

## OntarioWineReview Vintages Release Guide

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



### OntarioWineReview: Vintages Release Saturday July 7, 2007

When I say Sauvignon Blanc what do you think about? To some Sauv Blanc means crisp, high acid, citrus-driven wines perfect for summertime sipping. To others the Blanc means the three G's: gooseberries, grass and grapefruit ... with a little cat's pee on the side. While still others think exclusively New Zealand. And while the Zealanders seem to have perfected the way Sauvignon Blanc should taste in many people's minds, the noble blanc had found a home in many other countries long before the Kiwi's turned us all (back) onto it. This vintages release focuses on Sauvignon Blanc from around the world, including New Zealand; I'll tell you about the best Sauvignon Blancs in this release along with 17 other wines that you should seriously consider putting your hands on. You'll also notice that white wines dominate this release - but what the heck summer's here, what do you expect.

**Savvy B.** ... France is the traditional home of the Sauv grape (you could probably have guessed that from the French name), which means they have been making it for decades, long before the Zealanders got their fingers on it. Five French Sauvs appear in this release, but none seem to have the staying power of the "Vintages Essential" Henri Bourgeois Sancerre Les Baronnes (\$24.95 - #542548). Lovely taste that rivals anything from the Kiwis - or should that be the other way around - whatever: citrus, gooseberry, grass, grapefruit, green apple - all are in there and all follow right along from nose to taste. You know the Zees are doing Sauv Blanc justice, so any bottle you pick up is bound to be good (most anyway) - but nothing seems to rival bang-for-buck like the Mount Riley 2006 Sauvignon Blanc (\$18.95 - #981670) ... or for consistency ... the '05 was good and this one's top of its class too. The nose is typical New Zealand right down to the cat's pee; with flavours of citrus, grass and goose (as in berry) ... this one's all yum for the sum (as in summer and price). Moving right along to California, of all places, not one you usually equate with Sauvignon Blanc, but check out the Geyser Peak 2005 (\$15.95 - #340208) ... it's softer and lighter than the previous two mentioned - still with the heavy citrus but not as in-your-face; a good lengthy finish with orangey-melon-like notes. This one's easy to recommend in part because of its reasonable price. Interested in something with a few years on it, DeLoach 2003 (\$18.95 - #34769) is not the typical Sauv you'd expect because it has three to four years of bottle age on the others in this release: as a rule Sauv Blanc is best served young and fresh, this one has softened and the "melon, kiwi and apple" from the description have become almost over-ripe with age, but still an interesting pick up if you have a spare twenty bucks burning a hole in your pocket. Chile is considered by many to be the perfect place to grow grapes, and they pretty much try their hand at everything. This Carmen Reserve 2006 (\$13.95 - #31096) is well-priced and well-balanced. Melon and grapefruit-citrusness are the most predominant aspects, it's easy drinking style and smooth mouthfeel make it seem almost sweet by comparison with the others - but have no fear, it is a dry wine. You just knew the Aussies were gonna pick up the Sauvignon-stick, the Katnook Estate 2006 (\$22.95 - #737122) is pricey but fun, exciting and enticing. Check out the nose on this one, its peachy melony and sweet smelling, almost icewine like ... but there's no sweetness here on the palate as the tart citrus roars through the mouth and ends cantaloupe fresh ... with plenty of staying power to boot. Many say that South Africa is the next hot spot for wine, and I for one believe it; especially after the Santé Festival's focus on South Africa just this past May. I tasted some stellar stuff coming out of that country. For this Vintages release focusing on Sauvignon Blanc they have brought in Agulhas First Sighting 2006 (\$15.95 - #18705) the nose and taste are reminiscent of New Zealand with plenty of grapefruit, citrus and orange blossom.

**Brazil** (Sparkling) ... Please do not adjust your eyes, that does say "Brazil". It's Vintages first foray into the land of rainforests and it comes off as pretty good value and taste. George Aubert Moscatel Sparkling Wine (\$14.95 - #036871) a low alcohol (7.2%) sweet sparkler. Fruity and light, this came as a complete surprise to me, as I wasn't expecting too much from this wine. It started off rather foamy in the glass and the mouth, but once it settled down there was lots of peachy-melony goodness in the glass. Serve this chilled on the patio this summer, by itself or with fresh fruit salad.

**California (Red)** ... Not much to choose from this release, but the Kunde 2002 Zinfandel (\$19.95 - #965921) is a great choice for you Zin fans. Plumy, jammy, raspberry and cherries, a good seam of acidity and a sweet

like finish of dark rum and cherry cola.

**Argentina** (White) ... Good value from Argentina comes in the form of this chardonnay – Las Moras 2005 Chardonnay Reserva 2005 (\$11.95 - #032896) ... great for summer and seafood. Pineapple, honeydew melon, pear and a sprinkling of honey follow through on the palate ... mid-palate it turns buttery and that continues right through to the finish.

**Chile** (Red) ... Chile is one of my favorite places to buy wine from because there's always good value in the bottle. Santa Carolina 2004 Barrica Selection Carmenere (\$14.95 - #640888) offers just that; good spicy appeal with sweet red fruit of cherry and raspberry.

**Chile** (White) ... you white drinkers should check out the matching Chardonnay (\$14.95 - #928580) with its citrus, melon, apples, pears and soft butter. Good for summer. Grab this one-two punch from Santa Carolina for your next BBQ and you'll please everyone around the table.

**Australia** (White) ... Here's a bizarre combination of grapes making for another interesting wine in the organic product category. Robinvale Demeter 2005 Chardonnay/Chenin Blanc/Sauvignon Blanc (\$18.95 - #032391), another of my twenty-bucks-burning-a-hole-in-your-pocket selections; interesting sweetness for a dry wine with apricot, apple, and some pineapple flavors and smells.

**Australia** (Red) ... if you're looking for spicy black fruit peppered with some oak to go with your barbecued beef meal this wine should do the trick: Chapel Hill 2005 Shiraz/Grenache (\$18.95 – 037168) ... but then what else do you expect from the Aussies.

**New Zealand** (Red) ... Two Pinot Noirs from New Zealand appear up in this release, both are typical pinots from that part of the world; but if you're willing to shell out the extra three clams I'd recommend the Torlesse Omihi Road 2004 Pinot Noir (\$22.95 - #034371) over the other. Strawberry and earth are the typical characteristics, but throw in some stewed fruit and plums for a more interesting taste sensation.

**South Africa** (White) ... The Goats do Roam line of wines has done very well, and why not, they are well priced and tasty. This newest installment Goats do Roam 2006 White (\$12.95 - #943167) is blended from a multitude of grapes, the blend differs with every year, but never fails to please. This year's version is once again easy drinking at an affordable price; features include a soft apple nose, honeysuckle, pear and a lingering pleasant finish. If you buy a case you're set for the summer.

**France** (White) ... From Burgundy comes this Chateau Laboure-Roi Bourgogne 2005 Chardonnay (\$18.95 - #041053) ... a perfect breakfast wine (the description recommends "an omelet with diced bacon" as a pairing) - you have your melon and tree fruit smells and flavors, along with oaky vanilla notes and buttery finish. A great eye opener or palate cleanser for any time before 10:00am.

**France** (Red) ... Here's a bargain from Bordeaux you can stick in the cellar and lose for a few years: Chateau L'Enclous Bonis 2003 (\$22.95 - #035808), its mouthdryingly rich in tannins with lots of upfront oak. Give it some air and the red fruit shines through - give it some time to mellow and that fruit will show even better. The Rhone provides good value with the following two selections: Chateau de Nages Vieilles Vignes Rouge 2004 (\$18.95 - #040964) and Mas Des Bressades Cuvee Excellence 2005 (\$16.95 - #708750). The Nages has good black fruit, cassis and well integrated oak, perfect BBQ material; while the Mas has more red fruit mixed in with the blackberries and cassis, there's also some perceptible cedar taste blended in with the fruit flavors.

**Italy** (Sparkling) ... It has been said to me on numerous occasions that "once you've tasted one Moscato D'Asti you've tasted them all" ... while this might be true I still really enjoy these wines. The newest to hit Vintages is the Dante Rivetti Riveto 2005 Moscato D'Asti, a sweet sparkler that's fresh and fruity with light floral tones and even lighter alcohol (5%). This can be added to your morning O.J. to brighten it up, or sit quietly with a glass in the backyard on a hot summer's afternoon.

**Spain** (Red) ... Kick me in the Spaniards! Spain wins out again for best value reds in the release. You just can't go wrong picking up one of these three Reds: Beronia 2005 Tempranillo Elaboracion Especial (\$17.95 - #723643) with its licorice and red fruit nose, blackberried-tannin and fruit compote flavors. Castano 2002 Pozuela Reserva (\$16.95 - #035485) with tobacco, red and black fruit and nice cedar wood integration that runs throughout the nose and taste ... with licorice and coffee on the finish. Finally, the ever popular Raimat Abadia 2003 Crianza (\$15.95 - #935460) ... I buy this one every year and am constantly awed by the price for experience year-after-year. This year stewed fruit, plum and cedar run the gamut with some really good

smoky flavors clinging to the long smooth finish.

**And for desert** ... we end up with this little sweetie from Yalta that rivals port with deep delicious flavors of cherry cough drop and blackberries soaked in alcohol. It's yummy as a sipper, but too much will give you one heck of a headache, so pour accordingly as you serve this Massandra South Coast Kagor Red 2002 (\$22.95 - #026559) in the waning hours of the evening.

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