

OntarioWineReview Vintages Release Guide

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



OntarioWineReview: Vintages Release Saturday August 16, 2008

Help! It's the annual Vintages Chilean release, for me one of the most dangerous, money-wise. I am a big fan of Chilean wine because they offer some of the best values on the market – many of them under \$20 and most worth much more (but don't tell the Chileans that or we just might see even higher prices, and for God's sake don't tell the LCBO there is still money to squeeze out of these wines). There is also a secondary focus in Vintages: Austria, and, of course, the usual suspects of wines from other countries ... 27 wines in total. Full reviews of Ontario wines can be found by linking directly to my website (www.ontariowinereview.com) - there are 7, 4 of which were previously recommended by me. So now let us on to Chile and see what kind of trouble we can get into.

Chile ...

Chile is like a cross between a Mina bird and Joe Cocker – they have an uncanny knack of mimicking others, and yet like Joe Cocker doing a cover tune, they make it all their own (think: Help from my Friends). Starting with whites, there's a very nice *Casa Lapostolle 2007 Chardonnay* (\$14.95 - #0396986) that has a touch of sweetness amongst the buttery-oak, there's also good fruit flavours too – though the nose seems a little muted. Another Chardonnay of note is the *Cono Sur 2007 Chardonnay* (\$12.95 - #0061911), refreshing uplifting nose loaded with tree fruit which translates into the mouth as ripe and delicious ... perfect for summer at a perfect price for sharing and serving.

Chilean red has long been a downfall of my bank account, here, amongst the 11 wines on offer I give you 5 of the best ... and all great values too. *Panul 2006 Reserve Malbec* (\$14.95 - #0061929), I've liked much of the stuff from Panul, but this is the first time they've been seen in Vintages. This is brambly black fruit with some holdability ... this is Panul's weakest wine I've tried – but even saying that it's still very good and it offers up great value. Pinot Noir fans are starting to find out that Chile can grow this finicky grape, not only that, they can make some pretty good wines from it: *Santa Rita 2006 Reserva Pinot Noir* (\$14.95 – 0065458) fits that bill nicely. Sweet black cherry on the nose and palate all finishing with a touch of vanilla. With little to no tannins to speak of this Pinot could turn your "I hate Pinot" friends into fans in no time. *Ventisquero Quenlat 2005 Gran Reserva Cabernet Sauvignon* (\$16.95 - #0061937) is a friendly, ageworthy addition to your cellar: black fruit dominant, big alcohol (14.5%) and smooth – 5 years plus potential. *Veranda 2005 Cabernet/Carmenere* (\$15.95 – 0001972) is a smooth, easy drinking black fruit and chocolate number with good cherry nuances ... great price for something that's both bbq and winter ready. My fifth red selection you'll find in the Take a Chance on Me section at the bottom of this report.

Austria ...

Noted mostly for their whites, Austria is mounting a major comeback on the world wine scene. In this release, three wines are worth taking note of. *Lenz Moser Prestige Gruner Veltline Trocken 2006* (\$14.95 - #0071233) – Austria's signature white in it's most perfect form, and at an incredible price: lemon and melon rind make up the nose; light grapefruit in the mouth, delicious. There's also the rare *Stadlmann Zierfandler Classic 2006* (\$17.95 - #0071696) made from the almost extinct indigenous Zierfandler grape. It's a cross between Riesling and Gewurztraminer on the nose, with a pleasant mouthfeel; by no means am I saying this is outstanding wine, but it is a great little quaffer and is reported to age well in the cellar – and besides how many Zierfandlers are you going to get to try in your lifetime. Also from *Stadlmann is the 2005 St. Laurent* (\$19.95 - #0071670 – light, fruity and easy drinking – if you don't expect too much you'll get a lot out of this one.

Now, on to the rest of the world – starting with Ontario, and then we'll continue alphabetically:

Ontario ... Red ...

[Coyote's Run 2006 Red Paw Pinot Noir](#) (\$23.95 - #0079228)

[Megalomaniac 2006 Sonofabitch Pinot Noir](#) (\$24.95 - #0085134)

Ontario ... White ...

[Coyote's Run 2006 Reserve Chardonnay](#) (\$29.95 - #0049775)

[Featherstone 2007 Gewurztraminer](#) (\$18.95 - #0064592)

[Fielding Estate 2007 Gewurztraminer](#) (\$16.00 - #0078501)

[Tawse 2007 Sketches of Niagara Riesling](#) (\$18.20 - # 0089029)

[Vineland Estates 2006 Sauvignon Blanc](#) (\$16.95 0 0551168)

Argentina ... Red ...

Clos de los Siete 2006 (\$24.95 - #0622571) – nice tannins structure holds up the black fruit, spices and herbs, beautiful, ageable and above all, tasty.

Trapiche Broquel Malbec 2006 (\$15.95 - #0017210) – big alcohol (14%) propels this one towards deliciousness with chocolaty black fruit.

Argentina ... Rosé ...

Amancay Malbec Rosé 2007 (\$11.95 - #0068890) – rich, ripe strawberry-raspberry nose, good red fruit/berry on the palate.

Australia ... White ...

Fifth Leg 2007 Sauvignon Blanc/Semillon/Chardonnay (\$20.95 - #0489062) – this 13.5% alcohol blend is grassy on the nose with lemon and floral on the finish. Quite nice.

France ... Red ...

(Bordeaux) – *Chateau Lestage 2004* (\$27.95 - #0086231) – black fruit, tannins and great drink-now-ability.

Italy ... Red ...

(Tuscany) – *Ruffina 2004 Chianti Riserva* (\$15.95 - #0969469) – chocolate and spicy notes, easy, pleasant finish with a slight bite at the end.

(Veneto) – *Quintus 2006 Valpolicella Ripasso* (\$17.95 - #0081455) – does classy label equal classy wine? In this case it does. Plum, chocolate, red fruit nose; all follows on the palate with a sweet black cherry finish. Hold 5+ years.

Italy ... Sparkling ...

Bellenda San Fermo Prosecco di Conegliano Valdobbiadene Brut 2007 (\$19.95 - #0082347) – fresh and lively with an apple nose and dry lemon in the mouth, good acidity make this a good palate cleanser, make sure to serve very cold.

Italy ... White ...

(Piedmont) – *Fontanafredda 2006 Gavi de Commune di Gavi* (\$16.95 - #0075440) – pleasant easy sipper with floral notes and under-ripe apples.

Fontanafredda 2006 Moncucco Moscato d'Asti (\$19.95 - #0673277) – as the alcohol goes down on these wines (5.5%) the price goes up. I love Asti though and this tasty sweet, slightly fizzy number has lots of grapy, peachy and yummy.

New Zealand ... White ...

Ra Nui 2007 Sauvignon Blanc (\$19.95 - #0658542) – restraint has been shown here to deliver more where it counts, the mouth. No over the top aromatics, but on the palate it has all the grassy, grapefruit and gooseberry you'd expect – tons of finesse here.

Spain ... Red ...

Finca Antigua Crianza 2004 (\$15.95 - #0981613) – great smell and wonderful taste: red fruit, plums, black fruit and chocolate; it has it all, and everything mixes well with the tannins.

USA ... Red ...

(California) – *Beringer 2003 Cabernet Sauvignon* (\$28.95 - #0091058) – some spicy notes mingle with smooth chocolate, red and black fruit along with silky tannins. Yummy.

Freemark Abbey 2002 Merlot (\$31.95 - #0001602) – great nose of chocolate, blackberries, cherries and a touch of vanilla all follow through in the incredibly smooth mouth.

(New York) – *Brotherhood 2005 Pinot Noir* (\$18.95 - #0079939) – good price for this red berry, slightly tannic Pinot from New York ... a nice introduction to the state.

USA ... White ...

(California) – *Jekel Vineyard 2006 Gravelstone Chardonnay* (\$15.95 - #0421016) – pleasant peach, apple and melon notes on both the nose and palate.

(New York) – *Sheldrake Point 2006 Waterfall Chardonnay* (\$16.95 - #0079947) – clean and fruity, made for summertime gulpability – a touch minerally, which helps clear the palate for the next sip.

Port and Sherries ...

Portugal – *Offley Late Bottled Vintage Port 2000* (\$19.95 - #0070086) – spicy, black and red cherry, chocolate, plums, touch of bite from the lingering tannins on the finish. I just love this kind of Port.

Take a Chance on Me ...

From our friends in Chile comes this *Vina Tarapaca Gran Reserva Cabernet Sauvignon 2004* (\$15.95 - #0018721) ... now usually a Cabernet Sauvignon from Chile is a no-brainer, so I hear you asking, what's the big deal about this one? If you pop the cork now you'll find this one very tight and closed off, it needs some lie down time to show off its awesome potential ... I'd suggest buying now and lying this one down in the cellar for 3 years before releasing that cork. Can't wait that long – well there are plenty of other drink now Sauvs from Chile you can enjoy right now.

Grape Guy Top 3 ... what I'll be lining up for on August 16, 2008

Ra Nui 2007 Sauvignon Blanc (\$19.95 - #0658542) – New Zealand

Veranda 2005 Cabernet/Carmenere (\$15.95 - #0091272) – Chile

Quintas 2006 Valpolicella Ripasso (\$17.95 - #0081455) - Italy

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 to sign up for the free bi-weekly newsletter and feel free to browse around a little while you're there.



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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. I look forward to hearing from you!

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