

## OntarioWineReview Vintages Release Guide

A bi-weekly report about the upcoming wines being released through LCBO's Vintages program.



### OntarioWineReview: Vintages Release Saturday April 12, 2008

I'm writing this report on March 9, 2008 – the day after Toronto got dumped on with a foot of snow, or more, so there is nobody who needs a taste of the south like those of us who have been spending our February and March in the Great White North – no name seems more appropriate on a day like today. This LCBO release is all about Southern wine (Wines from a Southern Clime) so on this day of –3 degree weather – and snow banks that are a minimum 6 feet high, let's go south for a little get away. In this report you'll find 7 featured wines, 12 reds, 6 whites and my Take a Chance on Me wine selection. To see the Ontario wines of note click on the links and you will be directed to my website ([www.ontariowinereview.com](http://www.ontariowinereview.com)) for a full review. And now without further ado, Southern spotlight here we come.

#### Southern Exposure ...

We'll start the look at the south by staying in North America, California to be exact, Santa Barbara Winery 2006 Chardonnay (\$17.95 - #989152) – this is a good price for a really decent Cali-Chard – the fruit flavours are upfront with ripe apples and pears. Turning our attention from our own continent to another, South Africa, Fairview 2006 Viognier (\$19.95 - #906487) a grape variety that is starting to gain traction worldwide; prices always seem a little high for these wines, but once they become more widely accepted hopefully you'll see them come down. For now you'll have to pay 20 bucks for a nose of tropical fruit, floral, apricot and pear and a beautiful palate of wildflowers and citrus with an almost sweet finish. This one's pretty exceptional and well worth it's price tag. Speaking of exceptional, the Torbreck Woodcutter's Shiraz (\$25.95 - #927533) is back – this 2006 version is spicy, peppery and juicy – a great wine as always, and one you can lie down for a few years. From the Rhone (South of France) comes the Chateau du Trignon Gigondas 2004 (\$27.95 - #681817) – it's smooth and lush with an intense sweet herb nose and the thrill of berries in the mouth. Zin-fans should turn their eyes towards Italy in this release, as the closest thing to a Zin-like wine is the A-Mano 2006 Primitivo (\$15.95 - #972588) - the sweet cherry pie nose follows in the mouth; while there's also some cola nuances making this one very pleasant indeed. Finally, in my look at the south, are two sweeties from Spain and Portugal; these are cold weather wines made in some very hot places – go figure. First, there's the Quinta de Ventozelo 1998 LBV Port (\$21.95 - #660159) – red cherries, mint, blackberries and chocolate with a hint of tannins that makes this a warming (21% alcohol) treat going down. Then there's the Argueso Pedro Ximenez Sherry (\$17.95 - #69559) – my sweet tooth of younger days seems to find its way back when it comes to a PX Sherry. Creamy, nutty and caramelly ... very tasty; and here's a tip – if you open it and put it in the fridge it'll thicken over a few days and makes a delicious topping for ice cream, pie or any other dessert you want to liven up ... also good, in small doses, in French Onion Soup.

#### White Wines ...

##### Ontario ...

[Megalomaniac 2007 Narcissist Riesling](#) (\$17.95 - #675587)

[Mike Weir 2006 Sauvignon Blanc](#) (\$15.95 - #686972)

**South Africa ...** not one, not two, but three South African whites were wonderful and tasty values this release. The first appeared above from Fairview, the next two appear below. Let's start with the Stellenzicht 2004 Golden Triangle Chardonnay (\$19.95 - #58008) – a nose mixed with citrus, tropical fruit and vanilla, the flavours are reminiscent of buttery, caramelized apples. Best value of the release might also prove the trickiest to find: KWV 2006 Cathedral Cellar Sauvignon Blanc (\$9.95 - #662718) – a mixed shipment has left the LCBO with both the 2006 and 2007 vintages of this wine, but search out the '06 with its great crisp Savvy B. nose and extra long finish – it's the gooseberry, grapefruit and grassy you're searching for ... the '07 just doesn't stack up.

France – Burgundy ... yaba-daba-doo, this Chardonnay is for you – especially if you like 'em unoaked - pineapple and peach on the nose with plenty of follow-up fruitiness in the mouth ... delicious. Oh, and if you

are wondering which one I'm referring to: Blason de Bourgogne Saint-Veran Chardonnay 2006 (\$18.95 - #16725).

**Germany ...** if you love Riesling as much as my sweetie, then I'm going to suggest you beg, borrow or steal (maybe all three) twenty-bucks and get your hands on this Darting 2006 Riesling Spatlese (\$19.95 - #963207) ... this is pure Riesling heaven. The nose is apples, apricot, honey and pears (plus a whole lot more), while the palate is a touch sweet with great balancing acidity. The taste follows the nose – sweet and stunning, with an extra, extra, extra long mouthfilling finish. All at 9% alcohol ... wow!

**Italy ...** People who read my column regularly know I am a fan of Moscato – this one (Bava Cocconato Moscto d'Asti 2007 - \$15.95 - #712547) follows the same citrusy, sweet, grapeyness blueprint that others have followed, but it's always a pleasant thrill on the tongue (and summer is coming – it's a refresher you'll want hanging around). My second Italian white is the Elio Filippino Langhe Arneis 2006 (\$18.95 - #60848), made from the Arneis grape. I would have sworn this was an unoaked Chardonnay with its fresh apple-pear nose, and then came the real zing on the tongue with tart Granny Smith apple and a lemon squeeze. Ouch and yum all at the same time.

### Red Wines ...

#### Ontario ...

[Megalomaniac 2006 Bravado Cabernet Sauvignon](#) (\$24.95 - #67595)

[Megalomaniac 2006 Vainglorious Cabernet/Merlot](#) (\$24.95 - #67637)

**Argentina ...** traditionally wines go with food, and most notably the foods that a country is noted for. In the case of Argentina that means beef, and the Viniterra 2005 Syrah (\$13.95 - #57927) with its blackberry, vanilla and herbs, is a perfect BBQ candidate – with beef of course.

**Chile ...** I draw your attention briefly to the Casa Lapostolle Clos Apalta 2005 (\$99.95 - #723676) ... is it worth the money? That's for you to decide, but if you believe the hype it most certainly is – let me just say this is one hell of a delicious, beautiful and complex wine – one of the best I have tried from Chile. Now back to your regularly scheduled report. Back to reality pricing, Los Vascos 2006 Grande Reserve (\$15.95 - #32078) is a beauty in its own right. Owned by Chateau Lafite Rothschild (France), you have to believe these folks know something about wine: rich red fruit are on both the palate and nose, there is also vanilla, mint and spicy characteristics – there's also plenty of potential for the future here ... you're never gonna get a Lafite at that price, so get off the couch and use your feet to get you some.

**Australia ...** I'd be remiss in my duties as a wine-writer if I didn't present at least one Aussie option each release – lucky for you I've got two. The first is the Penmara 2004 Reserve Shiraz (\$17.95 - #912782) with its chocolate, juicy blackberries, vanilla, herbs and cola – this one's a tasty little sucker at a very decent price point. Then there's the Syan 2005 Cabernet Sauvignon (\$26.95 - #62430) with its big alcohol (14.7%) eucalyptus and juicy black fruits ... lovely and immensely enjoyable.

**New Zealand ...** Coopers Creek releases two at Vintages this week, but only one's worth buying ... the Coopers Creek 2006 Merlot (\$17.95 - #672451) is smoky-blackberries ... there's also some tannin dryness and good holdability (for 5 years or so), which'll make it better than it already is.

**France – Midi ...** you would expect a wine made from Syrah and Mourvedre to deliver a tannic punch, especially at this young age: Chateau de Gourgazaud Cuvee Mathilde 2006 (\$13.95 - #958629), but instead there is plenty of red fruit in this bottle and it's ready to go now ... put a little chill on it for added enjoyment.

**Italy – Piedmont ...** there are some great Italian values I'll point out to you in this report, I wouldn't classify this \$43.95 a value – but I do think it is very good: Marchesi di Barolo Barbaresco 2004 (#60855). Earthy with stewed black fruit on the nose, while the mouth really has all the fun here: plums, red and black fruits, delicious and smooth.

**Italy – Puglia ...** I told you about the delicious A-Mano Primitivo (Zin) above; if you want to add to your Zinfund ways also check out the Giordano Primitivo di Manduria 2005 (\$17.95 - #51797) it truly proved to be smooth and luscious in the mouth with lots of Zin-like qualities.

**Italy – Tuscany ...** Not a huge fan of Chianti I am, but this one came from nowhere to surprise me with its cinnamon, black fruit nose – it followed that up with an initial smoothness in the mouth, then around mid-palate it developed a shot of tannins with a tasty yet drying cedary-oaky and black fruit character. For more

flavours check out San Jacopo da Vicchiomaggio Chianti Classico 2006 (\$17.95 - #710194)

**Italy – Veneto** ... you can always guarantee that if there is a good Valpolicella Ripasso in a release I'll definitely let you know about it. Well, the Luigi Righetti Valpolicella Classico Superiore Ripasso 2005 (\$18.95 - #575787) fits the bill nicely with its spicy, plummy and cherry nose (and flavours) with herbs to back it up – I love Ripasso and this gives me yet another reason to do so. On the other hand, it's rarer to find an Amarone deal, but this one seems to be: Remo Farina Amarone della Valpolicella 2003 (\$19.95 - #33365 – 375ml) – all the things you love Amarone for in a half bottle ... if you think about it, that's \$40 for a full bottle – and for Amarone that's a good deal ... though not as cellarable as a 750ml.

**Portugal** ... big fruit, lots of alcohol (14.5%) from Portugal; good nose, plummy jammy red fruit, spices and herbs – real pizzazz for the mouth: Encostas de Estremoz Touriga Nacional 2004 (\$19.95 - #684936).

#### **Take a Chance on Me ...**

Here's an interesting spin on a Bordeaux-blend: Casa Silva Quinta Generacion 2004 (\$19.95 - #59451) from Chile – Cabernet Sauvignon and Petit Verdot are the classic varieties, while Syrah and Carmenere put the new world, and in particular, a Chilean spin on things. Smooth and tasty ... an interesting woody, forest floor nuance on the nose with sweet fruit in the mouth. This one you should really enjoy.

Happy Shopping.

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**Psst, Pass It On** ... keep the good wine flowing. Pass this report onto to friends, family members, loved ones, or any other wine lover on your list of contacts.

To contact me with feedback, article ideas, comments, concerns or questions – email [michael@ontariowinereview.com](mailto:michael@ontariowinereview.com). I look forward to hearing from you!

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