

OntarioWineReview

A bi-weekly newsletter dedicated to helping you discover Ontario's best Wines and Wineries.
Enjoyment comes from understanding - Passion comes from understanding more.



OntarioWineReview Newsletter – 215
October 17, 2013

In this Edition

- **OntarioWineReview:** *Do You Brew*
Grape Guy's Picks of the Bunch: *It's All Here: Red Blends, Ports and Sparklers*
 - **Bi-Weekly OWR Updates:** *Wine Videos, Blog Additions and more*
 - **Wine Event Spotlight:** *One from Away and One here at Home*
-



OntarioWineReview: *Do You Brew*

Last weekend I spent some time with a bunch of Ontario Do-It-Yourself winemakers ... they call themselves 'Fermentation on Premises' (FOP), you and I would probably refer to them as U-Brew joints; but no matter what you call them a fair number of Ontarians are choosing to go the u-brew way instead of paying the inflated prices at the LCBO.

I was at the provincial get together of the Canadian Craft Winemakers Association to give a seminar on Wines of the World, so that these vintners would better understand what their customers were looking for when they are asked for a certain type of wine (ie: Chilean Merlot. Australian Shiraz or Ontario Baco).

I would like to say that I was very effective in my presentation and that the next time you visit a u-brew you'll get exactly what you want ... but to tell you the truth they probably opened my eyes to the plight of the Do-It-Yourselfers than I did to what a typical Chilean Merlot tastes like. My take away was far greater than theirs ... in my eyes anyway.

Now I once u-brewed with a buddy of mine, an experimental wine phase in my life that I chronicled in [Newsletter #21 – The Homemades Tale](#) ... my experience was not good; but u-brew, or u-vint (as would probably be the more appropriately terminology) has come a long way since then. And while the product has changed and gotten better, the way it is sold has not moved an inch as far as how it is regulated – another way that Ontario remains in the dark ages when it comes to alcohol.

You Can Look But You'd Better Not Touch Boy ...

I don't think there is any other product in the world that you can't go to the source, or in some cases to a shop, and test drive, test use or test taste. If I'm looking for a TV I can walk into my nearest Best Buy or Futureshop and pick the one I like based on how it not only looks on the outside but also the picture quality by viewing it in action at the store. If I want to check out Ford's Eco Boost, a Mazda 6 or the new Chevy Impala all I have to do is go down to the dealership and take a test drive. Costco has in-store tastings of their products at both lunch and dinner time – so much so that you can actually have a meal while you're shopping. If I visit a winery I can go through their line-up of wines to find the exact one that matches my palate; and even the LCBO has tasting bars in some of their bigger stores – thus allowing you to sample their wares. But walk into a u-vint joint all you can do is look at names of kits and trust the guy or gal behind the counter as they compare it to something commercially available. You would think that a proprietor could whip up a batch and have samples on-hand for potential customers to try – but that would be illegal ... could you imagine if Cadillac tried to sell cars in that manner? Or Apple? Or Sony? Or any other retailer: "I'll tell you all about it but you can't try it until you buy 36 of them."

It's All About Quantity – and Less Tax ...

And when you buy from a u-vint place it has to be in lots of 24-36 bottles (whatever quantity the kit makes). Now some of you will say that's no different than a wine agent, who has to sell wine by the case. While true, an agent can hold a tasting for clients and friends – and can pour the very product the customer will be getting; eg: if you taste a bottle of 2010 Chateau Blah Blah at an agent tasting and you order a case, you'll get 12 bottles of 2010 Chateau Blah Blah. At a u-vint place they too can hold a tasting, but not of the actual product they will be selling, they have to find a commercial equivalent; so if the kit is supposed to mimic Apothic Red or Menage a Trois the u-vint place can pour either one of those two wines at their tasting and tell their customers the wine 'will be similar to this'. But then you're committing to the purchase of up to 36 bottles based on a comparison and not the real thing

Other Head Scratchers ...

Here something that left me wondering if there is any other industry in Ontario that is put under such scrutiny: The AGCO regulates their advertising; in fact all licensees (aka FOP) in Ontario are required to submit advertising to the AGCO for approval ... is this done in any other industry besides maybe tobacco?

Another regulation I found asinine was that of Special Occasion Permits and FOP wines ... wines served for special occasions are generally required to be purchased from a government store – the exception is a “wedding or other religious occasion” – meaning that u-vint wine can be served on the wedding day at the ceremony but not at the reception hall later that same day.

Despite all these crazy rules and restrictions one of the main reasons people u-vint is the tax savings – a case of Chateau Blah Blah could be the same price as any of the kits – but you get more wine – and because of the lower tax (~ 6.5%) makes u-vint wines as low as 2-3 dollars a bottle as oppose to the LCBO's floor price of ~\$7 per bottle – that can be considerable savings over the course of a year.

If you consider for the same price as the Chateau Blah Blah you get 3 times the wine that's pretty damn good. In my view that makes u-vint the real competition to the LCBO's monopoly and not the wineries of Ontario ... which probably explains why the FOPs are heavily regulated – and now the light pops on.

If you go the u-vint way let your thoughts be known your on their quality for dollar.



Grape Guy's Picks of the Bunch: *It's All Here: Red Blends, Ports and Sparklers*

Big Head 2012 Bigger Red - \$48.00 (W)

www.bigheadwines.ca

There is truth in advertising (alright, not always), but this time winemaker Andrzej Lipinski is telling you exactly what to expect from this bottle of red – a blend of Petit Verdot (35%), Cabernet Franc (35%) and Merlot (30%) which went through both natural fermentation and malolactic fermentation – aged for a mere six-and-a-half months in new European oak barrels. The fun of this wine is in figuring out where the flavours/aromas of this wine come from: the Petit Verdot brings the pepper, Cabernet Franc the tobacco and the Merlot brings the fruit. Nose of cherry, plum and pepper. Flavours are layered and lovely: red and black fruit, mid-palate full of plum, cherry, cassis, blackberry and smoky tobacco leading to a black pepper finish. Bigger is definitely a good name for this wine and at 15.5% alcohol he ain't kidding on any level. Price: \$48.00 – Rating: **** ½

Hinterland 2010 Etoiles – Method Traditional - \$39.00 (W)

www.hinterlandwine.com

A 60/40 blend of Chardonnay and Pinot Noir goes into this sparkler ... the Chardonnay also spends some time in 3rd fill oak (6-7 months) thereby adding some complexity into the Chardonnay component. The result is a bubbly that smells of mineral and citrus; the palate has got a real green apple / citrus pith thing going for it leading to a long mineral finish ... one of the better Etoiles made to date, and that's saying a lot, as this wine continues to shine in the Hinterland portfolio. Price: \$39.00 – Rating: ****+

Karlo Estates 2010 Quintus - \$35.00 (W)

www.karloestates.com

If ever there was a year to make a true Bordeaux style blend 2010 would be it. 40% Merlot, 20% each of Cabernet Franc and Cabernet Sauvignon, and 10% of Petit Verdot and Malbec, made in an old world style, meaning it'll require a little time to come into its own. Currently red and black fruit dominates the nose with a nice shake of white pepper into the mix. The taste profile doles out spices, blackberry, and cassis with just a hint of greenness on the mid-palate, but with good tobacco notes it finishes really strong. Give it a few years to integrate: drink 2014-2020. Price: \$35.00 – Rating: ****+

Lailey 2012 Chardonnay – Niagara Peninsula - \$19.95 (W)

www.laileyvineyard.com

I've really gotta stop saying I don't like Chardonnay – having just re-organized my wine cellar over the weekend I found that I have quite a bit of the stuff in there ... it can't all be for guests now can it? Plus I keep coming across wines like this one from Lailey; an all estate fruit, old vines number aged 10 months in oak (but none new). A nose loaded with butter and peach blossoms followed on the palate with mac apple, vanilla, spice and great acidity for balance and don't forget the fresh clean finish that doesn't weigh you down. With Chardonnay like this being made here in Ontario I'm having a real problem keeping my ABC status. Price: \$19.95 – Rating: ****+

Union Wines 2007 Forte - \$16.95 (L)

www.unionwines.com

Talk about under-appreciated, Port is one of the most under-appreciated wines and yet can be some of the most balanced and beautiful – especially when matched with the right stinky cheese, a cigar, or a perfect evening. Allan Jackson (yes that Allan Jackson) loves Port and calls this 6 year in barrel Cabernet and Merlot based Tawny “a labour of love” ... it's not just the dried cherry and cranberry that passes pleasantly over the palate – it has outstanding acidity to balance the sweetness – this elixir is a real beauty and stunning value for the price. For fun and freshness a small percentage of Syrah was added back into the blend before bottling – lifting the fruit a tad ... nice decision. One of the best Port-style wines to come out of Ontario, possibly ever. This style of wine is not only under-appreciated but this version is under-priced too (but shh, don't tell the Union). Price: \$16.95 – Rating: **** 1/2

Availability legend: W (Winery) – L (LCBO/Vintages) - OL (On-Line).



Bi-Weekly OWR Updates: Wine Videos, Blog Additions and more

Weekly Wine Videos

Just as the name suggest ... every week I'll introduce you to another fabulous Ontario wine

www.ontariowinereview.com

A bi-weekly newsletter dedicated to helping you discover Ontario's best Wines and Wineries.

that you've just gotta try – [Check out the YouTube Channel Now](#)

Video #35 – [Tawse 2012 Quarry Road Riesling](#)

Video #36 – [Coyote's Run 2011 Black Paw Vineyard Pinot Noir](#) (part of Pinot Noir Week)
look for all the Pinot Week videos in the next newsletter

Ottawa Life – International Wine Selection(s) of the Week:

Check out the [Ottawa Life – Thirst Impressions](#) blog for my weekly selections

This week's posts:

[Pinot Paradise](#)

NEW – [Quench By Tidings ... #Wine Wednesday](#) ([see them all here](#))

[Beaujolais is Not Nouveau](#)

[Things to Be Thankful For](#)

['Tis the Season for Chardonnay](#)

[On the Road with the Grape Guy:](#)

Trips, tours and tastings – join me as I review the highs, and sometimes, the lows

Nothing New This Week ... more coming soon

[Lost and Found \(blog\)](#)

Wines that got "lost" in my cellar - some are Treasures others Trash ... Find out what happened

Nothing New This Week

[Taste it Again Grape Guy \(blog\)](#)

Find out what has happened to some of my favourites over the years

[Between the Lines 2009 Cabernet Franc](#)

[What I'm drinking Tonight \(blog\)](#)

When it's not an Ontario wine, here's what I'm pulling out of the cellar

[Read the New Posts Added](#)

[Vintages Release \(blog\)](#)

**October 12, 2013 – Vintages Release Report
In-Store Discoveries – October 12, 2013**

Event and Ticket Winners



Fridays, Saturdays & Sundays in November 2013 - 11 am to 5 pm

Taste the Season is Niagara-on-the-Lake's must-do event in November! Celebrate the season's bounty with locally inspired VQA wine and food pairings at each of the 27 member wineries. [Tickets are available here.](#)

Winners of Taste the Season Passports are:

Vern & Peggy Parkinson

Mark Savage

David Haight

Event and Ticket Winners



Wine Event Spotlight: *One from Away and One here at Home*

South African Wine Tasting Celebration ... Thursday October 17, 2013, at 6 pm ... Focusing on premium South African wines and a tasting led by wine expert Tony Aspler. Enjoy a 4 course sit-down meal followed by the performance of Juno award-winning singer, South Africa's own Lorraine Klaasen accompanied by her band. All proceeds will be donated to Making a Difference (MAD), a South African charity. Price: \$250 per ticket - Location: St Georges Golf Club, 1668 Islington Avenue, Etobicoke ... More details can be found here: <http://www.grapesforhumanity.com/?p=596>

Slow and Sinful Gala ... Slow Food Prince Edward County's third annual tribute to locally produced champagne-style wines, will be held on November 30th. Guests will be invited to circulate among small tables where some of the county's best chefs and Loyalist College Culinary Arts students will be serving savory and sweet offerings paired with thoughtfully selected sparkling wines and specialty distillations. Little Bluff will delight with their up tempo dance music. For information on the Gala and Slow Food's charitable activities and to purchase tickets for the event please visit <http://www.slowfoodthecounty.ca>

OntarioWineReview's bi-weekly newsletter is devoted to the love, enjoyment and promotion of the wines of Ontario and the wineries that make them.



What can the Grape Guy do for you ... Michael Pinkus (Grape Guy) provides a variety of wine related services that you might be interested in taking advantage of: he gives lectures, leads seminars, conducts tastings, sets up tours; consults, selects and judges. He also gives interviews, broadcasts, podcasts and writes. [Contact the Grape Guy if you require any of these services or have any questions.](#)



Psst, Pass It On ... keep the good wine flowing. Forward this newsletter to your mom in Mimico your uncle in Uxbridge, your great aunt in Grand Bend or any other family member or loved one that you know needs good wine advice.



Socially Speaking ... Follow Michael Pinkus, the Grape Guy's (almost) daily **Tweets** at <http://twitter.com/TheGrapeGuy>. You can become a friend on **facebook**: <http://www.facebook.com/?ref=home#!/mepinkus>. "Linked In" folks can find Michael at <http://ca.linkedin.com/pub/michael-pinkus/14/704/4b8>

To contact us with feedback, article ideas, comments, concerns or questions – email michael@ontariowinereview.com. We look forward to hearing from you!

© OntarioWineReview.com 2013. All rights reserved.

You may use the content of this newsletter by including full credit to Michael Pinkus, Grape Guy and a link to www.ontariowinereview.com