

OntarioWineReview Vintages Release Guide

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



OntarioWineReview: Vintages Release Saturday March 15, 2008

It would seem that the LCBO has abandoned the double feature per magazine to focus on one (I'm sure this is temporary), though it is probably best in our short attention span world. This week's releases focus is on "recipes" and "wine" – but there does seem to be quite a lot of Rieslings in this release (9), more so than usual anyway – so I'll also run down your best choices in Rieslings.

Recipes and Wine ...

Now I'm the wrong guy to talk to about food matches with wine, my philosophy is: pick a wine, open it, then decide what's for dinner ... this way of "pairing" lead me into a chicken calzone and a shiraz last night, and has brought me into some even crazier matches – but you live and learn. As long as you like the wine and you like the dinner you prepared, somehow they'll match.

Starting things off, there's a *21-year old Tawny from Australian producer DeBortoli* (\$43.95 - #58040); I like the classic stuff from the old country (Portugal), but this one was quite enjoyable: smoky, nutty, toffee-like, with sweet cherry, a little coffee and some really wild flavours.

On the white side of Recipes & Wine we have J. Lohr, who brings us their *2005 Mist White Riesling* (\$14.95 - #57299), this one's delicious – a touch of sweetness, well-priced, a peachiness through and through ... thoroughly enjoyable. There's a Chardonnay from Santa Rita – the *Medalla Real 2006* (\$18.95 - #303628), peach and tropical fruit on the nose, which follows along on the tongue with a medium length finish. *D'Arenberg The Hermit Crab Viognier/Marsanne 2006* (\$16.95 - #662775) has some very interesting flavours to it: there's something spicy and something herbaceous on the nose, while on the palate it's reminiscent of butterscotch and vanilla. *Coopers Creek 2006 Unoaked Chardonnay* (\$16.95 - #56382) is a Chardonnay that smells like a Sauvignon Blanc ... it could have fooled me anyway ... with lots of apple, citrus softness in the mouth – quite enjoyable. From German producer Darting comes their *2005 Gewurztraminer Kabinett* (\$16.95 - #944181), a real beauty; while spicy, floral notes get up the nose, on the tongue there's a sweet beginning and an ending full of floral elegance – and there's a long finish that's sehr (German word for "very") delicious ... at 9.5% alcohol, you could drink it like Lionel Richie, All Night Long. Pinot Grigio is a great food wine, that's why the *Albino Armani 2006 Pinot Grigio* (\$16.95 - #63032) is a great choice for light suppers. A strong apple nose makes it seem simplistic, but it's complicated in the mouth with soft fruit flavours, some of them even seem a tad over-ripe.

Now we move to the reds in this Recipes & Wine release ... here there are only 2. The first is from California, *2005 7 Deadly Zins* (\$24.95 - #59311) – tasty, plummy, cherry, chocolate, very lustful, if you like Zinfandel, if you drink enough of this puppy you might end up taking part in all 7 of those hinted at sins. Second on my list is the *Shingleback 2004 Shiraz* (\$22.95 - #57844) lots of peppery spice intermingled with blackberries and raspberries on the nose, the taste is ripe and juicy with all those blackberries.

Riesling ...

Not an official focus, but with 9 on the sched it should be. I already mentioned the J. Lohr above and there's an [Angels Gate '06](#) that can be found on my website, but there are two more I would like to bring to your attention to. From New Zealand, of all places, *2007 Sherwood Estate Riesling* (\$17.95 - #58636) ... peachy and 'sweet' – some tropical fruit holds this one together along with a bit of apricot; the finish is floral, tropical and talc; I didn't see this one coming and was thrilled by it. There really is no surprise here as I mention the one from Germany: forget all your pre-conceived notions about animal labels on the outside and concentrate your attention on what's inside this bottle, the *Lingenfelder 2005 Riesling Bird Label* (\$14.95 - #568634) is a peachy, peary, appley goody from the Pfalz region ... soft, refreshing, delicious and well priced.

Sparkling Wine ...

Of the four bubblyies being released I think your best bet is on the *Santa Margherita Prosecco Di Valdobbiadene Brut* (\$17.95 - #687582), great apple and citrus on the nose with Mac in the mouth (the apple variety, not the tartaned-toffee).

White Wine ...

Ontario ...

[Chateau des Charmes 2006 Chardonnay Musque](#) (\$16.95 - #640516)

[The Grange of Prince Edward County Trumpour's Mill 2006 Victoria Block Barrel Fermented Chardonnay](#) (\$24.95 - #72538)

Chile ... If you dig on pink grapefruit cocktail you'll really like the *Equus 2007 Sauvignon Blanc* (\$11.95 - #59394) – it has a lingering citrus finish and is ready for summer sipping, so stock up now, waiting for the good weather may make this one obsolete. Also from the land of value (Chile) is the *Valdivieso 2006 Chardonnay* (\$11.95 - #59691) a nose of melons and tree fruit followed on the palate by more tree fruit and hints of cloves, cinnamon and something spicy.

Australia ... Greg Norman Estates gets a birdie score for this one; 2005 Chardonnay (\$19.95 - #552083), it's a touch flinty, but also adds peach and apple to the mix ... I thought the Ashbrook '05 was comparable, but for the price Norman's stacks up better.

Red Wine ...

USA – California ... Lohr scores again, this time with the *J. Lohr Los Osos Merlot 2005* (\$18.95 - #27516), this one is soft, fruity and very enjoyable ... chocolate notes come through along with black cherry – there's good tannins in here for some short term holdability.

Chile ... You really can't go wrong with a bottle at this level of quality for this price, I'm talking about the *Montes Limited Selection Cabernet Sauvignon/Carmenere 2006* (\$14.95 - #16071), I tried this at the [Gourmet Food and Wine Show](#) in November, I liked it then, I like it even more now. It's a 70% Cab with 30% Carm blend and it sure is a crowd pleaser: juicy black fruit dominated, soft, supple tannins, elegant on the palate, some herbs and mint also come through – this is the kind of wine Chile is known for – great value for a great wine.

Australia ... Kosher wine usually means expensive or bland ... this one is neither: *Beckett's Flat Cabernet/Shiraz 2004* (\$20.95 - #58693), it has all the pre-requisites of the Cab/Shiraz blend: dark fruit, spicy, peppery and quite delicious. Thanks to Beckett's Flat for making a kosher wine that doesn't taste like I made it myself.

South Africa ... The *Onyx Shiraz 2005* (\$21.95 - #704486) from Darling Cellars is very impressive – dark fruit, a touch of pepper, good mouthfeel, sweet and succulent ... this is the kind of wine all of South Africa should aspire to make (and all without that you-know-what*).

France – Midi ... *Chateau L'Hospitalet La Reserve Rouge 2005* (\$18.95 - #682492), a typical southern France blend of 40% Syrah, Grenache (30%) and Mourvedre (30%) with anise, dark fruits, spices and tons of pepper. Looking for a soft, juicy, red fruit forward Merlot, and don't wanna pay more than \$13? Jacques & Francois Lurton have just the ticket: *Domaine de Berlande Merlot 2006* (\$12.95 - #27979) ... tastes are ripe plums and juicy cherries – there are also some tannins under the cork, but it's very drinkable right now, feel free to hold it for 5 years or so.

Greece ... Haven't found too many Greek wines to be enamored with of late, but this *Lycos Kratistos Nemea 2003* (\$15.95 - #61473) is very interesting and tasty. A drink now wine that is seemingly sweet in the mouth – cooked fruit and compote-like, but still very enjoyable.

Italy – Tuscany ... *Michele Satta Piastraia 2002* (\$39.95 – #709980) has a beautiful nose with conflicting flavours and smells – prunes, plums, cherry, anise; sweet and sour all at the same time. I once had a wine called Crossfire that claimed to create different feelings in the mouth, thus causing your tastebuds to crossfire; this is also that kind of wine. Lots of fun.

Portugal ... Here's another piece of fun, *Esporao Reserve Reserve 2005* (\$25.95 - #606590) – blended from two indigenous Portuguese grapes and Cabernet Sauvignon this wine is a party in the mouth when it comes to flavours. Sweet cherries, dark chocolate, lots of tannin – the flavours are very reminiscent of port ... try it, you'll like it.

Dessert ...

Ontario ... [The Ice House Northern Ice 2006 Cabernet Sauvignon Icewine](#) (\$36.95 - #67330)

Take a Chance on me ...

Usually my TAC-wine is something of the strange dessert variety, but this time my TAC-wine is a straight red table wine that comes from Italy. Not often (like hardly ever) do you see a Malbec from this part of the world, but the *Santa Margherita Malbec 2005* (\$17.95 - #60962) is a worthy addition and well-worth trying. Dark fruit dominated with dark chocolate and some brambly flavours – I thought it very tasty and well worth taking a chance on.

Happy Shopping.

*If you don't, check past reviews under South Africa.

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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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