

Vintage's View

MARCH 1, 2007

Vancouver is a wine-mad city and **March** is the most wine-soaked month of all. It's when the 29th annual **Vancouver Playhouse International Wine Festival** rolls into town bringing with it over 1,550 wines from 17 countries and 180 wineries, more than enough to whet anyone's proverbial whistle. Australia is the star of this year's show and global Rieslings are in the spotlight too.

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; B.C. wines are stocked in guest room refreshment centre; and in case you hadn't noticed, we offer complimentary early evening wine testing on the second level balcony.

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:

Wine Wiz: Mark Wendenberg, Sumac Ridge

Personable winemaker Mark Wendenberg has plied his trade at Sumac Ridge since 1992, and definitely has wine in his blood: He's the son of German-born Penticton grape grower, Chris Wendenberg. After training and apprenticing in Germany, young Wendenberg hit the road to work and gain valuable experience—kind of like when chefs go on stages—in New Zealand, Australia and Switzerland before joining Sumac Ridge and exercising his sparkling wine chops wonderfully expressed in the ever-lovely Steller's Jay Brut. In his spare time when he's not tending SR's wines, Wendenberg grows a few vines of his own.

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

VINCOR Goes Olympic:

Vincor, Canada's biggie wine company with holdings in B.C. and Ontario has inked a sponsorship deal for the 2010 Olympics that provides support for the Canadian Olympic Team for Beijing 2008, locally in 2010, and London 2012.

This means we'll see plenty of B.C. wines like Jackson-Triggs, Sumac Ridge, Inniskillin, Nk'Mip, and See Ya Later at the games instead of the usual international mega-wines and that's a good thing. And there'll be a Canada-wide summer release of Jackson-Triggs *Ésprit*™ Merlot and Chardonnay. They are consumer friendly quaffs, priced at \$11.95 with partial proceeds going to Canada's O-Team.

WINE SPEAK

Interesting STUFF on Wine Tasting:

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.

Body:

This is how the wine feels in your mouth. Is it light, medium, or full? Liken it to milk: light-bodied is like skim milk, medium like 2%, and full-bodied is akin to whole milk.

Balance:

This means that the wine is well made, well integrated, and everything about it is in harmony. It's when you smile and say aaaah.

WHAT'S ON

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

March 6, 2007

California Wine Fair

Although we tend to drink most of the wines we make here in B.C., we like to keep abreast of what else is happening out there and keeping tabs on our California neighbours is good fun who will be out in record numbers with 75-or-so participating wineries pouring 250 wines, and we are regularly referred to as Napa North ever since the Wine Spectator hung that particular label on us. Venue: Fairmont Waterfront Centre Hotel. Tickets are \$55 at 604-687-1644 or www.artsclub.com.

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

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

SPOTLIGHT

Wine Region: The Gulf Islands

Just north of Washington State's San Juan Islands are B.C.'s Gulf Islands that happen to be more hospitable to growing grapevines than the slightly more southerly isles. This is important to know because in the 1850s, a dispute over the Canadian-US boundary which involved who'd get San Juan Island, came to be known as "The Pig War" when a Canadian pig—the war's only casualty—was killed by an American. As it turned out, America got San Juan Island and a few others and we Canadians got the Gulf Islands. Today there are eight wineries on six of them. The oldest is relatively young. Saturna Island Vineyards on Saturna Island with vineyards that run right down to the ocean's edge, dates back only to 1998. With the vagaries of island ferries, is not possible to visit them all in a single day. Three days or so would offer leisurely touring of these picturesque islands and tasting of characterful wines.

Winery: Sumac Ridge Estate Winery

Not only is this Okanagan winery one of the oldest in the province, it actually got its start 1979 as a nine-hole golf course. The founding partners, Harry McWatters and Lloyd Schmidt, planted five acres of riesling and gewürztraminer, turned the clubhouse into a tasting room, and then the winery itself. The club restaurant continued feeding golfers, eventually introducing the ever-improving wines to them. Although the partnership ended in 1985, the expanded winery continues to be enormously successful and currently produces 75,000 cases of wine a year, the best known being Steller's Jay Brut, an outstanding sparkling wine that regularly racks up its share of kudos for this much awarded winery. Today, Sumac Ridge's portfolio includes 22 wines in three categories including ultra premium red and white Pinnacle Meritages (Sumac Ridge was the first Canadian winery to use the California-minted term 'meritage' on its labels), with the white described as one of the best whites made in Canada. No trip to the Okanagan is complete without a visit to this exceptional winery, and a meal at Sumac Ridge's Cellar Door Bistro, is highly recommended. Oh, and the golf course is still in action.

TOP DROPS:

White:

Sandhill Chardonnay 2005

Ripe, rich, tropical, and creamy, this is one of B.C.'s most polished chards. Excellent quality, stellar style. We find it magical with popcorn, while others prefer game hen, halibut, creamy pastas, ...

Red:

Sumac Ridge Meritage Black Sage Vineyard 2004

This spicy blend of cabernet sauvignon, merlot, and cabernet franc is right up there with the big boys. It's smoky, meaty, rich, and ripe with hits of chocolate, pepper, and spice. Bring on the steak.

Bubble:

Stellar's Jay Brut

Not only is this an affable, easy, elegant sparkler—and Sumac Ridge's signature wine—it really is one for the birds. Specifically the namesake cheeky Steller's Jay, the province's official picnic-loving bird. They've been known to steal food right out of people's hands and mouths. Drink anytime, on its own, or pretty much with anything. That's the beauty of bubble—it's perfect for everything and any occasion.