

CANADA'S GREAT KITCHEN PARTY 2023 AND THE CANADIAN CULINARY CHAMPIONSHIP 2024

WINE REPORT

By David Lawrason, National Wine Advisor



The ten regional KP events in 2023, plus the 2024 Canadian Culinary Championship, drew record donations by Canadian wineries, with all being wines at premium to super-premium levels, and many being Gold Medal winners at the **WineAlign National Wine Awards of Canada**. In all, 65 wineries donated almost 300 cases. At an average price of \$35 per bottle the total value of the donations is estimated to be \$105,000.

The magnitude of this donation, and the fact that the events were attended by about 4,000 people across the country make this the Canada's largest showcase for Canadian wine, and the largest collective charitable undertaking by Canada's wineries. KP beneficiaries include MusiCounts, SpiritNorth and local youth food security initiatives in participating cities.

The number of different wines poured this year – 110 - was also larger due to a strategy to ask each winery for less, spread the donations among a larger number, and include new wineries. This was partially in response to the crop shortages that faced Okanagan wineries in 2023, but we also wanted to bring in new wineries and diversify the experiences of our guests.

The alphabetical list of wines poured at the end of this article is quite incredible.

In most cities I assembled local judges to taste through the donated wines and come up with a Best of Show selection, the gold medalist going forward to the CCC in Ottawa in 2024. The competition is run primarily to bring publicity to the wineries, with an enhanced KP social media program kicking into gear this year, and plenty of social media generated by guests.

THE FALL REGIONAL COMPETITIONS

The campaign began Sept. 22 with the traditional smaller regional event in **Ottawa**, held in a classic, glittering ballroom at the Chateau Laurier. The judges this night included veteran National Wine Awards judge Janet Dorozynski, wine author Rod Phillips and up-and-coming blogger Matt Steeves. They voted Rosehall Run's \$75 2020 St Cindy Pinot Noir from Prince Edward County Best of Show, followed by L'Acadie Vineyard 2020 Vintage Cuvee from Nova Scotia, and Charles Baker's Cuvee de Boulanger, the debut of a new sparkler by Niagara's riesling specialist. Ten other wineries poured this night, including hometown hero Kin Vineyards of nearby Carp Ridge. Eighteen wines were poured in Ottawa.

Next stop was a new regional event in **Kelowna**, the former home of the Canadian Culinary Championship. The competition was only for winery chefs, to highlight the great cuisine in wine country. August wildfires had put this event at risk but the

show went ahead at the spectacular new O'Rourke Family Estate in Lake Country, and proceeds went to Central Okanagan Fire Relief. I was joined by two Okanagan-based Masters of Wine - Rhys Pender and Geoffery Moss who are also National Wine Awards judges. Mission Hill's super-premium 2021 Perpetua Chardonnay took Best of Show, followed up by O'Rourke Family Estate 2020 Chardonnay, and Spearhead 2021 Golden Retreat Vineyard Pinot Noir. Twenty-one wines were poured in Kelowna.

The third stage of the regionals was in **Edmonton**, always among the largest events, filling the Shaw Centre ballrooms. It has become a tradition to gather our Edmonton judging crew in kitchen area, this year joined by William Bincoletto, Alberta's first accredited sommelier (1976), retailer and writer Juanita Roos of Color del Vino and Mary Bailey, wine and food writer who doubles as the lead culinary judge. The Best of Show was taken by River Stone Winery's signature

Cornerstone 2019, an elegant Bordeaux blend from estate vineyards in Oliver, followed by TerraVista 2022 Fandango, based on Spanish white varieties grown in Naramata, and then a tie between UPPERCASE 2020 Petit Verdot and Bella 2022 Sparkling Rouge. In total 17 different wines were poured in Edmonton.

Vancouver was the fourth stop, held on a soggy, foggy night at field level in BC Place. The judging team included Kelcie Jones who was named top sommelier in Vancouver in 2023, Mike Littleford head sommelier at Michelin-starred Published on Main, and Osoyoos-based Kim Kriese, Kitchen Party's wine coordinator. The top scoring wine was L'Acadie Vineyard 2020 Vintage Cuvee, but as it was already destined for the CCC we also nominated close runner up Usra Major 2022 Exile, Love and Misunderstandings Gamay to move forward. The second runner up was Tantalus 2021 Chardonnay. Fifteen wines, a cider and a sake were also poured. Also, a special note here that the Roche 2021 Pinot Gris was served by winning chef Chef Jasper Cruickshank of Wild Blue Restaurant + Bar in Whistler, who went on to be crowned Canadian Culinary Champion.

And on to **Calgary**, where the new venue in the historic Hudson Bay building delivered a cozier ambiance, and where big reds from B.C. carried the day. The wine judges were all repeat volunteers: freelance wine and food writer Shelley Boetcher, writer, Tom Firth who directs the Alberta Beverage Awards, and Darren Oleksyn wine columnist for the Calgary Herald. The Best of Show went to the powerful Rust 2020 Ferriera Vineyard Syrah, followed by Poplar Grove 2018 Syrah and Clos du Soleil 2018 Signature from the Similkameen Valley. Eighteen wines were poured in Calgary.

The last major event was **Toronto** at the classy mid-town event space called The Carlu. Ontario wines took over, with a strong contingent of Niagara core varieties like sparkling, chardonnay, pinot noir, cabernet franc and merlot. My colleagues at WineAlign and veterans of the WineAlign National Wine Awards of Canada assembled for the evening: Sara d'Amato, Michael Godel, Master Sommelier John Szabo and the newcomer Megha Jandhyala. The day belonged to Thomas Bachelder, with top spot going to his Grimsby Hillside Frontier Block Chardonnay, and third place to his 2021 Wismer-Parke Pinot Noir. Second place went to the excellent Thirty Bench 2020 Small Lots Cabernet Franc. Two new wineries in Niagara placed a very close 4th and 5th: King + Victoria 2020 Pinot Noir and Kirby Estate 2020 Merlot Reserve. Twenty-one wines were poured in Toronto

Three other smaller events were held in the fall of 2023 that did not involve large donation of wines or a wine competition. **Winnipeg** was designed as a private house party event, with the wines very kindly selected and donated by Tina Jones and Mike Muirhead of Jones & Company Wine Merchants. Likewise, **St. John's** was also a smaller event, with donations via Scott Giannou of Beverage Baron, plus special donations by L'Acadie Vineyards, Closson Chase Vineyard of Prince Edward County and Stratus Wines of Niagara. **Saskatoon** was larger but all the wines, except for a donation again by Closson Chase Vineyard, were sourced and discounted with the generous assistance of sommeliers Angela Zolinsky and Denise Lautner of Saskatoon Co-op.

THE CANADIAN CULINARY CHAMPIONSHIP

The **Canadian Culinary Championship 2024** was back in Ottawa, the last event and grand finale of the season! There were three key wine components to this event: a New Niagara Winery Showcase that featured five very promising new wineries, the always fun Mystery Wine Competition, and the Grand Finale featuring ten other wineries. All in all, there were 30 wines poured over two days, and I was joined by the original Ottawa judges Janet Dorozynski and Rod Phillips, plus National Capital Sommelier Guild president Bill Ellis and Edmonton's Mary Bailey to select the CCC Best of Show. It was a very close race but the honours went to a new Niagara wine by veteran winemaker Marlize Beyers, a very elegant chardonnay called The Long Way Home 2022 from Niagara's Beamsville Bench.

This was one of the ten wines presented by five wineries in the **New Ontario Winery Showcase** that each poured two wines at both the Mystery Wine Competition and the Grand Finale. All had opened during or since the Covid 19 pandemic, and they wowed the crowd. They included Kern & Co, King + Victoria, Black Bank Hill, Lailey Stonebridge and the Niagara Custom Crush Studio. Great discoveries, with all the winemakers travelling from Niagara to attend the festivities

At the **Mystery Wine Competition** the chefs had to prepare a dish to match a red wine that was served blind to them, and the 250 guests. I selected a rare wine to make it a real mystery this year – the **Lailey**

Vineyard 2021 Zweigelt, an Austrian variety well adapted to Canada's climate and gaining some traction in both Niagara and the Okanagan. I heard of only one or two people who identified this grape, one being James Chatto, former Culinary Advisor of Canada's Great Kitchen Party. The chefs did a fine job creating recipes to match.

The last call of the evening was to announce the **Wine of the Year**. Just before the Grand Finale I gathered the wine judges for one last look at the eight wines that had made it to the Championship. Only six points separated the top three finishers. In third place came the dark horse from B.C. Ursa Major 2022 Exile, Love and Misunderstanding Gamay from the Naramata Bench by winemaker Rajen Toor. In

second place, came the aforementioned The Long Way Home 2022 Chardonnay by Marlize Beyers. And the Wine of the Year – showing such detail, perfume and pinot alarcity - is **Rosehall Run 2020 St Cindy Pinot Noir** from Prince Edward County, by winemaker Dan Sullivan. Congratulations all!

I want to thank Canada's wine industry for donating so much great wine and appreciating our efforts. I also want to thank the dozens of individuals in wineries and venues across Canada who were part of pulling all this together, none more than Kim Kriese who was my right-hand in keeping it all on track. In my view, it has become one of the great undertakings in Canadian wine, that is quickly elevating the reputation of Canadian wine right here at home.

THE WINES OF THE 2023 FALL REGIONAL QUALIFIERS AND THE 2024 CANADIAN CULINARY CHAMPIONSHIP

*in alphabetical order with appellation of origin and cities where presented.
Wines with an * were contenders for Wine of the Year*

Bachelor 2021 Grimsby Hillside Frontier Block Chardonnay, Lincoln Lakeshore TOR CCC *

Bachelor 2021 Wismer-Parke Pinot Noir, Twenty Mile Bench TOR

Bachelor 2021 Wingfield Wismer Chardonnay, Twenty Mile Bench CCC

Bachelor 2021 Foxcroft Vineyard Gamay, Twenty Mile Bench, CCC

Bella 2022 Sparkling Rouge, Naramata Bench, EDM

Big Head 2019 Raw Riesling, Niagara Peninsula, TOR

Black Bank Hill 2020 Viognier, Lincoln Lakeshore CCC

Black Bank Hill 2020 Syrah, Lincoln Lakeshore CCC

Black Swift 2021 Longest Road Chardonnay, Okanagan Valley, KEL

Blasted Church Vineyards 2020 Nothing Sacred, Skaha Bench, CLGY EDM

CedarCreek 2020 Naramata Ranch Pinot Noir, Naramata Bench, KEL

CedarCreek 2021 Organic Riesling, Okanagan Valley, CLGY 21

Charles Baker 2020 Cuvee de Boulanger, Niagara Peninsula, OTT

Charles Baker 2020 Riesling Ivan Vineyard, Niagara Peninsula, TOR

Checkmate 2015 Fool's Mate Chardonnay, Okanagan Valley, CLGY

Clos du Soleil Signature 2020, Similkameen Valley, CLGY VAN


Closson Chase 2021 Churchside Pinot Noir, Prince Edward County TOR SKT STJ

Closson Chase 2021 Vineyard Chardonnay, Prince Edward County CCC

Corcelettes 2020 Merlot, Similkameen Valley, VAN



Corcelettes 2020 Cabernet Sauvignon, Similkameen Valley, VAN
Day Dreamer 2022 Cabernet Franc, Naramata Bench, CLGY
Deep Roots 2022 Sauvignon Blanc, Naramata Bench, KEL
Deep Roots 2020 Syrah, Naramata Bench, EDM
Dirty Laundry 2022 Reserve Chardonnay, Summerland, EDM CLGY VAN
Flat Rock 2020 Gravity Pinot Noir, Twenty Mile Bench, EDM
Flat Rock 2021 Riesling, Niagara Peninsula, TOR
Fraser Valley Cider Company Bone Dry Cider, VAN
Frind 2020 Chardonnay, Okanagan Valley, EDM
Gray Monk 2020 Pinot Noir, Lake Country, CLGY
Gray Monk 2020 Odyssey Merlot, Okanagan Valley, CLGY EDM
Hillside 2022 Below the Road Rose, Naramata Bench, KEL
Huff 2022 Getaway Rosé, Prince Edward County, OTT
Kacaba 2020 Signature Series Reserve Syrah, Niagara Peninsula, OTT TOR CCC
Kern 2018 Hughes Vineyard Chardonnay, Lincoln Lakeshore CCC
Kern 2018 King Street Cabernet Franc, Twenty Mile Bench, CCC
Kew Vineyard 2018 Brut, Niagara Peninsula, CCC
Kew Vineyard 2020 Soldier's Grant, Niagara Peninsula, CCC
KIN 2020 Chardonnay Carp Ridge, CCC
KIN Vineyard 2019 Pinot Noir Carp Ridge OTT, CCC
King+Victoria 2020 Pinot Noir, Twenty Mile Bench, TOR CCC
King + Victoria 2019 Riesling, Twenty Mile Bench, CCC
Kirby Estate 2020 Merlot Reserve, Niagara Lakeshore, TOR
L'Acadie Vineyard 2020 Vintage Cuvee, Nova Scotia, OTT, KEL, VAN, STJ, TOR
Lailey 2020 Stonebridge Merlot Reserve, Four Mile Creek TOR
Lailey 2019 Stonebridge Chardonnay, Four Mile Creek, CCC
Lailey 2019 Cabernet Franc Reserve, Four Mile Creek , CCC
Lailey 2021 Zweigelt, Niagara River, CCC Mystery Wine
Leaning Post 2021 The Fifty Pinot Noir, Niagara Peninsula, TOR
Laughing Stock 2020 Blind Trust, Okanagan Valley, KEL
Le Clos Jordanne 2021 Le Grand Clos Chardonnay, Twenty Mile Bench – TOR CCC
Le Clos Jordanne 2021 Le Grand Clos Pinot Noir, Twenty Mile Bench – TOR CCC
Le Clos Jordanne 2020 Villages Chardonnay, Niagara Peninsula, OTT
Le Clos Jordanne 2020 Villages Pinot Noir, Niagara Peninsula, OTT
Lightfoot & Wolfville 2021 Terroir Series Kekfrankos, Nova Scotia, OTT



Lighthall 2019 Chardonnay, Prince Edward County, OTT
Liquidity Estate 2021 Viognier, Okanagan Falls, KEL
Mission Hill 2021 Perpetua Chardonnay, Okanagan Valley, KEL *
Monte Creek 2021 Hands Up Red, Thompson Valley, CLGY
Nicolas Pearce 2021 Crew Sauvage Pinot Noir, Niagara Peninsula TOR
Organized Crime 2021 The Mischief, Beamsville Bench, OTT
Organized Crime 2022 The Sacrilege, Beamsville Bench, OTT
Orofino 2021 Hendsbee Vineyard 21B Riesling Similkameen Valley, VAN
O'Rourke Estate 2020 Chardonnay, Lake Country, KEL
O'Rourke Estate 2020 Pinot Noir, Lake Country KEL
O'Rourke Estate 2018 Brut, Lake Country KEL
O'Rourke Peak 2021 Granite Gewurztraminer, Okanagan Valley, KEL
O'Rourke Peak 2021 Goldie Red, Okanagan Valley, KEL, EDM
Osake Fraser Valley Junmai Renaissance VAN
Painted Rock Merlot 2021, Skaha Bench, KEL, CLGY
Phantom Creek 2019 Kobau Vineyard Merlot, Okanagan Valley, KEL VAN
Poplar Grove 2019 Syrah, Okanagan Valley, KEL
Poplar Grove 2018 Syrah, Naramata Bench, CLGY
Rennie 2016 "G" Assemblage, Twenty Mile Bench, CCC
Quails' Gate 2020 Dijon Clone 21 Pinot Noir, Okanagan Valley, KEL
Quails' Gate 2021 Estate Chardonnay, VAN TOR
Red Rooster 2021 Pinot 3, Okanagan Valley, VAN
Rigour & Whimsy 2022 'Bifrost', Okanagan Falls, CLGY
River Stone 2019 Cornerstone, Okanagan Valley EDM *
Roche 2021 Traditional Pinot Gris, Naramata Bench, CLGY, VAN
Rosehall Run St Cindy Pinot Noir 2020, Prince Edward County, OTT, KEL, TOR Wine of the Year
Rosehall Run 2022 Righteous Dude Nedelko Riesling, OTT, CCC
Rosehall Run 2017 Ceremony Brut, Prince Edward County, CCC
Rosehall Run 2021 JCR Chardonnay, Prince Edward County CCC
Rosehall Run 2021 JCR Pinot Noir, Prince Edward County CCC
Rust 2020 Ferreira Vineyard Syrah, Black Sage Bench, CLGY VAN *
Rust 2020 Syrah, Okanagan Valley, VAN
Spearhead 2021 Golden Retreat Vineyard Pinot Noir, Okanagan Valley, KEL
Sprucewood Shores 2020 Hawk's Flight Reserve Merlot, Lake Erie North Shore, OTT TOR CCC
Stratus 2021 White, Niagara-on-the-Lake, OTT



Stratus 2019 Red, Niagara-on-the-Lake, OTT STJ CCC
Stratus ALTO 2021 Assemblage. Niagara-on-the-Lake TOR
Stratus 2022 Field Blend Ancestral, CCC
Tantalus 2021 Chardonnay, Okanagan Valley VAN
TerraVista 2022 Figaro, Naramata Bench, EDM CLGY
TerraVista 2022 Fandago, Naramata Bench, EDM CLGY
TerraVista 2022 Roussanne, Naramata Bench VAN
The Long Way Home 2022 Chardonnay, Beamsville Bench CCC *
Therianthropy 2022 Mouflon Partial Skins, Niagara Peninsula, OTT
Thirty Bench 2019 Small Lots Cabernet Franc, Beamsville Bench TOR
Thirty Bench 2022 Winemaker's Blend Riesling, Niagara Peninsula CCC
Thirty Bench 2020 Winemakers Blend Cabernet Franc, Niagara Peninsula CCC
Thirty Bench 2020 Wild Cask Cabernet Franc, Niagara Peninsula CCC
Tightrope 2022 Pinot Gris, Naramata Bench, EDM CLGY VAN
Time Chronos 2020 Cabernet Franc, Okanagan Valley, KEL EDM VAN
Township 7 2019 Polaris Blanc de Blanc, Okanagan Valley VAN
Trius 2020 Showcase Watching Tree Vineyard Blanc de Blanc, Niagara Peninsula, TOR
Unsworth 2019 Pinot Noir, Vancouver Island, EDM
UPPERCASE 2020 Petit Verdot, Okanagan Valley, EDM CLGY VAN
Ursa Major 2022 Exile, Love & Misunderstandings Gamay, Naramata Bench, VAN *
Westcott Vineyards 2022 Violette Brut, Ontario TOR