

## OntarioWineReview Vintages Release Guide

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



### OntarioWineReview: Vintages Release Saturday May 2, 2009

This time out, it's the annual California parade at Vintages, which means plenty of whites and reds that we all seem to love – we buy enough of them so making that general statement isn't out of line. There is also a Tuscan (Italy) release, all of them reds, and many of them very good.

Ontario reviews can be found on my website ([www.ontariowinereview.com](http://www.ontariowinereview.com)) - the rest can be found right here – starting with the focuses: California and Tuscany; then the rest of the world appears in alphabetical order.

You'll notice I have gone to a stars rating system at the end of each review; here's how those stars break down:

5 = Outstanding ... 4.5 = Excellent ... 4 = Very Good ... 3.5 = Good ... 3 = Average

I'm always looking for good values and I'm not afraid to give or take away a half mark for it – I'll let you know when I've done so.

#### California ...

There are 6 California whites as part of this release, and all of them Chardonnay, unfortunately none of them are very impressive. If you like California Chardonnay then you can't go wrong with any of them, but I did not feel any stood out amongst the crowd. So let's move on to the reds, there's gotta be something good there, right? In fact there are 4 wines worth your hard earned dollars. I'll start with one of my perennial favourites the *Artezin 2006 Zinfandel* (\$26.95 - #0004887), there's a lot of typicity here for Zin fans, this edition of this wine is better than the 05 and rival the 04 – good acidity, plums, lots of black fruit, vanilla, cherries and cola – quite concentrated and full (\*\*\*\*½). Another Zinfandel of note is the *Kiara 2006 Private Reserve Zinfandel* (\$22.95 - #0094250) this one is far from typical, but still very nice, plums, vanilla, cola, hints of blackberry with some minerality along with a spicy finish – this wine shows a lot of finesse (\*\*\*\*). Next up, the *Paul Hobbs 2005 CrossBarn Cabernet Sauvignon* (\$69.95 - #0118695), big peppery, blackberry smells with silky tannins on the tongue and good acidity, a tad pricey but very nice (\*\*\*\*). Finally, there's *Sanctuary's 2004 Usibelli Vineyards Cabernet Sauvignon* (\$34.95 - #0095372) – nice fruit, laced with herbs and spice, lots of blackberry and good tannins (\*\*\*\*). There is one more Californian wine, that's not part of the official release, but I thought I would put it here anyway because I think it's the best of the bunch: *Eberle Winery 2005 Steinbeck Vineyard Syrah* (\$28.95 - #0106146), beautiful nose, great palate – somewhere between the peppery-bacony meat smell of Syrah and the jammy fruity Shiraz ... nice balancing act between the two styles (\*\*\*\*½).

#### Tuscany ...

Tuscany is always an exciting region to buy wine from, their use of both indigenous and international grapes, sometimes together, always makes for interesting wines with character and loads of flavour. There are five here that I would like to bring your attention to. Starting with the *Barone Ricasoli Rocca Guicciarda Chianti Classico Riserva 2005* (\$24.95 - #0943613) with all its sweet red fruit on the palate, nice vanilla oak, that is initially on the nose, follows through in the mouth with a very good finish (\*\*\*\*). *Fassati Pasiteo Vino Nobile di Montepulciano 2005* (\$24.95 - #0642009) has got nice herbs and black fruit on the nose, nice acidity and a good balance of fruit and herbs on the palate (\*\*\*\*). *Fattoria di Magliano Heba Morellino de Scansano 2006* (\$27.95 - #0123596) has a rich blend of red and black cherries, spices, cinnamon and good mix of tannins

and acidity (\*\*\*\*). So far I have told you about the 4-star wines but the next two are the real stars of the Tuscany feature ... both are pricey, but offer up fantastic wines for the price. *Leonardo Da Vinci Brunello di Montalcino 2004* (\$59.95 - #0097592), a very pretty nose with good fruit in the mouth and licorice and leather go along for the ride – great aging potential (\*\*\*\*½). Another pricey yet very nice wine is the *Marchesi de' Frescobaldi Montesodi Chianti Rufina Riserva 2005* (\$59.95 - #0365536), deep red colour, smells of blackberry, bitter sweet chocolate and cherry, firm drying tannins and toasted flavours on the tongue ... this one needs lots of time and its going to be fantastic, it's already wonderful now (\*\*\*\*½).

#### **Ontario – Whites ...**

[Southbrook 2006 Triomphe Chardonnay](#) (\$21.95 - #0117572) – (\*\*\*\*½)

#### **Argentina – White ...**

*Henry Lagarde 2007 Chardonnay Reserve* (\$17.95 - #0098087) – sweet fruit, caramel, lemon, apple, creamy smooth with a nice touch of acidity on the finish. (\*\*\*\*)

#### **Australia – Red ...**

*Jim Jim (The Down-Underdog) 2007 Shiraz* (\$14.95 - #0682005) – looking for a value Shiraz from Oz to drink through the summer, then this is your wine, priced to buy by the case. Nothing extraordinary or earth shattering here, it's exactly what you'd expect from Shiraz, pepper, red fruit and berries – a very nice wine at a very nice price, half a mark extra for value here. (\*\*\*\*)

*The Colonial Estate 2006 Envoy Grenache/Shiraz/Mourvedre* (\$29.95 - #0047563) – nice fruit: spice, blackberry, raspberry and even a touch of mineral in the mouth. (\*\*\*\*)

#### **Chile - Red ...**

*Cono Sur 2008 Cabernet Sauvignon/Carmenere* (\$13.95 - #0056853) – here's a great bargain red for your collection or even your evening BBQ. Minty goodness is the main smell, followed in the mouth by black fruit, cherry, a bit of bramble, good tannins and great mouthfeel, yum – no mark for value, but it deserves one. (\*\*\*\*½)

#### **France – Red ...**

##### **(Beaujolais)**

*Domaine du Penjois Julienas 2006* (\$18.95 - #0112532) – think not Nouveau my friends, think red fruit: strawberry and raspberry richness, think subtle tannins, think great finish, a delicious wine at an equally delicious price. (\*\*\*\*)

##### **(Burgundy)**

*Domaine Debray Bourgogne Hautes Cotes-de-Beaune* (\$21.95 - #0112219) – this one shows restrained fruit, sour cherry, cranberry, real elegance for not too much dough – look hard enough and you'll also find some earthy-mineral notes. (\*\*\*\*)

##### **(Rhône)**

*Perrin & Fils La Gille Gigondas 2006* (\$29.95 - #0906073) – cedary, cinnamon, and herbs fill the nose; the palate is blackberry, vanilla, cedar and very smooth. (\*\*\*\*)

#### **France – Rosé ...**

*Chateau Val Joanis Tradition 2008 Syrah Rosé* (\$15.95 - #0707281) – a light orange colour, touch of sweet fruit in the mouth though it is dry. A vanilla-caramel-strawberry concoction without being a sickeningly sweet, that this ends dry is the real surprise. (\*\*\*\*)

*Domaine Corne-Loup Rosé Tavel 2008* (\$16.95 - #0071209) – this is a seriously dry rosé, served blind it could be mistaken for a white; but with the sense of sight you'll pick up sour cherry, cranberry and big citrus acidity. (\*\*\*\*½)

#### **France – Sparkling ...**

##### **(Champagne)**

*Dehu Pere & Fils Grande Reserve Brut Champagne* (\$59.95 - #0095109) – crisp lemony nose and a touch yeasty, apple and pear are the main fruits; very flavourful. (\*\*\*\*½)

### **France – White ...**

#### **(Bordeaux)**

*Chateau Roquetaillade La Grange 2007* (\$14.95 - #0240374) – nice mineral note, grassy, floral with a nice bit of grapefruit – quite appealing. (\*\*\*\*)

#### **(Burgundy)**

*Domaine Bernard Defaix Cote de Lechet Reserve Chablis 1er Cru 2006* (\$36.95 - #0017541) – here's a very tasty wine with lemon, apple and mineral; good fruit and full mouth feel. (\*\*\*\*1/2)

#### **(Loire)**

*Domaine des Aubuisieres Cuvee de Silex Vouvray 2008* (\$17.95 - #0057042) – bosc pear and sweet lemon drop on the nose; there's a nice apple note with a touch of mineral on the smooth palate. (\*\*\*\*)

### **Italy - Red ...**

#### **(Piedmont)**

*Neirano Bonimu Nebbiolo Langhe 2006* (\$18.95 - #0101329) – not sure about the Nebbiolo grape? This is the grape of Barolo – those long aging, pricey wines ... Here's a perfect chance to try a juicy, friendly version loaded with the Neb's signature herbs and spice, without paying Barolo prices. (\*\*\*\*)

#### **(Veneto)**

*Marchesi Fumanelli Amarone Della Valpolicella Classico 2004* (\$59.95 - #0105155) – this has a big Port-like nose of cherries and chocolate, great colour and a lovely bit of herbs on the finish. (\*\*\*\*1/2)

*Zenato Cormi Merlot/Corvina 2006* (\$19.95 - #0108282) – there's 'umph' in this wine. Corvina is usually found in the Valpolicella blend, this is your opportunity to see how it plays with others; nice red and black fruit with a touch of leather and spice, supple and slightly tannic but fully enjoyable. (\*\*\*\*)

### **Italy – Sparkling ...**

*Santero Brachetto D'Acqui* (\$18.95 - #0119495) – this is a sweet red fizz that's loaded with roses and strawberry ... a perfect wine for Valentine's Day – too bad we're heading into May, guess we'll have to settle for the patio this summer. (\*\*\*\*)

### **New Zealand – Rosé ...**

*Sileni Cellar Selection 2008 Cabernet Rosé* (\$16.95 - #0599951) – has a cherry-tobacco note with some raspberry and strawberry mixed in, elegant and lovely with a nice cherry finish. (\*\*\*\*1/2)

### **New Zealand – White ...**

*Te Awa Left Field 2007 Chardonnay* (\$16.95 - #0095976) – fresh fruit, lively lemon, crisp granny Smith, nice lemon finish – lovely and well worth the price. (\*\*\*\*1/2)

### **Spain – Red ...**

*Manga Del Brujo 2006* (\$17.95 - #0015073) – this is a spectacular wine, so much going on for so little dough. Plum, black and red fruit, juicy, luscious, excellent mouth feel, nice spice, there's even some bittersweet chocolate and cherry on the finish. (\*\*\*\*\*)

### **Spain – Rosé ...**

*Vina Aljibes 2008 Syrah Rosé* (\$13.95 - #0122333) – a sweet candy floss and bubble gum rosé, the electric pink colour is a lot of fun and there's lots of berries in the mix; this wine should find a place on your patio table this summer. (\*\*\*\*1/2)

### **Grape Guy Top 3 ... what I'll be lining up for on May 2, 2009:**

*Manga Del Brujo 2006* (\$17.95 - #0015073) - Spain

*Domaine du Penjois Julienas 2006* (\$18.95 - #0112532) - France

*Cono Sur 2008 Cabernet Sauvignon/Carmenere* (\$13.95 - #0056853) – Chile

Happy Shopping.

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**About OntarioWineReview:** a website devoted to the love, enjoyment and promotion of Ontario's wines, wineries and lots more wine related issues – visit [www.ontariowinereview.com](http://www.ontariowinereview.com) to sign up for the free bi-weekly newsletter and feel free to browse around a little while you're there.



**What can the Grape Guy do for you ...** Michael Pinkus (Grape Guy) provides a variety of wine related services that you might be interested in taking advantage of: he gives lectures, leads seminars, conducts tastings, sets up tours; consults, selects and judges. He also gives interviews, broadcasts, podcasts and writes. [Contact the Grape Guy if you require any of these services or have any questions.](#)



**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](mailto:michael@ontariowinereview.com). I look forward to hearing from you!

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