

As you've probably noticed, all of us at the Executive Hotel Vintage Park have a thing for B.C. wine: we've partnered with many of the province's wineries and named rooms and suites after them; we've hung wine-themed art hither and yon; there's a sweet wine list happening in our lounge and restaurant; B.C. wines are stocked in mini-bars; and in case you hadn't noticed, we offer complimentary early evening/happy hour wine tastings in the lounge. Got a little time to spar? We can arrange wine tours to all of our major wine regions.

Just so you know, we strive to have as much fun with B.C.'s great wines as we can, and that means tasting widely, increasing our partnerships with the wineries, and sharing our finds with our guests. You'll see what we mean and why as we profile some of our partner wineries, their winemakers and best bottles in our wine letters.

Just the Facts

Here's the dirt on B.C. wines and wine country:

- Jesuit missionary Father Charles Pandosy first made wine in B.C. in 1859 in the Okanagan; the first commercial wines were made in the 1920s; and B.C. wines stepped up in 1990 when old varieties of grapes were pulled out and replanted with premium varietals.
- Currently, B.C. has 140 licensed wineries (in 1981 there were just 14 struggling to make a buck) and another 26-or-so in the pipeline. This includes a dozen fruit wineries, cider makers, and sake (rice wine) producers.
- There are 411 grape growers growing 60 grape varietals (48% are white, 52% are red).
- The top whites are chardonnay, pinot gris, and gewürztraminer; top reds include merlot, pinot noir and cabernet sauvignon.
- In 2006, 6,632 acres of land were under vine.
- We have five wine regions:
 - the Okanagan
 - Similkameen
 - Fraser Valley
 - Vancouver Island
 - Gulf Islands

Wine Buys:

Want to take a bottle or two home? Here are a couple of our favourite wine shops, handily within strolling distance.

Marquis Wine Cellars, Vancouver's first wine shop, has a stellar selection of B.C.'s best bottles. Ask for resident B.C. wine guru David...
1034 Davie Street, 604-684-2471,
www.marquis-wines.com

Taylorwood Wines sells only B.C. wines at winery-direct prices. Ask for a taste—there's usually something open.
1185 Mainland Street
604-408-9463
www.taylorwoodwines.com

Spotlight

Wine Region: Okanagan

The Okanagan wine region may be B.C.'s biggest but it's pretty piddling in size when you compare it to say, Napa. While it's said to have North America's most scenic vineyards—hectares of them rise from lakeshores to climb up mountain slopes—it's got plenty more going for it. Like a four-lake daisy chain running the length of the Okanagan Valley providing optimal growing conditions with long warm sunny days and cool nights with the heat from the lakes tempering the chill. The valley runs from the US border about 160 kilometres (100 miles) north, and all of this combines to provide superb growing conditions for wines that run the spectrum from auxerrois to zinfandel. Wine touring is a breeze with wineries running the length of the lakes; tasting rooms are open year-round; many of the wineries have on-site restaurants, delis, and picnic areas. Accommodation ranges from campsites to lakeside resorts. Local wines are found in abundance in restaurants everywhere.

Winery: Osoyoos Larose

Established in 1998, Osoyoos Larose is arguably the most exciting winery project in B.C. A joint venture between Vincor Canada (Inniskillin Okanagan and Ontario, Jackson-Triggs, Sumac Ridge Estate Winery and Hawthorne Mountain Vineyards) and Bordeaux-based Groupe Taillan, owners of world-renowned *grand cru classe* properties

and France's largest producer of appellation controlée wines. The name references the vineyards' location overlooking Osoyoos Lake and Groupe Taillan's most prestigious Bordeaux château, Gruaud Larose. The vineyards boast optimal growing conditions, an ideal site along Lake Osoyoos that provides moderating temperatures, prime soils, plenty of sunlight, and minimal rainfall. Add in careful planting and a passionate winemaker/viticulturalist and the results are bound to be nothing short of brilliant.

Wine Wiz: Pascal Madevon

The winemaker for Osoyoos Larose is Frenchman Pascal Madevon who came for a look-see at the project in 2001 when he was being courted for the job as winemaker. This was just as the first fruit was being harvested and it was the quality of the fruit that blew his socks off and opened his mind to the amazing potential of the region. Six years and four vintages later, Madevon is still thrilled with the terroir and the success and quality of his Bordeaux-style wines. His passion and excitement grows with each passing vintage and with each new acre planted and he hasn't stopped grinning.

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Top Drops:

White: *Joie Chardonnay 2006*

You'll have to be quick off the mark to grab a bottle of this taste treat from Naramata Bench husband and wife sommelier/winemaker team Heidi Noble and Michael Dinn. This delish unwooded chard is dry, crisp and layered with fresh aromatics that dance from citrus and honey to apple. Bring on the oysters.

Red: *Osoyoos Larose Le Grand Vin 2004.*

This red meritage is a premium blend of five Bordeaux varietals and has fast gained a reputation as a 'must have' wine. Although it has only just been released, it's drinking beautifully, showing chocolate, black cherries, and plums nicely synched with oak flavours and supple tannins. Buy several bottles, one to drink now, the rest to cellar.

Icewine: *Inniskillin Vidal Icewine 2005*

Icewine, one of B.C.'s most spectacular wine pleasures, is expensive to be sure because it's made from grapes that have been left on the vine and can't be picked until the temperature has dropped below -10° C. This one is \$52.99 for 375 ml) but it delivers in every way. The colour of spun gold, it's a sublime mix of lime, apricot and grapefruit with a

slight mineral edge. I prefer to savour this nectar on its own but if you must, try blue cheese or apple pie.

Cool Stuff

Screw caps, stelvin closures....call them what you like but don't turn your nose up at them. We B.C. residents have fallen hook, line, and sinker for these 'modern' day closures. Nope, it's not because we're too lazy or weak to manage a corkscrew, rather we're all about what's in the bottle. We especially like that what's in the bottle is exactly what the winemaker made, not something that's subjected to the quality of the stopper, the vagaries of oxygen, how one bottle can vary enormously from the next, and nastiest of all, a corked wine.

Wine Speak

Don't know a fat wine from a thin one? Woody from wooly? Here's where we let you in on some of the lingo that goes along with wine. Drop a few of these babies and you'll sound like a pro.

Brooding: drop this into conversation over a glass of wine and you'll get some attention, maybe even a little respect. It doesn't describe your mood if you've been served a nasty little wine when you, of course, deserve far better, but rather it describes a complex, intense red wine with hidden nuances and glories like serious depth, and glorious concentrated flavours.

What's on?

If you're around or you'll be back soon, put these on your calendar:

April 20, 2007

Chocolate & Wine Pairing Evening

A fundraiser for Les Dames d`Escoffier Scholarship Fund

Miele showroom

69 Smithe Street

Reserve at www.lesdames.ca/chocolate.htm

April 28, 2007

Like Wine for Chocolate

Fine wine, fine chocolate...and all that jazz!

Telus World of Science

Tickets at chocaffair@scienceworld.cachocolate.scienceworld.ca

April 30, 2007

BC Hospitality Golf Classic

Golf with chefs, wine guys and more at this delicious fundraiser for the B.C. Hospitality Foundation.

University Golf Club

www.bchospitalityfoundation.com

May 1, 2007

New Zealand Wine Fair 2007

New Zealand's sauvignon blancs and pinot noirs rock. Come out and taste these and others among the 120+ wines being poured by 25 of New Zealand's finest wineries.

Fairmont Waterfront Hotel

www.nzwine-events.ca

May 3-6, 2007

Okanagan Spring Wine Festival

There's hardly a prettier time to be in the Okanagan than early May when the sun is shining, cherry and apple trees are blossoming, and grape vines budding. The four-day Okanagan Spring Wine Festival described as "one of Canada's best small festivals" offers over 100 events that mix wine, food, and fun.

www.owfs.com

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