

## OntarioWineReview Vintages Release Guide

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



### OntarioWineReview: Vintages Release Saturday January 5, 2008

Here we are again, a new year and some new wines the LCBO wants to introduce to you. In this report, I'll tell you about 10 of these wines (3 whites / 7 reds) that I think are really good value. Speaking of value, this release is loaded with them – I guess our friends at the Lick-Bo (LCBO) realize we aren't made of money and most of us blew our wad over the holidays so you'll find some great wines under \$20, and in some cases under \$15, wines that aren't only tasty but age-worthy as well – from Spain especially (more on that in a bit). For now sit back, relax, grab a pencil and paper – or your Vintages magazine (if you've already got your copy, mine came middle of December ... I guess uncle Bo wanted me to save some of my wad for January wine-buying – it worked) ... now let's make our list together.

#### New Year – New Wines (Whites) ...

This features best whites come from France, but before I introduce those I'll jump into the pool with a Chardonnay from Australia, X + Y 2006 Chardonnay (\$18.80 - #48561) – this one's got melon and apple notes on the nose, but the real stars are vanilla and butterscotch, a tad too woody for my taste but I definitely see its appeal. Now off to France, where a delicious Sauvignon Blanc takes center stage: Domaine de L'Aumonier Le Touraine Blanc 2006 (\$13.95 - #62307) – very New Zealand-like in all aspects except the price ... great grapefruit and citrus nose – citrus comes in the form of lemon and grapefruit in the mouth. Now I'm sure I'll get laughed out of the Wine Writers Circle for this recommendation but hear me out before you begin your chortling, Domaine de Mirail 2006 Colombar (\$13.85 - #61606) – not a very sophisticated wine by any stretch of the imagination, but it brought me back to family dinners at home when I was a kid; mom liked (and poured) Colombar because she liked it and it was inoffensive, best of all I got a glass too – it was my first exposure to wine ... now, of course, both mom and I know better, but this one's for mom: to the good old days eating those dinners at the kitchen table, to childhood memories and knowing better now. Cheers.

#### New Year – New Wines (Red) ...

On the other hand, the reds are very exciting this release – nothing from my childhood here, probably nothing I would have appreciated (I was drinking Colombar afterall) - but today for no more than a \$20 investments there are some really great wines to be had here. Starting off in California there's the Concannon Limited Release Petite Sirah – (yet another spelling) (\$16.85 - #48629). Very tasty, nice flavours of sweet herbs and cedar, the nose hints at the black fruit and cassis to come in the mouth ... the mag recommends "drink now", but I think I'd give this one a couple more years on its side to give it some time to develop. Off to Argentina where Malbec is becoming the signature grape of that South American country and while they're trying to get this grape some traction in the world market they're keeping the prices low. Check out the Dona Paula Los Cardos Malbec 2003 (\$12.85 - #48322) – a Malbec specialist. Lots in bottle to enjoy, mocha, chocolate, black cherries, there's even some pepper, plum and vanilla that shows up to the party, quite a lot of bang for your 13 bucks. Australia delivers a surprisingly good Pinot Noir, Windy Peak 2006 (\$19.80 - #48587). Pinot always seems to be expensive, whether they're worth it or not – this one is: a cherry vanilla nose; while in the mouth, the usual earthiness is suppressed, replaced by strawberry, cranberry and a touch of cedar and spice – quite delicate. France gets into the act with 2 fine reds, one pricey, one not. Chateau de Barbe Blanche 2004 (\$27.95 - #48066), a Merlot dominated Bordeaux (65%) with a long finish, lots of red and black fruit, with cedar, spice and herbs playing the back up role, and 5+ years of ageing potential. Then there's the Chateau la Brie 2003 (\$13.85 - #61994) – the name suggests enjoying it with soft cheese – but a pleasant nose of cedar and black cherry; starts off a bit harsh but ends pleasingly with a short tannic finish – put away the cheese and grab a chunk of meat, you'll enjoy it better. From Italy comes a wine made from the Franconia grape (Moletto - \$16.85 - #51664) ... a pretty red cherry and floral nose that delivers cherries, spice and cinnamon in the mouth; very pleasant with a touch of tannins that'll keep this one drinking fine over the next 3-4 years easy. I promised you earlier I'd tell you about a Spanish wine that truly delivers for its price point: it's a Garnacha (Grenache), Shiraz, Monastrell blend called Papa Luna 2005 (\$16.85 - #39883) –

what a bargain! The nose is laced with spice, cinnamon, vanilla and nutmeg – but it's on the palate that this baby absolutely shines: chocolate, cinnamon, vanilla, pepper, mocha ... and that's everything I picked out, besides the red and black fruit support ... each sip brought out more and more flavours that played in my mouth. Lush and incredibly enjoyable – at that price it's a multi-purchase if ever there was one; and what's more this one'll sit in the cellar for a number of years and only get better, will drink well into 2012 and beyond. More from Spain in the Spanish section of this report.

### **California / Washington (White) ...**

Was going to title the section U.S.A. but the LCBO only brings in stuff from California, Washington and/or Oregon – rarely do we see Florida, Arkansas or Texas wine (although they're making some pretty good stuff in the Lone Star State). From California come a bargain *Chardonnay 2005 from Glass Mountain* (\$13.85 - #533208) – oaky, buttery and fruity all at the same time – everything you dig in a Cali-Chard with a good finish and nice balance. There's also a nice Washington *2005 Chardonnay from Chateau Ste. Michelle* (\$17.70 - #232439) – a good name in Washington wines – a good nose, well-balanced, nice fruit, pleasant long finish and cheaper across the border (or so I am told). If you can't pick it up in the nation to the south, then it's best you pick yourself up a bottle here and enjoy.

### **Australia (White) ...**

I seem to be on a Chardonnay kick ... odd for me actually as I usually find myself to be a Chardonnay-aphobe, but they seem to have the attention of my tongue this release and none more than this *Ingoldby 2006 Chardonnay* (\$14.85 - #47647). Although wooded this one was quite deftly made, using the French oak as support rather than as the main player. This soft and supple Chard has apples and peaches as upfront fruit (peach especially dominates mid-to-end the palate) ... not overly woody but great vanilla flavours and smells – and for \$14.85 how can you go wrong?

### **Australia (Red) ...**

A couple of Aussie reds are worth looking into – the *Ashwood Grove 2005 Cabernet Sauvignon* (\$15.85 - #48264) is one, with its rich juicy blackberries, cassis, cocoa and mocha nose, along with a palate that follows while adding in a dash of white pepper. The second is from the well known and highly respected *Kilikanoon Winery – their 2005 Killerman's Run Shiraz/Grenache* (\$19.80 - #9225) has heavy alcohol (15%) but lots of cocoa, black fruit, cinnamon, nutmeg, vanilla, plum and a good tannin backbone – this one will age very nicely over the next 5-7 years (maybe more).

### **New Zealand (White) ...**

I mentioned earlier a French Sauvignon Blanc that was doing a great New Zealand impression – well now it's time for the real thing. *Dog Point Vineyard 2006 Sauvignon Blanc* (\$21.80 - #677450) – grapefruit, gooseberry, cat's pee and a touch floral on the finish ... it's all New Zealand, the real McCoy – right down to the price.

### **New Zealand (Red) ...**

While there are jokes that can be made about "les jeune" and the name of this wine, I should point out that this wine does have a few years to go until it reaches maturity; so be careful when you drink it or you too will be painted with the same obscene brush that went around the room as we tasted the *Saint Clair Vicar's Choice 2006 Merlot* (\$15.85 - #47472) – tons of cherry (keep your jokes to yourself) herbs and spice on the nose; cherries continue in the mouth with a black licorice and spice finish.

### **France (White) ...**

I told you I'm Chardonnay-crazy this time out, but how can you balk at good wine at a decent price. Here's an old vines Chardonnay well worth its \$14.85 price tag; *Francois Labet Bourgogne Chardonnay Vieilles Vignes 2005* (#41319). Easy drinking with good tree fruit and a lemony finish ... very tasty – especially because of its long lingering finish.

### **Franc (Red) ...**

I haven't recommended this much French wine in quite some time, but I have two more to pass your way. *Donnadieu Cuvee Mathieu et Marie 2005* (\$15.85 - #43646) a sweet red fruit affair with good flavours of

nutmeg, cinnamon and spices ... a real yummer. How about this one from Perrin and Fils, a *2005 Cairanne Peyre Blanche* (\$17.80 - #650960), the name suggests white (blanche) but nothing could be further from the truth. A Grenache-heavy blend with a cherry, beet root nose that also possesses sweet herbs and cinnamon ... holdability to spare due to its acidity and tannins balance, but you might want to drink now, especially with those delectable cherries and strawberries in the mouth, there's also a shake of cranberry and cedar dashed in for good measure.

### Germany (White) ...

I'm gonna complete the whites (this is the last one) by going to the good doctor for help – Dr. Loosen that is. His perennial favour *Dr. L Riesling* (\$14.85 - #599274) consistently delivers great Riesling in a style we've all come to know and love. This 2006 model is apple and peach forward with a sweet pear-like finish ... this is the pleasure you drink Riesling for.

### Chile (Red) ...

Wouldn't be a complete report without at least one Chilean wine. This is the wine of the month (according to the LCBO anyway): *Haras Character Cabernet Sauvignon 2004* (\$17.80 - #54502) spicy character this one is ... eucalyptus, herbs, vanilla and tons of cocoa – bit pricey for this release, but well worth checking out.

### Italy (Red) ...

Speed freaks will relish the notion of owning a *Lamborghini Trescone 2003* (\$16.85 - #39842) ... not a fast car but a nice Italian wine – the nose is prune and plummy but the taste makes up for its shortcomings, racing in to save the day with strawberry, cherry and fine tannins. The finish is a little quick, but what do you expect.

### Spain (Red) ...

I promised one more Spanish bargain and here it is ... *Raimat Abadia Crianza 2004* (\$14.85 - #935460). Each time it passes through Vintages I pick up a few bottles, the reasons are many: first there's that price, then there's the age-ability factor, and finally the taste. Lots of red fruit ... a beautiful nose and even better palate – this wine never fails to impress me vintage after vintage, and at that price it's worth a multiple purchase. Now I hope you've added at least one Spanish wine to your list – you'll be doing your palate a favour.

### What's for dessert ...

After those heavy Spanish bargains you'll need something a tad on the sweet side ... check out the Muscat of Limnos Vin de Liqueur (\$11.85 - #61119) from Greece. Orange blossom, honey and lemon meringue pie on the nose – and quite tasty with peaches and lemons in the mouth and a pleasantly long finish. This is a great way to end off any meal. Happy Shopping.

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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!

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