

OntarioWineReview Vintages Release Guide

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



OntarioWineReview: Vintages Release Saturday October 27, 2007

Someone in the tasting room made a comment that it was a "very light tasting this week" ... he wasn't talking about the wine's flavour profiles here, he was referring to the amount of wines. On the other hand, someone also mentioned that the quality was up, "which means the holidays are coming" ... and finally, the theme of this weeks release was vague: entertaining. So what the LCBO wants you to do this holiday season, from what I gather, is entertain lightly with good wine ... I guess. So let's get right down to it.

Sparkling Wines ... A party just isn't a party without some bubbly to pass around; Vintages kicks 6 new ones onto the shelves this week ... 2 represent good value, while one is just pricey, because its real, true, authentic Champagne. Taittinger Champagne Brut Reserve (\$59.95 - #814723) is a great special occasion fizz ... one to pick up for New Year's Eve with someone special – toasty, tasty and lovely with apple and tropical fruit in the mouth. Hungeford Hill 2002 Dalliance Sparkling Chardonnay/Pinot Noir from Australia (\$24.95 - #39354) smells of apples and peaches while the mouth follows the nose's lead with a seemingly sweet taste. But the true bargain in bubbly comes in the form of a Cremant de Bourgogne (France) Louis Bouillot Perle D'Ivoire Blanc de Blanc (\$18.95 - #48801). I swear there is some pink colour to this wine made from Chardonnay grapes – there's also a lemon freshness that's been squeezed over fresh raspberries and strawberries (that's the nose); I would have thought with those smells it would be a bit sweeter in the mouth, but instead it finishes slightly dry with raspberries as its finale, and at \$18.95 it's the best bargain in the bubbly bunch.

White Wines ... There are also only 3 whites of note to speak of this release: one from Australia, another from South Africa and one from Germany. Australia's Yalumba Winery brings us a 2005 Wild Ferment Chardonnay (\$17.95 - #39271) a lemon, floral and tropical nose is followed by peachy, floral, almond and vanilla tastes. South Africa's KWV strikes again with it's 2005 Cathedral Cellar Chardonnay (\$14.95 - #328559) the woody, buttery, nose would seem it's been over-oaked; but there's tropical fruits in the mouth – and a hint of some oak on the palate, but not enough to be off-putting in any way ... this is a very pleasant sipper when sufficiently chilled. Finally, Germany comes along with a pretty pricey Riesling, the Dr. Pauly-Bergweiler 2006 Riesling Spatlese (\$28.95 - #727370), but of the two being offered, this is the one to get. Petrol, peach and florally nose with apples, pears, lychee and apricots in the mouth ... very pleasant with an easy, smooth finish.

California (Red) ... From Lodi comes the Van Ruitten 2004 Old Vines Zinfandel (\$18.95 - #58685). Zin fans should be happy with this one: cola nut, red fruit and sweet cherry nose – red fruits, raisins and plums in the mouth.

Argentina (Red) ... Two from the Argentines, the value priced Catena Alamos 2006 Cabernet Sauvignon (\$13.95 - #467944) with its chocolate, red fruit, plum nuances that linger all the way through to the finish. There's also the sleek sophisticated look of Michel Torino 2004 Ciclos Malbec/Merlot (\$18.95 - #37895). Sometimes I'm a real sucker for packaging and this one looks good, so maybe that influenced my tastebuds – but I don't think so, cause my nose was fooled too. Mocha, blackberries, coffee and anise aromas; chocolate, plum, blackberries, sour cherry and black raspberry flavours all mingle with the bit of persistent tannins – and a good value at that price.

Chile (Red) ... A drink now 2005 Carmenere from Arboleda (\$16.95 - #46284) – rich black fruit, plum and chocolate follow though from the nose right into the mouth. Pleasant and very enjoyable.

Australia (Red) ... Three from Australia, including the best value wine of this release: Jim Jim [the Down-Underdog] 2006 Shiraz (\$14.95 - #682005) its gotta whole lotta spice (cue the Jimmy Page guitar riff here) – ya, a whole lotta spice (and again); with flavours reminiscent of chocolate and black cherries. Up the price ladder is Wits End The Procrastinator 2005 (\$16.95 - #684100) I'd tell you about this 60% Shiraz/30% Cab Sauv/10% Grenache wine ... but I'll wait till later; first I'll talk about the Yalumba Mawson's Wrattonbully 2004

Cabernet Sauvignon (\$19.95 - #39107) which is all red fruit and yum, with sweet herbs and chocolate. Now, about that Procrastinator ... um, just give me a second here ...

France (Red) ... From the Midi comes Domaine de Triennes St. August 2003 (\$24.95 - #726554) – a slightly chillable red full of plums and spice with a touch of cinnamon and chocolate – there are also hints of strawberries and raspberries here. The Rhone produces Rasteau (never sure how these guys keep those dreadlocks clean, but anyway...) – Domaine Grange Blanche Rasteau 2005 (\$16.95 - #35436) is great value in a friendly yet age-worthy sipper. Red fruit and cinnamon with a little bite from the tannin. Great flavours that warm the cockles of your heart, soul and stomach.

Did I finish talking about that Wits End wine yet ... I'll get to that in a minute.

Italy (Red) ... Batasiolo 2004 Barbaresco (\$23.95 - #37051) with its raisin, black fruit and plum nose; raspberry, strawberry with a lengthy finish in the taste department, is enjoyable all on it's own. Also from Italy Luigi Righetti Valpolicella Campolieti 2005 (\$16.95 - #695890) is a beauty of a Ripasso with tons and tons of red fruit, plummy, raisiny goodness – drink now or hold a few years – that's the beauty of Ripasso.

Spain (Red) ... Searching for something with cedar, cinnamon, nutmeg and black fruit throughout that can sit in the cellar for a few years and comes out tasting like a rose (so to speak) Condado De Haza Crianza 2004 (\$24.95 - #963348) is just such a creature. 5 years in the cellar should do it some justice, if not more.

As for the Procrastinator ... spice, tobacco and black fruit are the smells; cherries, white pepper and a jumble of red fruits ... delicious – if you can remember, or find the time, to drink it.

And for Dessert ... I always find the dessert wines fascinating. This time out its Perrin & Fils Muscat de Beaume de Venise 2005 (\$16.95 - #4713) sweet grape infused ginger ale without the fizz ... great for after dinner.

Cheers and Happy Shopping.

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To contact me with feedback, article ideas, comments or questions – email michael@ontariowinereview.com. I look forward to hearing from you!

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