



Just Off the Vine ...

The Ontario Wine Society's Newsletter

September 2006

Upcoming Events

Toronto Chapter

Reds!

Monday, September 25, 2006

Reception: 6:00 p.m., Tasting: 6:30 p.m.

The ONTARIO CLUB, Commerce Court South, 5th floor (South East Corner King & Bay Streets.) Ontario Club dress code: Casual, but no jeans or running shoes please. Members: \$33, Non-Members: \$38

Experience the opportunity to taste a wide variety of red wines from Ontario wineries by Award winning Wine Doctor Ed Finstein. Our format for this tasting is semi-blind so we are going to tell you what grapes but not the specific wines or vintages. We are hoping that you will gather enough information over the course of the evening from the Wine Doctor that you will be able to identify the wonderful wines we are tasting. We will start out the evening with some great reception wines:

- Reif Estate Late Harvest Gewurztraminer
- DeSousa Wine Cellars Semi Dry Riesling

For the main event, we will be sampling nine wines from Reif Estate, Pelee Island Winery and DeSousa Wine Cellars. Do you think you can distinguish the differences between the following grapes?

- Cabernet Sauvignon
- Pinot Noir
- Shiraz
- Merlot
- Cabernet Franc
- Baco Noir
- Marechal Foch

Other Upcoming Events

Toronto Chapter

- German & Ontario Reislings Tuesday, Oct. 24, 2006.
- Ontario/BC Tasting Monday, Nov 27, 2006.
- Cabernet Franc Horizontal Tuesday, Jan 23, 2007.
- Ice Wine Weekend Saturday, Feb 3, 2007.
- CCOVI Tuesday, Feb 20, 2007.
- New Kids On the Block Tuesday, March 13, 2007.

Niagara Chapter

November 10 - Annual Dinner at Hernder Winery

December - TBA

January - Canadian Meritage and Bordeaux

February - Interactive Blending Tasting

March - Annual Social Event

April - Malivoire - Matching Wine and Food Tasting

Previous Events

“Niagara Sub-Appellations Tasting”

from the Terroir Series

Peninsula Ridge Estate Winery

July 18, 2006

YVONNE TROUT

What a beautiful location and facility! Our evening started on the deck of the Coach House of the Restaurant at Peninsula Ridge, where we sipped rosé wine grown from the Beamsville Bench sub-appellation. As we mingled, we overlooked the very vineyard it was grown in; which made up the beautiful upward sloping backdrop of the winery.

This was truly a tasting where we learned so much, so I'll just cut to the chase to get at it. Executive Director of VQA, Laurie MacDonald, explained to us about the 10 new sub-appellations (SA), implemented into and regulated by VQA. She explained that it was a difficult procedure to divide the Niagara Region up, but was facilitated by science. Extensive research was done on topography, geology, and climatic data that was then cross referenced to come up with areas that had similar conditions or “terroir”. Some lines were easy to draw like the Niagara River SA, and some were much harder like the St. David's Bench SA. Here is a very brief overview of the general characteristics that make each unique:

Lincoln Lakeshore – lake creates warmer fall temperatures to prolong the growing season and prevent frost

Creek Shores – lots of water (rivers and inlets), slower ripening

Beamsville Bench – steep escarpment face circulates wind – reduces frost

Twenty Mile Bench – double bench, high elevation allows for longer periods of uninterrupted sunshine



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Short Hills Bench – very hilly, gradual escarpment face, faster ripening

Vinemount Ridge – uncommon south facing slopes, more sun exposure, top of escarpment – lots of growing potential

Niagara Lakeshore – Lake Ontario acts as a hot water bottle for cooler days and warmer nights

Four Mile Creek – flat area, longest season, hottest temperatures

Niagara River – river pulls the cold air off the land and circulates air

St. David's Bench – complex escarpment with many micro-climates, but overall has early spring warming

We got to taste wine from all of the sub appellations, and based on what we were told we could likely expect from the wine, most of us were able to accurately guess which wine came from which sub appellation! As a group, we were pretty accurate, which I think goes to show the validity of the sub appellations and what they stand for.

We'd like to thank Peninsula Ridge Winery & Jonathon Kuhling for hosting the tasting; and our speaker Laurie MacDonald for leading us through the tasting. I'd also like to thank Matt Hemmingsen for the food and Wendy Midgley for planning the tasting. Pictures of the event were taken by Bruce Jackson, and can be viewed on the web-site: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/photoshopplake>

“Tasting and Cruise”

Sparklings, Pinot Noirs, & Chardonnays

Dalhousie Princess Cruises

August 8, 2006

YVONNE TROUT

Well the weather sure was agreeable! It was a perfectly clear, warm night with barely a cloud in the sky as we cruised out into Lake Ontario. On this night, we got to sample sparkling wines, Chardonnays, and Pinot Noirs from the Niagara Region while enjoying the evening cruise.



Here are some highlights of the evening. After everyone was finished getting “lei'd” by Sue or Fred, we boarded the ship and started the sampling. We enjoyed the wines of the Niagara Region, and helped ourselves to the hors d'oeuvre buffet set out for us. The view across to Toronto was clear during sunlight hours, only to be topped by the brilliant orange and red sky behind the CN Tower as the sun went to bed. While passing the lakeside park in Niagara on the Lake, a number of our members heard a splash and cheer of a crowd with a number of boats escorting a swimmer. We later discovered that we had just witnessed a 16 year old swimmer named Samantha Whiteside begin her crossing of Lake Ontario. She finished the 52 km swim at 10:30 the next morning, in hopes of raising money for juvenile arthritis research.

We cruised up the Niagara River to Smuggler's Cove, and back again as our Captain described each of the sights we got to see over the speaker. At this point, most of us



made our way up to the third deck to enjoy the open air atmosphere. Although the music was played by our DJ throughout the entire cruise, a number of our members became brave in the last hour or so and danced the night away. It looks like we've got some members who have taken some lessons! And for those who weren't captivated by the high energy of the dancers, one of the biggest moons I've seen in a long time captivated the rest of us – and all the photographers on board.

We'd like to thank the following wineries for contributing wines to this event: Peninsula Ridge, Lailey Vineyards, Konzelmann, Flat Rock, Niagara College Teaching Winery, Henry of Pelham, Reif Winery, Cave Spring, Vineland Estates, and 13th Street.

Pictures of the event were taken by just about everyone! But the wonderful selection taken by Bruce Jackson, and can be viewed on the web-site: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/photoshopplake>



News from the Vines

FRED COUCH, OWS – NIAGARA CHAPTER

Calamus Estate Winery has now opened in Niagara. The winery is at 3100 Glen Road in Jordan and is situated just off the traditional wine route, adjacent to the Ball's Falls Conservation area. The winemaker is Arthur Harder. The home of Calamus is in two historic barns originally built in the 1800's. To see photos of the Niagara Chapter's latest events go to: www.flickr.com/photos/photoshopplake. Congratulations to Chef Jason Parsons and his culinary team at Peller Estates Winery who received the highest rating possible by Zagat Survey. The rating was classified as "extraordinary to perfection". The renovated tasting room is now open at Thirty Bench Winery now called "Thirty Bench Wine Makers".

The Webmaster has added these links:

Wineries in Niagara –

Calamus Estate Winery - www.calamuswines.com

Wine Newsletters –

Wine Current - www.winecurrent.com

For more information on the Wine Society events and links to all the wineries, visit the Ontario Wine Society web site at:

<http://www.ontariowinesociety.com/>

Wine Events

Niagara Grape and Wine Festival

September 22 to October 1, 2006

Ontario's biggest annual wine event, the Niagara Grape and Wine festival kicks off its 55th annual event. Two fun-filled weeks in the Niagara region that are sure to delight any culinary traveller. For more information on the festival visit

<http://www.grapeandwine.com/>

Upcoming Festivals

Niagara Icewine Festival
January 19 to 28, 2007

Niagara New Vintage Festival
June 9 to 17, 2007

Winery Events

CAROLINE CELLARS

Wine & Swine

September 30th, 2006, 6:00 p.m.

To celebrate the finale of another Grape and Wine Festival we will be having our annual pig roast under our marquee tent. We will have live music, great food, and fabulous wine. We hope to see you there.

CAVE SPRINGS CELLARS

The Vertical View

September 16-17, 23-24 & 30 -11:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m.

Vintage wine encapsulates an entire year in the bottle. Each week, we will conduct a "vertical" tasting of a single grape variety through its various incarnations over the vintages.

Reservations Required. 905-562-3581, ext. 302

\$15.00/person

Crush 101

October 1, 7-8, 14-15, 21-22 & 28-29

11:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m.

Brix, pH, total acidity, racking...it all sounds complicated. In the midst of harvest learn the ABC's of how grapes are crushed and fermented into wine in a simple and easy to understand way.

Reservations Required. 905-562-3581, ext. 302

\$15.00/person

Cooking Class at Pow - Wow Restaurant

St. Paul St. W., St. Catharines, ON

September 18, 2006

Join Chef Shawn Lane as he leads you through a three course meal complete with a recipe book and helpful hints around the kitchen. Taste the difference from an industry professional! Enjoy wines paired with each course of your meal and receive instructions on pairing wine and food from a winery representative.

This is a fun and informative evening out with spectacular cuisine and wine. A great gift idea or treat yourself and impress your friends with your culinary wizardry!!

Advance Tickets Sales Only!!! \$50.00 per person (taxes and gratuity included)



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EASTDELL ESTATES

Forager's Feast

September 23, 24 & October 1st

The VIEW Restaurant at EastDell Estates presents from forest and field, three courses bursting with rich fall flavours. Each course paired with a sampling of the wine that inspired the recipe. Reservations are required, call 905.563.9463 to reserve. \$65 for festival passport holders, \$70 for non-passport holders. Taxes & gratuities are additional.

FLAT ROCK CELLARS

Taste of Guelph

September 17 - 1:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.

Join Flat Rock Cellars on September 17th for the 9th annual Taste of Guelph in support of Guelph General Hospital and St. Joseph's Health Centre. Taste of Guelph offers sumptuous culinary delights, an array of splendid drinks from over 40 local restaurants, wineries and breweries.

Phone: (519) 767-3424. Cost: \$125

Summerhill Wine Fair

September 17 - 1:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.

Flat Rock Cellars will be one of 10 wineries to provide a sampling opportunity at the Summerhill LCBO. Customers will be issued a passport and receive the opportunity to sample up to 6 of the featured wines. Don't miss out on the chance to try some of the best of what Niagara has to offer.

Savour Niagara

September 20, 2006 - 6:00 p.m. - 10:00 p.m.

An evening of education, activity, adventure and gourmet living! Savour Niagara is a celebration of Niagara's finest wines and foods, combining an evening of tasting with a series of educational seminars and cooking demonstrations featuring cooking and wine celebrities Anna Olson, Host of Sugar, Food Network Canada and "The Matchmaker", Michael Fagan, LCBO Food & Drink Magazine.

Niagara wineries will work together with restaurants to offer a scrumptious tasting of VQA and specialty wines married with fresh flavourful tastes of innovative dishes prepared by the region's most creative chefs. Call to purchase (905) 685-6100. Cost: \$55.00

HARBOUR ESTATES

Rock'n'ribs 2006

September 16 7:00 - 11:00 p.m.

For the fourth year in a row, we are proud to announce that April Wine will again headline Rock'n'Ribs. We received numerous emails asking for them back and the band is more than happy to be back. We are a favourite venue for them. This will be a special year for them as they are about to release a new CD. A great opportunity to have the band sign a copy for you after the show. Rock'n'Ribs is an all you can eat ribfest and concert held on our property in a large tent. All proceeds of the silent auction go to Conservation Niagara Foundation.

You can purchase tickets online at www.hewwine.com/Eventdescriptions/rocknribs.htm. The site is secure, we process your credit card here at the winery. Tickets are \$110 pp plus tax. Each table will seat ten and will be assigned on a first come first serve basis. Don't delay, tickets are already going quickly.

6th Anniversary Party

September 24 - 10:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.

For those of you who have attended in the past, you know this is just a fun easy going day at Harbour. A great time to see what's changed, try some new wines, relax in our park while listening to the grand piano or to just say hello to us. For those of you who have not attended before, it's wine, food, music and fun. Most of 2005 wine releases will be available for tasting that day. Come celebrate with us!

www.hewwine.com/Eventdescriptions/Anniversary.htm

The Great Grape Stomp

September 30 - 12:00 noon - 5:00 p.m.

If you attend this event, you'll never forget it. Get your partner together and register your team. Full information and previous year pictures at

www.hewwine.com/Eventdescriptions/TheGreatGrapeStomp.htm.

A fundraiser for Hospice Niagara. Unless some great news story breaks, Seamus O'Regan of Canada AM will team up with Walter Sendzik to take on the competition.

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HILLEBRAND ESTATES WINERY

Artisans at the Winery

September 23 - 24 - 10:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

This year marks the 12th anniversary of Artisans at the Winery. Browse and shop the handmade wares by some of Canada's talented artists. From fine art to home décor. From apparel to pottery. It is there for you to enjoy at Hillebrand Winery in the heart of Niagara-on-the-Lake wine country. A celebration of great wine, food and art. Call 1-800-582-8412 or visit Hillebrand.com for further information.

KONZELMANN ESTATE WINERY

Harvestfest BBQ 2006

September 29 - 11:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

Join us at Niagara's exclusive lakefront winery and enjoy an outdoor BBQ featuring authentic German Oktoberfest sausage paired with a glass of Konzelmann wine.

Adults \$6.00, kids \$4.00 (sausage & pop).

LAKEVIEW CELLARS

Winemaker's Dinner - 15 Years in the Making

September 30 - 7:00 p.m.

Join founding winemaker, Eddy Gurinkas and our winemaking team: Tom Green, Jason Roller and Scott McGregor as they guide you through five exquisite courses paired with vintage wines from our library. An exclusive opportunity to taste our Limited Edition, 15th Anniversary Syrah Reserve. \$100 for festival passport holders, \$110 for non-passport holders.

Reservations are required as seating is limited to 40 people. Call 905.562.5685 ext. 233 to make a reservation or email us at LVretail@lakeviewcellars.ca

15th Anniversary Celebration

October 14 - 11:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

Stop by Lakeview Cellars and sample some fine wines from our library. A chance to meet founding winemaker Eddy Gurinkas and our current winemaking team, Tom Green, Jason Roller & Scott McGregor. No charge for admission. Visit www.lakeviewcellars.ca or call (905) 562-5685 x227 for details.

MALETA WINERY

Join The Grape Brain Gang

September 22-October 1 - 10:30 a.m. - 5:30 p.m.

Complimentary tastes of Maleta's Red, White & Rosé Grape Brain wine series, featuring a refreshing Riesling, a charming Rosé and a complex Cabernet-Merlot. Food pairing included.

Free for Festival Passport Holders. \$3.00pp without Passport.

Trio of Sleeping Giants

September 23, 24, 30 and October 1

10:30a.m. - 5:30 p.m.

Take flight with complimentary tastes of Maleta's elegant 2003, 2002 and 2001 Meritage, our Big Red, Bordeaux-style Cabernet-Merlot. Food pairing included.

Free for Festival Passport Holders; \$3.00pp without Passport.

PELLER ESTATES

Andrew Peller Signature Series Wine Release

Celebrate Winemaking Excellence as Peller Estates releases its award winning Andrew Peller Signature Series Chardonnay 'Sur Lie' 2004. The wine has received accolades from Canadian and international wine experts. Tasting of back vintage and current vintage Andrew Peller Signature Series Chardonnay.

\$10.00 per guest, complimentary to Wine Club Members

PILLITTERI ESTATES WINERY

Naturally Niagara, A Bistro Experience

September 22 & 23 - 12:00 noon to 4:00 p.m.

September 30 & October 1 - 12:00 noon to 4:00 p.m.

The Pillitteri patio presents a mouth - watering menu from Old Town's, "The Epicurean". Chef John Woods features savoury seasonal offerings, finishing off with a delicious dessert. Reservations recommended.

Lunch \$20.00 per person (includes a glass of our premium wine)

Vineyard Trolley Tour and Tasting

September 22 & 23 - 12:00 noon, 1:00, 2:00, & 3:00 pm

September 30th & October 1st, 12:00 noon, 1:00, 2:00 & 3:00 pm

Enjoy a guided Trolley Tour of our scenic vineyard followed by walking tour of our production facility and beautiful barrel cellar. Savour two premium wines paired with complementing appetizers in our Hospitality Room



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overlooking our picturesque vineyard.
The tasting concludes with the world's best
Icewine.

\$10.00 per person – Reservations recommended

Savour Niagara

September 20 2006

Four Points by Sheraton, Thorold

Savour Niagara is a celebration of Niagara's finest wines and foods, combining an evening of tasting with a series of educational seminars and cooking demonstrations featuring cooking and wine celebrities Anna Olson, Host of Sugar, Food Network Canada and Proprietor of Olson Foods + Bakery and 'The Matchmaker', Michael Fagan, LCBO Food & Drink Magazine.

Visit the Pillitteri table and enjoy a scrumptious tasting of VQA wines married with fresh flavourful tastes of innovative dishes prepared by the region's most creative chefs.

REIF ESTATE WINERY

Artisan Wine & Cheese Seminar

October 14 - 5:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.

Exclusive to Wine Club Members - JOIN NOW - Membership is free

Join us for an evening of wine and cheese lead by resident Sommelier Carol LePage and Lori Elstone of Deluca's Cheesemarket and Deli to explore the cause and effect of pairing artisan cheeses with Reif Estate Wines. The tasting will include pairings of limited edition wines with artisan cheeses followed by a private book signing with Gurth Pretty author of The Definitive Guide to Canadian Artisanal and Fine Cheese where each guest will receive a copy of this fabulous new publication. Reservations required.

Cost: \$39.95 per person. Telephone 905-468-WINE or email events@reifwinery.com

Never have a small glass of port, my lad. It just goes wambling around looking for damage to do. Have a large glass. It settles down and does you good.

ADVICE FROM LORD GODDARD

STONEY RIDGE CELLARS

Igluu wine BBQ

September 16 - 17

Sample our award winning igluu late harvest wines with cheeses and Chocolate. Live entertainment on the patio and deck with a Bbq lunch

\$10.00 passport holders. \$15.00 non passport holders

Summerhill Toronto LCBO wine fair

LCBO event under the tent – Toronto

September 16 2:00 -7:00 p.m.

Niagara Wine Festival

September 15 - 24

Passport weekend at Montebello Park

igluu wine bbq

September 23 - 24

Sample our award winning igluu late harvest wines with cheeses and Chocolate. Live entertainment on the patio and deck with a Bbq lunch

\$10.00 passport holders. \$15.00 non passport holders

Stars are out in the Vineyard Film Festival

September 23

Dinner and Movie on the lawn - Under the Tuscan sun
\$40.00 per person. \$35.00 with passport

Wine Makers Dinner Four Seasons Hotel – Yorkville

September 27 - 6:30 p.m. - 10:00 p.m.

October 25 - 6:30 p.m. - 10:00 p.m.

Call for reservations. \$125.00 per person

Winemakers Luncheon

September 30 - 12:00 noon - 2:00 p.m.

October 1 - 12:00 noon - 2:00 p.m.

Gourmet luncheon in the renovated barrel room with our chief winemaker. Sample the 2005 reserve wines from the barrel before bottling

\$40.00 per person. \$35.00 with passport

Cranberry Festival Weekend

October 7 - 9

Staff cranberry baked goods competition - "you be the judge". Benefits to the Kidney association charity

For reservations for any of the above events call toll free 1866 778 6639 x25 or 905 562 1324 x 25rr e-mail store@stoneyr ridge.com

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SOUTHBROOK WINERY

Fall Dinner Dance Extravaganza

September 22 - 7:00 p.m. Dinner - 7:30 p.m.
Buffet Menu includes Top Sirloin of Beef au Jus, Slow Roasted Succulent Pig Roast, Home style Apple Sauce & Garlic Aioli Sauce, B.B.Q. Chicken

Includes 3 glasses of wine per ticket purchase with a take home Souvenir Wine glass

Ticket Cost: \$59.95/+gst/pst. per person

Gather your friends, book a table for 8 and receive a Complementary Private Group Wine Tour & Tasting Certificate Value \$150.00

For information please call or email Cathy (905) 832-2548 Ext. 242 cathy@southbrook.com 1061 Major Mackenzie Dr. between Bathurst & Dufferin

Other Winery Events

BLACK PRINCE WINERY

A KNIGHT's KRUSH, a celebration of the fruits of our labour - September 30- 2:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Fly-In Wine Makers Dinnern September 30 - 6:30pm

Contact Carrie at Black Prince Winery
ctaylor@blackprincewinery.com

CREEKSIDE ESTATES

Autumn Stroll – Dundas Conservation Area

September 17th 2006 - 1:00 to 5:00 pm

Ticket Price: \$110.00 To order call 905.648.2999 or visit:
http://www.ancasterrotaryam.com/autumnstrol_main_06.html

Savour Niagara

September 20th 2006 - 6:00 to 10:00pm

<http://www.sbcn.ca/events/savourniagara.html>

Tickets: \$55.00 per person.

Tastings from the Underground

September 23 - 24, 30 - October 1st

12:00 noon to 4:00 pm

Fee: \$2 for Grape and Wine passport holders, \$5 for non-passport holders.

FEATHERSTONE WINERY

Mad about Mushrooms

September 16 - 17 - 11:00 am - 4:00 pm
\$3.00 per person

Wine Seminar: Tongue and Cheek

September 16 at 11:00 a.m.

September 17 at 1:00 pm

\$10.00 per person, max 15 people per session.

Food Celebration: The Perfect Pearing

October 21 - 22 - 11:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. \$3.00 per person

Wine Seminar: Harvest Happenings

October 21 at 11:00 a.m.. October 22 at 1:00 p.m.

\$10.00 per person, max 15 people per session.

Please call ahead to reserve: 905-562-1949

INNISKILLIN ICEWINE BAR

Every day 11:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.

Icewine - All Wine For All Seasons

September 23 - 7:00 p.m.

\$150.00 plus taxes and gratuities. To reserve your tickets please call 1-905-468-2187 Ext 323

Legends On The Lake

September 27 - 6:00 p.m. - -9:30 p.m.

\$135 per ticket

Raising Funds for Canoe Kayak Canada and Rowing Canada You can also visit www.LegendsOnTheLake.ca for more information and topurchase tickets.

NORMAN HARDIE WINERY & VINEYARD

The Release of our First Riesling

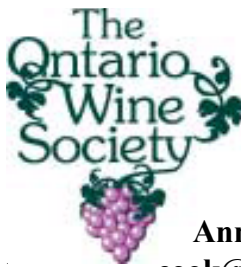
Please contact Norm Hardie at 613 827 1204 or norm@normanhardie.com.

Riverview Cellars Winery

Grape & Wine Tastings

September 22 - October 1 - 10:00 a.m. - 7:00 p.m.

\$4 for non-passport holders.



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STRATUS WINES

Anna and Michael Olson

cook@stratus

September 16 - 6:30 pm

Seating is limited. \$100 plus taxes and gratuities

2 signature wines, 2 vintages, 2 o'clock

September 22, October 13, 2006

\$20.00 per person

STONECHURCH VINEYARDS

Cycling Tour

September 17th – 12:00 – 5:00 pm.

For more information call 1-866-935-3500 x228

Stargazing in the Vineyards

September 30th – BBQ starts at 6:30pm and the evening ends when your neck is stiff from looking up!

Wine and Wellness

October 12th – 5:00 – 9:00pm.

Meet the Experts to Health, Beauty and Longevity.

Minimum \$5.00 / person donation to charity upon arrival.

Pre-registration is required by calling Lisa at 905-935-3535 x228.

Latino Night

Saturday, October 21st

Entrance fee of \$25.00/person includes one glass of wine and food. Limited space available. Please call to register. 905-935-3535 x228 or 1-866-935-3500 x228.

Experience the Variety Event

October 28 – 1:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.

There is a \$15.00/person charge with proceeds to the Heart & Stoke Foundation. Please register by contacting Lisa at 905-935-3535 x228 or 1-866-935-3500 x228

Stargazing in the Vineyards.

October 28 - BBQ starts at 6:30 p.m. There is no admission fee or registration required.

Wine Trade Winds Diary for Summer 2006

DEAN TUDOR, GOTHIC EPICURES WRITING

Colio Estate Wines has a re-launch of their terrific CEV Merlot Reserve 2002 Barrel Aged, 13% alcohol. It had cleaned up with all sorts of top prizes or “bests” in 2005. At \$24.95, it is approachable, with black currants, fruity, and some jam, almost cabernet sauvignon-like. The 2005 Colio Estate Riesling from Lake Erie North Shore was a summer charmer.

For the intensely curious amongst us, Flat Rock Cellars has announced a most perfect Christmas gift (my designation, not theirs). They want you to experience the new Clone Research Pack 2004, to learn about the differences between pinot noir clones through a tasting of three distinct Dijon clones. They claim to have vinified each clone to bring out a true, individual varietal character. Sort of a sub-MVC of the pinot noir profile. In addition, it has all been gently handled, including gravity flow over five-levels. The pack includes one bottle of each 2004 clone (#115, #667, and #777) plus one bottle of the final blend, Gravity 2004. The price is \$110 and it comes in a nice presentation package with notes. I still remember Three Guys Pinot, a collection of three different pinots from the same year (2000, I think) made from the grapes of the same vineyard. One came from John at Marynissen, one from Eddie at Lakeview, and one from Jim at Stoney Ridge. There was a fourth bottle in the pack, which was a wooden case: Three Guys Pinot Noir. This was a blend, one-third from each winemaker. I remember liking Jim's the best, followed by the blend. It sold for \$100, so we're only looking at an increase of \$10 for this kind of pack. At Flat Rock Cellars, Ed Madronich has fashioned his blend from the three clones, but he's not saying what the proportion are. You can figure it out by simply tasting the wines. One clone shows earthy aromas, mint and dried fruit. Another shows beetroot and smoke. A third shows “sweet exploding aroma of ripe red cherries, raspberries, violets and just-ripe strawberries”. One clone is definitely North American in style, another mushroomy and underbrush - not quite the merde - while the third seems to be elegantly Burgundian. A great game to play with five or six friends: just split the cost. For details, try www.flatrockcellars.com or 905-562-8994.