

Vintage's View

PLAYHOUSE WINE FESTIVAL EDITION

MARCH 15, 2007

Wine lovers, get ready for a whole lot of fun. "One of the biggest, best and oldest wine festivals in the world" is our home-grown **Vancouver Playhouse International Wine Festival**. It rolls into town for a busy week, **March 26 to April 1** with **180 wineries** from **17 countries** pouring over **1550 wines** at **58 events**. Whew!

As you've probably noticed, all of us at the Executive Hotel Vintage Park have a thing for wine, B.C. wine in particular. 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; B. C. wines are stocked in guestroom refreshment centres; and in case you hadn't noticed, we offer complimentary happy hour wine tastings.(5:00pm-6:00pm)

So it's fitting that we're at the Wine Festival—just try and keep us away! —in **Booth Number Five, Main Concourse**. Stop by and say hi or to get updated insider tips on what to see, and taste, and do. In the meantime, read on and we'll tell you how to get the most out of the Festival. Pick up a Festival guide at the Front Desk or our Bell Desk or visit www.playhousewinefest.com.

JUST GOOD STUFF TO KNOW:

Tasting Room Biggest-Bang-for-the-Buck Strategies

EAT FIRST. There's nothing more embarrassing than falling on your face in the first hour because you're soused. There's the usual bread, cheese, and sausage on hand but it's not dinner. Trust me, some of these wines will be too amazing to spit out.

SPIT? Yes. Start practicing now. Put a bucket or pot on a plastic-covered table and have a go. Keep working at it. Spit at the Festival and people will think you're a pro. Plus you'll be able to taste more *and* stay on your feet.

Speaking of feet, **comfortable shoes** are a must. Save the Jimmy Choos for a fancy winemaker dinner.

Wear dark clothes. With all that spitting going on and jostling, it's a given that you'll be wearing some wine.

Don't wear fragrance, aftershave, scented body lotions, and the like. No one wants his or her wine to taste like Poison or Old Spice.

Don't step up to a table and ask for the most expensive stuff. If it's on the table, it's good. Try anything and everything. This is the time to expand your horizons. Ask the person pouring about the wine. There are no dumb questions. Say thank you.

Move away from the table and let others get a sample.

When tasting, swirl (carefully), sniff, sip, savour, spit

Make a game plan. Are you going to start off with Champagne and sparkling wines? Do whites before reds, lighter wines before heavier ones and save the ports and dessert wines for the end. Since this is likely the greatest gathering of rieslings you'll find almost anywhere in one go, try 'em. Compare to B.C. rieslings.

Taste as many B.C. wines as you can—there's not a dud in the bunch—and unless you're traveling to B.C. wine country any time soon, this opportunity to taste widely is it too good to pass up. **ENJOY AND ~ HAVE FUN !!**

OTHER GOOD STUFF

Other Good Things to Know

You've got to be 19 years or older to drink. It's the law.

Every wine being poured in the Tasting Room is available for sale in the onsite Liquor Store. If you find something you love, run or walk very fast and grab it. Things sell out quickly. Don't worry about packing it around. You can check it at the store and pick it up when you leave. Or check it with us at the Executive Hotel Vintage Park Booth and we'll take it back to the hotel and deliver it to your room.

Taste responsibly and don't drive. If you're a little tipsy—we usually are and we spit! —there's a "Get Home Safe Booth" where they hand out free bus tickets. Or if you're into it, the Executive Vintage Park is a moderately sobering 12-block walk.

UP YOUR GLASS:

What's this you say? thinking sounds a little rude.

Well it's not, or not very. It is however a 'wine entertainment' crafted and performed by hometown hero, brilliant wine guy, fascinating wine scribe, 22-year award-winning host of CBC Radio's cross-Canada Disc Drive music show, and scintillatingly and talented bon vivant. In other words, he knows his stuff and can put it across in the most entertaining way imaginable.

Don't imagine. Come. You'll get an evening of "lore and legend, fact and fable, spoofs and silliness, rants and raves" and music. It's at beyond restaurant + lounge which means that you can guzzle a glass or two of whatever tickles your fancy, and eat well too.

What's Hot!

Hot Tickets: our picks for the festival

The Thursday, Friday, and Saturday evening *International Festival Tastings* (March 29, 30, April 1, 7p.m. to 10 p.m.) of course.

Get Uncorked! Okay, it's an Aussie do but we've got to be polite because they're the *special* guests this year and it's the kick off event for the whole shebang. It's Yellowtail wines and 'top tucker' in a casual, kick-up-your-heels-and-party resto/lounge, Earls at the Paramount, March 26, 5-7:30 p.m.

This one's a DO in capital letters:

B.C. Food & Wine: Our Land Revealed, March 31, 12-2:00 p.m., at O'Doul's Restaurant. Taste the wines of B.C. and discover the impact of our mountains, lakes, sunshine, and fresh air on the wines. Each is paired with specialty B.C. gourmet bites.

Vintners Brunch and Flavours of the Festival are two bountiful brunches on Sunday April 1 (no fooling!) mere steps from each other, one at the Convention Centre, the other across the street in the Fairmont Waterfront Hotel. Both feature plates from some of Vancouver's best restaurants and fab wine pairings with each one. Wines are global but rest assured, there are standouts from B.C. among them.

Gold Pass Tasting Lounge, Friday March 30, 5:30-9 p.m. Treat yourself to this ticket and you'll be treated like royalty...well a VIP at the very least. Your \$125 Gold Pass buys you admittance to this rarified space (plus the Tasting Room) where you'll enjoy a selection of the best wines from the Tasting Room in a yours-to-keep Riedel glass; sommeliers will pour themed flights of ultra-special wines not found in the Tasting Room; there's food of course; and you can wander between the Tasting Room and your sanctified lounge at will. Who needs the madding crowds?

Fascinating Festival Facts

The Vancouver Playhouse International Wine Festival got its start in 1979 when a wine-loving Playhouse Theatre board member thought it'd be a heck of a good way to raise some money for the theatre. There were no strenuous objections so the inaugural festival got off the ground with exactly one winery, Robert Mondavi which has been at every Festival since. About 1,000 other people thought it was a good idea too since that's how many showed for the two-day event held at a mansion in Shaughnessy (this is Vancouver's oldest posh 'hood) owned by the tony Vancouver's University Women's Club. It was a one-winery show the next year—Mondavi again—but by the fourth year 45 California wineries were on board. In year nine, 1987, the festival had gone global with wineries from six other countries showing up for the party (perhaps Expo '86 put us on the map in more ways than one). By 1988 it was big enough to sprawl out in the Vancouver Convention and Exhibition Centre where it's been ever since.

These days, the best and brightest wineries line up to participate. Like who you say? How about French Champagne houses like Mœt & Chandon, Tattinger and Lanson plus compatriots M. Chapoutier, Pierre Spaar and Veyret-Latour to name a few. Others? Fifty-four from Australia (they're the feature country this year) pouring 215 wines at the public tastings and at 20 other seminars, lunches, dinners, and barbies (BBQs to us). Argentina, Greece, Chile, Lebanon, and Japan too (they're bringing sake aka rice wine). California is out in force as always, and Germany, Portugal, Spain, and Italy are among the others bringing their best.

And best it is. One of the Festival's stipulations is that each participating winery send their top wine guys—the owner, winemaker or export manager—to pour some of their finest wines. This makes a ticket to the evening International Festival Tastings (March 29-30, April 1) an enormous bargain at \$70. To get the biggest bang for your buck, check out "Tasting Room Biggest-Bang-for-the-Buck Strategies." These will help you get the most out of the three-hour tastings.

Each year the Festival features a different global wine region—this year it's entitled Discover Australia—A World of Difference, and the theme varietal is—ta da—riesling. This means lots of wines from Australia, lots of rieslings from everywhere, and plenty of events focused on them.

And most importantly from our perspective, there are thirteen B.C. wineries in the tasting room like Nk'Mip, CedarCreek, Jackson-Triggs, Inniskillin, and Sandhill to name a few.