

## OntarioWineReview Vintages Release Guide

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



### OntarioWineReview: Vintages Release Saturday April 26, 2008

This Vintages release kicks off the month long [California-fest](#) that's happening at the LCBO – from April 28 to May 25. Everything California is being displayed front and center at the provinces liquor monopoly – so if you drink, which obviously you do because you're reading this report, you'll be inundated by California; but heck, after the winter we've had to endure it'll be nice to dream and see things that remind us of sun, sand and surf ... so let's kick Cali-month off right by looking at the wines from Napa and Sonoma. Ontario reviews can be found by clicking the link which will redirect you to my website, [www.ontariowinereview.com](http://www.ontariowinereview.com). Many have also asked if I have a top 3 each release, (the answer is usually yes) and if I would mind highlighting those – you'll find them at the end.

#### Napa & Sonoma ...

Any California wine fan knows *Chateau Montelena* ... they are the winery that won the white (Chardonnay) portion of the Judgment of Paris in 1976 where the Californians stunned the French. Therefore this winery is not only award winning, it can actually claim to be world changing, and the *2006 Chardonnay* (\$44.95 - #701748) is delicious. Switching gears from wines that changed the world to winery owners that changed the face of the wine world, *Robert Mondavi*, whose *Fume Blanc* is the granddaddy of New World oaked Sauvignon Blancs – the 2006 model (\$24.95 - #221887) is full of citrus-grassy goodness with a little vanilla on the finish – lovely.

Moving onto the reds, there's the *Beringer 2006 Pinot Noir* (\$27.95 - #718668). Now there is no way anybody could mix up the California version of Pinot Noir for a Burgundian Pinot Noir. The Californian version is all sweet red cherries with just the merest hint of earthiness and slight tannins, and of course there's the red fruit finish ... the Beringer is California Pinot without a doubt. For bizarre blends you can't beat the *2006 Big House Red* (\$18.95 - #308999), 4 grapes you wouldn't expect to come from that part of the planet: Sangiovese, Montepulciano, Touriga Nacional and Carignane ... this wine is a long time favourite of mine – it has a mixture of red and black fruit, some spices and an incredibly interesting finish. More traditionally blended grapes (Sauv/Franc and Merlot) can be found in the *Rosenblum Holbrook Mitchell Trio Meritage 2004* (\$35.95 - #59279). This high alcohol (15.7%) bruiser has Port-like nuances in both taste and smell – lots of cherries and black fruits. Looking for single varietals? There's the *Rutherford Ranch 2005 Cabernet Sauvignon* (\$19.95 - #73817) ... but don't be fooled by the label, this wine also contains traces of Merlot, Syrah and Cab Franc ... but the whole mixture brings about herbs and red berry fruit that's very enjoyable now. Merlot fans can get their fix with these two: *Sebastiani 2004 Merlot* (\$20.95 - #219162) with its sweet red fruit nose and fruity-jammy taste – Miles would hate it; or you can break the bank for the *Shafer 2005 Merlot* (\$54.95 - #346262) – sure it's sweet and smooth, sure it's got a great name behind it, and sure it'll age a decade or more – but is straight Merlot worth \$55 ... factor in the 12% Cab Sauv and 8% Franc and then maybe (wink) – still a very tasty wine though.

#### White Wine ...

##### Ontario ...

[Flat Rock Cellars 2006 Unplugged Chardonnay](#) (\$15.95 - #68015)

[Henry of Pelham 2006 Gewurztraminer](#) (\$17.95 - #268359)

[Henry of Pelham 2006 Barrel Fermented Chardonnay](#) (\$19.95 - #268342)

**France – Loire ...** it has just a touch of sweetness that helps carry it through to a delicious finish – this is the wine I would choose to sip on a hot summer's day, well chilled in a bucket of ice on the patio: *Chateau Moncontour Vouvray Demi-Sec 2006* (\$17.95 - #16709).

**France – Rhone ...** *Perrin Reserve 2006 Cotes du Rhone Blanc* (\$14.95 - #499509) is the kind of simple sipper that brings a smile to a wine-lover's lips. Fruity nose and a grapefruit palate, very Sauvignon Blanc-

like.

**Italy – Veneto ...** As the days get long you start thinking of cleaning off the patio of all that winter debris and making way for a few lawn chairs and the BBQ. As the days go from cold to crisp to warm you might want to make sure you have a chilled bottle of *Tommasi Soave Classico Le Volpare 2007* (\$17.95 - #70870) ready, it'll set the mood and get you ready for those hotter days to come.

### Red Wines ...

**Argentina ...** as we speak about hot days to come we must remember our old friend, the BBQ, not only does he make our meat good to eat, but he also reminds us how good those reds from hot climes can be when paired with seared flesh. And Argentina, home of the cattle, is the perfect place to find our first BBQ-match of the season: *Kaiken 2005 Malbec* (\$14.95 - #58339) ... plummy, jammy, black fruit and sweet chocolate – this is great value and grill ready.

**Australia ...** Paul Hogan talked about throwing a shrimp on the bar-bie when he was tourism Australia's spokesperson – today you'd feel just as at home with a talking koala or kangaroo, even better if they were holding a bottle of one of these wines: *James Haselgrove Futures Shiraz 2006* (\$25.95 - #59857) – with its black cherry, pepper, spices, sweet mid-palate, eucalyptus and black fruit finish; or the *Pennyfield 2004 Cabernet Sauvignon Basket Pressed* (\$23.95 - #59907) – with its sweet juicy herbal nose and palate, that's ready to drink now; or even the perennial favourite Ringbolt Cabernet Sauvignon 2006 (\$19.95 - #606624) – with its friendly mouthfilling flavours ... tasty.

**France – Southwest ...** noting beats a wine from Cahors, these incredible long aging reds have plenty of heft and tannins to last up to 10 years or more and cost peanuts to buy – or they used to. This *Chateau de Haute-Serre 2004* (\$21.95 - #693952) is one of the more expensive offerings I've seen come out of this regions in years, but considering in 10 years that price will seem like a steal you might consider it an investment. This one is rich and juicy with a very sexy and appealing nose and full-on black fruit tannins on the finish – it's a yummer for years to come. Also from Southwest France comes *Domaine du Crampilh Cuvee L'Original Madiran 2005* (\$18.95 - #70037) – it has a slightly off-putting nose, but it certainly makes up for it in the flavour department ... thick and chewy and very Port-like in flavour – it has a wonderful smoothness but it'll also leave tannin skid marks on the tongue.

**Portugal ...** speaking of Port, the home of the ultimate sweet wine brings us two reds of note. First, there's the *Cortes de Cima Chamione Red 2006* (\$14.95 - #650291) – a wine made by an Aussie in Portugal using Cab and Shiraz, and this one comes off with lots of new world smells and tastes – a plummy nose and sweet palate. Going old world for the second wine is *Quinta da Cortezia Touriga Nacional 2005* (\$18.95 - #70292) – great little sipper that's enjoyably “sweet” through the mouth and ends dry, dry, dry. Opa! (Or the Portuguese equivalent).

**Spain ...** opa? Is that a Spanish term – Anyway, there's no better way to transition to this *Seleccion de Torres Celeste 2004* (\$19.95 - #672691) you've seen this bottle before with its celestial bodies on the blue-black label – this is good value Spanish red with dark fruit, herbs and spice on both the nose and taste. On the other hand, if Opa is a Greek term, then as they say on Survivor – “I've got nothing for you this time.”

### Rosé ...

#### Ontario ...

[Daniel Lenko 2006 White Cabernet](#) (\$20.15 - #75648)

### What's for Dessert? ...

We head back to France for dessert and the *Chateau Septy Monbazillac 2003* (\$9.95 - #31625 – 375ml) – a blend of Sauvignon Blanc, Semillon and Muscadelle. This little palate teaser is fresh, fruity and grapey (that's the Muscadelle influence), a good price for something simple for dessert on its own or with simple fare.

### Take a Chance on Me ...

It's chicken or the egg time – what came first the winery or the name of it's owner – Willi Opitz (sounds too funny to be fake) makes a wine called *Willi Opitz Cuvee Red 2005* (\$18.95 - #71266) from Zweigelt, Blaufrankisch and Cabernet Sauvignon. Willi's winery is located in Austria, not well known for their stellar reds – but this one is downright enjoyable – dry, fruity with intense black fruit ... give it a try, heck it's only 20

bucks – if you don't like it bring it back.

### **Grape Guy's Top 3 for April 26, 2008 release ...**

These are the one's I would/will be lining up for at 9am:

#1 – Chateau Moncontour Vouvray Demi-Sec 2006 ((\$17.95 - #16709)

#2 – Kaiken Malbec 2005 (\$14.95 - #58339)

#3 – Chateau de Haute-Serre 2004 (\$21.95 - #693952)

Happy Shopping.

---

**About OntarioWineReview:** a website devoted to the love, enjoyment and promotion of Ontario's wines, wineries and lots more wine related issues – visit [www.ontariowinereview.com](http://www.ontariowinereview.com) to sign up for the free bi-weekly newsletter and feel free to browse around a little while you're there.



**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. 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!

© OntarioWineReview.com 2008. 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](http://www.ontariowinereview.com)