

OntarioWineReview Vintages Release Guide

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



OntarioWineReview: Vintages Release Saturday February 6, 2010

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

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

I'm always looking for good value 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.

The two focuses for this release are 90-point wines and Valentine's Day ... so here's what's good:

Wines for your Valentine ...

Nothing is more romantic than opening a bottle of bubbly, it usually signifies something special, and for that I recommend the *Pierre Sparr Brut Rosé Cremant D'Alsace* (\$18.95 - #0039016) with its nice raspberry-strawberry notes and light lemon citrus on the palate (****). Another bubble of note is the *Piemonte Cantina San Pancrazio Brachetto 2008* (\$16.95 - #0159566), Brachetto is very much like Moscato, light and fizzy with a little sweetness – lots of strawberry flavour and beautiful colour; perfect for this time of year (****). Moving on to something red, nothing says “my sweetie” to your sweetie, like an actual sweetie: [Stratus 2008 Red Icewine](#) (\$39.95 / 200ml - #0056689). If you're looking for a dry red wine you can start your search with the *Artesa 2005 Cabernet Sauvignon* (\$22.95 - #0909101), blackberry, black cherry with a touch of mocha and nice tannins (****). To some nothing says Valentine's day like a boatload of cherries, and that's exactly what you get in a bottle of *Domaine des Darrezes Cuvée Tradition Saint-Amour* (\$16.95 - #0159673) from Beaujolais, there is also some floral and raspberry just to give it that little extra yum-factor (****).

90-Point Wines ...

We'll start this look at 90-point wines with a stunning white: *Concha Y Toro 2008 Trio Reserva Chardonnay / Pinot Grigio / Pinot Blanc* (\$12.95 - #0433938), not only is it an exceptional value it tastes great too: lemon-lime, melon and mineral, exotic and tasty, buy it by the case (****½). Next up is the *Thelema Sutherland 2007 Chardonnay* (\$19.95 - #0146423) – buttered toast with a nice nuttiness, full of hazelnuts and almonds (****). Another white of note is this one from Germany: *Reinhold Haart 2007 Riesling Kabinett* (\$19.95 - #0727461) with its sweet peach and pear flavours, very easy to sip on (****). There are two wines from Argentina in this category: *Bodega Norton 2006 Reserva Malbec* (\$17.95 – 0017061) with its mocha, bramble, blackberry, cassis, plum and black raspberry (****); and the *Luigi Bosca 2006 Single Vineyard Malbec* (\$18.95 - #0074922), floral notes, blackberry, a touch of spice and elegance on the palate (****½). From Australia there's the lovely *Langmeil 2006 Blacksmith Cabernet* (\$22.95 - #0644039) with its black fruit and spice, big 15% alcohol and black fruited finish (****½). You just had to know that France is gonna factor in here somewhere and the *Domaine Grand Nicolet Vieilles Vignes Cotes du Rhone-Villages Rasteau* (\$21.95 - #0155481) fits the bill nicely with its smooth mocha, black fruit and red berries, this one's big and fruity with a real kick (****½). But if you can only pick up one French wine make it the *Perrin & Fils Les Christins Vacqueyras 2007* (\$22.95 - #0973453) this one is a real beauty, nice red fruit, sweet licorice and lovely chocolate note; smooth, supple and delicious (****). Two more 90-pointers left to go, there's one from Italy, the *Remo Farina Montecorna Ripasso Valpolicella Classico Superiore 2005* (\$19.95 - #0056267) with layers of finesse, cherry, coffee, chocolate and a great smooth finish (****½). Finally, there's the Cary Grant of wines: *Buil & Gine Gine Gine 2006* (\$17.95 - #0067843), blackberry, cassis on the nose, cherries and chocolate on the palate with a luscious red berry finish (****½), I'm giving it an extra half mark here for the price.

Australia – Red ...

The Black Chook 2008 Shiraz / Viognier (\$16.95 - #0066738) – floral and red fruit nose, sweet red fruit with raspberry and vanilla. (****)

Canada – Dessert ...

(Ontario)

[Muskoka Lakes Winery Red Maple](#) (\$18.95 - #0050039)

Canada – Sparkling ...

(British Columbia)

Sumac Ridge Tribute Private Reserve (\$22.95 - #0169508) – fresh lively lemon with crisp apple, very nice bubble. (****)

Chile – Red ...

Arboleda 2007 Merlot (\$18.95 - #0045864) – sweet supple black fruit, chocolate, juicy blackberry, and nice tannins. (****½)

Chile – White ...

Casa Lapostolle 2009 Sauvignon Blanc (\$13.95 - #0396994) – nice melon, pineapple core and sweet grapefruit. (****)

France – Red ...

(Beaujolais)

Louis-Jadot Combe aux Jacques 2008 Beaujolais-Villages (\$9.95 / 375ml - #0005918) – be sure to chill this bottle of succulent cherry juice ... made from grapes, honest. (****)

(Bordeaux)

Chateau Clerc Milon 2006 (\$62.00 - #0564492) – dense black fruit with black currants and cedary notes. (****)

Chateau Grand Puy Lacoste (\$85.00 - #0564302) – best Bordeaux of the release; beautiful red-fruited nose with nice red fruit, cedar, herbs and cassis in the mouth. Time will improve this one but it drinks nicely right now. (****½)

(Midi)

Le Secret des Capitelles Saint-Chinian 2007 (\$14.95 - #0156299) – herbal nose with a red plum palate; I really liked this one for its balance and its price. (****½)

New Zealand – Red ...

Sileni Cellar 2009 Selection Pinot Noir (\$16.95 - #0694901) – sweet red cherry, a touch earthy along with a sweet cherry finish. (****½)

New Zealand – White ...

Omaka Springs 2008 Pinot Gris (\$17.95 - #0063347) – there's a nice touch of pear sweetness here along with floral and cantaloupe/melon notes. (****)

Portugal – Dessert ...

Justino's Fine Rich Madeira (\$14.95 - #0592600) – smells of toffee, almond and a bit of nuttiness; palate has burnt caramel and nutty qualities with a bit of orange peel; smooth and tasty. (****½)

South Africa – Red ...

Flagstone 2007 Dragon Tree Cabernet Sauvignon / Shiraz / Pinotage (\$15.95 - #0037549) – best use of Pinotage I've tried; nice blackberry and chocolate notes. (****)

South Africa – White ...

Lammershoek 2008 Chenin Blanc (\$18.95 - #0058206) – surprising and unexpected, you think it will be fresh and lively but instead you get woody characteristics: vanilla, lemon curd with a touch of butterscotch; more Chardonnay-like than Chenin but still quite good. (****)

Spain – Red ...

Pagos del Rey Arnegui Crianza 2006 (\$15.95 - #0146274) – red and black fruit mingle with hints of chocolate, dark plum and a good tannins grip on the finish; very well priced. (****)

United States – Red ...

(California)

Gallo Family 2007 Frei Ranch Vineyard Zinfandel (\$34.95 - #0555599) – plum, cherry, chocolate and some crème de cassis, quite a lovely Zin with an air of elegance. (****½)

United States – White ...

(California)

Chateau Souverain 2008 Chardonnay (\$24.95 - #0158600) – delicious with nice oak-vanilla, sweet buttered-vanilla-almond, and lovely pear notes on the finish. (****½)

Dry Creek Vineyard 2007 Fume Blanc (\$13.95 - #0277715) – grassy and goosy (as in berry) notes with lots of grass on the palate, mid-weight and a log finish. (****)

Grape Guy Top 3 ... what I'll be lining up for on February 6, 2010:

Piemonte Cantina San Pancrazio Brachetto 2008 (\$16.95 - #0159566) – Italy

Chateau Souverain 2008 Chardonnay (\$24.95 - #0158600) – United States

Concha Y Toro 2008 Trio Reserva Chardonnay / Pinot Grigio / Pinot Blanc (\$12.95 - #0433938) – Chile

Bonus Must Buy: *Perrin & Fils Les Christins Vacqueyras 2007* (\$22.95 - #0973453) - France

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. I look forward to hearing from you!

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