

OntarioWineReview Vintages Release Guide

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



OntarioWineReview: Vintages Release Saturday June 7, 2008

It looks like another double bill at the Vintages release, this time we are looking at Father's Day gifts and Champagne. Dad seems to need expensive wine to make him happy (according to the LCBO), and Champagne is pricey by its very nature, so get ready to open your wallet and shell out a few bucks for gifts; but have no fear, your friendly neighbourhood Grape Guy has found some good values for you to keep for yourself.

Ontario reviews can be found by clicking the link, which will redirect you to my website, www.ontariowinereview.com.

Champagne ...

Let's call my recommendations in this category a 4 + 1, four Champagnes and one sparkler from Alsace (also in France). From Champagne there's the *Ayala Champagne Demi-Sec Rich Majeur* (\$53.95 - #0075960) a bit of sweetness from the apple and pear arrives on the palate, with a yeasty nose and a good bubble that dances playfully on the tongue. But then they all have playful bubbles – it's Champagne. There's the *Chapuy Champagne Brut Carte Noir Tradition* (\$37.95 - #0068304), light and frothy, yeasty and appley with a touch of cinnamon flavour in the mouth. *Cattier Chigny-Les-Rosés Champagne Brut Premier Cru* (\$19.95 - #0919456 - - 375ml) – floral, tree fruit, subtle fizz and very refreshing. Pink bubbles are always a lot of fun and the *Beaumont Des Crayeres Champagne Brut Grand Rosé* (\$48.95 - #0926998) is tart and sweet at the same time, with a strawberry-raspberry mix of flavours, very tasty.

Now, it's not Champagne, but it is bubbles, it's from France, it's reasonably priced and it is very tasty too: *Pierre Sparr Dynastie Cremant D'Alsace Brut 2004* (\$19.95 - #0952796) – maybe a tad on the sweet side with its sweet Mac apples – but yum-my ... a perfect party pleaser and/or starter.

Father's Day Gifts ...

We'll start with something to sweeten dad's disposition, *Smith Woodhouse Madelena Vintage Port 1996* (\$47.95 – 0520106) – your dad deserves a 12 year old Port ... though it still needs plenty of time it has plenty of what makes Port so delicious.

How 'bout a nice Argentinean Cab for dad? *Gran Lurton 2005 Gran Reserva Cabernet Sauvignon* (\$20.95 - #0980334) – big minty nose with some eucalyptus in the mouth and big juicy black fruit. Does dad prefer Aussie? There's the *CraneFord 2005 Basket Pressed Quartet* (\$26.95 - #0059964) a blend of Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon and Franc, as well as 8% Shiraz. Big chocolate, eucalyptus on the nose, yummy in the tummy (or in the mouth at least) with a good tannin and acid mix, it's a real good wine. Maybe dad's tastes are more old school when it comes to wine. That can only mean one country, France: *Chateau La Vieille Cure 2005* (\$46.95 - #0947127) – a Bordeaux that's big, black and ballsy ... nowhere near ready yet – this one's for those young dads that have plenty of time to wait for it to mature ... maybe your dad needs time to do the same - they can age together.

Whites ...

Ontario –

[Chateau des Charmes 2006 Estate Riesling](#) (\$16.95 - #0277228)

[Fielding Estate 2005 Fireside Series Chardonnay](#) (\$20.95 - #0069609)

[Flat Rock Cellars 2007 Twisted](#) (\$16.95 - #0001578)

USA – California ... It's not so much the lemony, buttery, vanilla flavours, nor the mild acidity, it's the lengthy butterscotch/caramel finish that makes this *Liberty School 2005 Chardonnay* (\$18.95 - #0960120) so

appealing.

Chile ... Sauvignon Blanc is a hot grape these days; everybody seems to be making it. The Chileans have a way of mimicking everyone and yet manage to make wines their own. The *Anakena Ona Sauvignon Blanc 2006* (\$16.95 - #0059501) has a zesty minerality with some grassy-grapefruit notes and a huge long finish ... what you're expecting from a New Zealand Savvy B.

New Zealand ... The country you'd expect to have a great Savvy in the release actually brings out something different: a *2007 Viognier from Coopers Creek* (\$19.95 - #0061416), a great summer wine if I've ever tasted one. Fruity, peachy, lemony with a certain bit of spiciness on the tongue and a medium length finish.

Portugal ... Vinho Verde actually means, "green wine", the name comes from the tinge of green these whites have (and I'm not just talking bottle colour). *Aveleda Follies Vinho Verde Alvarinho 2006* (\$15.95 - #0059048) is very palate pleasing wine - starting with a ripe fruity nose leading to melon, tropical fruit, apple and Bosc pear in the mouth, there's also a touch of citrus acid on the finish.

Reds ...

USA – California ... I liked this wine before I knew the price. I liked the big rich blackfruit, spices, herbs, vanilla and good tannin bite ... I thought it was the best American wine in the release – though \$49.95 is a bit out of my ballpark: *Whitehall Lane 2004 Cabernet Sauvignon* (#0606509).

Mexico ... L.A. Cetto seems to be the only Mexican winery we get here in Ontario. I've enjoyed their Petite Sirah for years, both for its taste and price. The new *2005 Zinfandel* (\$10.95 - #0405605) is also highly enjoyable in both categories. Jammy, red fruit – a real fruit driven red for drink now enjoyment. Great for that backyard bbq with a mess of sticky, finger-lickin' ribs – and priced to take a case home.

Argentina ... Good fruit, easy drinking, strawberry, red fruit, a little bit of tannins, sweet mid-palate all for \$12.95 – it's not surprising to see this kind of value from Argentina. *Finca El Retiro 2004 Bonarda* (#0640896) is a rather strange grape variety, but when it's this good who cares what they make it from. Also from Argentina comes this herbaly, minty, silky, blackberry dominated Malbec: *Luigi Bosca Single Vineyard 2004 Malbec* (\$17.95 - #0074922).

Chile ... Three Chilean wines for under \$20 make the grade this time round. Two from *Cono Sur*: the black and jammy with a touch of chocolate goodness, *2007 Vision Carmenere* (\$15.95 - #0059360); and the sour cherry, raspberry, strawberry and leathery finishing *2007 Vision Pinot Noir* (\$15.95 - #0689992). The regular Cono Sur Pinot Noir goes for about \$10 – the Vision is worth the 5 extra bucks. For a few dollars more you'll enjoy the *Vina La Rosa Don Reca 2006 Cabernet Sauvignon* (\$19.95 - #0063792) – juicy blackberries, ripe tannins and time to spare for ageing.

Australia ... Here's a value from Ozland – *St. Hallett Shiraz/Grenache 2006* (\$14.95 - #0024117) – smooth, easy drinking, a touch spicy – the palate screams plummy – very nice.

France – Midi ... The *Clos des Fees Walden Cotes du Roussillon Villages 2006* (\$16.95 - #0070334) has a woody, earthy, off-putting nose – but the palate more than makes up for it.

Greece ... Not many Greek wines come through, and when they do the next question is, are they good? The *Tsantali Estate Nemea Reserve 2003* (\$14.95 - #0013524) is smooth with black and red fruit, silky tannins with value to spare.

Spain ... *Tomas Cuisine Vilosell 2005* (\$20.95 - #0066928) is a blend of five different grapes that include Syrah, Grenache and Tempranillo – fruit forward with plummy, strawberry and black raspberry – all with an excellent finish.

Rosé ...

Ontario –

[Flat Rock Cellars 2007 Pinot Noir Rosé](#) (\$14.95 - #0039974)

[Henry of Pelham 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon Rosé](#) (\$14.95 - #0685610)

[Malivoire 2007 Ladybug Rosé](#) (\$16.00 - #0559088)

[Strewn 2007 Cabernet Rosé](#) (\$12.95 - #0467753)

What's for Dessert?

[Pillitteri i Baci Vidal Icewine](#) (\$28.95 - #0071779 – 375ml)

Port / Sherry ... one of each this time out: *Gonzalez Byass Nutty Solera Oloroso* (\$11.95 - #0035204) great value with marmalade toasted almonds, raisins, spices and other toasted nuts on the nose and palate. *Quinta Santa-Eufemia Fine Ruby Port* (\$14.95 - #0070201), nice cherry, sweet and beautiful ... a little tannin makes this one have a touch of bite.

Take a Chance on Me ... Talk about countries rarely seen at the LCBO – Slovenia brings us *Jeruzalem Ormoz Pinot Gris 2006* (\$13.95 - #0073247). Some sweet pineapple core with a touch of peach and good acidity. Well priced and something you might want to whip out on a hot summer day.

Grape Guy's Top 3 ...

Pierre Sparr Dynastie Cremant D'Alsace Brut 2004 (France) - \$19.95

L.A. Cetto 2005 Zinfandel (Mexico) - \$10.95

Finca El Retiro 2004 Bonarda (Argentina) - \$12.95

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 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. I look forward to hearing from you!

© OntarioWineReview.com 2008. 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