

Progress Report

THE WINES OF ONTARIO, CANADA

I visited Ontario, Canada in October 2012 and toured a number of wineries to taste the wines and just obtain a general idea of the current state of development. In brief, I was impressed by what I found, in fact sufficiently so that I thought a special Progress Report on the wines and appellations of Ontario may be of interest to subscribers. To that end we asked Ontario wineries to submit commercially available pinots, chards and sparklers and these are reviewed below.

As background for those of you who are unfamiliar with the wines of Ontario, you might just think "icewine." However, the wine country of Ontario is located between 41° and 44° north which is the same general latitude shared by Burgundy and Oregon and, not surprisingly, produce both pinot and chardonnay among other varieties. They have cold winters and hot summers that are moderated by the proximity of the Great Lakes near the vineyards - Ontario, Erie and Huron. The soils of the Great Lakes basin vary from sand to clay to rock, with a high concentration of limestone from an ancient seabed that was exposed over a long period of glacial activity. Some of the vineyards lie flat on former seabed areas. Others are perched on hills and "benches" that formed the ancient shoreline. The topography generally lends itself to excellent water drainage and is mineral and nutrient-rich.

Ontario established its own governing wine authority, the Vintners Quality Alliance (VQA), in 1988. In addition to creating, monitoring and enforcing Ontario's strict appellation system, the VQA also acts as a wine authority in partnership with the government to ensure high standards of quality. Importantly, VQA Ontario does not represent the wine industry in Ontario and is not a marketing agency. The VQA presently identifies four specific wine growing areas in Ontario: Lake Erie North Shore, Niagara Peninsula, Pelee Island and Prince Edward County. Another 10 sub-appellations were created within the Niagara Peninsula in 2005.

The first wine pioneers in Ontario appeared in the 1970s. Things have changed rapidly since then because as of 2012 there was an annual production of over 2 million cases from 140 licensed wineries in 15 appellations encompassing some 15,000 acres of vineyard. By way of perspective the Côte d'Or has about 25,000 acres under vines.

Note: the following information is based on information provided by either the VQA or Wine Country Ontario.

LAKE ERIE NORTH SHORE

Stretching along the warm, shallow waters of Lake Erie, vines in this southerly appellation enjoy the most sunshine in Canada, providing excellent ripening conditions and full-bodied wines. It has an average of 1540 growing degree days and is in the southwestern extremity of Ontario. With the benefit from the quick summer warming of the shallow waters of Lake Erie, as well as the number of growing degree days, early harvests are the norm with picking usually beginning at the end of August. The soil composition was greatly affected by the glacial lakes, which deposited large amounts of unsorted stony materials in the area. When the glacial lakes elsewhere retreated, this area remained covered in deep waters for a longer period, allowing waves to smooth out the ridges and deposit considerable amounts of sediment. The light-textured, well-drained soils around the lakeshore contain mostly sandy loam and gravel deposits punctuated by small, irregular stony ridges, which overlie shale limestone bedrock. Note: technically, the Lake Erie North Shore appellation includes Pelee Island but most observers consider it to be a unique growing area unto itself and in that spirit I treat it separately below.

PRINCE EDWARD COUNTY

Bordering Lake Ontario and the Bay of Quinte, this appellation, Ontario's newest and most northerly, is surrounded by water. There is an average of 1264 growing degree days, which is significantly less than the other three appellations. The top soils range from reddish-brown clay loam to sandy loam and overlay limestone bedrock embedded with shale fragments. The stony surface and numerous rock and shale fragments within the soils allow water to drain into the broken limestone bedrock below. This ensures good drainage in the spring and absorbs water throughout the growing season, which has the effect of forcing vine roots to descend more deeply during the hot summer months. This ultimately results in lower yields with more concentrated berries. The rocky soil also allows good heat conduction and retention and encourages early warming in the spring.

PELEE ISLAND

Sitting 25 km off the mainland on Lake Erie, Pelee Island lies at Canada's most southerly point, allowing for the longest growing season of all the winemaking regions in Canada with 1592 growing degree days. Pelee Island is the site of Canada's first commercial winery which began operation in 1866. This small island of approximately 10,000 acres is planted mostly to chardonnay and pinot noir. The more southerly exposition normally allows the harvest to occur two to three weeks earlier than other appellations. Similar to the mainland in southwestern Ontario, they have sandy loam and clay over limestone bedrock.

The soils have moderate drainage capacity because of the underlying bedrock but dry out later in the season. The majority of vineyards are planted on the southwestern corner and center of the island, where the soils are the deepest and allow for root systems to properly set. As I noted above, Pelee Island is considered to be part of the Lake Erie North Shore appellation.

THE NIAGARA PENINSULA

Shaped by the natural wonders of the Niagara Escarpment and the majestic Niagara Falls, the Niagara Peninsula provides ideal cool-climate conditions for wine growing. Its diversity has resulted in the identification of 10 sub-appellations. They average 1400 growing degree days and at 13,600 acres the Niagara Peninsula is the largest planted area of all the viticultural areas in Canada. Over the ages this appellation experienced several glacial events that eroded and shaped the layers of sedimentary rock and ancient reef structures of the Niagara Escarpment, creating complex soil compositions in the area between the escarpment and Lake Ontario.

NIAGARA PENINSULA – 2 Regional and 10 sub-appellations:

- Creek Shores
- Lincoln Lakeshore
- Vinemount Ridge

1) NIAGARA ESCARPMENT REGION*

- Beamsville Bench
- Short Hills Bench
- Twenty Mile Bench

2) NIAGARA-ON-THE-LAKE-REGION*

- Four Mile Creek
- Niagara Lakeshore
- Niagara River
- St. David's Bench

* Niagara-on-the-Lake may appear on the label of a wine sourced from the growing area east of St. Catharines, while Niagara Escarpment may be used on wines sourced along the bench area west of St. Catharines.

For more information visit: www.winecountryontario.ca, www.vqaontario.com, www.grapegrowersofontario.com and www.vqaontario.ca

Conclusion: As is the case with virtually all new growing areas that are focusing on pinot noir and chardonnay, the process of investigation in Ontario, essentially via trial and error, is in full swing. It doesn't matter whether it's a region within California, Oregon, New Zealand or Australia, prospecting for quality terroirs is the name of the game. Before I offer a few thoughts on the current state of Ontario wine quality, I wish to acknowledge up front that one visit and tasting through a few hundred wines in no way makes me a particularly well-informed observer. Still, I have reasonably well-developed views about what is occurring elsewhere so this obviously helps inform my thoughts here.

Typically, the first criterion that pioneers to any given region consider is whether grapes could be grown successfully. Only later does the more qualitatively important question get posed, e.g. can wines of distinction be consistently produced? It's one thing that vines can thrive but there are plenty of areas in the world that can do that. There are relatively few that can produce wines of unusual distinction, particularly with pinot and chardonnay. The point I wish to make is what immediately struck me after having tasted only the first 20 or so examples is that there is a "there there" in Ontario. Is it especially well-developed? No, it's not, at least not yet. But lest I sound unintentionally dismissive, it's not yet especially well-developed in most of the 4 other areas that I mentioned either though there are enough success stories in each of them to provide hope while the process of investigation and refinement of the current state-of-the-art continues.

What I found most encouraging is that as one moved from growing area to growing area the character of the wines changed. This is why I say that there appears to be a "there there" in Ontario. For what it's worth at such an early stage, the region that impressed me the most was the Niagara Escarpment, in particular the Beamsville Bench though very solid wines are also being made in the Short Hills and Twenty Mile Bench areas.

As to wine quality, it's candidly variable. It's easy to tell that growers are still trying to determine what varieties work best where as well as on what rootstocks farmed with what specific viticultural regimens. The complexities of the exercise are indeed daunting for a variety of reasons and one can't just blithely assume that what works in growing areas like Burgundy or Oregon are automatically suited for Ontario because they're not. I spent a lot of time walking the vineyards and asking pointed viticulturally oriented questions and many of the answers surprised me, not because they were radical but rather because it became clear very rapidly that these are unique microclimates that necessarily required adaptations to tried and true methods that had been refined elsewhere.

As to what readers might look for, both chardonnay and pinot show significant promise. Somewhat ironically, I found the present day quality of the pinots to be superior to that of the chardonnay yet my (very early) sense of things is that chardonnay may ultimately prove to be the better performer. It's obviously in the very early days and there remains an enormous amount of work to be done but the grower community is collaborative, well-funded and well-organized. Moreover, thanks to the VQA there is an impressive commitment to identifying, maintaining and developing specific appellations that genuinely do have unique characteristics. This is perhaps the most extraordinary aspect of the Ontario wine area as it very clearly says that they understand that if they are to improve, and thrive, there has to be a commitment to producing wines of character and of terroir. They understand the most important reality of all, which is that the only competitive advantage that any wine region has is to produce wines that cannot be produced elsewhere. It obviously remains to be seen whether Ontario can ultimately compete at the very highest levels of wine quality but based on what I tasted, my sense is that there is at least a chance that it can. It is in this vein that I encourage readers to try a few examples of the better wines I have identified below. I think that you will agree that there is a "there there."

Lastly, should you like the wines there is every reason to be optimistic about the future and for two very important reasons: the first is simply that the vines, which are predominantly very young, can be expected to produce ever higher fruit quality as they age; secondly, growers will almost certainly improve and adapt their viticultural prowess to coax better quality from the vines. As is the case elsewhere I find it fascinating to watch the development of new pinot noir and chardonnay growing areas and Ontario is certainly one to watch carefully.

Burning Kiln Winery (Norfolk County, Ontario, Canada)

2011	Pinot Noir - Prime	red	86
2010	Pinot Noir	red	88
2011	Chardonnay - Cureman's Chard	white	88
2010	Chardonnay - Cureman's Chard	white	87

After forming a partnership between seven individuals inspired by the land, its rich history, heritage and various cultural backgrounds, Burning Kiln was established with their first harvest in 2010 and first release in 2011. Norfolk County is located in Ontario's South Coast and geographically rests on the huge delta sand plain left over from the glacial deposits from thousands of years ago at the end of the last ice age. With a moderate climate and long growing seasons, the area eventually became home to abundant flora and fauna as well many farms that included tobacco. The Burning Kiln vines were planted in 2006. The winemaker is Andrzej Lipinski and the assistant winemaker is Patti Fider. For further information, contact 519.586.9858 or visit: www.burningkilnwinery.ca

2011 Pinot Noir - Prime: (Ontario VQA, 12.5%). Light ruby. A very fresh and fruity nose features notes of cherry, raspberry and a hint of herbal tea. There is good detail and punch to the light weight flavors that terminate in a clean, dry and delicious finish this is a bit simple and lacks just a touch of phenolic maturity. This should drink well almost immediately. 86/2014+

2010 Pinot Noir: (Ontario VQA, 13.4%). A fruity nose of plum, black raspberry and violets leads to very fresh and energetic medium weight flavors that possess just a touch of youthful asperity on the otherwise clean and agreeably dry finish. It's interesting because the fruit profile isn't Burgundian but the mouth feel is. My score assumes that the finish will round out with a few years of bottle age. 88/2016+

2011 Chardonnay - Cureman's Chard: (Ontario VQA, 13.9%). A fresh and restrained nose offers up notes of green apple, pear and dried floral notes where there is just enough wood to notice. In the same fashion as the 2010 version there is a slightly oily texture to the attractively energetic medium-bodied flavors that culminate in a slightly drier and cleaner finish. While this could certainly be aged for a few years I would prefer to enjoy it now for its vibrancy. 88/now+

2010 Chardonnay - Cureman's Chard: (Ontario VQA, 12.5%). A cool and admirably pure nose features notes of apple, flowers and spice hints that is trimmed in a discreet touch of wood. The round, lush and supple medium weight flavors possess a slightly oily texture before terminating in a fruity, naturally sweet yet reasonably well-balanced finish that presently displays limited depth. 87/now+

Cave Spring Vineyard (Jordan, Ontario, Canada)

2010	Pinot Noir – Dolomite	red	87
2009	Pinot Noir – Estate Cave Spring Vineyard	red	88
2010	Chardonnay - Estate	white	90
2008	Chardonnay – Cave Spring Vineyard	white	89
NV	Brut – Blanc de Blancs	sparkling	89

More than three decades ago, the Pennachetti family helped to pioneer the cultivation of noble European grape varieties on the Niagara Peninsula with the planting of their first Riesling and Chardonnay vines at Cave Spring Vineyard. First named by European settlers in the late 18th century for the limestone caves and mineral springs found on the site of their estate vineyard, Cave Spring is nestled along a gently sloping terrace of the Niagara Escarpment. In 1981, founder Len Pennachetti built a house on the vineyard and five years later the Pennachetti family took the next step, partnering with winemaker Angelo Pavan to found Cave Spring Cellars in the village of Jordan. They have now expanded to more than 137 acres, all within the Beamsville Bench sub-appellation overlooking Lake Ontario. For further information, contact 888.806.9910 or visit: www.cavespringcellars.com

2010 Pinot Noir – Dolomite: (Niagara Escarpment VQA, 840 cases, 13%). A fresh and very fruity nose features a mix of red berries that include cherry, raspberry and currant. There is a liting and very clean mouth feel to the light to barely medium weight flavors that terminate in a balanced, linear and refreshing if not particularly complex finish. 87/2015+

2009 Pinot Noir - Estate Cave Spring Vineyard: (Beamsville Bench VQA, from vines in their 11th leaf, 270 cases, 13%). A perceptibly riper and more deeply pitched nose of both red and dark berry fruit aromas is given additional breadth in the form of floral and spice hints. There is again a lovely mouth feel to the cool and restrained medium-bodied flavors that possess a certain generosity, all wrapped in a dusty and agreeably dry finish. This is not especially complex either but there is better underlying material and thus a better chance that more will develop. 88/2016+

2010 Chardonnay - Estate: (Beamsville Bench VQA, from vines ranging in age from 28 to 34 years, 1,165 cases, 13.5%). A fresh, cool and admirably pure nose of apple, pear and white flowers leads to intense and seductively textured middle weight flavors that possess good mid-palate concentration. There is plenty of mouth coating dry extract that buffers the moderately firm acidity and would help to allow this to be drunk immediately if desired. This is really very good. 90/2014+

2008 Chardonnay Cave Spring Vineyard: (Beamsville Bench VQA, from a single parcel of 35 year old vines, 275 cases, 13.5%). An attractively layered nose offers up notes of apple, pear and citrus scents. There is both good richness and volume to the round and beguilingly textured medium-bodied flavors that possess solid depth as well as reasonably good length. For my taste this has reached its peak though the vibrancy is such that it could easily continue to be held. 89/now+

NV Brut – Blanc de Blancs: (Niagara Escarpment, aged sur lie in bottle for a minimum of 30 months prior to disgorging). A distinctly yeasty nose also features notes of citrus, white flowers and brioche. The delicious, intense and restrained flavors possess a relatively fine effervescence as well as very good depth on the persistent finish. This is also really quite good. 89/now+

Closson Chase Vineyard (Hillier, Ontario, Canada)

2010	Pinot Noir – Closson Chase Vineyard	red	86
2007	Pinot Noir – Closson Chase Vineyard	red	86
2010	Chardonnay – S. Kocsis Vineyard	white	88

Closson Chase was founded in 1998 by a group of partners that included winemaker Deborah Paskus. She was among the first to plant in the Prince Edward County's tough limestone soils. Closson Chase is located in Ontario's most northern appellation, which is located at the eastern end of Lake Ontario in the Prince Edward County Appellation. The area relies on the lake to provide a moderate cool climate growing season. Prevailing southwesterly breezes travel across the Bay of Quinte and serve to moderate temperatures throughout the year. These breezes are especially beneficial during the warm summer months, keeping average temperatures around 22°C/72°F. Production is currently at around 2,700 cases. For further information, contact 888.201.2300 or visit: www.clossonchase.com

2010 Pinot Noir – Closson Chase Vineyard: (Prince Edward County VQA, 15% whole cluster, hand harvested 110 days after bloom, organically managed, 12.5%). An expansive nose features exuberantly fresh notes of raspberry, cherry and dried flowers where a hint of spice can also be perceived. There is fine intensity to the supple, refined and detailed flavors that terminate in a bone dry finish where a touch of citrus appears. This is certainly pretty but most will find the dryness of the finish to be too much. 86/2015+

2007 Pinot Noir – Closson Chase Vineyard: (Prince Edward County VQA, hand harvested 118 days after flowering, organically managed, 6" leaf in 2007, 12.7%). This is still agreeably fresh even though there are the first signs of secondary fruit now in evidence. There is a lovely sense of vibrancy to the attractively well-detailed middle weight flavors that display slightly under ripe supporting tannins as well as a very slight bitterness on the markedly dry finish. Again, I like the style as well as the delivery save for the finishing dryness which will again be more than most will find appealing. 86/now+

2010 Chardonnay – S. Kocsis Vineyard: (Beamsville Bench VQA, hand harvested 120 days after bloom, Kocsis Vineyard is one of the oldest Chardonnay plantings in Niagara at 31st leaf in 2010, 13.5%). The color is quite golden and the nose exhibits a Riesling-like along with hints of exotic fruit to the peach and apricot aromas. There is fine concentration to the lush, even opulent flavors that possess plenty of dry extract, all wrapped in a mouth coating finish. This is a big chard and for my taste I would be inclined to enjoy it now as it risks becoming heavy with age. 88/now+

Coyote's Run Estate Winery (St. David's, Ontario, Canada)

2010	Pinot Noir - Rare Vintage	red	87
2009	Pinot Noir - Rare Vintage	red	87

Coyote's Run is located in Niagara-on-the-Lake in a warm microclimate just below St. David's Bench. Jeff Aubry is one of the founding partners and president and David Sheppard is the winemaker. I visited Coyote's Run and saw they have the benefit of being located on a property where two sharply defined and visibly distinct types of soils exist. They planted vines on each and named these the Red Paw and Black Paw Vineyards. Red Paw Vineyard has the rarer red Trafalgar iron rich clay loam soil that is approximately 450 million years old. The heavier, dark Toledo clay loam of the Black Paw Vineyard is more common in Niagara-on-the-Lake. It is a newer soil at about 15,000 years old that was formed from lake bed deposits resulting from glacial runoff of Lake Iroquois, the same lake that carved the Niagara Escarpment. The Toledo clay contains more organic matter than the Trafalgar clay, and as a result, this soil holds more water and has higher heat retention. They produce wines with the same varietals from the two different vineyards and in tasting a variety of wines and vintages from each *terroir*, it was apparent that there was a significant difference. For further information, contact 877.269.6833 or visit: www.coyotesrunwinery.com

2010 Pinot Noir - Rare Vintage: (Four Mile Creek VQA, from the newest estate vineyard, clone 828, 100 cases, 13.5%). A very fresh and expansive nose of various red berries and spice nuances leads to well-detailed and vibrant flavors that possess a dusty mouth feel on the moderately dry finish that displays a touch of youthful asperity. This needs a few years to flesh out and if you're going to try one young I would suggest trying it with an appropriate food choice to buffer the dryness. 87/2016+

2009 Pinot Noir - Rare Vintage: (Four Mile Creek VQA, from the newest estate vineyard, clone 828, 110 cases, 12.5%). Light ruby. This opens with noticeable reduction and it clearly needs air so a vigorous decantation is helpful. The detailed, intense and energetic middle weight flavors are again noticeably dry on the otherwise reasonably complex and persistent finish. The supporting tannins lack the last 5% or so of phenolic ripeness and again, if you're going to try a bottle young I would recommend serving it with something to help buffer the asperity. 87/2016+

Felding Estate Winery (Beamsville, Ontario, Canada)

2011	Chardonnay	white	87
2010	Pinot Noir – Jack Rabbit Flats Vineyard	red	88
2009	Pinot Noir – Jack Rabbit Flats Vineyard	red	86
NV	Brut	sparkling	89

Felding is a family owned and operated winery founded by Ken and Marg Fielding. They began producing wines in 2002 and opened the winery in 2005 and are now producing approximately 13,000 cases annually. Fielding Estate's wines are from

100% Niagara Peninsula grown grapes. Their son Curtis is the General Manager and Richie Roberts is the winemaker. For further information, contact 888.778.7758 or visit: www.feldingwines.com

2011 Chardonnay: (Niagara Peninsula VQA, harvested October 4-17th, 12.5%; bottled under screwcap). This is really quite pretty with cool and airy aromas of green apple, pear and lemon peel scents serving as an elegant introduction to the concentrated and voluminous medium-bodied flavors. There is a lush and very round mouth feel with just enough acidity to save the balance on the soft and reasonably persistent finish. 87/now

2010 Pinot Noir - Jack Rabbit Flats Vineyard: (Lincoln Lakeshore VQA, handpicked from two separate vineyard plots, harvested September 14th, 12.5%). This is also really very pretty with an elegant and well-layered nose that offers up notes of various red berries, spice and sandalwood hints. There is good volume and intensity to the mouth coating medium-bodied flavors that possess better concentration than many of the pinots in this review, all wrapped in a clean and focused finish. This may be a bit too dry for some readers but I suspect that the finish will flesh out with a few years of bottle age and as such my score offers the benefit of the doubt in this respect. 88/2016+

2009 Pinot Noir - Jack Rabbit Flats Vineyard: (Lincoln Lakeshore VQA, 12.5%). There is a distinct herbal tea character to the otherwise very fresh nose that combines both red and dark berry fruit scents. The supple and round middle weight flavors possess an attractive mouth feel and good energy before terminating in a clean and markedly dry finish as the supporting structure lacks just a bit of phenolic maturity. A few years of bottle age will probably serve to ameliorate the dryness but it's unlikely to ever dissipate completely. 86/2015+

NV Brut: (Niagara Peninsula VQA, 55% chardonnay, 45% pinot noir, aged on lees for over two years and aged another four months after disgorging). A pretty and quite airy nose of pear, apple and yeast is trimmed in soft yeast hints. There is fine intensity to the clean and delicious flavors that display a relatively fine mousse as well as a crisp and moderately dry finish. Lovely. 89/now

Flat Rock Cellars (Ontario, Canada)

2011	Pinot Noir	red	86
2010	Pinot Noir	red	NR
2010	Pinot Noir - Gravity	red	87
2010	Chardonnay - The Rusty Shed	white	86
2008	Riddled	sparkling	86
2007	Brut	sparkling	91

Founded in 1999 by Ed Madronich, Sr., Flat Rock is on a piece of the Niagara Escarpment known as the Jordan Bench, part of the Twenty Mile Bench, and comprises 80 acres. Having met with the founder's son, Ed Madronich, Jr., it is clear Flat Rock is passionate about pinot and Ontario *terroir*; you can see his enthusiasm and learn something about the climate and *terroir* of Ontario by this video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oPcdN4bQ9dQ>. Stelvin screwcaps are their wine closures, and they use bottle caps for sparkling, which are used during the élevage of all champagnes/sparklers. Jay Johnston is the winemaker. As an observation on the tasting notes, I had the chance to taste all of these wines at the winery. While the sparklers and chard showed about the same, the pinots did not. Why exactly I cannot say but there was definitely a difference. For further information, contact 855.994.8994 or visit: www.flatrockcellars.com

2011 Pinot Noir: (Twenty Mile Bench VQA, 3,444 cases, 12.5%). Light ruby. An exuberantly fresh and very pinot nose of primarily red berry fruit and spice hints precedes the attractively well-detailed and intense flavors that terminate in a tart and markedly dry finish that avoids overt austerity. I like the delivery as it's delineated and vibrant but some may find this to be overly dry. 86/2015+

2010 Pinot Noir: (Twenty Mile Bench VQA, 5,127 cases 12.5%). Strong reduction makes decanting a necessity. Otherwise there is good verve to the supple yet well-detailed middle weight flavors where the reduction resurfaces on the finish. This particular bottle was problematic yet the same wine did not show this way at the winery. Not Rated

2010 Pinot Noir - Gravity: (Twenty Mile Bench VQA, 414 cases, 13.2%). A fresh and quite fruity nose of cool red pinot fruit and soft spice elements introduces detailed, intense and delicious medium-bodied flavors. There is good persistence to the dusty finish that displays a hint of youthful asperity. 87/2016+

2010 Chardonnay - The Rusty Shed: (Twenty Mile Bench VQA, 427 cases, 13.5%). A fresh and ever-so-mildly tropical nose of white peach and pear is trimmed in noticeable wood that is also prominent on the opulent and quite succulent flavors. The mouth feel is borderline soft and the wood sweetens the finish on the slightly simple finish. This is carrying more wood than I can warm up to. 86/now

2008 Riddled: (Twenty Mile Bench VQA, 71% chardonnay, 29% pinot noir, 343 cases produced). There is enough reduction to notice though there is plenty of verve to the foamy flavors that terminate in a clean and dry finish that offers only moderate depth. 86/now

2007 Brut: (Twenty Mile Bench VQA, 67% pinot noir and 33% chardonnay; secondary fermentation took place in the bottle and the wine remained on yeast lees for 3 years before disgorging and dosage in June 2011, 174 cases). There is a hint of reduction here as well though it's much less prominent and allows the pretty notes of citrus, white flowers, apple and pear to be appreciated. There is very fine intensity to the delicious flavors that are supported by a borderline aggressive effervescence on the complex, balanced and impressively long finish. This could easily be held and might develop further but it's sufficiently far along that it's enjoyable now. Well worth considering as this is really very good. 91/now+

Grange of Prince Edward Vineyards & Estate Winery (Hillier, Ontario, Canada)

2009	Pinot Noir – Trumpour's Mill	red	NR
2007	Pinot Noir – Diana Block	red	87
2008	Brut	sparkling	88

The Grange of Prince Edward Vineyards & Estate Winery is the County's largest vineyard and winery in Prince Edward County. It is a family-run agribusiness established on an over-600-acre farm purchased in the early 1970s by the current President and CEO Caroline Granger's father Robert Granger. In 2001 the first 10 acres of vines were planted to a mix of chardonnay, gamay and pinot noir. The rationale was that the calcium-based limestone in the clay-gravel soils and the region's shortened growing season were a good match. Now there are 60 acres under vine and the farm has 6 distinct vineyard blocks. Plantings include pinot gris, cabernet franc, sauvignon blanc, and enough pinot noir to make it one of the larger vineyards in Canada. The Grange participates in Sustainable Winemaking Ontario. For further information, contact 866.792.7712 or visit: www.grangeofprinceedward.com

2009 Pinot Noir – Trumpour's Mill: (Prince Edward County VQA, 13.5%). While the aromas were pretty and fresh there was a very curious and atypical flavor profile and a dry and excessively astringent finish. Two bottles were tasted with the same result. Assuming these bottles are representative, this is not worth your attention. Not Rated.

2007 Pinot Noir– Diana Block: (Prince Edward County VQA, named as a tribute to Diana Granger; originally planted in 2001 with 3,250 pinot vines, clone 777, on SQ4; only made in years when the grapes meet set standards, 13%). A distinctly reluctant nose of both red and dark berries displays the first hint of secondary aromas along with traces of spice. There is reasonably good depth to the sound and supple light weight flavors that culminate in a moderately dry but persistent finish. 87now+

2008 Brut: (Prince Edward County VQA). A fresh and expressive nose of brioche, apple and pear aromas is trimmed in a lovely hint of yeast. There is a slightly fruity character to the markedly foamy and solidly complex flavors that deliver a crisp, dry and solidly persistent finish. This is solid if not truly distinguished. 88/now+

Henry of Pelham Family Estate Winery (St. Catharines, Ontario, Canada)

2009	Pinot Noir – Speck Family Reserve	red	88
2009	Pinot Noir – Estate	red	87
2011	Chardonnay – Estate	white	89
2010	Chardonnay – Speck Family Reserve	white	89
2007	Blanc de Blancs - Cuvée Catharine "Carte Blanche"	sparkling	89
NV	Brut - Cuvée Catharine	sparkling	86
NV	Brut – Rosé - Cuvée Catharine	sparkling	90

Henry of Pelham Family Estate Winery was established in 1988 but the family has a long heritage in the area dating back to 1794. Henry of Pelham was one of the original winemaking pioneers in the area. After studying heat scans and other research to determine if their vineyard was suitable for prime grape growing, the three Speck brothers, Matthew, Daniel and Paul, along with their father, tore out their Concord and Niagara grapes in 1984. The vineyards are located within the Short Hills Bench VQA where there is a clay silt soil and numerous streams originating from the base of the Niagara Escarpment. Such streams such as Fifteen Mile and Twenty Mile Creeks flow through the escarpment and provide excellent water drainage in the vineyards. Short Hills Bench typically sees a long, warm summer and a dry, sunny autumn and is only 7 km south of Lake Ontario. To picture the Short Hills Bench, imagine a shelf of land jutting out of the Niagara Escarpment midway up and bounded to the east by a valley of short hills carved by small creeks. The south and west are bounded by the limestone and Dolostone (dolomite) rock-face of the Escarpment. The Bench has a shale and limestone basin with 30-40' of glacial clay, containing different minerals at different depths and locations, silt and a 1-2' mixture of clay-mixed topsoil. The winery continues to be family owned and operated and now produces approximately 75,000 cases each year. For further information, contact 905.684.8423 or visit: www.henryofpelham.com

2009 Pinot Noir – Speck Family Reserve: (Short Hills Bench VQA, yields 1½ tons/acre and below, 13.5%). A relatively deeply pitched nose of plum and dark raspberry leads to delicious, round and supple middle weight flavors that possess good mid-palate concentration before terminating in a clean, dry and persistent finish that displays a trace of austerity. 88/2015+

2009 Pinot Noir – Estate: (Short Hills Bench VQA, yields 1 to 3 tons/acre ~17 to 52 hl/ha, 13.5%). Light ruby. This is also quite deeply pitched with an earthy and somber nose of dark berry fruit aromas that appears to have a whiff of Brett to it though I stress that it is very subtle. There is good volume and solid mid-palate concentration to the moderately austere but persistent finish. This is an interesting if somewhat awkward effort. 87/now+

2011 Chardonnay – Estate: (Short Hills Bench VQA, yields 1 ½ - 3 tons/acre, 13.5%). A fruity but not simple nose of pear and Vignier hints is trimmed in just enough wood to notice. There is good density to the round and supple flavors that possess a good level of dry extract, all wrapped in a clean, crisp and delicious finish that displays a lovely vibrancy. Worth a look. 89/2014+

2010 Chardonnay – Speck Family Reserve: (Short Hills Bench VQA, from vines that were planted by the Speck brothers in 1988, yields 2 tons/acre, 13.5%). An attractively well-layered nose of cool, pure and airy aromas includes notes of citrus, green apple and floral scents. There is a lush, even opulent palate feel to the round but not soft middle weight flavors that display plenty of finishing punch on the anise-inflected finish. This could easily be enjoyed now or held for a year or two first. 89/2014+

2007 Blanc de Blancs - Cuvée Catharine – “Carte Blanche”: (Short Hills Bench VQA, this is the winery's first vintage dated sparkling that was aged for 54 months in the bottle before being disgorged). There is a touch of reduction present yet there is very fine aromatic complexity to the citrus, floral and green apple nuances. There is a cool and impressively intense feel to the solidly complex and persistent flavors that are supported by a relatively fine mousse on the crisp finish. Lovely. 89/now+

NV Brut - Cuvée Catharine: (Niagara Peninsula VQA, aged *en tirage* for an average of 30 months, 11.5 g/L). Here too there is a very mild touch of reduction that is enough to push the fruit to the background yet the aromatic impression is still one of coolness and restraint. There is good verve to the vibrant flavors where the mousse is moderately though the appeal of the somewhat simple if agreeably clean and dry finish is diminished by a hint of bitterness. 86/now

NV Brut – Rosé - Cuvée Catharine: (Niagara Peninsula VQA, aged *en tirage* for an average of 30 months, 11.3 g/L). An expansive and very fresh nose of cherry and strawberry aromas is in keeping with the delicious, intense and fruity flavors that possess an intense but not drying effervescence on the clean and moderately dry finish. This is really very good and could be drunk now or held for a bit more development if desired. 90/now

Hidden Bench Vineyards and Winery (Beamsville, Ontario, Canada)

2010	Pinot Noir	red	91
2010	Pinot Noir – Felseck Vineyard	red	90
2010	Pinot Noir – Locust Lane Vineyard	red	91
2011	Chardonnay	white	90

Founded in 2003 by Harald Thiel Hidden Bench Vineyards and Winery is a winery dedicated to producing wines solely from three vineyards totaling about 100 acres, situated within the Beamsville Bench VQA sub-appellation. The total production has slowly climbed and the present goal is 8,000 cases. The Beamsville Bench is composed of dolomitic limestone which is

thought to have an impact on the mineral character found in many Beamsville Bench wines. Other features of the Bench include sloping vineyards backed by the escarpment, moderating breezes and excellent drainage. Their website offers an informative interactive program when focused on their vineyards, where you can easily get detailed information on specific block plantings, rootstocks and varietal clones. The pinots are bottled unfined and unfiltered; all of the following wines are from 100% organically grown estate fruit. For further information, contact 905.563.8700 or visit: www.hiddenbench.com

2010 Pinot Noir: (Beamsville Bench VQA, 13.5%). A perfumed and exceptionally pretty nose of both red and dark pinot fruit is trimmed in an attractive lashing of spice hints. There is a really lovely texture to the round, supple and well-concentrated middle weight flavors that possess fine phenolic maturity as well as excellent depth and length. One to look for plus there is solid upside development potential. 91/2017+

2010 Pinot Noir – Felseck Vineyard: (Beamsville Bench VQA, 13.5%). This is also beguilingly perfumed with its spicy nose of mixed red berries and plum aromas. Here too there is very good mid-palate concentration to the dusty and mouth coating medium-bodied flavors that possess a robust and moderately somber finish that delivers fine depth and excellent length. This is not especially refined but there is ample authority and character. Patience will be required. 90/2017+

2010 Pinot Noir – Locust Lane Vineyard: (Beamsville Bench VQA, 13.5%). There is excellent aromatic breadth to the well-layered mélange of dark berries, spice, plum and black cherry scents. There is impressive mid-palate concentration to the rich, intense and sleekly muscular medium weight flavors that possess very fine depth and length. Like the Felseck, this is not an elegant wine but there is plenty of character, indeed from a structure and power standpoint, this is vaguely reminiscent of Corton. 91/2018+

2011 Chardonnay: (Beamsville Bench VQA, 13.5%). A beautifully restrained and pure nose features notes of apple, essence of pear and floral aromas. There is a lovely sense of underlying tension to the round, supple and delicious medium-bodied flavors that display fine intensity where the citrus-infused finish adds lift to the moderately dry finish. While this could be drunk now with pleasure there is enough development potential to warrant 2 to 3 years of cellar time. 90/2015+

Hillebrand Winery (Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario, Canada)

2010	Pinot Noir Showcase – Clark Farm	red	85
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For further information, contact (800) 582-8412 or visit www.triushwines.com.

2010 Pinot Noir Showcase – Clark Farm: (Four Mile Creek VQA, 13.7%). Noticeable wood all but dominates the otherwise pretty red pinot fruit and continues onto the round, supple and ripe medium weight flavors that terminate in a mildly astringent, wood and warm finish that is sweet and borderline cloying. The fruit seems ripe enough but the wood program is anything but subtle. 85/now

Inniskillin (Ontario, Canada)

2010	Pinot Noir - Winemaker's Series – Select Vineyards	red	88
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On July 31, 1975, Inniskillin Wines incorporated and its founders Karl J. Kaiser and Donald J.P. Ziraldo were granted the first winery license in Ontario since prohibition. Ziraldo was the founding chair of the Vintners Quality Alliance (VQA) when it was introduced to the industry in 1989. The wines are currently made by winemaker Bruce Nicholson. For further information, contact 877.323.8452 or visit: www.inniskillin.com

2010 Pinot Noir - Winemaker's Series – Select Vineyards: (Niagara Peninsula VQA, 14%). A deeply pitched nose of dark berry fruit display background hints of tar. There is a lush and overtly opulent mouth feel to the middle weight flavors that also display a slightly peculiar taste on the otherwise dusty and robust finish where a touch warmth surfaces. There is very good phenolic maturity to the supporting structural elements and while this isn't exactly typical, it seems to work anyway. 88/2016+

Jackson-Triggs Winery (Niagara, Ontario, Canada)

2011	Pinot Noir - Grand Reserve	red	88
2011	Pinot Noir - Delaine "Puncheon Pinot"	red	88
2008	Entourage Grand Reserve – Brut	sparkling	88

Jackson-Triggs is a blend of the founders' names, Allan Jackson and Don Triggs, who established the winery in 1993. Marco Piccoli is the winemaker. For further information, contact 905.468.4637 or visit: www.jacksontriggswinery.com

2011 Pinot Noir - Grand Reserve: (Niagara Peninsula VQA, 13%). A relatively deeply pitched nose of red and dark berry fruit aromas is cut with hints of spice and soft floral nuances. There is good volume and solid mid-palate concentration to the supple and lush middle weight flavors that display good length on the ever-so-slightly dry finish. 88/2017+

2011 Pinot Noir - Delaine "Puncheon Pinot": (Niagara Peninsula VQA, 13%). There is a hint of menthol to the pretty mix of primarily red berries that is trimmed in just enough wood to notice. The round, supple and mildly woody flavors are underpinned by phenolically mature tannins on the dusty finish that also displays ample wood influence. There is more oak than I personally like but it's not so much that it dominates the finish and more importantly does not dry it out. 88/2017+

2008 Entourage Grand Reserve – Brut: (Niagara Peninsula VQA, aged on lees for three years). Notes of mild reduction, green apple and white flowers introduce an aggressively effervescent palate impression before terminating in a medium dry finish of good if not truly special length. This could use a bit more depth but overall, this is a competent showing. 88/now

Konzelmann Estate Winery (Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario, Canada)

2011	Pinot Noir (1)	red	87
2010	Chardonnay	white	86
2008	Chardonnay – Barrel Aged	white	90

In 1984 German winemaker Herbert Konzelmann and his family immigrated to Canada, purchased a lakefront peach orchard and promptly began replacing the trees with grape vines. Konzelmann Estate was officially the seventh winery to open its doors in Ontario, and now is one of over 140. Currently, the sixth generation of the Konzelmann family, Fabian Reis has taken over the winemaking responsibilities. Production now includes over thirty wines with a total output of around 500,000 bottles. For further information, contact 905.935.2866 or visit: www.konzelmann.ca

2011 Pinot Noir (1): (Niagara Peninsula VQA, 13%). A perfumed and elegant nose features notes of red and dark pinot fruit that displays a pretty top note of violets. The round, supple and very lush medium-bodied flavors possess a dusty and mouth coating palate impression, all wrapped in a slightly sweet finish with just enough depth to be interesting. 87/now

2010 Chardonnay: (Niagara Peninsula VQA, 13.5%; bottled under screwcap). A very mild but still perceptible trace of reduction is not enough to completely mask the otherwise moderately exotic yellow orchard fruit aromas. There is a very generous mouth feel to the round and opulent middle weight flavors that possess good verve though the finish is cut short by the sharp acidity that imparts noticeable dryness. In sum, this is a bit awkward. 86/now

2008 Chardonnay – Barrel Aged: (Niagara Peninsula VQA, 13%; bottled under screwcap). There is good complexity to the attractively layered aromas of dried apricot, peach and whispers of mango that are trimmed in hints of *pain grillé*. The generous and exceptionally rich medium-bodied flavors possess good balance and very fine length with none of the dryness of the 2010. This is a lovely example and worth considering plus it is drinking perfectly now. 90/now

Le Clos Jordanne (Jordan, Ontario, Canada)

2010	Pinot Noir – Claystone Terrace Twenty Mile Bench	red	89
2010	Pinot Noir – Village Reserve	red	89
2009	Pinot Noir – Claystone Terrace Twenty Mile Bench	red	NR
2009	Pinot Noir – Village Reserve	red	90
2010	Chardonnay – Claystone Terrace Twenty Mile Bench	white	89

2010	Chardonnay – Village Reserve	white	90
2009	Chardonnay – Claystone Terrace Twenty Mile Bench	white	88
2009	Chardonnay – Village Reserve	white	89

Le Clos Jordanne was launched in 2006 and is a partnership between Constellation Brands Canada and Boisset France, who owns, among others, the Domaine de la Vougeraie. The wines are produced under the direction of viniculture manager Thomas Bachelder, who is responsible for both the grape growing and winemaking. For further information, contact 905.562.9404 or visit: www.leclosjordanne.com

2010 Pinot Noir – Claystone Terrace Twenty Mile Bench: (Twenty Mile Bench VQA, 13%). A relatively high-toned nose of cherry, raspberry and cranberry leads to round, supple and reasonably well-concentrated middle weight flavors that possess a dusty mouth feel on the mildly dry but not really austere finish. This robust effort is clearly intended to reward mid-term cellaring. 89/2017+

2010 Pinot Noir – Village Reserve: (Niagara Peninsula VQA, 13%). This is aromatically similar to the 2010 Claystone except this is slightly spicier. There is lovely detailed and fine verve to the extract-rich medium-bodied flavors that also possess a relatively robust finish that offers both good depth and length. 89/2016+

2009 Pinot Noir – Claystone Terrace Twenty Mile Bench: (Niagara Peninsula VQA, 13.5%). This was so strongly reduced that it dominated the palate and the finish. I tried a second bottle and while the reductive funk was not quite so strong, it was more than an informed observer would find acceptable. Not Rated.

2009 Pinot Noir – Village Reserve: (Niagara Peninsula VQA, 12.5%). Here the nose is quite restrained with cool and admirably pure aromas of plum, red pinot and dark currant that also display a hint of spice. There is good energy and fine delineation to the delicious medium weight flavors that terminate in a dusty and mildly austere finale. Like its stable mates, this robust and sleekly powerful effort was expressly built to age and it should indeed reward mid-term cellaring. 90/2017+

2010 Chardonnay – Claystone Terrace Twenty Mile Bench: (Twenty Mile Bench VQA, 13.5%). A notably ripe and mildly exotic nose is comprised of white orchard fruit and soft wood notes. There is a very generous and lush mouth feel to the vibrant medium-bodied flavors that offer an interesting contrast between the natural sweetness of the mid-palate with the agreeably dry and clean finish. This doesn't possess first-rate depth but it is satisfying nonetheless. 89/2014+

2010 Chardonnay – Village Reserve: (Niagara Peninsula VQA, 13.5%). This is also noticeably if discreetly exotic with is fresh and cool mix of both white and yellow orchard fruit aromas. There is good richness to the lavishly generous and mouth coating middle weight plus flavors that possess slightly better depth and length on the sappy finish. This is a very big chard and readers would be well advised to maintain a cool serving temperature cool as this could easily be heavy if allowed to warm up unduly. 90/now+

2009 Chardonnay – Claystone Terrace Twenty Mile Bench: (Niagara Peninsula VQA, 13%). There is moderate wood influence that fights a bit with the topical aromas of dried apricot, peach, mango and Viognier-like scents. There is plenty of volume to the big-bodied and seductively textured flavors that terminate in a curiously crisp and lemony finish that is borderline heavy. I appreciate that the description sounds incongruous but the wood influence is sufficiently imposing that it weighs down the finish. While this could certainly be held, for my taste I would drink it now for its vibrancy. And like the 2010 Village Reserve, I would serve this on the cool side. 88/now+

2009 Chardonnay – Village Reserve: (Niagara Peninsula VQA, 13%). A very ripe nose combines both Viognier-like and tropical fruit aromas with gentle wood influences. There is excellent richness, size, weight and punch to the opulent medium weight plus flavors that, while certainly powerful, are a bit more refined before culminating in an ever-so-slightly warm finish. This could also be drunk now or held for a year or two as the balance, save for a very mild touch of warmth, is quite good. Once again, I would advise maintaining a cooler than usual serving temperature. 89/2014+

Malivoire (Beamsville, Ontario, Canada)

2010	Pinot Noir – M2 Small Lot	red	90
2009	Pinot Noir – M2 Small Lot	red	89
2010	Chardonnay Mottiar	white	86
2010	Chardonnay Moira	white	87

The winery's first vineyard, the "Moira", was purchased in 1995 by Martin Malivoire and Moira Saganski. A year later they acquired a second and larger property a short distance to the west that became the site of the winery. Choosing a property below the escarpment, in what is now known as the Beamsville Bench sub-appellation, Malivoire currently farms four vineyards within the Niagara Peninsula Viticultural Area that are divided into two sub-designations: the Moira, Estate and Eastman vineyards on Beamsville Bench, and the Epp Vineyard on Twenty Mile Bench. Malivoire owns the Moira and Estate vineyards and farms the Epp and Eastman vineyards under lease. The location has "The Bench Effect" combining elevation and lake-facing slope to facilitate a flow of precipitation and cold air away from the vineyard, leaving it drier and slightly warmer. Shiraz Mottiar is responsible for the winemaking. For further information, contact 866.644.2244 or visit: www.malivoire.com

2010 Pinot Noir – Mz Small Lot: (Beamsville Bench VQA, 310 cases, 13.5%). An expressive and very pretty nose features both red and dark pinot fruit and plenty of spice elements. There is good ripeness and phenolic maturity to the supporting structural components along with solid concentration to the middle weight flavors, all wrapped in a persistent and solidly complex finish where the only nit is a soupçon of warmth. Worth considering. 90/2016+

2009 Pinot Noir – Mz Small Lot: (Beamsville Bench VQA, 285 cases, 12.5%). This is quite aromatically similar to the 2010 version except perhaps not quite as elegant. There is very fine volume and impressive richness to the utterly delicious middle weight flavors that display a discreet application of wood on the robust and serious finish that delivers very good length. I marginally prefer the refinement of the 2010 but it's clear that there is a consistent flavor content and terroir transparency between these two wines. 89/2016+

2010 Chardonnay Mottiar: (Beamsville Bench VQA, 65 cases, 13.5%). A cool, fresh and attractively restrained nose of white orchard fruit, apple and white floral notes introduces supple, even litting middle weight flavors that possess good detail on the crisp, clean and agreeably dry finish that is sufficiently tangy to mar the balance. In sum, this is very pretty but awkward. 86/2014+

2010 Chardonnay Moira: (Beamsville Bench VQA, 215 cases, 13.5%). An exuberantly fruity nose flirts with notes of the exotic that possess good freshness if limited breadth. There is good volume to the supple, round and decidedly forward medium weight flavors that also display touch of acid tang though here it is less pronounced and as a consequence the balance is less compromised. 87/now

Megalomaniac Winery (Vineland, Ontario, Canada)

2007 Pinot Noir – Statement Series	red	89
2007 Pinot Noir – "Sonofabitch"	red	86

Originally John Howard wanted to name his winery after himself, "and then my good friends accused me of being another (profanity withheld) megalomaniac, and the name stuck." The winery was built in 2007 and the winery now has 110 acres of vines under management. The winemaking team is led by Sue-Ann Staff. Howard is also a partner in two French vineyards in St. Emilion. In the category of impressive good deeds, Megalomaniac donates \$1 for every bottle sold to Kids Health Links with the goal of supporting hospitalized children. For further information, contact 888.634.2561 or visit: www.megalomaniacwine.com

2007 Pinot Noir – Statement Series: (Niagara Peninsula VQA, 13.7%). A perfumed, cool and very fresh nose features noticeable secondary development of dried leaves and forest floor nuances. There is good verve and detail to the middle weight flavors that possess a dusty and mouth coating finish that displays a subtle hint of dryness that manages to avoid clipping the persistence. This is drinking perfectly now. 89/now

2007 Pinot Noir – "Sonofabitch": (Niagara Peninsula VQA, 12.5%). This is also agreeably fresh, cool and complex and while there are hints of secondary development to the red and dark berry fruit and spice suffused nose, they are less evident than in the '07 Statement. I like the mid-palate mouth feel though the finish displays hints of astringency as well as a mild hint of bitterness. This would be better with food as the balance isn't what it could be. 86/now

Norman Hardie (Wellington, Ontario, Canada)

2011	Pinot Noir - County	red	88
2010	Pinot Noir - County	red	88
2009	Pinot Noir	red	89
2011	Chardonnay - County	white	90
2010	Chardonnay	white	89

Norman Hardie founded his eponymous winery after having been a sommelier and restaurant manager at a Four Seasons Hotel. Hardie studied wine at the University of Dijon and was an apprentice in the vineyards of Burgundy. All his wines are bottled unfiltered under screwcap. For further information, contact 613.399.5297 or visit: www.normanhardie.com

2011 Pinot Noir - County: (Prince Edward County VQA, 12.5%). This initially opens with enough reduction to notice though a quick double decanting liberates the fruity and very pinot aromas of primarily red berries. There is a supple, even lifting feel to the light to barely middle weight flavors that possess both good detail and a fine sense of energy, all wrapped in a delicious finish. This is a lighter but well-balanced effort that could be enjoyed now or held for a few years first. 88/2015+

2010 Pinot Noir - County: (Prince Edward County VQA, 11.9%). This was also initially noticeably reduced though as little as 5 minutes of air revealed the pretty red currant, cherry and briar-suffused aromas. There is a vaguely Oregon pinot-like character to the lively and intense light weight flavors that offer good punch if limited complexity on the youthfully austere finish. This is pretty but it will need to develop more depth than I envision to be at the next level. 88/2015+

2009 Pinot Noir: (Niagara Peninsula VQA, fruit was sourced in St. David's Bench and Twenty Mile Bench sub-appellations in Niagara, 12.5%). Here the reduction is very prominent and required extended airing to finally reveal the earthy dark berry fruit aromas so I would definitely recommend decanting this if you're going to try one soon. There is good volume and intensity to the medium-bodied flavors that possess a dusty mouth feel on the tautly muscular, indeed even robust and mouth coating finish that offers a bit more overall depth and length. 89/2016+

2011 Chardonnay - County: (Prince Edward County VQA, 12.5%). There is the barest hint of reduction that does not mask the moderately toasty nose of tropical and ripe yet very fresh aromas of Viognier, dried apricot and mango. There is good richness, size, weight and volume to the opulent and extract-rich flavors that culminate in a clean, dry and balanced finish. This is really very good with a classy mouth feel and the quality of the underlying material is such that it should allow for a few years of upside development potential. 90/2015+

2010 Chardonnay: (Niagara Peninsula VQA, 13.3%). This is interesting as it combines ripe aromas of white peach, pear, apricot and sauvignon blanc-like nuances. This is extremely rich with excellent volume to the generous and succulent flavors that balance the natural sweetness of the mid-palate against a relatively dry finish that offers good length. There is a touch of acid tang but it is sufficiently subtle that the balance is neither unduly compromised nor is the finish clipped. 89/2014+

Peelee Island Winery (Kingsville, Ontario, Canada)

2011	Pinot Noir	red	89
2010	Pinot Noir Reserve – Vinedressers	red	90
2011	Chardonnay - Non-Oaked	white	89
2011	Chardonnay – Lighthouse	white	88

Peelee Island Winery was founded in 1979 and there are now more than 700 acres planted on the island. Remarkably these vineyards now comprise the largest private estate in Canada. With tight control of their grape supply the winery is able to maintain their vineyard specifications strictly outlined by the World Wildlife Fund's Sustainable Vineyard Practice. For further information, contact 800.597.3533 or visit: www.peeleelake.com

2011 Pinot Noir: (Ontario VQA, 91% pinot noir with 9% Lemberger; 13%). A perfumed and appealing nose combines notes of red berry fruit, spice and soft earth nuances. There is a lush and seductively textured mouth feel to the concentrated medium-bodied flavors that possess a robust finish. This isn't exactly a classic pinot but it's certainly very interesting. 89/2017+

2010 Pinot Noir Reserve – Vinedressers: (Pellee Island VQA, 13%). An impressively complex and very spicy nose of plum, violets and various red berry aromas that leads to intense and solidly voluminous flavors that possess plenty of mouth coating extract, all wrapped in a dusty, structured and lingering finish. This will need a few years to harmonize but the potential is clearly present. 90/2017+

2011 Chardonnay Non-Oaked: (Ontario VQA, 12.5%). A fresh and bright nose of ripe apple, pear and citrus aromas give way to round, supple and rich middle weight flavors that reflect the apple and pear nuances of the nose. There is good verve to the delicious finish that offers fine length if only moderate depth. This is sufficiently forward that I would be inclined to enjoy it now for its freshness. 89/now

2011 Chardonnay – Lighthouse: (Ontario VQA, 12.5%). Here the nose is not quite as fresh or airy but it is perceptibly more complex. There is fine density thanks to the abundant extract that coats the palate and imparts a lush mouth feel before terminating in a generous finish that offers good length if not the detail or refinement of the Non-Oaked cuvée. 88/now

Peninsula Ridge Estates Winery (Beamsville, Ontario, Canada)

2010	Chardonnay – Beal Vineyard Inox Reserve	white	88
2009	Chardonnay – Beal Vineyard Reserve	white	88

The winery opened in 2000 and the property encompasses 80 acres on the Niagara Escarpment, which is designated by UNESCO as a World Biosphere Reserve. The vineyards are located on the Beamsville Bench. Peninsula Ridge has planted 42 acres of Vinifera grapes and also manages a neighboring 43-acre vineyard. For further information, contact 905.563.0900 or visit: www.peninsularidge.com

2010 Chardonnay – Beal Vineyard Inox Reserve: (Beamsville Bench VQA, 3 tons/acre, 13.4%). A cool, pure and airy nose features aromas of elegant white orchard fruit, citrus and discreet floral hints. There is an opulent, even lavish mouth feel to the light weight flavors that exhibit a hint of acid tang on the appealingly persistent finish. I would be inclined to drink this now for its freshness and verve as there is sufficient weight that there is the risk that the finish may become heavy with time. 88/now

2009 Chardonnay – Beal Vineyard Reserve: (Beamsville Bench VQA, 3 tons/acre, 13.5%). A classic chardonnay nose features ripe orchard fruit aromas with background hints of citrus fruit. The delicious, supple and very round middle weight flavors possess good detail on the moderately dry and crisp finish that is not particularly complex and displays a hint of warmth. I like the style as it's pure and in the same fashion as the Inox I would advise drinking this soon for its pretty fruit. 88/now

Rosehall Run Vineyards (Wellington, Ontario, Canada)

2010	Pinot Noir – Cuvée Country	red	88
2010	Pinot Noir – Rosehall Vineyard	red	87
2009	Pinot Noir – Rosehall Vineyard	red	89

A farm totaling 150 acres was purchased in 2000 and owner/winemaker Dan Sullivan began planting the site in 2001. He now has 23 acres planted. Rosehall Run Vineyards is in Prince Edward County and was named for the nearby hamlet of Rosehall. The first harvest was in 2004 and Rosehall now produces about 7,500 cases annually from a winery that was constructed in 2006. Note that all of the wines reviewed below are bottled under screwcap. For further information, contact 888.399.1183 or visit: www.rosehallrun.com

2010 Pinot Noir – Cuvée Country: (Prince Edward County VQA, 800 cases, 13.2%). Very light ruby. An expressive nose offers up notes of essence of red pinot fruit that exhibits lovely spice notes. The liting light weight flavors are quite supple and easy-to-like as the clean finish is both ripe and clean. This is really quite good if not especially complex. 88/2014+

2010 Pinot Noir – Rosehall Vineyard: (Prince Edward County VQA, 250 cases, 12.5%). This also displays a very light ruby color. There is a mild touch of reduction that dissipates with 5 minutes or so of air to reveal a similar nose that is the essence of spicy red pinot fruit. There is a lacy quality to the round and pliant barely middle weight flavors that possess a dusty and mouth coating finish that is slightly drier. This is certainly pretty but could use more depth and given that it will be ready soon, I don't see it developing much more. 87/2014+

2009 Pinot Noir – Rosehall Vineyard: (Prince Edward County VQA, 250 cases, 12.8%). A discreet application of wood sets off the ripe but cool aromas of red and dark berry fruit, briar and spice hints. There is a bit more volume to the delicious and phenolically mature flavors that also exhibit a mouth coating and dusty finish that offers better depth and length. I like the style as well as the delivery and while this could certainly be enjoyed now, it is still on the way up. 89/2015+

Rosewood Estates Winery (Beamsville, Ontario, Canada)

2011	Pinot Noir	red	87
2010	Pinot Noir	red	88
2010	Pinot Noir – Reserve	red	85
2009	Pinot Noir – Reserve	red	87
2011	Chardonnay – Reserve	white	86

In 2000 Eugene and Renata Roman purchased 40 acres on the Beamsville Bench sub-appellation and in 2003 planted their first 10 acre estate vineyard. In 2005 they began construction of the winery and 2006 marked their first harvest. The following year saw a purchase of an additional 45 acres in Jordan and in 2008 they opened the doors to the public. The vineyards are sustainably farmed and aiding in this effort is the fact that Eugene Roman is a second generation beekeeper and active hives are kept on the property. In 2013 Ross Wise became the Wine Master overseeing wine production though Luke Orwinski holds the title of winemaker. For further information, contact 866.633.3248 or visit: www.rosewoodwine.com

2011 Pinot Noir: (Twenty Mile Bench VQA, 469 cases, Wismer Vineyards, 13.5%; bottled under screwcap). A fresh and bright red pinot fruit nose displays top notes of spice, cherry and cranberry. There is a supple mouth feel to the very round and forward light weight flavors that terminate in a clean, dry and understated finish. This is very pretty if on the fruit-driven side. 87/2014+

2010 Pinot Noir: (Niagara Escarpment VQA, 13%). Very light ruby. A pretty mix of both upper and lower register red pinot fruit, spice and soft briar aromas introduce supple, round and almost lacy light weight flavors that possess just a bit more mid-palate stuffing. There is a tangy finish that is clean and dry in the best sense if only moderately complex. 88/2014+

2010 Pinot Noir – Reserve: (Twenty Mile Bench VQA, single vineyard Gary May Vineyard, 13.5%). A distinctly smoky nose of tar and briar aromas leads to nicely rich flavors that display the same character, all wrapped in a slightly bitter finish. This is stylistically very particular and not for me. 85/now

2009 Pinot Noir – Reserve: (Twenty Mile Bench VQA, single vineyard Wismer Vineyards in Balls Falls, 13%). This initially opens with enough reduction to notice but a quick decanting dissipates the funk to reveal a pretty nose of various red pinot fruit scents that enjoy added breadth from the presence of spice and briar notes that also exhibit just a trace of tar and smoke character. This smoky quality continues onto the middle weight flavors and while it's much more discreet, it's not invisible. In sum, this is also stylistically particular but again, significantly less so than the 2010 Reserve. 87/now

2011 Chardonnay – Reserve: (Beamsville Bench VQA, 13%). A pretty and perfumed nose of yellow orchard fruit is trimmed in a touch of wood that resurfaces on the lush, round and very generous flavors that coat the mouth with sap. There is not much depth on the finish that is sufficiently sweet that I found it cloying. 86/now

Tawse Winery (Vineland, Ontario, Canada)

2010	Pinot Noir – Cherry Ave Vineyard	red	89
2010	Pinot Noir – Laidlaw Vineyard	red	90
2010	Chardonnay – Robyn's Block Vineyard	white	89
2010	Chardonnay – Quarry Road Vineyard	white	91
2009	Spark – Brut - David's Block	sparkling	90

Tawse is a family-owned estate winery situated on the lower slopes of the Niagara Escarpment. Moray Tawse purchased his first six acres of vineyards in 2001 and opened a six-tier gravity-flow winery with three barrel caves carved into the Escarpment in 2005. Today Tawse has acquired over 200 acres and now produces around 30,000 cases annually. They apply organic and biodynamic methods and Ecocert and Demeter seals now appear on all Tawse vintages made from their biodynamic vineyards. Paul Pender became the winemaker in 2006 and he is aided by consulting winemaker, Pascal Marchand, of Maison Marchand-Tawse, has provided guidance to the Tawse Winery for 6 years. For further information, contact 905.562.9500 or visit: www.tawsewinery.ca

2010 Pinot Noir – Cherry Ave Vineyard: (Twenty Mile Bench VQA, 13%). Whether it's from the power of suggestion or not, I found distinct red cherry aromas to dominate the ripe, cool and attractively complex nose. The round, supple and delicious middle weight flavors possess solid depth and length on the balanced finish that is sufficiently supple that it could be drunk now though for my taste, I would allow a few years in the cellar first. 89/2015+

2010 Pinot Noir – Laidlaw Vineyard: (Vinemount Ridge VQA, 13%). This is slightly more aromatically complex with a well-layered nose that features notes of plum, red pinot fruit, cherry and a hint of spice. There is an appealing suppleness to the delicious medium-bodied flavors that are supported by well-integrated tannins on the firm, balanced and persistent finish that offers fine depth. This beauty should amply repay 4 to 6 years of cellar time. 90/2017+

2010 Chardonnay – Robyn's Block Vineyard: (Twenty Mile Bench VQA, 13.5%). There is a lovely freshness to the pretty nose of citrus, apple and pear aromas that are trimmed in a discreet application of wood. The lush, opulent and very forward medium weight flavors possess fine depth but not the underlying tension and detail of the Quarry. To be sure, this is perfectly good but not truly distinguished. 89/now+

2010 Chardonnay – Quarry Road Vineyard: (Vinemount Ridge VQA, 13.5%). A beautifully complex nose combines notes of both white and yellow orchard fruit with hints of citrus zest, spice and pain grillé. There is lovely freshness and vibrancy to the concentrated medium-bodied flavors that culminate in a clean, dry and balanced finish that displays the same fine depth of the nose. This is a big wine and while there is good verve I would still suggest that for maximum enjoyment a cool serving temperature be maintained as this risks becoming heavy with age. 91/2014+

2009 Spark – Brut – David's Block: (Twenty Mile Bench VQA). An expressive and solidly well-layered nose of green apple, Meyer lemon and brioche aromas precedes cool and delicious flavors that are supported by plenty of effervescence that exhibits a relatively fine bead, all wrapped in a clean and moderately dry finish. Very solid quality here. 90/2016+

Thirty Bench Wine Makers (Vineland, Ontario, Canada)

2010	Pinot Noir – Small Lot	red	88
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Thirty Bench produces wines exclusively from estate fruit and is committed to "small lot" winemaking. Emma Gardner is the winemaker. For further information, contact 905.562.9500 or visit: www.thirtybench.com

2010 Pinot Noir – Small Lot: (Beamsville Bench VQA, 269 cases, 13.1%). There is a slightly smoky character to the pretty mélange of red and dark berry fruit and briar suffused nose. The medium-bodied flavors possess fine intensity and a supple mid-palate that is followed by a moderately persistent finish where a touch of tar surfaces. This is well-made if particular and not what I'm looking for in a pinot-based wine. That said though, some may find this smoke/tar character appealing. 88/2015+

Union (St. Catharines, Ontario, Canada)

2010	"Union Noir"	red	87
2009	"Union Red"	red	88

Union Wines is a joint partnership formed in 2009 between Dr. Allan Jackson and sommelier Andrew von Teichman. They source their grapes from Niagara grape growers and rent space at one of the region's VQA recognized wineries. Without the costs of a physical winery they offer wines at under \$20 Canadian. Jackson serves as the winemaker. Note that both wines reviewed below were bottled under screwcap. For further information, contact 416.968.7070, ext 234 or visit: www.unionwines.com

2010 "Union Noir": (Niagara Peninsula, VQA, pinot noir, gamay noir, 1,859 cases, 13%). A relatively high-toned nose offers up notes of cherry, raspberry and cranberry. The fruity, round and supple flavors possess a lush mouth feel as there is reasonably good concentration if only moderate complexity on the persistent and delicious finish. 87/now

2009 "Union Red": (Ontario VQA, pinot noir, cabernet, merlot, gamay noir, 5,900 cases, 12.2%). Here there is just a bit more aromatic depth to the cool red and dark berry fruit aromas that are cut with hints of briar and spice. There is good volume to the seductively textured middle weight flavors that display an interesting hint of mocha on the balanced finish. I know that some pinotphiles love that mocha character that some pinots possess but it's not for me. Still, this is well-made and attractive in its fashion so if you like mocha in your pinot, this is one to consider. 88/now

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The 2011 Vintage in Chablis, the Mâconnais and the Côte Chalonnaise

Current Release 2010 and 2011 California and Oregon Pinot Noir (with more from 2009)

Progress Report: Current Release New Zealand Pinot Noir
