

OntarioWineReview Vintages Release Guide

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



OntarioWineReview: Vintages Release Saturday May 24, 2008

I've got 2 features and 29 wines to recommend in this release, so let's get right down to it. This time out the 2 releases are focused on New Zealand and, for those itching for summer, the first wave of rosés are here, so it's time to dust off that summer money you've been saving and head on down to stock up on wine for the season; because between the rosés and Zealanders there's plenty of summer sippers to celebrate.

Ontario reviews can be found by clicking the link, which will redirect you to my website, www.ontariowinereview.com.

New Zealand ...

Kicking it off is what you probably know New Zealand for, Sauvignon Blanc, best of the bunch (bang-for-buck-wise) just might be the *Sileni Estate Cellar Selection Sauvignon Blanc 2007* (\$15.95 - #0662882) – bright and clean with good grapefruit, not overpoweringly so, not too acidic, but with great jump in the mouth. But New Zealand is not only about Sauvignon Blanc, their goal now is to get you seeing them as the whole wine package: reds and whites. In the aromatic white category you'll find the *Lawson's Dry Hills 2006 Gewurztraminer* (\$18.95 - #0060129), the nose is light on rose petal and very clean and tasty in the mouth, only a touch of typical Gewurzt oiliness exists, and there's just a splash of citrus on the finish – very refreshing. Pinot Gris is another grape New Zealand can do, *Sileni Cellar Selection Pinot Gris 2007* (\$14.95 - #0032292) with its nice apple nose, which follows on the palate, then a citrus explosion finishes it off ... cool. And finally, for the whites, Chardonnay – in the form of *Sacred Hill Barrel Fermented Chardonnay 2006* (\$20.95 - #0060095), sure it's a playing-it-safe Chardonnay – vanilla, tropical fruit, nothing experimental here, but if you're looking to expand your countries making dependable Chardonnay, you can't go wrong with bringing this one to the table.

The Kiwis big red is Pinot Noir and there are two in the release of note: *Pisa Range Estates Black Poplar Block Pinot Noir 2005* (\$44.95 - #0062398), which has almost a sweet taste, though you'll find it smooth and easy, with strawberry and black cherry dominating with a touch of an earthy sensation. There's also the *Waitiri Creek 2006 Pinot Noir* (\$37.95 - #0683342) with its pleasant red fruit (cherry dominated) and nice tannins that blend together nicely in the mouth. Other New Zealand reds of note are the *Villa Maria Private Bin Merlot/Cabernet Sauvignon 2005* (\$17.95 - #0060038) at first it seemed simple and easy, but the spicy nose, black fruit and vanilla drew me in deeper and then there was the hint of tannin at the back – quite nice. Finally, something you don't see here often, from New Zealand anyway, a Syrah – *Goldridge Estate Premium Reserve Syrah 2005* (\$19.95 - #0060053) sweet herbs, a touch of spice and black pepper tickle the nose, all followed on the palate with fine tannins and pleasant finish. Delice!

Rosés ...

I'll start here with the crossover wine: *Kim Crawford 2007 Pansy Rosé* (\$16.95 - #0650325) from New Zealand – it has that sweet smell of success about it; a red berry burst of raspberries and cherries, big 14% alcohol, but so easy going down a summer's afternoon drunk waiting to happen. Established fans will snap it up quick, so if you want to become a fan get to the LCBO early. Looking for more of an oddball Rosé to put on the table, *Cline's Pink Truck Rosé 2007* (\$12.95 - #0059865) from California made from Zinfandel, Grenache and Mourvedre – a luscious cherry juice nose with raspberry and sweet cherry on the palate ... there is a touch of sweetness here, but its perfect for hot summer days because it's smooth and easy going down. Finally, here's a Rosé that thinks it's a red wine, sure strawberries dominate the smell and flavour, but this one's got a touch of tannin left in it too. I'd chill this one right down, to control those tannins, and then sip and enjoy: *Vina Honda Monastrell Rosé 2007* (\$13.95 - #0071431).

White Wine ...

Ontario ... [Cave Spring Gewurztraminer 2006](#) (\$19.95 - # 0302059)

Argentina ... I liked this wine for its' ballsy taste: butterscotch, vanilla and toasty oak – heavy with flavour and alcohol (14%) – but it's also got a great smell to it too: *Catena 2006 Chardonnay* (\$19.95 - #0918805).

Australia ... Get away from the oak and enjoy the value priced *Jim Jim Unoaked Chardonnay* (\$13.95 - #0058537) with its full-on tropical, apple and lemon flavour, a real playful white for summer.

South Africa ... *Lammershoek Barrique Chenin Blanc 2007* (\$18.95 - #0058206) has a very appley nose with tropical-bruised fruit in the mouth, trust me, it's delightful and has a pleasing finish.

France – Alsace ... skip the Riesling this time out and reach for the *Domaine Saint-Remy Gewurztraminer Reserve 2006* (\$18.95 - #0061150) too good to pass up. Tropical, yet spicy, light and enjoyable, tastes older than its 2006 designation, but a great long pleasant finish.

France – Rhone ... This Chardonnay is an enjoyable pleasant affair; with apple and tropical fruit, pears and other tree fruit thrown in for good measure – it's got an ounce or two of sassiness especially on the finish: *George DuBoeuf Pouilly-Fuisse Clos Reyssie 2006* (\$27.95 - #0656793).

Italy – Veneto ... Fresh, fruity and refreshing is the best way to describe the *Pra Soave Classico 2006* (\$19.95 - #0074534).

Red Wines ...

USA – California ... One of my favourite Syrah's in the past few years is coming back (different vintage of course) *Rosenblum Vintner's Cuvee Syrah 2005* (\$18.95 - #0686535) peppery, black fruit and herbs with good tannins structure and a little bite on the tongue.

Argentina ... A perfect wine for consuming now and throughout BBQ-season will be this juicy, blackberry laced *Finca El Retiro 2004 Malbec* (\$12.95 - #0993824) at that price buy a case; there are plenty of BBQs to come.

Australia ... Believe it or not my only Aussie recommendation in this release (red) is this *Lengs and Cooter The Victor Shiraz 2005* (\$21.95 - #00604434); black fruit driven, chocolaty, spicy and very tasty – get out the General Lee, Cooter's coming to town.

France – Midi ... At \$17.95 this wine is a bargain: *Chateau de Flaugergues Cuvee Sommeliere 2006* (#0065896) – smooth, red fruit nose with black fruit flavours ... yum.

France – Rhone ... Plummy, black fruit, supple tannins and another candidate in the smooth category for this release, the *Domaine de Font-Sane Gigondas Tradition 2005* (\$24.95 - #0735779) is all that and a bag of chips – so to speak. The official wine of Jamaica, *Ortas Tradition Rasteau 2006* (\$15.95 - #0998716) of course I'm kidding about that, but not about the value and deliciousness of this wine. Smooth, fruit driven with just the right amount of tannins ... what a great value.

Italy – Tuscany ... a classy label adorns this very classy wine which has bold tannins, black fruit and a chunky earthy taste – you'll need to lie this one down for a bit before fully enjoying: *Antonori Badia A Passignano Chianti Classico Riserva 2003* (\$39.95 - #0384552).

Italy – Veneto ... Ask any Amarone fan and they'll tell you, "It's always expensive, but it's always worth it." And that's so true when it comes to the luscious *Le Ragose Amarone della Valpolicella 2003* (\$61.95 - #0700872). Those who don't want to fork over the big bucks can go for Amarone's little brother, Ripasso: *Monte Zovo Valpolicella Superiore Ripasso 2004* (\$18.95 - #0023523) – plummy, black cherry, touch of earthy tannins on the finish ... very nice Ripasso, and another 5 years of holding will do just fine.

Portugal ... I'm a big fan of this *Quinta do Encontro Preto Branco 2004* (\$19.95 - #0067025) mixing some white grapes with red to produce big and powerful wines with a feminine side. Both red and black fruit can be found, good acidity, beefy tannins, but then there's the florally note on both the nose and taste ... lots of good fruit flavours, long finish – excellent. A little simpler is the plummy rich fruit in the *Sogrape Reserva Douro Vinho Tinto 2002* (\$18.95 - #0335208), another wine with a wonderful finish.

What's For Dessert?

Ontario ... [Ice House Northern Ice S.L.H. Vidal 2006](#) (\$19.95 / 375ml - #0067348)

Take a Chance on me ...

Not sure what I was expecting with this wine, but probably because it was in the middle of the tasting I didn't expect to find a sweetie amidst all those dry wines, but suddenly there it was; *Domaine Cady Coteaux du Laytor Saint-Aubin 2003* (\$25.95 - #0065961) a medium sweet wine that comes across all fruity and apple-y with a thickness I wasn't expecting, but I was pleasantly surprised. With this one appetizers or dessert will probably be what you serve, and all on it's own it has a really lasting gorgeous finish.

Grape Guy's Top 3 ...

Ortas Tradition Rasteau 2006 – France – (\$15.95)
Quinta Do Encontro Preto Branco 2004 – Protugal – (\$19.95)
Finca El Retiro Malbec 2004 – Argentina – (12.95)

Happy Shopping.

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 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. I look forward to hearing from you!

© OntarioWineReview.com 2008. All rights reserved.
You may use the content of this newsletter by including full credit to Michael Pinkus, Grape Guy and a link to www.ontariowinereview.com