

OntarioWineReview Vintages Release Guide

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



OntarioWineReview: Vintages Release Saturday March 28, 2009

Another two-fer from LCBO headquarters ... this time out we'll be visiting Burgundy and Spain. Those fans of the Pinot Noir and Chardonnay grapes know they pay big bucks for the best, I'll see what I can do to save you a few shekels on a couple of the good ones - I'll try to point you in the right direction anyway. Fans of Spain know that Spanish wines are offering up some of the best bargains today, this is the main focus of this release, so expect to see good values and good wines to stock the cellar, and I'll let you in on the best.

So let's get started. I'll begin in Spain, move to Burgundy and move on to the rest of the world in alphabetical order.

You'll notice I have gone to a stars rating system at the end of each review. Top score for an outstanding wine is 5-stars, followed by excellent (4.5), very good (4), good (3.5) and average (3). As always I am looking for good values and I'm not afraid to give or take away a half mark for it.

Spain ...

No Spanish whites make the release this time out but there is a neat-o Sherry you should know about. Not officially part of the release, but it is from Spain. Mom always told me that no dessert until you finished the main, but in this case I am going to make an exception: *Gonzalez Byass Nectar Pedro Ximenez Dulce Sherry* (\$18.95 - #0087577) is the kind of sweet experience that life was meant to be. Thick raisin pie, toffee, molasses, caramel - you name the sweet and it's probably in there, absolutely fabulous. Don't expect to have a lot, a little goes a long way to curb your sweet tooth (*****).

My Spanish red choices range in price from \$15.95 - \$64.95 ... We'll start with a \$34.95, 4½ star number: *Finca Allende Allende 2005* (#0954560) - delicious black fruit, cinnamon/nutmeg with a tasty black and plum fruit finish. Reasonable best describes the *Jean Leon Terrasole 2005 Tempranillo/Monastrell Crianza* (\$16.95- #0114298), dark fruit, dusty tannins, quite smoky with coffee notes (***½). The *Marques de Velilla Crianza 2003* (\$24.95 - #0103515) offers up sweet vanilla-plum on the nose with a delicious palate that has black fruit, plum and sweet spices (****½). *Ontanon Reserva 2001* (\$24.95 - #0725895) is another beauty that's complex and tasty; cocoa, dried blackberry, cinnamon and spice with a smooth silky tannin finish (****½). How about this very Zin-like *Palacios Remondo La Vendima 2007* (\$15.95 - #0674564), lots of plum, cherry-cola and vanilla sweetness that comes across as pleasant and easy drinking (****). The big gun is the *Pintia 2005* (\$64.95 - #0022954), 100% Tempranillo done in French and American oak. It's a smooth, lush beauty - chocolate, black fruit, smoky and big on tannins ...it's a cellar dweller for sure; the price tag stops it from being 5-star, but it's an easy 4½ recommend. I'll end the tour of Spanish wines the way I began, going off the radar and recommending something not being highlighted, but from the highlight country: *Luna Beberide Mencia 2006* (\$17.95 - #0095554) - black fruit, juicy plum, and vanilla - very tasty (****).

Burgundy ...

A couple of whites and a single red caught my palate this time out; considering there are 5 whites and only three reds so I think that's an okay ratio. The *Chartron & Trebuchet Saint-Romain Blanc 2006* (\$24.95 - #0110296) has lots of white tree fruit with vanilla nuances and a nice lemon drop finish (***½). The *Chateau de Maligny le Carre de Cesar Chablis 2007* (\$22.95 - #0708339) is

apple, vanilla with a crisp seam of minerality in an easy drinking style (**½). Finally, I was impressed with the middle ground Pinot here: *Nicolas Potel Morey-Saint-Denis Vieilles Vignes 2005* (\$49.95 - #0110403), earthy, red berry and gritty dry tannins (**½). For those looking to spend a little extra cash on a really-nice Chardonnay should check out the *Domaine Michel Caillot Meursault la Barre Dessus-Clos Marguerite 2005* (\$59.95 - #0020545): big wood, sweet butter on the palate with smoked-toffee notes, quite the mouth full (****).

Argentina – Red ...

Graffigna Centenario Cabernet Sauvignon 2006 (\$15.95 - #0093716) - blackberries and sweet red fruit on the nose; mocha-cocoa, cassis and blackberries on the tongue. (****)

Humberto Canale Estate Merlot 2007 (\$15.95 - #0094326) - a confectioners dream: mint, red licorice and chocolate, yum. (****½)

Australia – Red ...

Bremerton Tamblyn 2006 (\$18.95 - #0108050) - a blend of Cab, Shiraz, Malbec and Merlot that has a nice cool entry with sweet fruit, blackberries, white pepper and a slight, yet appealing jamminess. (****½)

De Bortoli Windy Peak 2008 Pinot Noir (\$18.95 - #0048587) - nice cherry, strawberry fruit, good tannins, a touch earthy, quite pleasant and good value. (****½)

Piping Shrike 2006 Shiraz (\$18.95 - #0048504) - peppery, black fruit, mocha, smooth with bit of a jammy quality, yet very drinkable without being all sweet fruit. (****)

The Hedonist 2005 Shiraz (\$19.95 - #0090191) - smooth with sweet chocolate, blackberry, plum, and pepper - a typical Shiraz, but nice. (****)

Wakefield 2007 Merlot (\$16.95 - #0683201) - Chocolate, blackberry and other sweet fruit. Very enjoyable. (**½)

Australia – White ...

Benwarin 2006 Semillon (\$17.95 - #0683235) - this one's bizarre but in a good way. Soft and gentle on the palate, mineral and lemonade with vanilla nuances; very tasty almost elegant and, here's the interesting/bizarre part, it has only 9.5% alcohol. (**½)

Wits End Free Settler & The Convict 2007 Chardonnay/Viognier (\$13.95 - #0090928) - full in the mouth, dried pear, peach and dried apple rings, lots of fruit on the palate and a medium length finish. (****)

Chile - Red ...

Botalcura La Porfia Grand Reserve Cabernet Franc (\$22.95 - #0083717) - big mint and black fruit on both the nose and palate. (****)

Chile - White ...

Casa Lapostolle 2008 Sauvignon Blanc (\$13.95 - #0396994) - melon and gooseberry, crisp, clean and refreshing; the palate and price are just right. (**½)

France – Red ...

(Bordeaux)

Domaine des Graves D'Ardonneau Cuvee Prestige 2004 (\$24.95 - #0091405) - smooth cedary and dried blackberries, this one seems to be maturing quickly so drink up now. (**½)

(Rhône)

Cuvee du Vatican Chateauneuf-du-Pape 2006 (\$37.95 - #0719120) - sweet red and black fruit, pleasant palate with drying tannins and a mocha cedar finish. (****½)

Perrin & Fils Cairanne Peyre Blanche 2006 (\$18.95 - #0650960) - black raspberry, vanilla oak, gritty tannins but with a smoothness on the finish. (****)

France – Sparkling ...

(Alsace)

Dopff au Moulin Cremant D'Alsace Cuvee Julien Brut (\$18.95 - #0641365) - sweet fruit, juicy and apple-y ... great fun in a bubbly, and I love the price. (****)

Italy - Red ...
(Tuscany)

Luce Della Vite la Vite Lucente 2006 (\$39.95 - #0747030) - big cedar, black fruit, spicy, herbs, dark dark fruit ... you'll have to wait on this one, it's a 4-star now on it's way to 4½ or higher. (****)

Italy - White ...
(Campania)

Torre Varano Taburno Falanghina 2007 (\$16.95 - #0106351) - flinty flavour with green apple acidity; this one has a bite you back quality. (***½)

South Africa -White ...

Kleine Zalze Barrel Fermented Vineyard Selection Chardonnay 2008 (\$18.95 - #0096495) - this wine is defined by what it is not: not too oaky, not too vanilla-y, not overly fruity; it's a "baby bear" wine: just right. Palate finishes dry and leaves you wanting more. (****½)

Kleine Zalze 2008 Cellar Selection Sauvignon Blanc (\$16.95 - #0096255) - grapefruit, gooseberry and lime zest. (***½)

United States - Red ...

Ridge Lytton Springs 2006 (\$58.95 - #0982413) - with 80% Zinfandel in the blend this one has it all for Zin-fans: red fruit, plum, cola, cherry, cinnamon and some cedar-vanilla ... lovely smoothness. (****½)

Grape Guy Top 3 ... what I'll be lining up for on March 14, 2009:

Gonzalez Byass Nectar Pedro Ximenez Dulce Sherry (\$18.95 - #0087577) - Spain

Humberto Canale Estate Merlot 2007 (\$15.95 - #0094326) - Argentina

Cuvee du Vatican Chateauneuf-du-Pape 2006 (\$37.95 - #0719120) - France

Happy Shopping.

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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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