

OntarioWineReview Vintages Release Guide

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



OntarioWineReview: Vintages Release Saturday August 29, 2009

I am back and rarin' to go after a bit of a hiatus from the Vintages tastings; thanks to all who emailed in to say you missed me. So without too much of a preamble let's get right to it – first up, a trip to the Rhone, then a sip on some Zinfandels, and finally the rest of the world from A-Z.

I have gone to a stars rating system which appears at the end of each review; here's how those stars break down:

5 = Outstanding ... 4.5 = Excellent ... 4 = Very Good ... 3.5 = Good ... 3 = Average

I'm always looking for good values and I'm not afraid to give or take away a half mark for it – I'll let you know when I've done so.

Ranging out to the Rhone ...

This release the LCBO has decided to take us all to France, the south of France, to check out the wines of the Rhone. Good news is that in some spots you're going to find excellent value in age-worthy reds, in other spots you'll pay for that age-ability. I'll guide you through the landmine of the Rhone with my top 5 wines from this featured release.

First up is the *Chateau Mourgues du Gres Les Galets Rouge 2007* (\$14.95 - #0132548), here's one of those values I talked about, nice red fruit with a tasty, almost minty, palate and hints of chocolate – it seems almost sweet (****). This next one, the *Delas Haute Pierre 2007 Chateauneuf-du-Pape* (\$35.95 - #0074195), is one of those wines I told you that you were going to pay for its complexity. Lots of staying power in the mouth, big on blackberry, herbs, spice, pepper, licorice and with the merely hint of floral; very pretty and very tasty (****½). The next two wines on my list have good value in the bottle: *Domaine Montmartel Visan 2007* (\$16.95 - #0130062), with its red cherry, plum, black pepper and smoked meat goodness (****); and the *Domaine Paul Henry Cotes du Rhone 2006* (\$14.95 - #0130021), a smooth, easy going red berry dominated wine that gets an extra half-star for value, nothing complicated here, just very good (****). Finally, there's the *Domaine Saint-Pierre Vacqueyras 2005* (\$25.95 - #0130013), lots of pepper, black fruit with coffee-like nuances on the tongue with a nice mocha finish (****).

Forgive me my Zins ...

Those who read my [On the Road with the Grape Guy blog](#) know that although I love my Ontario wine, I have a soft spot for Zinfandel; and in this release it's as if the LCBO has read my fondest wish, a Zinfandel spotlight. You'll see 8 Zins are hitting the shelves this weekend, and here are my top 4, in no particular order: *Candor Lot 1 Zinfandel* (\$19.95 - #0133389) is the only non-vintage Zin coming out this release, it's brought to you by the Hope Family (makers of such wines as Liberty School and Treana), this is a fine example of Zinfandel with the cherry, vanilla, plum and chocolate fans of the grape have come to know and love (****). A perennial favourite is this *Gnarly Head Old Vine Zin Zinfandel 2007* (\$17.95 - #0678698), I like to think of it as a beginners Zin, lots of plum, cherry, vanilla, spice and excellent length on the tongue; the price makes it a worthy pick up (****½). *Seghesio 2007 Zinfandel* (\$28.95 - #0942151) is a tasty little number with the black cherry, blueberry, vanilla, plum and red fruit with a kick, but if you're going to spend this much you might as well make the jump to their even better single vineyard offerings (****). No, the real winner in the Zin department this time out is the *Napa Cellars 2005 Zinfandel* (\$23.95 - #0126607), fully loaded with the hefty 15% alcohol Zin is known for plus lots of red berries, cherries, spiced-vanilla, cinnamon/nutmeg and a lingering finish ... this wine is BBQ ready, but will age nicely for the next 5 years at least (****).

Argentina – Red ...

Pasion 4 2007 Merlot (\$11.95 - #0059287) – I liked this wine as a blend, now I like it as a single varietal. It's a light and easy Merlot with big blackberry, pepper, spice and lush tannins – and check out that price, I'm giving it an extra half-star based on the bargain. (****½)

Australia – Red ...

Branson Coach House 2005 Greenock Block Single Vineyard Shiraz (\$24.95 - #0127563) – I really liked this one with the eucalyptus, spice and lingering finish. (****½)

Chile – Red ...

Apaltagua Envero 2007 Gran Reserva (\$15.95 - #0129973) – a blend of 93% Carmenere and 7% Cabernet Sauvignon with lots of in your face flavour and tannins on the tongue, look for mint, black cherry and tobacco notes. (****)

Santa Alicia 205 Gran Reserva de Los Andes Merlot (\$19.95 - #0663088) – it's what you expect from Chile, lots of fruit, well integrated tannins, lots of fruit, a touch of mint, some chocolate and, oh yeah, lots of fruit. (****½)

France – Dessert ...

Domaine Des Bernardins 2007 Muscat Beaugues de Venise (\$17.95 / 375ml - #0129999) – simple never tasted so good: apricot and spice on the nose with lots of tropical flavours. A sweetie with substance. (****)

France – Red ...

(Beaujolais)

Chateau Desvignes Chenas 2007 (\$16.95 - #0130096) – fans of Beaujolais rejoice, this is one of those wines you have been waiting to try to restore your faith in the region's ability to make great wines. Black cherry, white pepper with touches of tannin and herbs. Simply beautiful. (**** ½)

(Bordeaux)

Chateau Castegens 2005 (\$18.95 - #0125856) – here's a good value for you, a wine you can lie down for 5+ years from France's Bordeaux region. A nice mix of red and black fruit on the nose, cinnamon, oak and black currant on the palate. There's some tannin grip here but that'll smooth with time. (****)

Chateau St. Georges 2005 (\$34.95 - #0960310) – Another nice wine with earthy coffee notes that also have blackberry and currant notes – this is another one that needs time to come around. (****)

France – Sparkling ...

(Burgundy)

La Maison du Cremant Brut Cremant de Bourgogne (\$18.95 - #0127811) – who says good bubbly has to be expensive, this one offers up real value along with lemony crispness, fruit sweetness and great balancing acidity; perfect anytime. (*****)

Israel – Red ...

Golan 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon (\$17.95 - #0611152) – not often does a good kosher wine come to market for less than twenty buck, so this one should be snapped up pretty quickly by those looking for a wine to bring in the Jewish New Year. A blackberry, cherry nose leads to a palate that offers up sweet licorice, cherry, and earth-strawberry notes. (****)

Italy – Red ...

(Piedmont)

Paolo Manzone 2007 Magna Dolcetto d'Alba (\$16.95 - #0117176) – simple yet elegant with sweet red fruit, big in the cherry department. (****)

(Veneto)

Tommasi Vigneto Le Prunee Merlot 2007 (\$16.95 - #0024505) – plum and chocolate on the nose which follows onto the tongue with a lovely easy drinkability. (****½).

New Zealand – White ...

Coopers Creek 2007 Chardonnay/Viognier (\$16.95 - #0127480) – not exactly typical for New Zealand but very tasty. Light pineapple and melon, a touch of apple, a bit of pear and loads of flavour. (****)

Seifried 2008 Sauvignon Blanc (\$17.95 - #0957670) – Summer is coming to a close yet the weather is heating up, time for some Sauv Blanc; this one has big acid bite from the grapefruit, there's also gooseberry that goes along with it. The palate does what it's supposed to do, it gives you fruit with apple lemon zest and a green apple/grapefruit cocktail finish. (****)

Portugal – Red ...

Ramos Pinto Duas Quinta 2007 (\$15.95 - #0359893) – plum, chocolate, cherry and vanilla with nice tannins. (****)

South Africa – Red ...

Charles Back 2007 Fairview Shiraz (\$16.95 - #0626358) – smoky notes with blackfruit and nice spice at a good price. (****)

Spain – Red ...

Etim Seleccion 2006 (\$15.00 - #0681346) – stop the presses I may have found you the best value of the release. Fifteen-bucks for this lovely smelling, delicious tasting wine that has, amongst other things: spiced plum, chocolate, cinnamon, spiced-vanilla and plenty more; be sure to pick up a bottle or six come release day. (****)

Torres Gran Sangre de Toro Reserva 2004 (\$15.95 - #315648) – this one ain't a bad deal either, lots of spicy blackberry, hints of herbs and a dusting of pepper. (****)

United States – White ...

(California)

Cline 2007 Viognier (\$15.95 - #0128421) – good value in this Viognier, it offers up spicy grapefruit, herbs and honeyed lemon, good mouth feel too. (****)

Grape Guy Top 3 ... what I'll be lining up for on August 29, 2009:

La Maison du Cremant Brut Cremant de Bourgogne (\$18.95 - #0127811) – France

Napa Cellars 2005 Zinfandel (\$23.95 - #0126607) – United States

Etim Seleccion 2006 (\$15.00 - #0681346) – Spain

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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