

OntarioWineReview Vintages Release Guide

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



OntarioWineReview: Vintages Release Saturday June 9, 2007

It must be summer ... In their May 26th release, the LCBO majored in New Zealand with a minor in Ontario Roses ... this time round they bring in another 18 roses from around the world, including 3 sparklings (2 Champagnes and one from Spain). Below, I look at my favourites amongst the pinks then we'll tour the globe for the rest of the release.

Drink the Pink ... the rose wines were broken down into 3 categories: light, medium and full bodied; with a variety of colours to chose from: light tangerine, rose-petal pink to fuscia; I think I even saw something in the neon variety. Starting in the light bodied department the best of the best is from Germany, the 2006 Dr. Loosen Villa Wolf Rose de Pinot Noir (\$14.95 - #033662). Loosen seems to turn everything he touches into gold and this wine is no different. The first thing you'll notice is the unconventional colour, it has more orange tinge than pink, the nose is almost non-descript and I found very little to draw me in. But the flavours literally explode in your mouth: savour the candied strawberries and raspberries as they pass through – then once the liquid has gone from your mouth, you can suck those tastes right out of your tongue and cheeks like ringing out a dishrag. The lingering aftertaste reminds me of a red-chocolate covered cherry I recently had in Niagara-on-the-Lake at a place called the Chocolate Fix. This is surely a summertime patio winner if I've ever tasted one.

Of the medium-bodied pink elixirs two stood out for me, the Argentinian 2006 Familia Zuccardi Santa Julia Syrah Rose (\$11.95 - #034322) and the New Zealand 2006 Selaks Premium Selection Merlot Rose (\$17.95 - #025478). The Argentine wine has a raspberry nose and cherry taste and at 11.95 is the bargain of the bunch. New Zealand's is a little pricier at \$17.95, the colour of strawberry juice with matching strawberry nose and black cherry taste – quite tasty, but for the money I stay in South America.

Fuller bodied rose seekers should look towards Australia for the 2006 Peter Lehmann Rose (\$15.95 - #034298) lots of ripe cherries all the way through from the nose to the taste. Lehmann also has a red this release that I'll highly recommend.

Canada (Red) ... The LCBO goes to British Columbia for their reds this release, picking up some of the award winning 2003 Jackson-Triggs Proprietors' Grand Reserve Shiraz (\$23.95 - #033241). B.C. is proving to be very adept at Shiraz and the Jackson-Triggs winery in the Okanagan is proving they can make some of the best in the world (winning just such an award with the 2004 version of this very same wine). Spicy black fruit on the nose gives way to black fruit and spices on the palate. Best of all, there's a smooth lush mouthfeel to this wine with just a hint of tannin dryness. Great for that special event BBQ – father's day will do quite nicely, but so will Canada Day, Simcoe Day and Labour Day ... may I suggest picking up a few.

California (Red) ... A tasty, value priced wine from producer Round Hill. At \$15.95 this Cabernet Sauvignon (#526418) has blackberries and raspberries on the nose, following through with the very same berries on the palate there's also some minty and jammy characteristics to be enjoyed here ... finishing with a full-on cherry aftertaste. Slightly sweet on the palate, this one will be a big party favourite because it's easy to consume over the course of an evening.

Argentina (Red) ... Three things make the Argentinian reds released this time a real value especially for the BBQ season now upon us: 1) Argentina is making huge in-roads with their wines and 2) Argentina is known as a meat eating country and 3) of course, is the price. The 2004 Don Eugenio Cabernet Sauvignon Reserva (\$13.95 - #032094), good red fruit through the nose and mouth; the 2005 Trumpeter Cabernet Sauvignon (\$13.95 - #723288), sweet fruit on the nose and taste, a cherry core and tasty on the palate – this one's yummy ... easy drinking and a real party-pleaser; stocking up would be a good idea. Finally, the 2004 Terrazas de los Andes Malbec Reserve (\$16.95 - #029280) calls for a fat juicy steak ... good spiciness, good tannins, nice oak nuances in the blend – this one starts off sweet but ends dry. This one could easily hang around for the next few BBQ seasons.

Chile (White) ... Concha Y Toro has long been one of my “go to” wineries of Chile; if I need a crowd-pleaser or something to drink myself, and I crave Chilean I couldn’t go wrong by bringing home “the bull”. This 2006 Winemaker’s Lot Sauvignon Blanc (\$14.95 - #030932) has good granny smith apples on the nose and all the best aromas of my cat’s litter box – which in Sauv Blanc is a good thing ... this one’s tasty without the crunchiness, with a wonderful green apple and grapefruit finish.

Chile (Red) ... The same producer and same label (Winemaker’s Lot) has a real gem of a 2005 Carmenere (\$18.95 - #030952) too; there’s lots of blackberry and cassis, a good tannin backbone and a few years of ageability in this bottle.

Australia (White) ... Australia is starting to branch out with their grape varieties – at least the grape varieties we see here. Some of those grape varieties you wouldn’t expect to do well in Oz because Aussie-land’s a hot climate, thus the cool climate loving Riesling should not thrive in such a locale. But there are pockets in Australia that are making truly wonderful Rieslings. Stonehaven 2005 Winemaker’s Selection Riesling (\$15.95 - #024927) is one of those pockets ... delicious stone-fruit and apple aromas with good follow through from the promise of the nose, good acidity and a clean finish, a well-priced, well-structured, Aussie-Riesling.

Australia (Red) ... Two Australian reds caught the fancy of my tastebuds this time out: the Peter Lehmann 2003 GSM – Grenache/Shiraz/Mourvedre (\$18.95 - #650028) – this truly is a beautiful wine that starts off slowly. Those who like to stick their nose in for a good whiff might be disappointed ... but while the nose whispers red fruit the palate screams rich and tasty. Think of this wine as your favourite band: raspberry is the lead singer, with cassis and blackberry as the backing band ... there’s a touch of apparent sweetness from the rich fruit flavours but it’s dry – no doubt about it. You also can’t go wrong with the fruit-bomb called Billy Goat Hill 2005 Cabernet/Merlot (\$18.95 - #025072) – don’t let the cutesy label distract you, this one’s tasty with sweet cherry fruit in the mouth, a cherry nose and some lasting tannins that could see this one drinking well for the next three years.

New Zealand (White) ... To say New Zealand makes good Sauvignon Blanc is stating the obvious, so my obvious pick for New Zealand is the 2006 Sileni Estates Cellars Selection Sauvignon Blanc (\$15.95 - #662882). Most Sauv Blancs from New Zealand are priced in the upper teens and above, this one sits in the mid-teens but tastes like it should be at least \$5 more ... it has typical pink grapefruit, grassy, lemon, asparagus and pear aromas – the taste is pretty in pink grapefruit and seems to last forever. You’ll also find the typical racy Sauv Blanc acidity present, but not too tart on the finish.

France (White) ... Alsace is known for Riesling and Pinot Gris, and like the folks at Reese, Willm wondered what would happen if you put these two great tastes together. The good news is the experiment works and you this wonderful zippy Willm 2005 Pinot Gris/Riesling (\$15.95 - #030627), tasty and juicy. Aromas of pears, green apple and peach on the nose; while in the mouth it’s soft and sweet-ish (but not too much so) ... mac apple, some peach and good minerality – very nice and well priced. If you aren’t serving this wine at least once on your patio you’ve got more willpower than I.

France (Red) ... A buddy of mine turned me onto wines from Cahors a few years ago. Sure they need time to develop; sure they’re chewy and woody when young, and sure they’re as tannic as all get out; but what wine can you buy for fourteen bucks that you’ll be drinking and enjoying in ten to fifteen years. This Chateau Haut-Montplaisir Cahors 2004 (\$13.95 - #673590) is a mountain of pleasure for you Cahors fans. The wine is black as pitch, typical for Malbec wines from this region, and has the stuffing to go the distance. Spicy blackberries on the nose with a tannin rich mouthfeel full of blackberries, currants and cassis flavours along with some spicy oakiness ... and did I mention chewy. Value for the Q this year or for several years down the road.

Germany (White) ... There are 3 German Rieslings in this release, all are delicious and worth the money – but if I had only one bottle to buy and felt like splurging a little, the St. Urbans-Hof 2005 Riesling Kabinett (\$20.95 - #955328) would be my choice. Typically German with a low 9.5% alcohol, it’s light and refreshing with apple and peach notes on both the nose and taste. There’s also just a touch of sweetness and spritz as it enters the mouth ... a yum factor of 10 with an exceptionally good length. If splurging is not your thing on June 9, save the 6 bucks and pick up the Zilliken 2004 Butterfly Riesling (\$14.95 - #028456) it’s higher in alcohol (11.5%) with more citrus and lanolin tastes; not as refined as the Urban-Hof, but it does have a nice length to the finish and it’s quite tasty.

Spain (Red) ... If you’ve read this report till the end then you deserve to read about the real steal of this

release: Raimat 2004 Tempranillo/Syrah (\$13.95 - #014696), all I can say here is “hooray for Spain” – putting good quality, tasty wines in bottle for half the price of anyone else. This bottle would sell for \$50-plus if it were French and \$30-plus if Australian. Hip black cherry aromas intermingle with black pepper and spice – the taste is all dark fruit and fine tannins, with a good finish that keeps you coming back for more. Toss it in the cellar for a few years or bring it out at the final BBQ of the season, this one is guaranteed to be a real hit – and you’ll be remembered for bringing/serving it. What a way to end the summer.

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