

Vintage's View

FEBRUARY 1, 2007

Well here we are and it is **February 2007** - the New Year of 2007 is dawning. 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 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 guest room refreshment centre; and in case you hadn't noticed, we offer complimentary early evening/happy hour wine testing's in the lounge. Got a little time to spare? 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.

WINE WIZ:

Randy Picton, Nk'Mip Cellars

One of the Okanagan's most talented winemakers, 11-year winemaking vet Randy Picton signed on for a job with a built-in obsolescence clause. And that day is coming soon. In about two years, he'll hand over the keys to the cellar to his two Aboriginal wine-maker trainees/assistants. You see, Nk'Mip was started as a joint five-year project with the Osoyoos Indian Band and Vincor International who brought expertise, and global marketing skills and exposure to the table.

In the last four-plus years, Picton's wines have scooped over 100 awards, not obvious from his laid back, low-key manner. In person, he's approachable, straight talking, and always smiling. More, he's got loads of gold-standard experience having worked with Jackson-Triggs/Vincor star winemaker, Bruce Nicholson and at CedarCreek Estate Winery with pinot-centric Tom DiBello. Picton says, "The job is varied and includes everything from getting into the vineyard, processing the grapes and the lab work, to public events. Every year is an evolution. You're making new versions of the wines, which is always a challenge. It keeps you fresh and motivated." (He's also a heck of a good vegetarian cook.)

WINE BUYS:

Here are a couple of our favourite wine shops, handily within strolling distance. Just in case you want to take - a bottle - or two - or a hundred home
BC WINES ARE THE VERY BEST

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

COOL STUFF

Vancouver Magazine's 3rd Annual International Wine Awards:

Late last year, fourteen of the city's top wine palates—a mix of sommeliers, restaurateurs, wine writers and wine instructors—sat down to blind taste over 600 hundred wines in two days to select the top 100 wines available for sale in the province. A daunting task indeed. The wines tasted were from every part of the globe, and we're thrilled that Best in Show went to B.C.'s Nk'Mip Pinot Noir 2005 (\$21.99). "A steal at the price," said the judges. Visit:

<http://www.vanmag.com/foodanddrink/07jan/06wineawards.shtml> for all the results including more B.C. top drops.

The 9th British Columbia Icewine Festival is all over until next year (mark your calendars for January 16-20, 2008). The sold-out event drew visitors from Canada, the U.S., and Australia who packed in days of skiing and evenings of copious food and wine. Overall festival winners were Mission Hill Family Estate 2005 Reserve Late Harvest Riesling, Jackson-Triggs Okanagan 2005 Proprietors' Grand Reserve Riesling Icewine, Peller Estates Winery 2005 Private Reserve Trinity Icewine, Mission Hill Family Estate 2005 Reserve Vidal Icewine, and Willow Hill Wines Inc. 2004 Willow Hill Merlot Icewine.
www.thewinefestivals.com or
www.sunpeaksresort.com.

JUST THE FACTS:

Here's the dirt on B.C. 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:
Okanagan
Similkameen
Fraser Valley
Vancouver Island
Gulf Islands

WHAT'S ON

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

To February 4, 2007

5th Annual Dine Out Vancouver

This eating frenzy features 156 restaurants offering either \$15, \$25 and \$35 three-course prix fixe menus with recommended B.C. wine pairings. A good place to start? Our very own **Tivoli's**, then fan out from here. Take a look at www.tourismvancouver.ca for details.

February 2, 2007

Big Night Vancouver

Don't miss this chance to rub elbows with discerning Vancouverites, wine makers and chefs at the Vancouver Club as you sample the top ten wines from the Vancouver Magazine's 3rd Annual International Wine Competition where each wine will be paired with tastes from ten top Vancouver restaurants. Tickets are \$75 from 604-231-7535 or <http://tickets.ticketstonight.ca/order/ticketsarea.asp?p=215&a=55&backurl=default.asp>.

March 14-15, 2007

6th Annual Victoria Festival of Wine

A side trip to Victoria to take in this popular festival that bills itself as "two days of indulgence" is highly recommended. On tap are scads of seminars, a massive tasting (100+ wineries) including many hard-to-source Vancouver Island wines, winemaker dinners, and a musical "Sideways" evening featuring plenty of pinot noir. www.victoriafestivalofwine.com

March 22–April 7, 2007

Up Your Glass!

UYG! is an evening all about the vast subject of wine with award-winning broadcaster and writer Jurgen Gothe. Get ready for "lore and legend, fact and fable, spoofs and silliness, rants and raves, all surrounded by lots of music." beyond restaurant + lounge; tickets are \$35 at 604-684-3474

March 26–April 1, 2007

29th Vancouver Playhouse International Wine Festival

If you haven't already booked in for this amazing event (it's one of the top wine festivals in North America), there's no time like the present. This year—Australia is the feature country and riesling the featured varietal—will see more than 180 wineries pouring 1480 wines at 53 events over 8 days. You're waiting for what? www.playhousewinefest.com

SPOTLIGHT

Wine Region: Fraser Valley

When Vancouverites want to visit a few wineries, they've merely got to hop in their cars and in about 40 minutes they're in bucolic farm country and set for an easy loop round five ace wineries within minutes of each other. So as not to get looped in the process, most people spit (very important). Or better yet, bribe a DD (designated driver) with a really good lunch at Domaine de Chaberton Estate Winery's French bistro. Others worthy of a look in and tasting? Award-winning Township 7, the Fort Wine Company (superb fruit wines), Glenugie Winery (this one's organic), and Lotusland Vineyards (The name? Eastern Canada thinks we laid-back West Coasters live in Lotus Land).

Winery: Nk'Mip Cellars

This stunning winery (www.nkmipcellars.com) has made history—and excellent wines—since the day it opened its doors in 2002 with a memorable, commemorative Aboriginal ceremony and celebration that included the pulling of many corks. The deal? Nk'Mip Cellars (pronounced ink-a-meep) is North America's first Aboriginal-owned and operated winery and is a smash hit in every way. There's history here: the Osoyoos Indian Band has been growing grapes on their land as Inkameep Vineyards since 1968, and their South Okanagan reserve (12,950 hectares) contains 25% of all land in the Okanagan under vine. In a speedy four years, Nk'Mip has produced brilliant, award-winning wines.

TOP DROPS:

White:

Sumac Ridge Private Reserve Sauvignon Blanc 2005.

This is a lovely rich, ripe, citrus-y sauvignon blanc with the merest wink of oak layering on buttery, toasty notes. Perfect with grilled salmon.

Red:

Osoyoos Larose 2004.

Definitely one for the cellar. This ultra-premium Bordeaux-style blend, now in its 5th vintage, shows signs of elegance and concentration. It's still pretty tight and muscular and will benefit hugely from a few years in the cellar. (Osoyoos Larose is a co-pro between French Groupe Taillon and Vincor International, a marriage of Old World tradition, knowledge and style and New World technology, spirit and adventure.

Icewine:

Inniskillin Dark Horse Vineyards Riesling Icewine 2004.

This sweetie is burnished gold in colour and flaunts seriously intense honeyed peach, spice and tropical flavours. Unctuous, full-bodied, and seriously seductive. The recommend pairing is a dessert that's sweeter than the wine, but for me, icewine is dessert. (In Canada, it's icewine, in America ice wine.)