

## OntarioWineReview Vintages Release Guide

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



### OntarioWineReview: Vintages Release Saturday May 10, 2008

I can usually find some good values in any Vintages release, but this time out there seems to be a real chock-a-block of them, mostly from Argentina, with some fantastic 12 and 13 dollar wines, and from Germany, there are some Rieslings that over deliver for their under \$20 price tag. Now I know it's all relative, we cheer the 12 dollar wines as real values while our neighbours to the south pay 6 or 7 dollars for the same wine – trust me I feel your pain because I too go to the states and salivate over their prices, and of course curse the LCBO under by breath; but unfortunately that falls on deaf ears, so let's move on.

Today's release parallels my favourite kind of movie, a double feature: Pinots and German wines. Pinots refer to the whole Pinot family: Blanc, Gris, Noir, etc. and Germans can only mean great Rieslings (well, they make other things too, but those Rieslings rock!) – so without further ado, let's check out the 9 Pinots and 3 Germans, along with the other reds, whites and dessert wines that'll rock your world.

Ontario reviews can be found by clicking the link, which will redirect you to my website, [www.ontariowinereview.com](http://www.ontariowinereview.com).

#### Pinots:

**Blanc ...** British Columbia is making a good name for themselves with Pinot Blanc and here's a good example why: *Ganton & Larsen Prospect Winery Birch Canoe Pinot Blanc 2006* (\$17.95 - #0070706), light and fruity with citrus and peach tones – nice finish, soft acidity ... very pleasant.

**Gris ...** This Pinot Gris from New Zealand is listed as an extra dry (XD) but you could have fooled me (and everybody else in the room). *Omaka Springs 2007 Pinot Gris* (\$19.65 - #0063647) has sweetness in the mouth – melon and peach with some soft citrus nuances – tasty, but there is some sweetness there, no doubt. Another Gris of note is the *Andre Blanck et ses fils Pinot Gris Clos Schwendi* (\$18.95 - #0686311) from Alsace. Sweet pear on the nose with peachy tastes in the mouth, nothing overpowering – a sweet, easy finish makes this one fun for the patio.

**Noir ...** No offense to Burgundy fans, but we already know they make good Pinot Noir, heck the name Burgundy is synonymous with it; so I'll forego reviewing any Burgundian Pinot and give the other countries a chance with this grape. Oregon is making a name for themselves in the Pinot Noir department, and the *Adelsheim 2006 Pinot Noir* (\$37.95 - #0683821) is a good example of why – soft supple and a wonderful supply of red fruit ... buy it and try it, you'll then know why Oregon is getting the rep it is. Chilean Pinot Noir? Really? You're thinking too hot for this cool climate-loving grape. But wait, the Bio Bio Valley is turning out to be a perfect place for Noir – sure it's a little jammier in the red fruit department, but with good tannin structure and a bit of earthiness this *Paso Hondo Alta Seleccion Pinot Noir 2007* (\$14.95 - #0685925) is a good value and tasty wine. Moving back to an even cooler climate, New Zealand, the *Spy Valley 2006 Pinot Noir* (\$24.95 - #0734681) from Marlborough, is rich cherry, in both taste and colour – if you don't dig your Pinot dirty you'll dig this one. *Domaine Bonnard Sancerre Rouge 2004* (\$22.95 - #0065995) hails from the Loire – a place better known for its Sauvignon Blanc, but this Pinot is red fruited all the way through – and quite delicious. I have to admit I wasn't expecting much from an Italian Pinot, but this one surprised the heck out of me: *San Pietro 2006 Pinot Noir* (\$15.95 - #0066381) with its strawberry-cherry nose and its earthy-sour cherry in the mouth all wrapped up in tart tannins ... nice! Finally, another country not noted for Pinot Noir, Spain, has produced something mighty different in this category – *Miguel Torres Mas Borrás Pinot Noir 2006* (\$25.95 - #0673483) – big and firm with lots of red and black fruit along with earthiness and tannins to spare. I'd give this one a few years to settle down before popping the cork.

Ontario - [Malivoire 2005 Pinot Noir](#) (\$32.00 - #0996777)

#### Germany:

Riesling fans take note, there are 4 German Rieslings I recommend in this release, three here and one in the "Take A Chance" section at the bottom of this report; and the beauty of it all is, they are all under \$20. My personal favourite of the release is the *Darting Riesling Kabinett 2006* (\$15.95 - #0950212), excellent price point, but be careful, there is quite a bit of sweetness here – especially for a Kabinett wine. Peach, apple, talc – good balancing acidity and a tasty long sweet finish – yum. Then there's the *Kruger-Rumpf Riesling Kabinett 2006* (\$19.95 – 0692368) with a talc-peach nose and a simple palate of peaches and apples carried by great acidity that balances its sweetness on the tongue – this might seem simple but it is quite elegant. Finally, there's the *Eugen Wehrheim Riesling Kabinett 2006* (\$16.95 - #0071019), this one's also very nice and even seems to have a little fizz on the tongue, not as elegant as the Kruger or as sweet as the Darting, but its rough finish holds a certain appeal.

### Sparkling ...

**Ontario ...** [Henry of Pelham Cuvee Catharine Brut](#) (\$29.95 - #0616441)

### White Wines ...

**Ontario ...** [Chateau des Charmes 2006 St. David's Bench Gewurztraminer](#) (\$19.95 – 0453472)

**New Zealand ...** the Kiwi's have made a name from themselves primarily for their Sauvignon Blancs, but lately you see them branching out into other grape varieties and doing a really good job with those too. Take this *Goldwater 2006 Chardonnay* (\$19.95 – 0991463) for instance – nice pear, apple, and lemon zest on the nose, a matching juicy palate that also has butterscotch, vanilla and tart lemon backing up those fruits.

**France – Burgundy ...** this one's typical but tasty, the *Jean Chartron Rully Montmorin 2006* (\$26.95 - #0068981) has butteriness with fruit hiding in the back behind a vanilla curtain. Very wizard of Oz.

**France – Loire ...** the name of this wine just says it all: *Domaine du Pre Baron Touraine L'elegante 2006* (\$19.95 - #0061382) – hope you caught the elegant part – this one's really pleasant. A soft citrus nose and a great grapefruit palate with a long, dare I say, elegant finish.

### Red Wines ...

**Argentina ...** *Don David*, a distant cousin of Don Vito Corleone, moved to Argentina to get away from "the family business" to concentrate on wine. This big, rich, juicy, black fruited, cocoa laden *Reserve Malbec 2006* (\$12.95 - #0064998) is one of the best values of the release ... and it finishes off dusty and delicious. A personal favourite is the *Finca Flichman Expresiones Reserve Shiraz / Cabernet Sauvignon 2006* (\$15.95 - #0017111) – black berries and chocolate on the nose, peppery-jammy fruit in the mouth, with soft supple tannins. Another two great values that emerge from Argentina are the *Pasion 4 Merlot 2006* (\$11.95 - #0059287) and the *Tomero Malbec 2005* (\$12.75 - #0057943) – both big on black fruit and chocolate. The Pasion has the advantage of big, bold robust tannins that'll have it resting comfortably on your wine rack for 5+ years; while the Tomero is more for drink now pleasure.

**Australia ...** I once heard the comment, "someone at D'arenberg must be sleeping with someone from the LCBO", when I questioned why, they answered, "because they get a listing every month." So here is your monthly D'arenberg wine: *The Galvo Garage 2004* (\$26.95 - #0907584) big on booze (14.5%) and big on minty-eucalyptus on both the nose and palate, with a bit of blueberry-black fruit as back up ... very appealing. The *Mount Langhi Ghiran Billi Billi Shiraz 2004* (\$15.95 - #0719575) has a new look label. The floral, pepper and reddish fruit goes from the nose to the taste, and at \$15.95 it's also a good value to serve up around the BBQ this summer.

**France – Rhone ...** I quite enjoyed the *Domaine du Vieux Telegraphe Chateaufort-du-Pape La Crau 2005* (\$67.95 - #0951475), a well-balanced, black fruit powerhouse, which has black pepper and tannin rich; not cheap, but a wine you'll be enjoying for many years to come.

**France – Midi ...** For a good French value wine with dark plummy fruit and lighter in the mouth (mainly for drink now enjoyment) but also with a nice firm finish, you couldn't beat the *Chateau Planeres Cuvee Prestige 2005* (\$14.95 - #0070748).

**Spain ...** a fairly big sticker on the bottle proclaims, "The First Cabernet Sauvignon from Spain since 1969" – interesting. Very tannic, you can smell them as you pour the wine into the glass, it's also very peppery and robust: *Jean Leon Cabernet Sauvignon Reserva 2002* (\$27.95 - #0401596).

## Rosé ...

You'll find 4 rosés on the shelf this release. The only one I derived any pleasure from was *the Tammasi Chiaretto 2007* (\$12.95 - #0685057), this one has raspberry and strawberry smells and flavours all over it ... and it's dry, so don't go expecting any kind of sweetness here.

## What's for Dessert? ...

Two dessert wines of note from around the world, one from France, the other from Portugal. The port you'll recognize in both smell and taste, *DeLaforce His Eminence's Choice 10-Year-Old Tawny Port* (\$29.95 - #0112060) – black cherries and plum pudding mingle with almonds and chocolate on the finish, along with a hint of tannin and good acidity. Then there's the *Chamarre Tradition Jurancon 2003* from France (\$14.95 – 0065839 – 375ml), pretty floral and appley nose with a wonderful touch of honey amongst the apples on the palate, and just the right amount of sweetness so that this one's fully enjoyable on it's own.

**Ontario ...** [Cave Spring 2004 Riesling Icewine](#) (\$59.95 - #0074641)

## Take A Chance on Me ...

Not that I think you'll need any prodding, but there's a wonderfully aged German Riesling on the list today: *Reichsgraf Von Kesselstatt Riesling Kabinett 1998* (\$19.95 - #0940809) – this is probably what some of those other Rieslings are going to turn into given the proper amount of time, but for the same price, why wait. The petrol notes are developing nicely, but not overpowering, creamy mouthfeel, full of peaches and apples with a touch of petrol on the tongue. And the acidity seems to be holding the sweetness in check ... wow! Mind-blowingly good – a good reminder why Germans continue to reign over this grape.

## My Top 3 ...

*Darting Riesling Kabinett 2006* – Germany (\$15.95)

*Finca Flichman Expressiones Reserve Shiraz/Cabernet Sauvignon 2006* – Argentina (\$15.95)

*Pasion 4 Merlot 2006* – Argentina (\$11.95)

## Bonus 2 –

The *Don David Malbec* (\$12.95) and *Tomero Malbec* (\$12.75) get into the top five for value alone – both from Argentina.

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

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