

Toronto Wine Report - 2023

By David Lawrason, National Wine Advisor

One of Canada's greatest chardonnays took top honours at the Toronto edition of Canada's Great Kitchen Party Nov 9 at The Carlu. It was up against a very strong line-up of top Canadian wines donated to the event, and the scoring was close. But for me it was the tender tension, minerality and outstanding length from this fine site that sealed the deal. The Silver went to Thirty Bench 2020 Small Lots Cabernet Franc, a stunningly complete and authentic Ontario take on this grape. The Bronze went to Bachelder 2021 Wismer-Parke Pinot Noir, a nervy yet delicate Niagara classic. Others well deserving honourable mention, separated by one point each, included King + Victoria 2020 Pinot Noir, Kirby Estate 2020 Merlot Reserve and Kacaba 2020 Syrah Reserve.

The Best of Show Wine Competition is held to bring notice to wineries who donate to this event, both to the chefs for their pairings and to the VIP Reception and Celebration portions of the evening. The event at The Carlu on November 9 was a true, high-energy party, and the wine selection was the strongest to date in Toronto. There were 21 different wines poured this evening, with many of the VIP and Celebration wines being previous gold medal winners at the WineAlign National Wine Awards of Canada.

The Gold Medal wine goes on to compete for Wine of the Year at Canadian Culinary Championships in Ottawa in Feb 2024. Two other Toronto wines scored very highly but had already earned a berth in other cities. L'Acadie Vineyards 2020 Vintage Brut from Nova Scotia and Rosehall Run 2020 St. Cindy Pinot Noir from Prince Edward County

The judges in Toronto included the entire WineAlign critics corps: Sara d'Amato, John Szabo MS, Michael Godel and Megha Jandhyala. All are judges with the National Wine Awards of Canada. Here is the complete list of wines poured in Toronto, with deepest thanks to the wineries for donating some of their finest

VIP Reception Wines

L'Acadie Vineyards 2020 Vintage Cuvee Brut, Nova Scotia
Quails' Gate 2021 Estate Chardonnay, Okanagan Valley
Rosehall Run 2020 St. Cindy Pinot Noir, Pince Edward Country
King+Victoria 2020 Pinot Noir, Twenty Mile Bench
Bachelder 2021 Wismer-Parke Pinot Noir, Twenty Mile Bench
Kacaba 2020 Reserve Syrah, Niagara Peninsula
Sprucewood Shores 2020 Reserve Merlot, Lake Erie North Shore

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CELEBRATION WINES

Trius Showcase Watching Tree Vineyard Blanc de Blancs, Niagara Peninsula
Le Clos Jordanne 2020 Le Grand Clos Chardonnay, Twenty Mile Bench
Bachelder 2020 Grimsby Hillside Frontier Block Chardonnay, Lincoln Lakeshore
Le Clos Jordanne 2020 Le Grand Clos Pinot Noir, Twenty Mile Bench
Lailey Stonebridge 2020 Merlot Reserve, Four Mile Creek
Kirby Estate 2020 Merlot Reserve, Niagara Lakeshore
Thirty Bench 2020 Small Lots Cabernet Franc, Beamsville Bench

CHEF PAIRED WINES

Leaning Post 2021 The Fifty Pinot Noir, Niagara Peninsula
Big Head 2019 Raw Riesling, Creek Shores
Charles Baker 2020 Riesling Ivan Vineyard, Twenty Mile Bench
Westcott Vineyards 2022 Violette Brut, Niagara Peninsula
Flat Rock 2021 Riesling, Niagara Peninsula
Stratus ALTO 2021 Assemblage, Niagara Peninsula
Closson Chase 2021 Churchside Pinot Noir, Prince Edward County