

OntarioWineReview Vintages Release Guide

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



OntarioWineReview: Vintages Release Saturday March 1, 2008

This release we're heading to France, Burgundy to be exact, home of the heartbreak grape, Pinot Noir, and the king of whites, Chardonnay. Now Pinot from Burgundy is quite different from the California Pinot of Sideways. In France, it's rustic, more terroir-driven (earthy) and more robust; rather than the jammy, fruit-driven version of California – that's the way I see it anyway. So before I end up alienating an entire class of wine drinkers with my broad generalizations let's move right ahead with a look at 6 Burgundian wines (one sparkling, two whites, three Reds) - then move on to the rest of this week's releases, where 21 others are reviewed. To see the Ontario wines of note click on the links of those specific wines – you will be directed to my website (www.ontariowinereview.com) for a full review ... now, on with the Pinot:

Burgundy ...

I find it hard to get good value for Burgundy, prices are so out of whack with this Pinot craze, plus it's a tough grape to grow, they prove to be finickier than my cat. When I taste wines from Burgundy I'm always keeping an eye on the price I decide whether what's in the glass is worth the price I'm paying. Sure I can appreciate the \$90.00+ bottles, but it's tough to enjoy them when you realize you may never be able to buy one. So below I'm looking for value, Pinots that we can all afford to drink, not just for the Robin Leach crowd.

There's a sparkling Burgundy being released, the *Dufouleur Pere et Fils Cremant de Bourgogne Brut 2004* (\$19.95 - #47241), a terrific light sparkler teaming with pear and bruised apple nuances that ends with a creamy mouthfeel.

A pile of white Burgundies are coming to market; my two selections are at opposite ends of the spectrum. My value pick is the *Paul and Mallory Talmard Macon-Uchizy 2006* (\$15.95 - #66639), with sweet aromas and a touch of perfume. The palate is an apple and pear dominated fruit salad with dashes and squirts of lemon coating the top. At the other end of the price range is this beauty from *Paul Jacqueson Rully 2005* (\$27.95 - #65045) -the nose suggests sweet over-ripe fruit, while the palate is very peach pit like, more interesting flavors also play around in the mouth. Tasty little sucker.

My three Pinot choices range in price between 20 and 30 bucks - *Chanson Pere & Fils Le Bourgogne Pinot Noir* (\$19.80 - #50575) is part of the Vintages Essential Collection - which means it's always available. A soft raspberry nose gives way to sour cherry, earth and light tannins in the mouth, it's very enjoyable, though it doesn't so much glide as it does skid over the tongue. Turns out the whole tasting room was crazy about a Mercury, the *Chateau Philippe-Le-Hardi Mercurey 2005* (\$21.95 - #66365). A simple nose of cherries and wood that doesn't play true to its smells when it hits the mouth ... red fruit dominates, while cherries seem to arrive late, on the finish where the wood also comes back. There's also the *Antonin Guyon Chorey-les-Beaune 2005* (\$29.95 - #66431) that adds vanilla to the cherry-earthiness we've experienced above. In the mouth, you get major vanilla and sour cherry with a sprinkling of tannins that aren't as in your face. Allow me to add a fourth Pinot to the mix: *Molliard Bourgogne Pinot Noir Tradition 2005* (\$15.95 - #663899), a value priced Pinot that delivers sweet vanilla and cherry on the nose, sour cranberries and cherries in the mouth, there's also a touch of woody tannins. It's definitely a beginners Pinot ... but the price is worth it. Okay, one more for those serious Pinot drinkers: *Frederic Magnien Chambolle-Musigny Vieilles Vignes 2005* (\$55.95 - #66480) - this one adds bacon flavors and more robust tannins to the mix (that's all I'll say ... but it is delicious - better be for that price).

White Wines ...

Ontario ...

[Chateau des Charmes 2004 Paul Bosc Estate Chardonnay](#) (\$19.95 - #287268)

[Le Clos Jordanne 2005 Village Reserve Chardonnay](#) (\$25.00 - #33936)

British Columbia ... There are a few B.C. wines coming through the LCBO, the best of the whites comes from Mission Hill, with their *Family Estate Reserve Sauvignon Blanc 2006* (\$21.95 - #57430) ... not your typical Sauvignon Blanc, it's more tropical than citrus on the nose, with ripe pineapple and a touch of grapefruit in the mouth - the finish delves deep into the pineapple's core.

Australia ... I enjoyed this Chardonnay immensely, and I thought the price was alright for what you got - *Clarence Hill 2005 Chardonnay* (\$16.95 - #57679) with sweet apple all the way through in an easy drinking style. The *Hanenhof 2006 Semillon* (\$18.95 - #64220) is also quite lovely with baby power and honeydew on the nose, unripe stone fruit in the mouth, a sweet middle and bracing finish. Wow!

New Zealand ... What's a release without at least one Kiwi Sauvignon Blanc hitting our shores. *Babich Black Label 2007 Sauvignon Blanc* (\$19.95 - #9142) is pure New Zealand: grapefruit (read: citrus), cat's pee and a whole whack of gooseberry - all ending with a very pleasant finish.

Portugal ... This wine should be part of the President's Choice Memories of Grapefruit collection: *Varanda do Conde Alvarinho/Trajadura 2006* (\$11.95 - #966663) - you'd swear they just squeezed a pink one into the bottle .

Red wine ...

Ontario ...

[Le Clos Jordanne 2005 Village Reserve Pinot Noir](#) (\$25.00 - #33894)

British Columbia ... Another from *Mission Hill*, this time it's the *Family Estate Reserve 2005 Pinot Noir* (\$29.95 - #545012), cherry fruit and a touch of earth on the nose - the fruit follows through in the mouth with a gravelly-cinnamon finish.

USA - California ... Zin fans should be more than happy with this release, quite a few are coming through The Board. This *Rancho Zabaco 2004 Heritage Vines Zinfandel* (\$19.95 - #434605) has fabulous flavors of plum and sweet cherry-rum. The *Rosenblum Appellation Series North Coast 2005* (\$22.95 - #31773) is also delicious with its full-on plumminess, cherries, rum-and-raisin and other sweet fruits. Value priced Zin seekers would be happy with the *Howling Wolf* (\$15.95 - #57356) ... not one of my official selections for this release, but it was very good and worth a mention. Merlot fans should enjoy the *Tangley Oaks 2003 Merlot* (\$17.95 - #68155) with its sweet red fruit and plums both on the nose and in the palate ... all leading up to a fine tannin finish.

Chile ... you can't go wrong with this *Viu Manent 2004 Cabernet Sauvignon Reserva* (\$12.95 - #59196), good price in a cherry, red fruit, and mint (more on nose than taste) concoction.

Australia ... delivers three tasty morsels: *Kaesler 2005 Stonehorse Grenache / Shiraz / Mourvedre* (\$21.95 - #6551), this fifteen percent alcohol monster is loaded with rum, black cherry, sweet strawberries and raspberries and a tasty cherry smoothness going down. *Plantagenet 2004 Omrah Shiraz* (\$16.95 - #21360), chocolate and blackberry, smooth with a touch of a medicinal quality that appears at first, but then ends Twizzler-smooth (like red licorice). Finally, from Oz, *Wakefield 2005 Cabernet Sauvignon* (\$16.95 - #744235), a great bbq-friendly wine that's got herbs and juicy blackberries.

New Zealand ... the perennial favorite, *Oyster Bay Pinot Noir 2006* (\$24.95 - #590414) is back – mainly fruit oriented (as opposed to barrel oriented) with a touch of an earthy quality in the mouth. Good tannins ... this one's no rival for Burgundy, but it'll do.

South Africa ... this blend of the three biggies: Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc and Merlot is all dark fruit with a dark, woody feel in the mouth; it's surprisingly tasty, even with all that dark heft: *Napier Red Medallion 2001* (\$22.95 - #64212).

France - Bordeaux ... *Chateau la Gasparde 2005* (\$14.95 - #708594) has a great fruit-driven nose and a touch of a tannin smell ... these fruits get deeper and darker when they hit the palate. *Chateau Moulin de Lavaud 2003* (\$25.95 - #65607) is a cellar-dweller for sure - rich cedar, red and black fruit along with some weighty-tannins ... I'd say you could wait three-to-five years plus on this one.

France - Rhone ... for \$15.95 this is a very enjoyable wine: *Domaine de Vieille Ferme de L'Eoune Rasteau Cote du Rhone-Villages 2004* (#43141) - red fruit is very forward on the nose, the palate has a good apparent

sweetness quality and then there's the fresh ripe strawberry finish. Yum!

Spain ... this heavyweight is a blend of Marzuelo (40%), Syrah (40%) and Garnacha (20%) – grape content taken right from the back of the bottle. At 14.5% alcohol this is no wimp on the palate or up the nose. Rich, sweet blackberries, raspberries, chocolate, licorice, great mouthfeel - probably the nicest wine I tasted today - and all for the low price of \$20.95: *Can Blau Montsant 2006* (#67397) - wonderful.

Dessert ...

Ontario ...

[Stratus 2006 Riesling Icewine](#) (\$38.95 - #56671)

Other ... Today's dessert comes to us from Hungary in the form of this *Royal Tokaji Wine Co. Tokaji Aszu 5 Puttonyos Red Label 2000* (\$33.95 - #959031) ... the more puttonyos the higher the sweetness, and this one is loaded with it. Sweet dried fruit and wildflower honey on the nose, the taste is great, with apricots and dried peach flavors. It's got a smell-all-day and taste-all-night quality to it ... this stuff gives icewine and sweet Rieslings a run for their money.

Take a chance on me ...

Here's my 'Take a Chance' pick of this release ... *Zeyssolff Klevener de Heiligenstein 2005* (\$17.95 - #65656) - a rarity and oddity from Alsace. A beautiful nose of spicy, floral perfume, which continues into the mouth where a touch of sweetness comes through. If you're a fan of Gewurztraminer this is an easy stretch.

Happy shopping.

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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!

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