



2020 WINE REPORT

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ONTARIO WINERIES COME UP BIG DONATING \$30,000 IN WINE TO THE CANADIAN CULINARY CHAMPIONSHIPS



by David Lawrason

This year the Canadian Culinary Championships were held in Ottawa for the first time, and Ontario wineries responded magnificently, offering guests their best over three days of events. The donation by 22 wineries of almost 1,200 bottles of premium wine, was the largest in 14-year history of the Canadian Culinary Championships. The estimated value of the donations was about \$30,000, which reduced costs and increased revenues to our three beneficiaries that support youth endeavours in the fields of music, athletics and food health: Music Counts, B2Ten and Canada Community Food Centres.

In moving to Ottawa we faced a new situation where many of the wines that had been paired with gold medal chefs in other cities were not listed in Ontario, and could not be imported through the LCBO Private Order system in time to be served at the events. Likewise, if wineries from outside of Ontario might have wanted to donate to the VIP Receptions they could only do so with stock already landed and listed in Ontario, of which stocks were minimal. This meant that Ontario wineries were called on more to donate, and they came through big-time!

The logistics of shipping, organizing and distributing the wines to four different venues were challenging, but graciously and efficiently handled by Lisa Pasin of Canada's Great Kitchen Party, staff of the Shaw Centre in Ottawa, plus volunteers Kim Kriese who flew in from the Okanagan to help out, and Krista Benoit of ISpark Consulting in Ottawa.

In all I presided over six events involving Canadian wine, with over 1000 guests (and judges) involved, making the CCC Weekend the largest consumer showcase of Canadian wine in the nation. Here is a synopsis of the major events.

Please note the vast majority of the wines listed in the following articles are fully rated and reviewed at WineAlign.com.

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THE GREAT KITCHEN PARTY WINE OF THE YEAR

At the Grand Finale Competition on February 1st I announced the Kitchen Party Wine of the Year as well as the first and second runners-up. The winning wine for the second year in a row (with a different vintage) was **Charles Baker 2016 Picone Vineyard Riesling** from Niagara's Vinemount Ridge - of which more in a moment. The first runner-up was **L'Acadie Vineyards 2007 Prestige Brut Extended Tirage** from Nova Scotia's Gaspereau Valley. The second runner up was **Le Clos Jordanne 2017 Le Grand Clos Chardonnay** from Niagara's Twenty Mile Bench.

There were 12 wines entered in the Wine of the Year Competition (see below). Eight had won Best of Show in their respective regional competitions across Canada. Four were added during a judging of the 33 different wines poured during the CCC weekend in Ottawa. The finals judging took place at the Lord Elgin Hotel on February 1st, where I was joined by **five other judges**.

Volunteering their time and talents, WineAlign National Wine Awards of Canada judge **Janet Dorozynski** is a wine writer and Canada's top wine diplomat at Global Affairs, ensuring that Canadian wine is appreciated in our embassies and at dinners and trade fairs around the world. From the west we were joined by super-palate and international judge **Sid Cross** of Vancouver, as well as **Mary Bailey** of Edmonton who publishes a blog called The Tomato Food and Wine. There were two new judges this year. **Veronique Rivest** was Canada's Best Sommelier in 2016 and owns the very cool Soif a Vin wine bar in Gatineau. And from Moncton **Tammy Brideau** a sommelier and educator who is key to burgeoning culinary scene in New Brunswick in her role as Director of Food and Beverage Atlantic.

The winner, **Charles Baker 2016 Picone Riesling**, wowed the panel with its riesling veracity, intensity and depth. It was one of those wines that commands your full attention, shocking with its



presence then drawing you deep into its layers, and not letting go on the finish for a matter of minutes. From old vines atop the Niagara Escarpment it is made at Stratus Vineyards by marketing director Charles Baker, who specializes in old vine rieslings alone. It won Best of Show at the Toronto Kitchen Party in October.

L'Acadie Vineyards 2007 Prestige Brut "Extended Tirage" was "re-released" for the Halifax Kitchen Party after several years ageing on its lees in bottle.

Based on the high acid L'Acadie Blanc grape that has found a home in Nova Scotia, it was a wonderfully mature wine, firm, dry and lean and roiling with complexities of nuts, lemon, toast that again showed incredible length. I was reminded of an old, riveting white Rioja.

Le Clos Jordanne 2017 Le Grand Clos Chardonnay is a wonderfully elegant, layered Burgundian style chardonnay that was released last fall by parent Arterra Wines. It certainly has the depth and complexity to be compared to top white Burgundy, but I find it more like an oaked Grand Cru Chablis more than a wine from the Cotes de Beaune. From maturing vines on a bench near the village of Jordan it was made by star Niagara winemaker Thomas Bachelder. There is a long history to this project that can be found at <https://www.winealign.com/articles/2019/11/28/le-clos-jordanne-a-winery-profile>. It was poured during the Mystery Wine Reception and the Grand Finale Celebration.

Several other wines finished in the top rankings of the judges, including the powerful, complex barrel-aged Stratus 2016 White; the rich, layered yet streamlined Domaine Queylus 2017 Cabernet Franc Reserve, the brisk, elegant Fitzpatrick 2015 Fitz Brut from the Okanagan, and the sharp, surprisingly complex and detailed KIN Vineyards 2018 Carp Ridge Chardonnay, the first estate-grown chardonnay from the Ottawa Valley.

THE CANADIAN BIG REDS TASTING

On Thursday, January 30 I conducted a tutored tasting featuring ten Canadian wines built on the Bordeaux model – which combines grape varieties like cabernet sauvignon, merlot, cabernet franc and others. The tasting was for guests of the CCC from across Canada who had purchased the weekend package, plus local wine media. As well some winemakers were in attendance.

THE WINE OF THE YEAR FINALISTS

(in order of tasting)

Fitzpatrick Winery 2015 Fitz Brut, Okanagan Valley, BC

L'Acadie Vineyards 2007 Brut Prestige Extended Tirage, Gaspereau Valley, NS

Motts Landing Brut Prestige Traditional Method, Saint John River Valley, NB

Mission Hill 2018 Reserve Pinot Gris, Okanagan Valley, BC

Charles Baker 2016 Riesling Picone Vineyard, Vinemount Ridge, ON

KIN Vineyards 2018 Carp Ridge Chardonnay, Ottawa Valley, ON

Closson Chase 2017 South Clos Chardonnay, Prince Edward County, ON

Le Clos Jordanne 2017 Le Grand Clos Chardonnay, Twenty Mile Bench, ON

Mission Hill 2017 Perpetua Chardonnay, Okanagan Valley, BC

Stratus 2016 White, Niagara-on-the-Lake, ON

50th Parallel 2017 Pinot Noir, Okanagan Valley, BC

Domaine Queylus 2017 Cabernet Franc Reserve, Lincoln Lakeshore, ON

As with other events, Ontario wines dominated the line-up with just one wine from B.C., which has a big reputation for big reds. There is long-standing debate about Ontario's role as a source of big reds, as the climate is not as ideal (as the southern Okanagan) for getting these grapes ripe. That said, Ontario's climate more closely resembles Bordeaux than B.C.s, with hits warm, humid summers and harvest often extending

well into October. Not only do Niagara reds resemble Bordeaux in their youth, they age very well, often showing their best at ten years or more.

There was no judgment on the wines. We did not pick favourites or rank them. But commentary that followed tended to be along the lines that the guests were surprised by the quality and found that they actually enjoyed the lighter style and tension of the Ontario wines. Then again, there were some who preferred the much “bigger and riper” B.C. wine, admitting they were California wine drinkers.

I won't go into wine by wine description here, but I did set up the tasting somewhat on climatic and vintage lines. We began with a very fragrant, juicy cabernet franc by **Potter Settlement**, grown on its property near Tweed in Hastings County in central Ontario. Then came two blends made by Prince Edward County wineries – **Karlo 2017 Quintus** and **Rosehall Run 2016 Certain Ratio** - including fruit from Niagara, that were definitely on the leaner, greener side, yet nicely balanced. Then a pair of moderately-priced, long standing red from larger wineries in Niagara-on-the-Lake, including the 25th Anniversary Edition of **Trius 2017 Red Icon**, and **Jackson-Triggs 2016 Grand Reserve Meritage** – both being solid, well-balanced age-worthy examples.

From there prices moved upscale and into the warm 2016 vintage. **Hidden Bench 2016 Terroir Cache**, from the Beamsville Bench and **Stratus 2016 Red** from Niagara-on-the-Lake, are considered state-of-the-art for this style in Niagara and they didn't disappoint, with more weight, ripeness and depth and well defined, bright fruit.

The last three wines jumped even farther in price, up into the \$75 to \$100 range, which is pretty much the ceiling in Ontario. **Domaine Queylus 2006 Summus** was a single barrel merlot-cab franc blend that wowed the crowd. **Two Sisters 2013 Stone Eagle** was the most mature and perhaps refined wine, while **Mission Hill 2014 Quatrain** clearly demonstrated the BC ripeness and richness advantage. It was argued by some that it was almost too big, but again others liked it best.

As always, the outcome of such tastings is subjective, but for virtually everyone in the room except the winemakers perhaps, it was the first time they had done this kind of comparison, and the wines proved to be something of a revelation. And again, all the wines were donated to the cause.

Many thanks to our pourers – Janet Dorozynski of Ottawa, Tammy Brideau of Moncton and Kim Kriese, a CCC veteran from Kelowna who flew to Ottawa to



help out. And thanks also to Lord Elgin Hotel Chef Rene Rodriguez, Top Chef Canada 2014, for an array of excellent appetizers that kept guests in their seats at the end of the tasting.

The Winners Circle Chefs and Judges Reception

On the evening of January 30 over 200 invited guests filled the grand foyer of Ottawa City Hall for a reception that welcomed the twelve competing chefs, the twelve culinary judges, six wine judges and dozens of students and invited dignitaries. Six wineries also jumped at the chance to pour for this event. And it turned out to be not only a showcase of excellent wines, but somewhat eclectic wines as well, with two wineries from new 'emerging' Ontario regions, two from Prince Edward and two from Niagara.

The evening was a coming out for KIN Vineyards of nearby Carp, Ontario, who poured their first estate-grown, seriously structured and deep **KIN 2018 Carp Ridge Chardonnay** and very light, fragrant **KIN 2018 Carp Ridge Pinot Noir**. To my knowledge they are the first bottled Ottawa Valley chardonnay and pinot noir, and they received an excellent reception, with the Chardonnay making it all the way to the Wine of the Year finals. It was also the first time many had experienced Potter Settlement who poured a juicy estate-grown **Potter Settlement 2018 Marquette** and a perfumed **2018 Gewurztraminer**.

From Prince Edward County **Karlo Estates** turned heads by pouring their 2017 Estate Malbec, again the first ever malbec grown in PEC. They also poured an intriguing, well-balanced and very well received white blend **2017 Three Witches**, cleverly made by blending semillon, sauvignon blanc and gewurztraminer. **Rosehall Run** from PEC stepped up big time with their top wrung **JCR 2017 Chardonnay** and **2017 Pinot Noir**, wines that to my mind have become delicious, refined County standards.

From Niagara the crowds got a special treat tasting **Stratus Vineyards 2016 White**, a complex, powerful, barrel aged blend that went to become a Wine of the Year finalist, finishing 4th. It was accompanied by the fine **Stratus 2017 Weather Report Cabernet Franc**. And last but not least **Domaine Quelyus 2017 Tradition Chardonnay** and **2017 Cabernet Franc Reserve** highlighted the great work being done by winemaker Kelly Mason at this seriously good new property. The Cabernet Franc Reserve also made it to the Wine of the Year finals, finishing 5th.

The evening ended with the presentation of the Mystery wine to the competing chefs. Each unmarked bottle arrived in a wooden case, opened with ceremony on stage. The chefs quickly surmised it was red, and they were off to taste it in preparation for the first leg of the competition.

CLOSSON CHASE PINOT NOIR WOWS AT MYSTERY WINE COMPETITION

On Friday night Jan 31, within the soaring, spectacular Canadian Aviation and Space Museum in Rockcliffe, over 300 guests arrived to partake in the first of the CCC competitions. The night before at the Winners' Circle Reception each of the competing chefs had been given an unmarked bottle of the Mystery Wine.

Their mission was to assess the wine, arrive at a pairing decision and then create a matching dish.

The Mystery Wine this night was from Prince Edward County – **Closson Chase 2017 Pinot Noir** – which was wholly donated in truly magnanimous quantities to the

event. In my view it is a County classic in a vintage that was straight-arrow Ontario – neither too warm or too cool – a vintage where whites and lighter reds flourish. The nose bristled with fine sour cran-cherry, oak spice and gentle herbs. It was light to mid-weight, lean but not austere with very good fruit depth.

But this was not the only wine in the room. Eight other Ontario wineries showed up with an avant garde selection of what's new and interesting.

And starting on a very local note, **KIN Vineyards** of Carp poured Ontario VQA chardonnay and pinot noir made from Niagara fruit, while awaiting their home vineyards to come on line. From down the Highways 416/401 into Prince Edward County, I was delighted to see **Stanners Vineyard** step up with their amazing 2017 Narrow Rows Pinot Noir, which personally was among my top three wines of the CCC events – great aromatic lift, complexity and tension. Stanners also poured an idiosyncratic Pinot Gris with extended skin contact creating a rose-like hue. Also from the County, **Karlo Estates** poured the same Bewitching White and Estate Malbec as they did at the Winners Circle Reception.

From Niagara, for the first time, we were very pleased to welcome Two Sisters of Niagara-on-the-Lake. Designed to make “big reds” from a warmer, later ripening enclave, their **Two Sisters 2016 Eleventh Post** showed impressive complexity and depth, and the **2017 Unoaked Chardonnay** from Niagara Escarpment was very poised. **Domaine Queylus 2017 Le Grande Reserve Merlot** was a blockbuster, intriguingly complex and powerful, finishing among my favourites of the weekend; while the rich, elegant **Domaine Queylus 2017 Limited Edition Chardonnay** placed likewise with other judges.

Arterra Wines turned out to be the largest single donor of the entire weekend with several cases spread



out among its various brands, including Jackson-Triggs, Inniskillin, Le Clos Jordanne and the new Arterra line itself. The stand out this night was **Le Clos Jordanne 2017 Le Grand Clos Chardonnay**, a supremely rich yet sophisticated wine that ended up placing third in the Wine of the Year judging (above). **Inniskillin 2016 Cabernet Franc Reserve** is a classic cab franc, Ontario's number one red variety. And we were also treated to the quite rare, smoky, brooding **Jackson-Triggs 2017 Grand Reserve Shiraz**.

THE GRAND FINALE AND CELEBRATION FEATURED 14 WINERIES

The third floor of the Shaw Centre was aglow as the 12 competing chefs presented their last hurrahs. As mentioned, in previous years each chef featured a paired wine poured right at their stations for the guests to enjoy. This year there was not enough time to get those chef-winning wines imported into Ontario if they were not already listed here. So instead, two wine stations were created in the centre of the room to pour donated wines. It worked well enough, and gave the wineries good exposure, but I missed the element of tasting the pairing. Next year we will have to find a solution in partnership with the LCBO.

Many of the wines were also featured on the Celebration tables as guests were seated to enjoy athlete presentations, auctions and a great performance by B.C. based musicians Bill Henderson of Chilliwack and Barney Bentall.

A total of 14 wineries donated to this massive event, with over 700 guests. Again the vast majority were from Ontario, although last minute efforts by Quails' Gate of BC rounded up enough quantity of their LCBO-listed, generously fruited **Quails' Gate 2018 Chardonnay**. The Grand Finale bubbly was a crisp, dry Rosehall Run Ceremony. Other Whites included, the rich, smooth **Domaine Queylus 2017 Chardonnay Reserve** (that had been poured with Toronto Chef Keith Pears of W); the very fine, tensile **Closson Chase 2017 South Clos Chardonnay** (originally paired with

Saskatoon chef Darren Craddock); the lively **Flat Rock 2018 Chardonnay**, the zesty **Thirty Bench 2018 Winemaker's Riesling**, the juicy, herbal Jackson-Triggs 2018 Grande Reserve Sauvignon Blanc; and the very elegant, French barrel-aged **Huff Estate 2017 South Bay Chardonnay** from a maturing vineyard site on the shores of Lake Ontario in Prince Edward County.

Reds at the Grand Finale included an historic bottling. **Karlo Estates 2018 Marquette** is the first wine made from a new Minnesota bred cold-hardy grape variety called marquette that has been authorized by Ontario's VQA program. Three fine pinot noirs graced the Celebration: the bright, juicy **Huff Estate 2017 South Bay Pinot Noir**, a suave smooth **Westcott Vineyard 2016 Pinot Noir** from Niagara's Vinemount Ridge, the new smooth, almost off dry California-like **Arterra 2016 Pinot Noir Special Edition**. Other fuller reds included the swarthy yet smooth **Henry of Pelham 2018 Old Vines Baco Noir**, the stalwart, well balanced **Trius 2017 Red Icon** (also poured at the Big Reds Tasting) and the plummy **Jackson-Triggs 2016 Grande Reserve Merlot**.

All in all the wine program at first Canadian Culinary Championships in Ottawa was a roaring success. As I said in my final address at the Celebration. "It is the country's largest consumer showcase of Canadian wine. And there has been so much good wine".

On behalf of those who have created Canada's Kitchen Party, and its beneficiaries, my sincere thank you to all the wineries and local brewers and distillers who so generously shared some of Canada's best.

— David Lawrason

THE COMPLETE LIST OF 74 CANADIAN WINERIES Plus 22 Breweries, Cideries and Distilleries at Canada's Great Kitchen Party Events 2019 & Canadian Culinary Championships 2020

THE WINERIES

Mission Hill Family Estate Winery

National Sponsor

Andrew Peller Limited

National Sponsor

50th Parallel Estate Winery

Arterra Wines

Benjamin Bridge

Black Hills Estate Winery

Black Market Vineyards

Burrowing Owl Estate Winery

Cave Spring Cellars

CC Jentch Cellars

CedarCreek Estate Winery

Charles Baker Wines

Checkmate Artisanal Winery

Clos du Soleil Winery

Closson Chase Vineyards

Culmina Family Estate

Dirty Laundry Vineyard

Domaine de Grand Pre

Domaine Queylus

Evolve Cellars

Fitzpatrick Winery

Flat Rock Cellars

A Foreign Affair Winery

The Hatch Winery

Henry of Pelham Estate Winery

Hidden Bench Estate Winery

Honsberger Estate Winery

Howling Bluff Estate Winery

Huff Estates Winery

Indigenous World Winery

Inniskillin Wines

Jackson-Triggs (Grand Reserve)

KIN Vineyards

Karlo Estates

L'Acadie Vineyards

La Stella Winery

Lake Breeze Vineyards

Le Clos Jordanne

Lightfoot & Wolfville Vineyards

Little Engine Wines

Luckett Vineyards

Magnetic Hill Winery

Martins Lane Winery

Motts Landing

Nighthawk Vineyards

Nk'Mip Cellars

Orofino Winery

O'Rourke Peak Cellars

Pelee Island Winery

Potter Settlement Vineyards

& Artisan Winery

Quails' Gate Estate Winery

Peller Estates Winery

Red Rooster Winery

Redstone Winery

Richibucto River Wine Estate

Rosehall Run Vineyards

Sandhill Wines

Spearhead Winery

Stanners Vineyard

Stoneboat Vineyards

Stratus Vineyards

Summerhill Pyramid Winery

Tantalus Vineyards

Tawse Winery

TH Wines

Thirty Bench Wine Makers

Tinhorn Creek Vineyards

Trius Wines

Two Sisters Vineyards

Van Westen Vineyards

The View Winery & Vineyard

Wayne Gretzky Estates

Westcott Vineyards

BREWERIES, CIDERIES AND DISTILLERIES

Annapolis Cider Company, Wolfville NS

Banff Ave Brewing Company, Banff AB

Beaus Brewery, Ottawa

Brasseux d'la Cote Brewers,
Tracadie-Sheila NB

Breton Brewing, Sydney NS

Cannery Brewing Company,
Penticton BC

Coldstream Clear Distillery,
Stewiacke NS

Collective Arts Brewing, Calgary

Eau Claire Distillery, Calgary

Great Western Brewing, Calgary

Grimross Brewing, Fredericton NB

Jasper Brewing Company, Jasper AB

Landwash Brewery, Mount Pearl NF

Matron Fine Beer, Bloomfield ON

Muskoka Brewery, Gravenhurst ON

Okanagan Spirits, Kelowna BC

Provisions Brewing, Calgary

Quidi Vidi Brewery, Quidi Vidi NF

Saltbox Brewery, Mahone Bay NS

SCOW Cider, Moncton NB

Stillwell Brewing, Halifax

Zirkova Vodka (Canadian Owned)