

OntarioWineReview Vintages Release Guide

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



OntarioWineReview: Vintages Release Saturday March 29, 2008

This week's release at Vintages focuses on Organic and Artisanal wines. For those who dig organic wine this should be an interesting release. Lately there are more and more organics to choose from – myself, I have never been a big fan, but the [“Return to Terroir”](#) event, held in Toronto February 9 ... started me looking at eco-friendly wines in a different and better light. I have to admit, that it was because of the great wine being featured at RTT that this release left me a little cold, organically speaking, only 4 sparked my interest here. The Artisans fared just a little better, getting me interested in 6 of their wines.

Organic ...

I'll start with something sweet, *Fonseca Terra Prima Reserve Port* (\$24.95 - #67132), I enjoyed this one at the [Port Tasting](#) back in the fall with its cherry, mint and hint of chocolate ... heavy on the cherry. No white organic wines turned my crank so we'll slip right into the reds. From Argentina comes this cat on stilts (see the label) – *Budini 2005 Malbec* (\$12.95 - #58396) – I thought it a good starter Malbec, for those not too familiar with the grape because of the following 3 reasons: the black fruit, the spices and the price. Chile also produces an organic in this release, the *Emiliana Coyam 2005* (\$24.95 - #63891) – a blend of Syrah, Carmenere and Cabernet Sauvignon which packs a whopping 14.5% alcohol; dusty black fruit and chocolate lead the way, with herbs, spice, cinnamon and vanilla taking up the back-up role. Finally, in the organic wine category, we move over to France, where you'll find *Perrin Cotes du Rhone Nature 2005* (\$16.95 - #948059) ... I didn't want to like it, with its cutesy butterfly label but this one turned out to be downright tasty.

Ontario contributes the tasty [FrogPond Farm 2002 Cabernet/Merlot](#) (\$15.95 - #660571 – 500ml) to this category.

Artisan ...

Here I'll kick it off sweet again, with probably the most amazing Ruby Port I have ever tasted especially for the price. Here's another of the one's I tried at the [Port & Douro Tasting](#), and the one I told you to look out for – it's here at last: *Quinta do Infantado Ruby Port* (\$15.95 - #979898) – lots of chocolate, cherry, plum, blackberries and other fine port flavours and smells – and what a price ... we'll be wrestling in the aisle over the last bottle of this beauty – get there early. If you're looking for something white and refreshing in this category look no further than the *Jean-Max Roger Sancerre Cuvee les Caillottes 2006* (\$23.95 - #65573). This Sauvignon Blanc has a sweet pear nose before it moves into citrus with bracing acidity in the mouth ... pleasant as well as refreshing. For Artisanal reds I'll start in California with the *Madrigal Vineyards 2003 Petite Sirah* (\$19.95 - #71803) it's lyrical, poetic and complex ... a sweet nose of herbs and cherry-cola (so much so I would have sworn it was Zinfandel) followed by a palate loaded with black cherry, blackberries, sweet herbs and enough tannins to dry the tongue and throat – I'd say 5+ years easy for this beauty. Staying in the U.S. of A, but out of California, here's a shocker from, of all places, Virginia – *Kluge Estate Vineyards 2004 Albemarle Simply Red* (\$23.95 - #61044) ... a Bordeaux-style blend with Sauv, Franc and Merlot that is quite simply tasty. Red fruit and bramble hit the nose, while red fruit, cranberry and a touch of earthiness hit the palate. You can't expect to get out of the Artisan-wine category without visiting France and the *Vincent + Marie Christine Perrin Volnay 1er Cru les Mitans 2005* (\$49.95 - #66621) fits the bill, a pinot that brings it's A-game: silky tannins along with cranberry, sour cherry and a touch of earthy – very nice. Last, but not least, we'll pop over to Italy for a *Quintarelli Primofiore 2004* (\$56.95 - #20867) – a very complex wine with lots of fruit, herbs and vanilla.

White Wine ...

Surprisingly, I found quite a bit of good, attractively priced white wine in this release (must be that spring and summer are finally in the air); and best of all, I am sure that more are on the way.

Ontario ...

[Creekside Estate 2006 Sauvignon Blanc Reserve](#) (\$18.95 - #53371)

[Malivoire Wine Company 2006 Pinot Gris](#) (\$19.00 - #591305)

New Zealand ... from the Marlborough region the *Matua Valley Shingle Peak 2007 Sauvignon Blanc* (\$17.95 - #309591) is quite refreshing if not typical for New Zealand Sauvignon Blanc – grapefruit, gooseberry, cut grass and tons of citrus zip and zing on the tongue. Looking for something a little different? Then pick up the *Spy Valley 2006 Gewurztraminer* (\$18.95 - #32870) – the smells are floral, talc, and rose petal along with a peach-petrol blend ... the whole kit and kaboodle follows through in the mouth – but watch out, that musk can get over-powering if you let it, so grab something to eat to go along with it – this isn't your average every day sipping wine.

France – Alsace ... From one extreme (so musky it'll knock you over from across the room – see above in New Zealand) to the other (soft, supple, inviting and sip-worthy) – this *Pierre Sparr 2005 Gewurztraminer Reserve* (\$18.95 - #747600) is just what the doctor ordered for a spring/summer sipper – it also adds some pleasant spiciness to be palate.

France – Burgundy ... pleasant is also the way I'd describe this *L. Tramier & Fils Macon-Villages 2006* (\$17.95 - #69112) – very good fruitiness with hints of vanilla – I would have thought it light bodied, but the 13.5% alcohol tells a different story.

South Africa ... the *Klein Zalze 2006 Chenin Blanc Barrel Fermented* (\$13.95 - #57471) has a very peachy nose that follows right on through into the mouth, and there's also some heat from the 15% alcohol – I could see how some might consider this one a little soft and flabby, but I quite enjoyed it. For a more recognizable wine offering there's the *Morgenhuf Estate 2007 Sauvignon Blanc* (\$12.95 - #18507) – gooseberry and grassy with a touch of smokiness, clean and very refreshing in the mouth, this one finishes with a grapefruit bite.

Spain ... I don't usually talk about Spanish whites, but this one deserves a little notoriety, with its light lemon flavours and subtle nose which leads me to believe that this *Marques de Caceres 2006 Barrel Fermented White* (\$15.95 – #67041) is perfect for summertime sipping – so bring on the sun and the heat.

Red Wines ...

Ontario ...

[Black Prince Winery 2006 Reserve Cabernet Franc](#) (\$15.95 - #68874)

Chile ... So, do I talk about the origins of Chilean Carmenera or do I talk about the wine? Heck let me focus your attention on the *Concha Y Toro Winemaker's Lot 152 Carmenera 2005* (\$18.95 - #30957) this is what Carmenera should be, a spice-driven nose – black fruit, chocolate, berries, cinnamon and vanilla in the mouth – oh, so, good. I'll stop blabbing and just say, buy a bottle and let the wine do the talking for itself. Looking for something more recognizable? You can go for the *Tabali 2005 Reserva Cabernet Sauvignon* (\$14.95 - #58446) with black fruit, mint and eucalyptus ... this one's bbq-ready ... I keep saying it but with the weather we are having more positive reinforcement is need, bring on the nice weather.

Australia ... the land down under is always good for a dozen wines every release (9 this time) and this time I pick out this one: *Heartland 2005 Cabernet Sauvignon* (\$18.95 - #58099) ... chocolate, black fruit and cola with a nice cherry-vanilla finish, a bit jammy, but pleasant.

South Africa ... I remember a time when Pinotage was a scary grape variety to make wine out of, many a wine was considered “rustic” and that was putting it nicely. *Lammershoek 2005 Pinotage* (\$18.95 - #954594) is as far removed from those original Pinotage wines as you can get. The nose is spicy with black fruit, bramble and a touch of floral; while the flavours are explosive in the mouth: black currant, blackberry, spicy and tannin, there is a little bit of the typical South Africa flavours on the finish, but it's so “way back there” that it's practically standing in the corner un-noticed. My second selection from South Africa is *Robertson Winery Prospect Hill 2005 Cabernet Sauvignon* (\$18.95 - #687814). Robertson is a cooperative winery with ~43 members, each year at harvest time they all bring in their grapes and one batch is selected to be the “single vineyard” offering, the rest go into the everyday wine. I've seen Prospect Hill on previous versions of this wine so they must be doing something right. This one's full on blackberry and black cherry all the way from nose to palate, and it's drinking beautifully right now.

France – Midi ... Here's another Cahors wine that will stand the test of time (say 10 years), Cahors is usually

big, bold and black fruited – as this one is, but the addition of 20% Merlot softens it a bit, while the barrel ageing has left behind vanilla oaky notes – but there's still that tell-tale real spiciness and tannins galore, Chateau Croze de Pys Prestige 2005 (\$16.95 - #681668).

France – Rhone ... *Domaine des Senechaux Chateauneuf-du-Pape 2005* (\$35.95 - #677922) has a nose that's absolutely luscious with red fruit and cinnamon; in the mouth the red fruit explodes with a touch of spice, my notes say "beauty baby" and it is.

Italy – Tuscany ... sweet black fruit, lots of tannins, lots of spice and a lower alcohol level (13%) than both the mouth and nose projects. This one's my big, bold and brawny selection of the release: *Micheletti Guardione 2003* (\$37.95 - #39693).

Spain ... Two Spanish compositions close out my look at the red wines of this release. This one from Priorat, *Buil & Gine Gine Gine 2005* (\$20.95 - #67843) is a tasty little sucker brimming with full on red and black fruit with some spicy characteristics thrown in for good measure. The second, *Muruve Crianza 2003* (\$15.95 - #67546) is quite simply a value, value, value – nose of sweet plums and other black fruits ... the fruit is all over the tongue, mostly of the dark variety, lots of tannin heft and there's even a fizzy feeling here – I would recommend holding this one three years before its really enjoyable.

What's for Dessert? ...

Ontario ...

[Henry of Pelham 2006 Cabernet Franc Icewine](#) (\$39.95 – 672402 – 200ml)

Madeira fans should find happiness this release from *Cossart Gordon 5-year-old Medium Rich Bual Madeira* (\$23.95 - #69583) ... sweet, supple and delicious. Maple-soaked apricots on the nose, the taste is reminiscent of dried apricots and pears soaked in icewine (or something equally as sweet) with a touch of sweet spice on the finish.

Take a Chance on Me ...

My Abba wine this release comes from Bulgaria, yes, I said Bulgaria – not a country I'd normally recommend, but when something comes along that's decent I'd rather tell you about it than sweep it under the rug and hope that it goes away. *Damianitza No Man's Land Gold 2005* (\$13.95 - #672949) – this one's big on red, fruit that is - raspberry, strawberry and cherry with a touch of some dirty, earthy nuances ... a wine for those interested in, but not huge fans of, red wine. Give it a try, it's quite surprising.

Reminder: Port lovers ... check out the *Infantado Ruby Port* – you won't be disappointed.

Happy Shopping.

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