



TORONTO VINTNERS CLUB Inc.

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Merlot Revisited

Tuesday, October 16, 2007

Reception Wine: 6:00 PM, Formal Tasting: 6:20 PM

[Toronto Board of Trade](#) (4th Floor), 1st Cdn Place,
(Entrance off Adelaide St. between Bay & York)

When was the last time you had a chance to indulge Ch. Petrus – widely regarded as the pinnacle of the ultimate expression of the Merlot (noir) grape? For most of us, the answer is probably at a wine tasting since few have the privilege and deep pockets to sample this wine either infrequently, let alone on a regular basis. If we descend the price and rarity scale, however, it is more likely that we have tasted the splendid other wines of Pomerol and St. Emilion that are largely Merlot-based. In Bordeaux, Merlot is the most widely planted varietal, and the grape is also finds favour in California, Washington State, Chile, Italy, Australia and New Zealand. From a grower's perspective, Merlot offers several advantages over Cabernet Sauvignon, including early ripening in cooler climates, fewer aggressive tannins, earlier drinking for consumers and a distinctive flavour profile. But what is this profile? For many, the first word that comes to mind about Merlot is the soft texture of its mouth feel and smoothness on the palate. The varietal aromas and flavours are variously described as current, black cherry, plum, caramel, clove, possibly herbaceous; when oaked, smoke, toast and tar emerge and with age there are hints of truffle, mushroom, earth and cedar.

As is now our custom, TVC tries to present Canadian wines of interest and distinction now and then. This month we offer Merlot from the Okanagan Valley of British Columbia and compare them with benchmark Merlots from around the world. In case you're not aware, the Okanagan Valley represents one of the fastest growing production areas of quality red and white wine in the world. Thanks to its emerging reputation as a destination for serious wine connoisseurs, Frommer's has named this spot as a top travel destination for 2007. Big international names such Vincor/Taillan –the owners of Ch. Gruaud Larose –and the Constellation group are investing heavily there, while at the other end of the scale you have mum and pa "garriguist" with small vineyards and outstanding products that are immediately snapped up by high-end Vancouver restaurants and savvy buyers on a waiting list. Unfortunately for the consumer, the LCBO doesn't import many BC products; those obtained for this tasting were brought in privately so this will be a rare opportunity to taste some highly acclaimed wines from Canada's west.

So from BC, we feature premium Merlots from the awarding-winning Okanagan wineries of Nk'Mip (North America's first aboriginal-owned and operated winery), Jackson-Triggs (voted winery of the Year at the Cdn Wine Awards in 2003, '04 & '06), Cedar Creek (winery of the Year, Cdn Wine Awards '02 & '05) and Sumac Ridge (Gold, All Cdn Wine Championships, 2000 Merlot, Black Sage Vineyard). For comparison, you'll sample high-end products from Australia, California, Chili and France. See the Back Page for the wine notes.

NOTE:

1. This event is limited in capacity; reservations taken on a first come, first serve basis; members get preference.
2. You now have 2 options to reserve and pay for this tasting:
 - A) Complete the attached paper form and mail in with your cheque. Deadline for mail-in reservations is Oct. 12.
 - B) Pay securely online via LocalWineEvents.com using a link from our website. NB: LocalWineEvents charges in US funds and there is a small service charge for this service. As the Cdn dollar is virtually on par with the US now, the difference in currency exchange will be minimal. You will receive an immediate email confirmation indicating your transaction has been processed and your reservation is affirmed. Deadline for online payments is October 16. Online payments are FINAL.

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Duckhorn Three Palms 2003 (California, Napa) \$109. Bright ruby-red. Plum, currant, blackberry, menthol and loam on the nose, with a floral topnote. Sweet and shapely on the palate, with good brightness and definition to the flavors of currant, cherry and menthol. Finishes firmly tannic and persistent. Steven Tanzer (90 Points)

Ch. Troplong-Mondot 2003 (France, St. Emilion Grand Cru) \$100. A nice, lifted, elegant black fruit nose. Similar elegance on the palate, which has a nicely rounded texture, and it has sufficient substance to cover the firm, grippy tannins that lie beneath. Lovely although quite masculine style. Very good. (The Wine Doctor). 2003 was an extremely hot year that produced wines with deep color, lots of ripe tannins, great depth, concentration and outstanding aging potential.

Craneford "John Zilm" 2004 (Australia, Barossa Valley) \$40. A knock-out effort from the Barossa that spent 16 months in French oak, exhibits a dark ruby/purple color in addition to rich aromas of berry fruit, roasted coffee, chocolate, and subtle herbs. This fleshy, voluptuously-textured, hedonistic Merlot will provide immense pleasure over the next 5-6 years. Score - 92 (Robert Parker Jr.)

Casa Lapostolle Cuvee Alexandre 2004 (Chili) \$35. Colour: Deep red with purple shadows. Ready to drink now or cellar for several years. Smoky and round, with big black fruit delivering a serious opening salvo. Like most from Lapostolle, this is a big-boned red with full plum and black cherry aromas and flavors. Plenty of oak yields vanilla and chocolate late. A solid, very nice Chilean Merlot. Score: 87 (Wine Enthusiast).

OKANAGAN VALLEY, BC (Private Imports)

Nk'Mip Merlot 2003. This wine still has a lot of backbone from its ripe but firm tannins, a structure that should give this the ability to age superbly for at least another five years. The wine has flavours of black currants and spiced plums. It is big and rich in texture. If you drink it now, you should decant this wine, giving it time for its nascent lushness to develop. 87 points, rising to 89 when given the chance to breathe. (Appellation America).

Jackson-Triggs - Sun Rock Vineyard, Merlot 2004. (Silver Medal, Canadian Wine Awards). This new premium tier Merlot yields wonderful, vibrant red and black fruit with smoke and mocha notes with a lingering, spice end. (Vancouver Courier).

Cedar Creek – Platinum, Merlot 2004 (Gold Medal, Canadian Wine Awards). This is a big, bold wine, dark in colour, with aromas of spice and blackberries and plums. The fruit is rich, verging on jammy – spicy plums, currants, blueberries. The tannins are long and ripe, giving the wine an almost chewy texture. (Appellation America).

Sumac Ridge – Merlot, Black Sage Vineyard 2004. Intense, luscious black fruit with great complexity. Wonderful anise and berry flavours with black pepper, forward muscular fruit, firm tannins with lengthy tar and spicy notes to close. (Vancouver Courier). Lots of spicy, peppery, savoury, vanilla, coffee, black cherry jam nose with some tobacco and chocolate. Rich, round, fat, supple entry with ripe tannins. Big smoky, espresso, vanilla, peppery, olive, black cherry, minty, plum flavours. A bit alcoholic but has lots of fruit intensity. (89-Gismondi).