

## OntarioWineReview Vintages Release Guide

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



### OntarioWineReview: Vintages Release Saturday July 21, 2007

In the heat of the summertime Vintages has decided to release a slew of reds, whites and rosés (there's even quite a few sparkling wines to choose from). Some great for the BBQ, others for simple get togethers – and some are pleasant anytime sippers. Just don't be afraid to pull a George Thorogood on a hot summer's day, open something special and "drink alone" (cause when I drink alone I prefer to be by myself). Cheers.

**Italy** (Sparkling) ... Italy is the place for cheap and cheerful sparklers, be it dry or sweet. Here's something you can pull out for special occasions or at anytime for that matter. This Santa Margherita Prosecco Di Valdobbiadene Brut (\$17.95 - #687582) is a fine sipper for out in the sun, on the patio or as aperitif before dinner; or heck, even during: don't worry about pulling it out for any occasion, just opening this bottle make it special. Fruity with appley-citrus qualities; well priced and very tasty.

**California** (White) ... This release features two of my favourite Cali-wines in recent memory (one red and one white). Folie a Deux 2005 Menage a Trois White (\$18.95 - #665166) is a fun little frolic into the world of white wines with an interesting edge. The "trois" are Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc and Chenin Blanc; they make a perfect hot weather combination and are wonderfully fresh and fruity in both nose and taste: the nose is inviting and the taste is a real winner. Apple, cantaloupe, ripe Bartlett pear, soft, supple and quite simply, lovely. Some apparent sweetness on the tongue – but this one is considered dry.

**California** (Red) ... The matching red Folie a Deux 2005 Menage a Trois Red (\$18.95 - #665158) is the red from this release that has really caught my fancy. A blend of Zinfandel, Merlot and Cabernet Sauvignon, and each grape shows its influence in the mix. Red raspberry, plum, raisins soaked in rum, a kick of pepper and some chocolate come together to make for a quaffable wine ready to drink around the BBQ, living room, television or anywhere else fun is happening. There are four other California reds that make the grade this release, thus making California the go to section this time out ... Not all are necessarily values. Take the Cakebread Cellars 2004 Cabernet Sauvignon (\$99.95 - #710426), for instance, this is typical Cali-wine to the endth degree. Red fruit, cinnamon, vanilla, blueberry, coffee, hints of cherry – toasty, tasty and pricey – a good tannin structure that will reward some mid-to-long term cellaring; if you can afford to pick up a bottle or two I would say do so. Chateau St. Jean 2003 Cabernet Sauvignon (\$25.95 - #38034) brings the price-point back down to earth. This one is pure red fruit with its jammy fruit bomb characteristics along with a slight dusting of tannins, very enjoyable. Dropping down the price-ladder a little further, the Santa Barbara Winery 2004 Syrah (\$20.95 - #630616) has great raspberry-plumminess with pepper, oak and some black fruit; in the mouth it's nothing but fruit with just a splash of tannin ... tasty. Finally, my Cali-value is from the folks who brought you Red Truck – one of my favourite blends on a consistent basis year-after-year. They have now launched a single varietal Cabernet Sauvignon (\$16.95 - #36905) under the Red Truck brand. Some cedar mixes it up with sweet red cherry, plums and vanilla notes ... another great wine you can drive home to mama.

**Chile** (White) ... Once again Chile delivers value and style in the same package. Vina Requiringua Puero Viejo 2005 Chardonnay Reserve (\$12.95 - #34702) has tropical fruit notes all over it and finishes in the mouth with fresh citrus flavours. Oak aged but in such a subtle way that the fruit takes center stage, delicious.

**Chile** (Red) ... Chile also offers up two value reds in the \$14.95 range. Santa Carolina 2005 Barrica Selection Syrah (\$14.95 - #34959) has black fruit and eucalyptus with black cherry sweetness – this one would do well around the bar-bie. While the Santa Ema 2004 Merlot Reserve (\$14.95 - #642538) is a total knock off of an Australian fruit-bomb ... red fruit, bubble gum-like sweetness, strawberry, raspberry, cherry (pick your red fruit and drop it into this review). This is a fine sipper all on its own; it's everything I liked about Chilean Merlot from day one, when I first got into red wine. Have a friend with some reservations about red, this is your ace-in-the-hole to make them a believer, and where I believe they should start on their own road to liking red wines.

**Australia** (White) ... Fly Brook 2005 Unwooded Chardonnay (\$20.95 - #13169) is an atypical-Aussie Chard with all its usual overtly wood tones and rich buttery-vanilla tastes. Instead this chard is tropical fruits, pineapples and peaches ... good sipper from start to its short finish.

**Australia** (Red) ... The Craneford 2006 Allyson Parsons Cabernet Sauvignon (\$22.95 - #34470) has the stuffing to lie down for a few years. Right now you'll find plum, strawberry and cherry with some peppery tannins and spiciness on the nose, delicious. X & Y 2004 Shiraz (\$17.95 - #41194) offers up good value in an Aussie Shiraz (and is the wine of the month for July), a nose of nutmeg and allspice with a red fruit and jammy quality in the mouth. Enjoyable right now.

**New Zealand** (White) ... I once met Kim Crawford at a Vincor tasting – he seemed to be a very unassuming, down-to-earth kinda guy, not at all what you'd expect from the guy that brought the world "Pansy Rosé". Now we get the N'SYNC like named "SP Boyszone" Pinot Gris (\$29.95 - #36954), a small lot (or "small parcel" – that's where the SP in the name comes from), single vineyard offering (vineyard name: Boyszone ... not sure I want to know why). Sweet nose of kiwi and tree fruit with intense flavours that are almost sweet-like in nature. Very nice.

**Austria** (White) ... What started out as a curiosity for me turned out to be a very good wine indeed. Stadt Krems 2006 Gruner Veltliner Sandgrube (\$14.95 - #687913) is sealed with one of those newfangled glass stoppers you might have heard about. A glass-stopper, cool. After you get over being intrigued by the "stopper-thingy" you'll find that in your glass you have a refreshingly fruity wine with some apples and pears mixed in with an interesting spiciness ... quite tasty and an intriguing closure we don't see much of around these parts ... for those non-fans of the screwcap this may spark yet more debate.

**France** (White) ... Alsace is the headquarters for refreshing summertime whites of France; the proof of this is in the glass. If you're looking for Gewurztraminer the Cave de Turckheim 2004 Gewurztraminer Reserve (\$19.95 - #10397) is just the thing. Typical Gewurzt aromas of rose petal from the tip of the nose to the tip of the tongue, made in a delicate finesseful manner. If Pinot Blanc is your thing then may I suggest the Pierre Sparr 2005 Pinot Blanc (\$13.95 - #134635) – a well priced elegant sipper with minerally lemon notes on the nose and good mouthfeel along with citrus and honeydew melon on the tongue. This one's almost too easy drinking.

**France** (Red) ... You'll find quite a few "vin rouges" in this edition of the Vintages catalogue, the best value seems to be from the Rhone – Chateau Mourgues du Gres Les Galate Rouge 2005 (\$16.95 - #725606). With a great sweet cherry nose, red fruit palate and some lingering tannin – this ones good for the next 2 or 3 BBQ seasons ... and with its Parker score of 89 this one should sell out quickly.

**Washington** (Red) ... It's not often we get to see Washington State wines here, so when we do get them into the LCBO it's a good idea to check them out. Columbia Crest 2002 Grand Estates Shiraz (\$19.95 - #674929) is another good wine from the state below B.C. Peppery and woody right from the starting block, then changing to fruity as it flows through the mouth with plums, cherries and cinnamon-vanilla – ending with a wonderful finish. Another Washington winner here.

**Argentina** (Red) ... The land of beef and BBQ makes another fine candidate to drink around the grill. Dona Paula Estate 2005 Malbec (\$16.95 - #661819) – Argentina's signature grape - has perfectly pitched black fruit, cherry, cinnamon, cedar and a hint of mint; get out the tongs and flippers and get ready to grill.

**Germany** (White) ... Although there are two Rieslings from the Mosel you should forego those and pick the one from the Pfalz: Darting 2005 Riesling Kabinett (\$15.95 - #950212). Good sweetness on both the nose and palate – a peachy nose is aided along by an appley and mineral taste. A true summer sipper for this summer, next summer and even the next.

**Italy** (Red) ... There are many Gladiator jokes, most of which I can't repeat here (think hair and teeth and say the word slow), but Gladiator 2004 Primitivo Di Manduria (\$15.95 - #23119) is anything but hair raising – in price or in the mouth. The description says Zin, but I disagree ... although there is DNA linking between Italian Primitivo and California Zinfandel, this lacks the true nuances of Cali-Zin, namely the rum/raisin fruitiness. Instead you get good black fruit pluminess with a hint of nutmeg on the side. Drink this soldier now or lie him down till you need him.

**Portugal** (Red) ... Good value this time round through Vintages is found in Portugal with this Ramos-Pinto Duas Quintas Tinto 2004 (\$15.95 - #359893) – cedar, black cherry and vanilla are the keynotes to this wine,

with plum and hints of prune and cherry on the smooth finish.

**Spain (Red)** ... Vintages wine-of-the-month pick is quite lovely: Bodegas Lan Reserva 1999 (\$19.95 - #42929). This 8-year-old wine has the stuffing to go the distance at your next BBQ or even for a BBQ a few years down the road. Black fruit and cedar on the nose with dried fruit and spice that accompanies the other two on the taste. Smooth and drinkable now.

Nothing says summer grillin' like the Mediterranean; except maybe something Aussie ... there's lots of choice for the Q in this release, so enjoy.

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