

## OntarioWineReview Vintages Release Guide

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



### OntarioWineReview: Vintages Release Saturday February 16, 2008

The LCBO has gone back to one feature this release, and it's "Cab Home". Now I am not sure if that means after drinking these wines you'll need to take a cab home, or if they are advocating responsible social drinking – but I do get the distinct impression they want you to take as many of these cabernets home as possible ... and I'll help you pick out the ones you should be piling into that taxi with; so without further ado I'll call you a cab ...

#### Take the Cab-way home ...

With the opening bars of that Supertramp song playing in my head (Take the Long Way Home) I'll take the cue to segue into a little Breakfast in America and start our look at Cabs in California (which they can probably get in Texas "cause everone's a millionaire" – okay I'll stop this now). Kicking us off is the *Dominus Estates Napanook 2004* (\$39.95 - #63065 – this one's got a beauty of a nose loaded with spices and white pepper; great fruit in the mouth that's robust as well as silky. There are a couple of Rodney Strong Cabs coming to market, a 2004 and a 2003, and both around the same price. While the '03 is mostly herb driven my money's on the '04 Rodney Strong Alden Vineyards Cabernet Sauvignon (\$39.80 - #599798) – it's got the herbs but its also got the fruit, with nice tannins and a touch of vanilla along with nutmeg and cinnamon ... a better buy as it is a whooping 5 cents cheaper.

Argentina kicks in a couple of Cabs to this release. There's the *Erel Bravo Cabernet Sauvignon 2005* (\$18.55 - #58081) - smooth mouthfeel, lush, beautiful and incredibly silky. But I think I'll invest in the *Famiglia Bianchi Cabernet Sauvignon 2005* (\$13.95 – 677567) ... don't be fooled by its off-putting nose, the flavours more than make up for it: Blackberries, cassis, chocolate and a yummy finish. Staying in South America we move over to the value wine leader, Chile. I'm not picking the cheapest, nor am I taking the most expensive, but if you sit right in the middle with this *Santa Rita Medalla Real 2005 Reserva Especial Cabernet Sauvignon* (\$19.90 - #275594), you'd be doing just fine by your tastebuds and your wallet. A nose of eucalyptus, chocolate and dark fruit is followed in the mouth with cassis, dark fruit, chocolate, good weighty tannins (for the long haul) and nice balancing acidity round it all off nicely.

I know, surprise, surprise, Australia makes Cabs, of the 5 being brought to market this release only the *Kaesler 2006* (\$30.85 - #4200) delivers something special – dark as pitch but with tastes and flavours that'll keep you dipping into the glass for more.

Bordeaux is known for their Cabs and Cab based blends ... my Bordeaux of choice is the *Chateau Lalande Les Moulins 2005* (\$29.95 - #61036) – a black licorice dominated nose is followed up with more complexity in the mouth: dark fruit, chocolate and a smooth lush mouthfeel. Very enjoyable. But don't let Bordeaux rule the roost completely, be sure to wander over to the Loire section for their 100% Cabernet Franc offering – *Domaine Laurent Mabileau St. Nicolas-de-Bourgueil* (\$14.55 - #61192). First of all, it is the best Cab deal in the release – I thought at that price there must be something wrong with it, but no, it's all red fruit dominated (both nose and taste) with subtle herbs and spices backing it up ... great value and the one I'll be lining up for on the 16th.

Wrapping up the Cab feature and staying in the Old World, you should check out the *Tsantali Cabernet Sauvignon 2003* (organic) - \$17.55 - #61838 from Greece; another wine with that "organic" label attached but you could have fooled me, as I put it on my recommended list before seeing the label. Chocolate nose, good fruity flavours, firm tannins, very nice.

#### White Wines

##### Australia ...

*St. Hallett 2007 Semillon / Sauvignon Blanc* (\$14.90 - #57687) – now here's a wine that makes absolutely no mention of its secret ingredient on the front label, yet without it this wine would be just another typical Aussie blend – the 68/21 blend is augmented by 11% Riesling, which gives it the added depth of sweet fruitiness, while still keeping an element of the zip and zing usually associated with Sem/Sauv blends.

#### **Austria ...**

There's a Gruner coming to town, and damn if it isn't one of the better ones I've tried in a long time. *Freie Weingartener Wachau Gruner Veltliner 2006* (\$18.45 - #61127) – hints of minerality and citrus throughout the nose and mouth, ending with a lasting lime-dominated citrus finish.

#### **Germany ...**

Riesling fans are limited this release to one, *Prinz Salm Schloss Wallhausen Riesling Kabinett 2006* (\$21.75 - #993766) from the Nahe region. There's good sweetness here with citrus and talc thrown into the mix – very good with an elongated finish.

#### **Italy ...**

From the country that started the Grigio craze comes one of their best: *Alois Laegeder Riff Pinot Grigio 2006* (\$14.95 - #66415) with its great fruit layered nose and flavours that show citrus, peach and pineapple all in the same glass.

#### **Red Wines**

#### **USA – California ...**

One of my favourite drink now wines from the past few years, *Glass Mountain 2003 Cabernet Sauvignon* (\$12.75 - #727511) re-emerges on LCBO shelves; it's a red fruit beauty that has hints of red licorice and is simply terrific for its price point. Another fav is the *Ironstone Vineyards 2005 Merlot* (\$14.75 - #704353) at a cheap and cheerful price ... it's Merlot from California – need I say more? Well if you insist: think red fruit and chocolate layers. Finally, there's the *Ridge 2005 Lytton Springs* (\$39.85 - #982413), a Zinfandel dominated blend – I liked it better than the Geyserville (also in this release) based on its sweet cherry, robust fruit, and touch of floral ... but above all it's the taste that's a winner.

#### **Australia ...**

Golfing and wine seem to go hand-in-hand, could it be the relaxing nature of the game or that you could slip a bottle into your "equipment bag" and take it with you out on the course? (Couldn't very well see Tom Brady with a bottle in her hand muff). The *Nick Faldo 2005 Selection Shiraz* (\$19.85 - #590448) is a fruit driven Aussie Shiraz – "peppery and pez-like (candied)" say my notes, great for sucking on in the back nine when nobody is watching, or the 19th hole when everybody is.

#### **South Africa ...**

Speaking of Shiraz, I have quite the recommend from South Africa – *Fairview 2005 Shiraz* (\$16.85 - #626358) – no stink, just pure delice. Nice fruit forward wine with a touch of white pepper on the finish ... very much worth its price.

#### **Franc – Rhone ...**

The *Domaine de la Calline Saint-Jean Vacqueyras 2004* (\$23.45 – 38661) at first seemed destined for a non-recommend, it's nose was just too stinky, but then I tasted it and things brightened up. Marrying red and black fruit with licorice and cedar, and then there's that lead pencil finish that notched it over into the "better tell them about it" category.

#### **Italy -**

**Puglia ...** You may be aware that Italian Primitivo has been genetically linked to the Zinfandel grape of California, though I rarely taste the similarities, until now: *Botter Arlo 2005 Primitivo Doppio Passo* (\$14.45 - #60780) – powerful and intense Zin-like character from the sweet plums and red fruit to its rum and cola mid-palate, this one is downright delicious; if you're a Zin-fan you should pick yourself up at least one bottle,

maybe three. **Sicily ...** Time to pop the cork on this delicious red – *Morgante Nero d'Avola 2005* (\$15.25 - #40816) with its black fruit and chocolate nose ... its lighter in the mouth than the nose gives it credit for, but its excellent for this year's upcoming BBQ season. **Tuscany ...** Complexity comes in the form of this *Antinori Peppoli Chianti Classico 2005* (\$19.95 - #606541) – a great array of fruit, cedar, oak, herbs, you could probably spend all day picking out the individual flavours and smells – but why waste time doing that, drink up and enjoy and whatever you taste, you taste and whatever you smell, you smell ... just be sure to blurt them out at random intervals. **Veneto ...** Regular readers know I'm a fan of the Ripasso-style of Valpolicella and a recurring favourite is coming back to Vintages ... *Sa'Solin 2004 Ripasso della Valpolicella* (\$16.75 - #650713) – it's good value in a wine you can drink now or hold for another 5 years. If you know the style you'll wanna pick this one up; if you don't, this is a good place to start.

### Portugal ...

Two reds from Portugal hit the shelves and both are excellent values. *Quinta da Falorca Vinho Tinto 2006* (\$16.55 - #67512) – candied red fruit nose, light on tannin, heavy on the smoothness ... this is one of those wines that might turn your white-only friends to red. The Vale do Bomfim Reserve 2005 (\$14.85 – 66944) is a bit of a chameleon – a sweet red berry dominated nose gives way to dark fruit in the mouth – very enjoyable nonetheless.

### Spain ...

My most recent love for value wines (mostly reds) comes through again. *Bodegas Castano Hecula 2005* (\$13.85 - #718999), from where else but Spain, is a virtual steal ... the heavily wooded nose does not prepare you for the cedar, vanilla and black cherry that the mouth experiences ... there are good tannins in this bottle, enough to see it lasting 3-5 years easily – so buy "a-fews" – a few for now, a few for later.

### Take a Chance Wine of the Release ...

Here's a new little feature I'll be putting into my Vintage reports when I find something off the beaten track, but worth a look: *Croft Original Fine Pale Cream Sherry* (\$15.25 - #73452) ... very interesting and not at all what I expected. The nose smells dry, but the palate revealed more tropical fruit nuances and was very refreshing with just the right amount of sweetness ... I picked up candied almonds on the finish – very enjoyable and worth a taste, or two, or three ...

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 2007. 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)