sell through its website.

In recent months, she's actually had to turn away customers from other provinces and ship wine to an Ontario address for Nyarai wine seekers from Quebec. Technically, even carrying a bottle across provincial lines could result in a criminal record.

"For a smaller one like mine, or other absolutely wonderful

smaller wineries, it's really hard to even get an agent to look at you or give you the time of day. It's really hard to get an agent and pay them the big price."

Marks said she's been spreading the word about FreeMyGrapes.ca to several Niagara wineries and growers and hopes the movement gains more support locally.

"Every customer that comes in, I tell them about it. Every show I go to, I tell them about it. I've printed out little information cards and hand them out. Most people are like 'I've never heard of this before,'" said Marks, who is also the president of the Ontario Wine Society's Niagara chapter.

Sales of Generation Seven Wine \$13,000 raised for Meal Exchange

- The money was raised through bottle sales of Generation Seven wine, a new label from Niagara wine industry pioneer Château des Charmes. The wine was launched in September with 50 cents from every bottle sold donated to Meal Exchange. In December this was doubled to \$1 per bottle sold. In addition, Michèle Bosc hosted a Twitter party on December 16th to further spread the word about the charitable connection. A Twitter party is a virtual gathering around a common theme. In this case it was opening a bottle of Generation Seven, talking about the wine and the connection with Meal Exchange. More than 100 Tweeps directly participated with the conversation viewed by a potential audience of more than 250,000.

ONTARIO WINE SOCIETY 20TH ANNIVERSARY

TWO DECADES OF OWS & ONTARIO WINE By Linda Bramble

When I first met Heino Claesson, the founder of the Ontario Wine Society, the sixty percent tax on imported wines that had protected the domestic wine industry from its international competitors was about to be removed. The fledgling 'modern' wine industry that included bold pioneers like Inniskillin, Chateau des Charms, Reif, Henry of Pelham and Cave Spring Cellars had barely flapped its wings when threats to it ever becoming airborne were very real. Those of us who were familiar with their wines knew they had the goods. It was a matter of getting consumers to try them. Consumer acceptance would make the difference in sustaining the new industry.

When Heino asked if I'd be interested in joining his efforts to create a wine tasting club that would explore the vinifera-based wines of Ontario, it was a no-brainer. I was working at the time at the Niagara Institute where the nation's leaders would gather to reflect on questions of leadership. For five days we'd have exhausting conversations about ethics, vision, diversity, leadership styles, so by the eve of the last day, the participants were ready to par-tee! On one occasion someone asked about the local

wines, which got the usual groans, and I, who was also writing a monthly column on the emerging wine industry, gave the group a challenge "Give me the name of your favourite wine between \$10 and \$20 and I will match it varietal for varietal, blend for blend, price for price. I bet you in a blind tasting (a) you won't be able to identify your own wine, and (b) you'll prefer the wines from Ontario." We had 14 wines that night and, much to their shock, I didn't lose the challenge. Nor did I ever lose it for the next few years when new participants would ask to experience the same challenge.

Those were heady years. It was 1990 and the world was going through massive transformation. The once immutable pillars of world culture were being challenged: Nelson Mandela had just been released from 27 years in prison and apartheid was being dismantled; the WHO removed homosexuality from its list of diseases; the iron curtain fell and Germany was reunited. The Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement had just been ratified and we were entering one of the most significant economic adjustments we had ever experienced surrounding its implementation.

Any transformation brings corresponding bouts of chaos and calm. Between 1989-1991, Ontario's grape growers removed 8,000 acres of Labrusca and hybrid vines to be replaced by vinifera and vinifera hybrids, which would have an expected dislocating impact on the industry. In addition, we had also just entered the worst recession we had known since the thirties. The NDP with Bob Rae was elected to navigate the negative economic growth we started to experience along with the rapid acceleration of losses in the manufacturing sector with Niagara being hit particularly hard. There were immense cutbacks in social programs and expenditures not experienced since post W.W. II. There was every reason to be pessimistic about the future of the Ontario wine industry.

But not Heino. He wanted to form a club that would have as its organizing principle the celebration of the wines of Ontario. It would be a vote of consumer confidence in the industry. He immediately struck a chord with other like-minded people who chose to defy the popular game among wine cognoscenti that claimed a local

wine, by definition, could never be any good.

Over the course of the next two decades, the industry would grow. In 1990 it was assumed that domestically produced wines would be displaced by popular Californian wines, putting the tiny industry out of business, but the opposite occurred. The domestic industry grew by more than 5 percent a year. Between 1995-2000 the industry flourished -- new wineries were established; three vintages, 1995, 1997 and 1998 were absolutely stellar. By 2000 the VQA appellation system designed in 1988 to give legitimacy to locally grown wine, became legislated into provincial law becoming the only New World appellation system that monitored both wine growing and wine making quality.

Mergers and acquisitions that had been going on since the mid-eighties ramped up. In a leveraged buy out, the managers of Chateau Gai bought the winery from Labatt, beating out a bid from Andrès. By 1991, Don Triggs, CEO of Chateau Gai, now called Cartier, seduced Donald Ziraldo into merging Inniskillin with them. For one year the combined companies were called Cartier-Inniskillin until Gerry Schwartz, the new owner of Bright's, bought Cartier-Inniskillin. The new enterprise would be called Vincor soon to become

the ninth largest wine company in the world, which would make it an attractive purchase in 2005 by US-owned Constellation Brands. Andrès would get into the act by purchasing Hillebrand and then Thirty Bench.

Education and research was enhanced by the establishment of tertiary programs in oenology, viticulture, wine marketing and wine culture at Brock University and Niagara College. Then Mother Nature burst the prosperity bubble. In 2001 the Asian Lady Beetle infestation tainted just about the entire vintage. In 2003 and 2005 the grapes would suffer killing frosts. For the first time, the new entrepreneurs dared to think, could it be true that Ontario was not capable in the long term of growing premium grapes?

I remember having lunch with one of the industry's leaders who was in tears with the low morale of the industry. People were bickering with one another rather than collaborating. The challenges that once united them had been addressed; now it was the larger, more systemic issues that divided them. By 2009 tempers flared. Despite the fact that VQA sales had grown from \$5 million in 1990 to \$250 million and tonnage had increased from 1,000 tonnes to 30,000 tonnes; Ontario wineries grew from 20 to 115 and land values per acre

rose from \$10,000 to \$40,000; the tax return to government increased from \$2 million to \$100 million, six of the largest members of the Wine Council chose to leave to form an organization of their own. In the fall of 2009, the government announced that it would only support VQA wines, taxing the international blended category for revenue to support the VQA program. This infuriated those wineries that blended local with imported wine so they left the fold to form the Wine and Growers Association of Ontario (WGAO) to pursue their mutual interests.

It's not totally a David and Goliath story because these large wineries also produce 55 percent of VQA wines. Will there ever be a reconciliation between the WCO and WGAO? Should there be? Egypt has just demonstrated the power of the will of the people. If consumers believe in the International Blends of Canada category (replacing Cellared in Canada) then those wines should maintain their 80% domestic market share. It must be remembered that a high percentage of Ontario's growers sell their grapes as part of the blended program.

The changes that the industry has experienced over the last twenty years have been immense, but the largest, and most significant change has

been the change in acceptance regarding the worthiness of Ontario wines. I believe this, in no small part, has been led by the wine lovers of the Ontario Wine

Society, now three chapters strong. The value-added effect of your influence has, in no small measure, led consumer acceptance. So, I raise a glass to

you for being an integral part of the transformation of the Ontario wine industry. Heino, and now Ken, take a bow!

WINEMAKER'S CORNER

AN INTERVIEW WITH RICHIE ROBERTS OF FIELDING ESTATES By Jennifer Hart

What prompted you to get started in Winemaking?

When I was in high school I was looking at all my options, because I really had no idea what I wanted to do. A friend told me about the CCOVI program at Brock, and the more I read about it, and about wine, I thought it might be a good fit for me. By my second year in the program, I knew I wanted to be a winemaker. Probably my favorite things about choosing winemaking as a career is that you meet such great people in the industry, and you are making something that people genuinely enjoy as part of their everyday lives. It's also great because it's not a "desk job" - each day brings a new set of tasks and challenges.

What trade-related accomplishment are you most proud of?

Honestly, there really isn't one in particular that stands out. Anytime we have a good wine review, or win an award, it is really great to see. I would have to say, though that the most satisfying aspect to me is that the

public, the people who buy our wines, enjoy them.

Do you have a mentor or a person who has influenced your winemaking and if so, why?

I would say without question the person who I have been most influenced by is J-L Groux of Stratus, whom I worked with for four years. He really opened my eyes to a lot of things in terms of winemaking that I had not even thought of before. Even though I would say our winemaking styles are a bit different, there is no doubt that the time I worked with him has greatly shaped what I am doing today - and that is one great thing about winemaking - if everyone did the same thing, wines would be really boring!

What unique experience or experiences do you think you have had because of your winemaking?

I've been lucky that the wineries I have worked with have helped me to gain a lot of knowledge right from the vineyard to selling wine, and almost everything in between. I think this will only help me to keep making better wines going

forward. Also, I've been able to meet great people, enjoy some great wines, food, and travel because of this career.

If you were talking to someone who didn't know anything about Ontario wine, what would be the key thing you would want to tell them?

I would tell them to taste our wines, because there are a lot of good ones out there! I think that a lot of the negative associations with Ontario wines are fading. Many friends that I have who are not really even into wine are open to trying Ontario wines, and most of the time the reaction is positive!

Richie's FAQ's: Favourite Grape to Work With - Riesling is my favorite grape to work with, and the variety that I think we make best here.
Most Memorable Wine - Probably the most memorable wine I've had would be Cave Spring's 2003 CSV Riesling, a truly brilliant wine. Unfortunately, my cellar no longer holds any!
Favourite Wine you Have Made - In terms of wines I have made (or been a part of making), my favorite is probably a toss-up between two wines. The first is the Fielding 2009 Riesling - a wine that I am very proud of, especially for the price (\$15.95). The second wine is the Charles Baker 2006 Riesling, which I helped make at Stratus - the first Riesling that really "wowed" me while it was just in its infancy.

PREVIOUS EVENTS

DECONSTRUCTING 40 CREEK WHISKY By Patricia Dinsmore

Last night, to celebrate the start of the Ontario Wine Society's 20th Anniversary year, the Toronto Chapter, accompanied by Kittling Ridge Estate Wines and Spirits, held their first ever Whisky tasting. Did you know that, out of all the Canadian Whiskies currently available on the shelves of LCBO, most (if not all) of them are no longer distilled by Canadian-owned companies? Kittling Ridge is the rare exception and, just a few years ago, it was running the risk of being delisted. Today, their Forty Creek line of Whiskies is recognized as the most successful Whisky launch in Canada in the last 70 years.



Beth Warner of Kittling Ridge

Whisky tasting is not completely like wine tasting – after all, instead of an alcohol content in the teens, as wines typically are, Whisky is 40% alcohol/volume and, in order to get through it, you have to learn to take it easy. This particular night, Beth Warner

who is Vice President of Sales and Marketing for Kittling Ridge, led us through a deconstructing Whisky tasting. Along with the three samples of Forty Creek Whisky we enjoyed at the end of the tasting, we also tried samples of the Rye, Barley and Corn Whiskies that Kittling Ridge uses in the final blending. Each of these tank samples – which are actually “still” samples since Kittling Ridge uses copper stills to make their Whiskies – bring something different and unique to the table, and that is what we learned in during the tasting.

Before we actually started tasting, Beth shared with us a little “tidbit” of information. Adding a drop of water to the Whisky reduces the alcohol content by 10-15% but also helps bring out the aromas of each particular Whisky. A predominant statement throughout the tasting, was that John Hall, Owner, Winemaker and Whisky Maker at Kittling Ridge, makes Whisky using a Winemaker's approach. For those of us who do not understand the intricacies of Whisky making, this sounds a little confusing. You see, whisky is made by combining all the ingredients in

a pot or still and fermenting them all together – much like making a stew from scratch at home – but John's approach is to make each whisky type (corn, rye or barley) separately and then blend them together afterwards in the same way that a winemaker blends.

So, let's see what each of the individual components brings to the table – or, rather, the final blend. Our first glass was Rye Whisky – what most of us Canadians identify as true Canadian Whisky – but if you are thinking it is going to remind you of your favourite Rye (before you add the Coke or Ginger Ale), this will be a surprise for you. Beth, and a few other Whisky experts in the room, identified this as True Rye – what your CC or Wiser's or Crown Royal would taste like before it goes into barrels and long before you would be enjoying a glass of it. Pure Rye Whisky has this lovely copper - bronze colour to it...out of the three individual Whiskies we tried Monday night, it was the deepest in colour. The aromas of the Rye came across as a combination of vanilla and caramel with some fruit undertones. The fruit translates into the palate where you detect some spice and the

overall effect is a smooth, crisp palate and finish.

Next we moved on to the Barley Whisky which some people described as a Speyside Single Malt Scotch. Of the three, it was the palest – somewhere between the colour of straw and a golden yellow – and it had this wonderful creamy, nutty aroma that makes you think this will be a mild tasting palate. I know that was definitely what I was thinking but the first sip of this excellent Whisky made me quickly realize I could not have been more wrong. While the flavours did translate – the creaminess and nutty flavours abounded – there is this predominant string of fire and spice that comes right through as well. In fact, when I first tried this I immediately thought “Fire and Ice”...it was intense spice right up front and then the creamy and nutty flavours kicked in and mellowed it right out with a cooling effect like having a glass of milk tames the spiciest of foods.

Our final deconstructed Whisky – before proceeding on to the blended Forty Creek Whiskies – was the Corn Whisky. The colour on the Corn Whisky was somewhere between the pale-straw colour of the Barley Whisky and the bright copper

colour of the Rye Whisky. It was predominantly golden-yellow but, at certain angles, there was a distinctive orange streak to the liquid. This was probably the most distinctive set of aromas of the three whiskies we had tried so far – there was a real tropical fruit component dominated by banana aromas. Out of the three individual types of Whisky, I found this one to be the most complex. There was some spice and some of the banana I had detected in the aromas but there was also a hint of creaminess and a very subtle sweetness to the finish of the Whisky. Of the three individual Whiskies, the Corn Whisky turned out to be my favourite and, as many people in the room said to Beth, “You should bottle this stuff on its own”. Corn Whisky is the basis for United States Bourbon’s and this particular Corn Whisky was like tasting a high-end Bourbon.



Three Deconstructed Whiskys

Now it was time to move on to the three Forty Creek blended Whiskies – Forty

Creek Barrel Select, Forty Creek Double Barrel and Forty Creek Confederation Oak. The one key difference between these three is the barrels used to age them. The entry level Whisky, Barrel Select, was aged in Sherry casks, and due to the availability of Sherry casks Kittling Ridge is able to produce a large quantity. Approximately 120,000 cases of this Whisky sell annually in Ontario. The Double Barrel Whisky uses once used Bourbon barrels, which are infinitely more difficult to get your hands on, so it has a smaller production than the Barrel Select. Approximately 2000 cases of this Whisky are sold annually in Ontario. Finally, the Confederation Oak Whisky was aged in Canadian Oak and is sold as a special release so it has a limited, total production run of only 2,800 cases.

The one thing that I noticed amongst these three is that they were all a varying shade of copper with some more brilliant than the others. The aromas on the Barrel Select Whisky are a combination of honey, vanilla, nuts and tropical fruit with a slight toasty aroma. Those aromas continue on to the palate but there is a definite kick – most likely from the small amount of

Barley Whisky added in – but the finish just seems to keep lingering on and on which is very nice for an “every day” Whisky.

Next up the line was their Double Barrel Whisky, which had been aged in those rare once used Bourbon barrels. The noticeable aromatic difference between the Double Barrel and the Barrel Select is the introduction of citrus aromas along with the tropical fruit and nutty aromas that are found in both. The palate has a lot of complexity – honey, dried fruit, tropical fruit and even some toasty flavours – with a long, lingering finish.

Finally we came to the Confederation Oak Whisky –

Kittling Ridge's newest Whisky, aged in Canadian Oak barrels. The very first thing I thought of when I took in the aromas of this Whisky was that it smelled like a well made Rum Raisin ice cream, but not with Rum (obviously). In fact, it started me thinking of what would this Whisky be like substituted for the Rum in a true Rum Raisin ice cream. You see, the aromas of this Whisky were a combination of maple and raisin and vanilla with a bit of fig thrown in for good measure. The flavours, most of which had been underlying notes in the aromas, were vanilla, butter cream and a bit of spice and raisins. All the way through tasting the Confederation Oak, all I could think of was a bowl of Rum

Raisin ice cream and, yes, the next day, I went on a hunt for a recipe I could adapt to work in my ice cream maker. Now for summer to get here so I can try it out.

By the way, we ended the tasting with Kittling Ridge's Icewine & Brandy and some milk chocolate and white chocolate almond bark. If you are not a fan of Icewine, but prefer late harvest wines instead, give this Icewine a try. The addition of Brandy makes the Icewine closer to a Late Harvest Vidal than a true Icewine...and the almond bark was a great dessert to pair with it.

Photos by Patricia Dinsmore

ICEWINE WEEKEND 2011 By Wendy Muir



Sensory Garden, Rob DiDomenico Photos By Andy McCraw

The 2011 Icewine Weekend featured Reif Estate Winery. If you haven't been there since they renovated, you must go for a visit. Originally opened in 1983, due to the popularity of their wines, they unveiled a

whole new production and sales building a few years ago.

Guests at this year's event arrived at Reif the afternoon of Saturday, February 5 and entered their

massive new tasting & merchandising area.

We sipped on glasses of the 2009 Riesling as everyone gathered in one of the private tasting rooms.

Once all were accounted for, winemaker Rob DiDomenico, who joined Reif in 1990, took us for a brief tour of the winery.

As a gentle snow fell we wandered through the Wine Sensory Garden. Even in a dormant winter state, we could see the thought put into the design of the garden with the many flowers and herbs planted to represent the colours, aromas and flavours that are characteristically used to describe wines. Peering around the corner of the building, we could see the kilns Reif has incorporated into some of their inventive new wines. We were then taken into the old barrel room that held enormous 5,000-10,000 litre wooden barrels that had been imported from Germany. Although only two were still used for aging, you could envision how important they were in the earlier years of the winery's life.

Once back in the tasting room, we were treated to a couple of surprise wines poured into the complementary Schott-Zwiesel Cru Classic glasses that are being given to every guest at all 2011 events to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the Ontario Wine Society. A full-bodied, flavourful red was poured with all of us trying to

guess the grape varieties. No one was able to determine a 60% Shiraz / 40% Pinot Noir blend made from grapes that had been dried in the kilns reflecting the Italian Appassimento style. The next samples were a First Growth Merlot and a First Growth Cabernet Sauvignon. From the stellar 2007 vintage, these wines were stunning examples of the grape variety showing great fruit, body and length, though \$50 a bottle, they will cellar for years.

At this point a delicious charcuterie tray was brought out with an assortment of specialty seasoned dried meats that well-suited the aggressive reds that we were tasting. Also on the tray were "raisins" made from local Sovereign Coronation eating grapes that had been kiln-dried. To finish the tasting, we enjoyed the 2008 Vidal Ice Wine.

At that point everyone went back to our lodgings at the wonderful White Oaks Resort & Spa, where the staff and accommodations were outstanding as usual, to rest a bit and prepare for dinner. At 6:00 pm we all met at the main entrance to board a shuttle from Niagara AirBus to take us back to Reif. Since it was snowing quite heavily by then,

we all appreciated being "chauffeured" to the evening's event. For the dinner, Reif commandeered their production and barrel room. They put Oriental rugs on the floors and lit many candelabras turning the room into a cozy, elegant venue.

The meal, catered by Vintage Inns, was amazing. We started with a mushroom and goat's cheese tart with truffled frisée and a choice of either the 2008 Reserve Chardonnay or the 2007 First Growth Pinot Noir. The main course was perfectly cooked beef tenderloin with truffled mashed potato, grilled asparagus and exotic mushroom sauce complemented by the 2007 First Growth Cab Merlot. A pecan caramel meringue was served with the 2009 Totally Botrytis Affected First Growth Riesling for dessert.

Klaus Reif, a 13th generation winemaker who is president and oenologist at Reif and Rob DiDomenico, along with their significant others, and Andrea Kaiser, Director of Retail and Promotion, joined the group for dinner. With each course, Klaus stood up and gave a brief history and description of the wines we were drinking. While enjoying our coffee afterwards, the OWS presented Klaus and his uncle

Ewald, in absentia, with their prestigious "Lifetime Achievement" Award, a specially commissioned piece of artwork created by artist Tom Grella. As we have become used to at all the Toronto chapter events, photographer Andy McCraw

flitted about the room taking candid shots of everyone. As we all bundled up to venture into the snow, we were very happy to get on the shuttle and have someone else do the driving as we chatted and giggled all the way back to White Oaks.

Thanks to the organizers of the evening for making it such a memorable event - Wendy Muir of the OWS, Klaus, Rob and Andrea of Reif Estate Winery.

BRAND NEW YEAR, BRAND NEW WINERIES By Debbie Levere

In the spirit of "newness", at the dawn of a new year, the Niagara chapter decided to honour 8 new wineries in Niagara at our January event. The venue was Pondview Estates Winery which is in its first year of retail operation.

We arrived to a wonderful spread of cheeses, breads and crackers offered by Chef David House who continued to "wow" us all evening. Guests were



Speakers represented 8 new Niagara wineries

offered a 2009 Gewürztraminer-Riesling blend to begin the evening. The wine had lovely aromas of tropical and citrus fruits, followed by floral notes and a touch of minerality. The acidity was nicely balanced with a hint

of sweetness. Look for it in the LCBO in July.

Speakers from each participating winery spoke in turn and we tasted the wine produced by each one as they spoke. Betty Colaneri was the first to speak. Colaneri Winery opened on Labour Day 2010. They are very proud of the appearance of their bottles since family members are represented by artistically drawn labels for each varietal they sell. We sampled the 2009 Gewürztraminer which recently won a Silver medal at the Ottawa Food and Wine Show. It has intense floral aromas of violets and rose petals with lychee notes. It was made with a portion of dried fruit and barrel fermented for 7 months in aged French Oak barrels. On the palate there are lychee and honey flavours with the lingering finish of spice.

The winemaker, Andrzej Lipinski is using Amarone and

Ripasso Italian methods to make the truly unique, intense wines offered at Colaneri Estate Winery. They have an exciting new release of 2009 Pinot Grigio Recioto (where grapes are dried to make a sweet wine - which Betty described as the Italian answer to Icewine). Priced at \$25.00 this wine is a treasure.

Sue-Ann Staff was at a trade show in California so her mother, Wendy, spoke on her behalf. Wendy explained the history of the Staff farm in the Twenty Mile Bench sub-appellation and the derivation of the name "Robert's Block" Riesling, so named in honour of Great, Great Grandfather Robert. The tasting room is in the renovated kitchen of the family house which was built in the 1880's. They still grow Concord grapes there from the early days. Wendy told us about Sue-Ann's background starting in a Bright's lab, studying at the University of Guelph and in Australia for her graduate degree. Sue-Ann worked as a

winemaker at Pillitteri and 20 Bees before starting her own winery while still consulting for Megalomaniac.

The 2009 Riesling we tried is grown in clay over limestone from a Weiss clone Riesling and is allowed to lie "sur lie" after fermentation, making for a very smooth, complex, citrus minerality which was very pleasant. It is probably under-priced at \$21.00.

Wes Lowrey of Lowrey Vineyards spoke to us about his wines and winery. They make about 500 cases of wine per year from 35 acres of vineyard which have been owned by the family for five generations. Karl Kaiser recommended they try growing Pinot Noir many years ago and as a result they have some very old vines on their property. They grew Sauvignon Blanc, Cabernet Sauvignon, Pinot Gris, and Shiraz for Creekside and Fielding. They use bunch spacing and meticulous canopy control to ensure optimum quality of the grapes at harvest. Their 2008 Reds are about to be bottled and they have 2009 Sauvignon Blanc, 2009 Riesling, 2007 Pinot Noir, and 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon for sale, in addition to the 2009 Pinot Gris we tasted at the event. The Pinot Gris was a blend of 2/3 barrel fermented and 1/3 steel tank fermented. The barrels used were old barrels and the wine had been aged for 10 months. This

interesting blend made for a smooth, complex wine with lovely layers of taste and aroma with some banana and star fruit nuances. At \$25 per bottle this wine will sell quickly. The winery is open officially on weekends from April to December but the family lives on the property and there is usually someone there to greet visitors.

On the agenda next was Fred De Moura. He had brought a 2007 Shiraz/Merlot/Cabernet Sauvignon blend for us to try. It was very full bodied (lightly filtered) with some robust tannins. They used a combination of French, American and Canadian oak barrels for aging the wine for three years. They even use Portuguese barrels for their Chardonnay. Fred explained he and his wife bought 10 acres of land near the St. Catharines Niagara District Airport on Niagara Stone Rd. in 2002. They began planting in 2003 and their first vintage was from 2007. He and his wife wear many hats, building the winery building, harvesting the grapes, and making the wines. They harvest only one ton of grapes per acre and use as little machinery as possible to minimize skin damage. The winery will be open on weekends until the end of April when it will be open seven days a week. Until it is gone, the blend Fred served us is on special for \$20.00.

Next up was Andrea Glass, the winemaker for Good Earth Winery, located in the Lincoln Lakeshore sub-appellation. Andrea is a graduate of Niagara College and the CAPS program at George Brown College. She descends from a farming family and has been part of winemaking in Australia, South Africa, Argentina and California. The Good Earth has been a cooking school since 1998 on the site of the owner, Nicolette Novak's family farm. Fruit trees were planted there followed by grapes and their first vintage of wine was 2008. Ross Wise was the winemaker for the first two vintages and now Andrea is taking over. The wines are made with food in mind, showing the acidity and sweetness that makes them food friendly. The 2009 Pinot Noir we tasted at the event was aged in a combination of new and old French Oak barrels and is superb with duck confit, according to Andrea. They also offer Rieslings, Cabernet Franc, and Chardonnay at the winery. They make about 2000 cases yearly and have established an interesting monthly wine and food club.

Sean Douglas spoke to us next about his winery, Ridge Road. The properties for his grapes have been in his family since the 1800's with the earliest being 1801. He is growing some unusual varietals such as Traminette, along with

many more common varietals for this region. He began by selling grapes to amateur winemakers and he and his wife Jayne now make about 2000 cases of wine from the handpicked and hand sorted grapes. 2007 was his first vintage as a winery and they are winning awards already. He has very affordable wines all priced under the \$20.00 mark. Sean poured his 2009 Gamay Noir for us (retail price \$15.95). They offer a sparkling wine and verjus as well. Their brand new winery has a tasting bar and table seating for the guest's comfort.

The comical brother duo, Greg and Yannick Wertsch, from Between the Lines winery were next. They moved here in 1998 from Germany and both young men have studied and worked both here and abroad, gaining academic and practical experience that works to complement each other. Greg teaches at NCT and his brother is a graduate of NCT. There are 26 year old vines on their property where they have usual and unusual varietals such as Lemberger. They hope that barrel aged Lemberger will become their flagship wine. They have only been open for two and a half months but only 15 cases of

the 120 cases they made remain. The 2009 Cabernet Franc they poured sells for \$15.95 and their other wines are affordable. This Cabernet Franc is not barrel aged and people commented on how much they enjoyed it. The winery building is set beside the family home on Four Mile Creek Road between Lines 5 and 6 so there is always someone home to greet you.

Last but not least, Adriana Puglisi of Pondview Estate Winery spoke to us. Adriana and former Grape King, Lou Puglisi, are the owners. Lou was in California so Adriana stepped in and did an admirable job, telling us about the winery and the wines. Lou's family emigrated from Italy in 1965 and became grape growers. It is Lou's dedication to growing quality grapes on the 60 acres they own which starts the Pondview wines off on the right foot at harvest. The winery has only been open since last summer but their mission is to help Ontario residents become as excited about Ontario products as the residents of BC are about their local products. We tasted a 2009 Cabernet Franc barrel sample which people really enjoyed. Adriana encouraged us

to try their Silver medal winning Chardonnays from the 2010 Intervin competition.

At the end of the tasting we conducted a draw for two bottles of wine from our chapter's cellar and the lucky winners were Wally Rawlinko and Bonnie Gordon. We ended the evening with delightful snacks of all kinds prepared by Chef David House.

Thanks all the wineries and their speakers and to the hosts at Pondview Estate Winery; Joseph, Paula and Adriana went out of their way to welcome us. Thanks also to the planner, Debbie Levere, and her helpers (Darlene, Sharon, Fred and Sue) who picked up wine, set up and cleaned up.

Bruce Jackson the photographer has captured the evening and posted pictures of the event at www.ontariowinesociety.com.



Paula and Adriana from Pondview

This month's SOCIAL MEDIA BUZZ is, Seriously Cool Chardonnay.
www.coolchardonnay.ca and Twitter @coolcharddotca

INDUSTRY MEMBER EVENTS

CAVE SPRING CELLARS

Wine & Cheese

Sat., March 26

2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

In homage to the happy union of wine and cheese, we are partnering with Upper Canada Cheese Company. We will be sampling two award winning cheeses, perfectly paired with two of our benchmark wines. \$2.00 for each pairing

THE GRANGE OF PRINCE EDWARD

Maple in the County

March 26 & 27

12:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

We are excited to be participating in Maple in the County weekend in our own way- with special maple and wine pairings! After your day out at the sugar shacks come and sit by the fireplace and try out some maple treats with our different wines. We love an excuse to try out new recipes and unique wine pairings! Pairing is complimentary. For more info check out our website: <http://grangeofprinceedward.com/2011/02/15/maple-in-the-county-weekend/> slider. Paired with our 2007 Sweet Revenge Vidal Icewine. No reservation required. \$10.00 (Free with Discovery Passport)

HILLEBRAND

March Break

March 8 - 31

Savour our Dinner Tasting Menu. Normally an \$85.00 value but for a limited time \$55.00* (Save \$30) Per person, exclusive of wine and gratuities. Call 1-800-582-8412 x3 or go to: www.hillebrand.com

PENINSULA RIDGE ESTATE WINERY

Jazz on the Ridge

Fri., May 27

11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

A benefit for the New Niagara West YMCA, the McNally House Hospice and other important local community causes. Join us for a brilliant evening of great wine, spectacular food & celebrity jazz performers. Experience, once again, why Jazz on the Ridge is one of Niagara's premium events. Featured Artists: The Jack de Keyser Rhythm & Blues Revue, The Tianna H Quintet, Archie Alleyne & Kollage To purchase tickets call the Winery Retail Shop 905.563.0900, ext. 25 \$195.00 (includes \$95.00 tax donation receipt)

PILLITTERI ESTATES WINERY

Toronto Wine & Cheese Show

March 18 - 20

Pillitteri will be participating at the Toronto Wine and Cheese Show, pouring Pillitteri products available at the LCBO, including: Gewurztraminer Riesling, Cabernet Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon, Red Leaf Vidal Icewine, and Unoaked Chardonnay. Please visit <http://www.towineandcheese.com> for more information

Bonus Air Miles

Month of April

Purchase of Pillitteri's Gewurztraminer Riesling will earn Bonus Air Miles at the LCBO \$12.95

SOUTHBROOK VINEYARDS

Fruit Wine Fridays

Fridays in March

10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

A lot of people think that Southbrook made fruit wines before table wines because our

Framboise rose to market prominence so quickly when it was first made in 1992! Find out the true story when you visit us! Every Friday in March we'll be tempting you with complimentary samples of our four fruit wines - Framboise, Cassis, Blueberry and Blackberry. All awesome as dessert wine, but their versatility will open up a world of taste delights when you add them to your favourite recipes - both sweet and savoury! Check out our Recipe Box <https://webmail.southbrook.com/recipes> on our website for treats like Pan-Fried Duck Breast with Cassis https://webmail.southbrook.com/recipes_details?news_id=44 to get you started. Then experiment with your own recipes, and submit your successes to our Community Cookbook https://webmail.southbrook.com/submit_your_own_recipes !

STREWN WINERY

Rouse the Vines & Shape Up the Vineyard – Hands-on Spring Pruning & Lunch

Sat., April 2

11:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. followed by lunch

Grab your gloves, put on your coat & boots and join us in the vineyard! We'll give you pruning shears and some advice to help start the vines on their spring shape-up program. Session begins with a private wine tasting and concludes with a warming two-course lunch in the restaurant. Reservations required. To book your spot, call 905-468-1229. *Dress warmly, it is still chilly in the vineyard; tough gloves and waterproof footwear are essential. \$35.00 plus taxes & gratuities.

OWS EVENT DETAILS

Toronto Chapter - A Taste of Québec's 'Tasting Soirée' – Tue., March 22

This Tasting Soirée event promises to be a fun and educational evening with an assortment of artisanal Québec cheeses explained by fromager Thom Sokoloski from 'A Taste of Québec' complemented by an in depth exposure to Canadian Wine Awards' Winery of the Year for 2010 - Tawse Winery. Thom is also going to

demonstrate to us how we can make cheese at home!!

Niagara Chapter - Annual Social Event, Annual General Meeting, & Amazing Wine Race – Sat., Mar. 26

Come out and enjoy this year's Social and the Amazing Wine Race at Stonechurch Vineyards! At the suggestion of our members, we have decided to change up the Social wine

competition to include all who come! At this interactive Wine Competition, you will be put into teams of 6 to 8 people to collectively answer wine trivia questions and identify samples of wines carefully chosen from our OWS Niagara Chapter cellar. Every participant in each team will win a prize! Put your wine knowledge to work for your team! Please note that this year's Social is being held as an evening event.

OWS FEATURE EVENT

Oakville Chapter - Wine Cellaring with Tony Aspler

For novices and experts alike, if you have any interest in wine cellaring this event will give you the tips you need to create or maintain your own wine cellar.

The Oakville Chapter of the Ontario Wine Society would like to invite you, your friends and family to attend a fun and informative evening of Wine Cellaring with "The Wine Guy", Tony Aspler. Tony has selected some fantastic wines to compliment the discussion for the evening. Tony Aspler is not only an accomplished lecturer and wine educator, he has also

been writing about wine for over 30 years. Both nationally and internationally Tony contributes to many reputable wine magazines and publications. He has written fictional wine novels and fifteen wine and food books, the most current being Tony Aspler's *Cellar Book*.

Tony has been a key contributor to the growth and success of the Ontario wine industry through the creation of the Ontario Wine Awards, and his ongoing involvement with Cuvee, The Independent Wine & Spirit Trust and The Canadian Wine Library.

Copies of *Tony Aspler's Cellar Book*, will be available for purchase.

Seating is limited, so please register early to avoid disappointment. Attendees must be 19 years of age or older. Reservations will **not** be taken over the phone. Register online at: <http://www.ontariowinesociety.com/events.html>.

What not to wear: Perfumes and colognes interfere with the wine tasting experience and can be offensive to other attendees. Please refrain from using scented products

Just Off the Vine... is the official newsletter of the Ontario Wine Society. It is published 10 times a year. Visit us on-line at www.ontariowinesociety.com and follow us on Twitter @1OWS.

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