

OntarioWineReview Vintages Release Guide

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



OntarioWineReview: Vintages Release Saturday September 15, 2007

In this release Vintages is rolling out close to 20 Ontario wines in their annual Ontario feature. Being that some of the reviews of these can be found on my website (www.ontariowinereview.com) or in the magazine itself (3 to be exact) I'll let you look them up. I am also a proponent of visiting the wineries themselves to experience and purchase the wines of Ontario first hand – the LCBO to me has always been about the stuff I can't buy and try in my own backyard. You can check out my reviews of the following wines (that are not already in the magazine) that I whole-heartedly recommend: [Chateau des Charmes 2005 Estate Riesling](#) (\$16.95 - #277228); [Flat Rock Cellars 2006 Nadja's Vineyard Riesling](#) (\$19.95 - #578625). And so with that bit of preamble let's focus our attention outside the realm of Ontario and onto 23 other wines from other parts of the world.

France (Sparkling) ... It's always good to begin with a little bubbly – this one's from Alsace, so it's not Champagne, it's sparkling wine. It has a toasted-apple nose with slightly peachy and lemony flavours and it is: Jean Geiler Blanc de Blanc Brut Prestige (\$21.95 - #957746).

France (White) ... Staying in Alsace we find Zind-Humbrecht 2005 Gewurztraminer Wintzenzeim (\$35.95 - #918078); the notes in the catalogue says "nuanced aromas" but there is nothing nuanced about this. Monster spiciness and floral (read: rose petal) aromas – the finish is lengthy and what's on the nose follows through in the mouth. My notes say, "gotta like your Gewurzt spicy and rosy" – and you'd better believe it.

France (Red) ... We'll stay in France for one more wine, but this time we'll head to the Midi region (Minervois to be exact). A blend of 85/15 Syrah/Grenache, this wine is an excellent value at \$14.95: Abbotts Turrilite 2005 (#43042) ... red fruit dominated in an easy drinking style. Some vanilla is present and all in all it's very tasty with a good finish. This one's chillable (if you like your reds that way) – go ahead try it.

California (White) ... Paul Dolan Vineyards 2006 Sauvignon Blanc (\$19.95 - #46334) – is not at all what you'd expect from Sauv. Blanc. First, it's soft on the nose with grapefruit and lemon, and there's nothing in your face about it, just a nice easy sipping wine.

Australia (White) ... From a wine with little Sauvignon Blanc characteristics to one with lots, but it's not a Sauv. Blanc, its Annie's Lane 2006 Chardonnay (\$17.95 - #59105). Fresh and vibrant with a savvy b. like nose of hay, grass and grapefruit ... the flavours follow with more grassiness and citrus, and a nice long melon finish.

Australia (Red) ... Prepare to be tantalized by Elderton 2005 Tantalus - Shiraz (59%) / Cabernet (28%) / Malbec (8%) / Merlot (5%) – (\$16.95 - #721589) ... a cherry, raspberry and strawberry nose is followed by a touch of tannins in the mouth and some easy drinking tastiness. Also drinking well is the Richard Hamilton 2005 Hut Block Cabernet Sauvignon (\$19.95 - #567917) ... black fruit and spice driven nose with a slight tarry quality – the palate shows eucalyptus, cassis and other black fruit ... and the good news, the tarry disappears after a little while in the glass or open to the air.

New Zealand (White) ... Talk about fruity; the Gunn Estate 2006 Unoaked Chardonnay (\$17.95 - #694885) is all that and a bag of chips. Melon, pineapple and tree fruit are all get up into the nose ... there's a little butteryness on top of all that fruit in the mouth ... tasty.

New Zealand (Red) ... The fruitiness from New Zealand continues with this Sileni Cellar Selection 2006 Pinot Noir (\$16.95 - #694901) and it's a good price for a wine that's come halfway around the world to be on your table. Cherry, cranberry and strawberry aromas and flavours, with a hint of earthy tannins in the mouth.

Germany (White) ... (sing along with me now) – "Summer-thyme and the Riesling is easy"; there's the Lingerfelder 2003 Riesling Spatlese (\$21.95 - #928192) a wine right up any German Riesling fans alley.

Honeysuckle, apricot and pear greet the nose and all follow through in the mouth with just a touch of petrol ... nice balanced sweetness ... delicious. The best value in this release just might be the Lingenfelder 2005 Riesling Bird Label (\$14.95 - #568634). 2005 was a good year for Riesling in Germany, and this one's no exception: apple, peach and petrol with good minerality and some ageability. Good finish leads me to believe you should buy a couple, at least, especially at that price. You can sit on this one for another 5-plus years – while still keeping some aside to drink now.

Argentina (Red) ... Spicy, peppery with a touch of eucalyptus and mint ... good tannin structure, black fruit and cinnamon flavours and some ageability to boot ... all part of my description for this interesting combination of this 2005 Shiraz and Malbec from Dona Paula Estates (\$16.95 - #998492) – also note the reasonable price, if you're considering a multiple purchase – and you should.

Chile (Red) ... Two good values also come out of Chile this release: Los Vascos 2004 Grand Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon (\$17.95 - #32078) with its chocolate, mint and sweet fruit nose followed up by a wonderful taste with more mintyness and a restrained fruit to wood ratio. The other wine you should consider is Vina Tabali 2005 Carmenere Reserva (\$14.95 - #44008); a little more down to earth with black currant, black fruit and smoky notes on the schnoze; the mouth produces lush, beautiful dark fruit that's juicy and nicely balanced with the tannins and a slightly earthy finish. This is another Chilean bargain.

Italy (Red) ... Something a little pricier that will hold for a long, long time: Il Borro Rosso 2004 (\$53.95 - #661769) – smooth and lovely now, dark fruit inspired with good tannins to hold it in check for the long haul ... if you like deep, dark and tasty then this is your wine.

Portugal (Red) ... Here's a re-issue for Vintages, Sogrape 2003 Callabriga Tinto (\$18.95 - #682591) – a nose of chocolate, black fruit and raisins, which follows through in the mouth with lightly stewed flavours – it's tasty and drinks well now – but could see a few more beneficial years in the cellar.

Spain (Red) ... We'll finish off our look at dry wines in Spain (as usual) I have two tasty deals for you. Bodegas Castano 2004 Hecula (\$15.95 - #748999) – this one usually flies off the shelf due to its value for taste. There's some red fruit and chocolate on the nose with good berry flavours on the tongue that follow through toasty and tasty. Long lasting tannins, which somehow manage to be smooth in the mouth and not overpoweringly woody. A steal at \$15.95. Finally, there's the Prado Rey Roble 2005 (\$16.95 - #674465) with its lusciously scented nose of cherry, raspberry, pepper, chocolate and vanilla ... the mouth is equally luscious with lots of cherries and some nutmeg ... the powerful 14.5% alcohol also sets this one apart from the competition, but never hints at it in the taste.

What's for Dessert ... Australia delivers a sweet Moscato from Trentham Estate called La Famiglia (\$15.95 - #43938) at only 7.5% it's light on alcohol but fun with a fruity citrus nose and taste. Enjoy while out on the patio with friends and loved ones. Craving a bit more sweetness, check out **Hungary** for the Puklus Wine Cellars 2002 Tokaji Aszu 5 Puttonyos (\$34.95 - #47209) ... if you like sweet, but lack the funds for icewine, Tokaji can take over admirably – and in 500ml bottles you get a little more bang for the buck. Apricots, pears, rusty over-ripe fruit, candied and honey-like. Delicious, delectable – a dessert all on its own. **Port fans** will be glad to see the return of Fonseca Bin 27 Reserve Port (\$16.95 - #156877) – dark chocolate, cherry, plummy and raisiny in the background, good tannins are still present and get smoother as you leave it open over the course of a few weeks; try taking a nip very few days. Stock up for those cold winter months ahead – nothing's better for sitting in front of the fireplace with a good book.

Funky fruit wine comes to Vintages by way of **Scotland**, with Hutchisons Spiced Ginger Wine (\$13.95 - #505636) more of a curiosity, unless you're a huge ginger fan. The spicy gingerbread house nose is followed by a zapping of the tongue and a stinging in the throat ... interesting and unique – but watch out, its got chillies in it.

Houston, we have a winner ... Last but certainly not least is the wine I'll be lining up for come September 15th ... or should I say, the Sherry I'll be fighting you all for. Well worth the \$15.95 asking price is the **Gonzalez Byass Oloroso Dulce Solera 1847** (#972109) – named that way because GB claims the sherry was started in 1847, so if nothing else you're drinking a little drop of history here; but put that notion aside as I tell you what history tastes like. The perfect blend of creamy and sweet: orange, caramel, dates, figs, toffee all come through in the mouth along with some almonds and hazelnuts. A deep brown sugar colour, like thick rusty water – not sure whether I want to sell this to you or put you off ... that way there's more for me. My notes have glowing words of recommendation like "stunning, amazing and wonderful" and that all comes from a non-Sherry drinker. This is a must purchase – another for sitting around the fireplace this winter. See you in line.

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.



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!

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