



"Meritage" – Bordeaux-Style Wine

November 16, 2010

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

Faculty Club, Univ of Toronto, 41 Willcocks Street, Toronto

Members' Fee: \$43; Guests'/Non-Members' Fee: \$57

If you're a red Bordeaux fan, then you won't want to miss this tasting. The term Meritage (derived from a combination of "merit" and "heritage" and pronounced like heritage) was coined to define a blend of Bordeaux grape varieties which produces a wine that is more complex and possibly age-worthy than the sum of its constituent parts. Originally, it was an attempt by American vintners to depart from the tradition of labelling wines in terms of the grape variety (e.g., Cabernet Sauvignon, Chardonnay) and to reflect the great tradition of varietal-blending in Bordeaux. For centuries in this area, leading chateaux have typically blended Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Cabernet Franc, Malbec and Petit Verdot in order to produce more complex wines, the result of which is great Bordeaux. The goal of N. American vintners has been to take the best qualities of each grape as influenced by the growing season in any year to yield a wine that can be aged and whose qualities emerge over time. To create a synergistic wine that embodies the strengths of each component while also bringing something new and exciting to the table is no small task.

As part of an ongoing commitment to showcase the best of the emerging Canadian wine scene, Toronto Vintners has assembled for this tasting a unique and special collection of Meritage wines from the Okanagan Valley and Niagara Peninsula. Since Meritage wines are usually blended from Bordeaux varieties, will any Canadian wine be as good or better than a Bordeaux? In a recent Vendange Institute International Premium Tasting of Canadian wines versus Bordeaux, several Canadian wines, including three that we will be tasting – Sumac Ridge, Burrowing Owl and Cedar Creek Meritages - beat out several Bordeaux wines from Chateau Lascombes, Pontet-Canet, Chateau Rauzan-Gassies, Pichon Longueville Baron and others. So there's your answer. To see the specific results of this tasting, go to http://www.vendangeinstitute.com/cnd_vs_bdx.htm

For our tasting, we selected some of the best of the West from Okanagan BC from **Sumac Ridge** (Pinnacle 2000), **Burrowing Owl** (2004), **Cedar Creek** (2004), **NkMip** (2004) and **Jackson Triggs** (Sun Rock Terrace 2004). From Ontario we have **Henry of Pelham** (Speck Family Reserve 2002), **Creekside Estate** (2005) and **Thirty Bench** (Small lot 2007). The choice of these wines offers us the chance to compare Meritage from the two most important wine producing areas in Canada. Are the Okanagan wines, fleshier and fuller than their Ontario counterparts because of the longer and hotter growing season that allows the grapes to reach physiological maturity at harvest? Is there a recognizable Okanagan vs. Ontario style? Do older vintages from Okanagan (e.g., the Pinnacle 2000) or Ontario (Henry of Pelham 2002) age well? Does the blockbuster Ontario "hot" vintage of 2007 produce a wine similar to that from Okanagan? Or, do the individual interpretations of Meritage by the winemakers blur any differences due to vintage or region?

Please join us for this tasting of exclusive, hard-to-find wines and vintages from the Okanagan Valley that are rarely seen in Ontario, and participate in our own "Vinous Grey Cup" that pits the best of the West against that of the East. And if you attended TVC's 2000 Bordeaux tasting in September, you can decide whether the Meritage are as good or better or not as good as the Bordeaux. This should be an interesting evening!! In addition to our wines, the Faculty Club will be serving an array of tasty appetizers.

REGISTER/ BUY TICKETS

Register/buy tickets online at <http://www.onlineregistrations.ca/tvcevent9>. You must register online and then can pay by credit card or by cheque. **ALL ticket sales/reservations are final.** Cheques must be received by Friday, Nov. 12. The cheque-payment option will be disabled at midnight Tues, Nov. 9 after which only credit card sales will be accepted until midnight Sunday Nov. 14 or earlier if the event sells out. You will be sent an email confirmation after completing your registration. If you tried to register but did not receive your confirmation, please contact torontovintners@onlineregistrations.ca before trying to register again.

Tasting Notes and Information

2000 Sumac Ridge Pinnacle \$50

This was the first release under the "Pinnacle" label and B.C.'s first \$50 domestic wine. "As usual with Pinnacle, this is a bold wine with a brooding dark hue. This wine spends a long time in the barrel and there is vanilla on the nose and sweet oak flavours. It takes a while for the fruit flavours to take over in the glass. When they do, there is dark chocolate, cherries, plums and even sweet tobacco, with layers of flavour." (Trivia note: served regularly by the Governor General at dinners for visiting dignitaries). In a blind tasting by the Vendange Institute of expert tasters, the '01 came in 4th place just ahead of '00 Ch. Lascombes.

2004 Cedar Creek Platinum Reserve Meritage \$40

The platinum label is reserved for the winery's premium selection. It has won a Gold Medal at the annual Okanagan Wine Festival and Double Gold Medal at the San Francisco International Wine Competition. In the same tasting by Vendange above, it placed first well in front of the Ch. Lascombes. "Deep, dark and complex with aromas of chocolate, roasted coffee, ripe blackberry, black currants, cedar, spice and licorice. Flavours of vanilla and ripe black fruit with elegant tannins (43% Merlot, 38% Cabernet Sauvignon, 9% Malbec, 8% Cabernet Franc, 2% Petit Verdot)".

2004 Burrowing Owl Meritage \$65

Only 1500 cases made. With the 2004, winemaker Steve Wyse set out to raise the bar, adding a touch of Malbec and Petit Verdot for the first time. The object, as the winery puts it, was to "add a little more zip." "This is a delicious wine, with red fruit aromas simply spilling from the glass. There is a core of sweet fruit flavours on the palate – plums, cherries, red currents, black berries – with a rich and spicy finish. A half bottle saved for the second day was a revelation. The wine blossomed to full-bodied richness, with satisfying layers of flavours and a very long finish." (Merlot (65%), Cabernet Franc (20%), Cabernet Sauvignon (13%), Malbec (1%), Petit Verdot (1%). Burrowing Owl '02 Meritage ranked 3rd at Vendange, ahead of the Ch. Lascombes.

2004 NK'MIP Qwam Qwmt Meritage \$40

This winery is owned by, and is on lands of, the Osoyoos Indian Bands. The Qwam Qwmt (achieving excellence in the native language "nsylxcen") is their premium label and is a blend of 51.5% Merlot, 28.5% Cabernet Sauvignon and 20% Cabernet Franc which received eighteen months in French (80%) and American (20%) oak. Appearance: dark purple-red and slight orange rim. Nose: bright fruits with slightly dusty nose. Quite overt oak, not quite integrated into the

wine yet. Palate: quite good fruit, tannic backbone, good acidity and promising length. Conclusion: this wine is still a bit young to assess. Have a look at it from 2009 onwards."

Jackson-Triggs Sun Rock Vinyard Meritage 2004 \$35

Okanagan Estate's premium single vineyard designated wine had an impressive showing at the San Francisco competition, earning a total of three Gold Medals, for its 2004 Shiraz, its 2004 Chardonnay and its 2004 Meritage. The latter also won a Gold Medal at the All Canadian Wine Championships. "A deep ruby; cedar, vanilla, currants; sweet, well extracted fruit, well balanced, medium-bodied with a firm structure. Bordeaux in New World style; a touch green on the finish" (Aspler).

Henry of Pelham Speck Family Reserve 2002. \$50

"This is one of a new series of super-premium wines from Henry of Pelham, already well-known for their Cab-Merlots, and it deserves all its advance billing. The fruit is exceptionally well focused, and expresses the superlative growing conditions of 2002. The fruit-acid-tannin balance is almost perfect, and the wine is stylistically elegant, with a long finish" (Rod Phillips, Winecurrent.com, February 19, 2005). Gold medal 2005 Ontario Wine Awards. Note – one of the best vintage years in Ontario.

2005 Creekside Estate Reserve Meritage \$35

Silver medal at Cuvée. The 2005 Reserve, benefiting from a hot growing season that produced rich, ripe Bordeaux reds varieties, as well 30 months aging in a combination of French and American oak barrels, demonstrates the purpose of Creekside's Reserve Meritage program: "To create a synergistic wine that embodies the strengths of each component while also bringing something new and exciting to the table is no small task; a true Meritage is much greater than the sum of its parts." (60% Merlot and 40% Cabernet Sauvignon).

2007 Thirty Bench Benchmark Red \$60

Gold Medal and Best Meritage at Cuvée 2010. This wine has an elegant bouquet of black cherry, blackberry, black pepper, chocolate and leather. Flavours of sweet black fruits, leather, sweet chai spice and cocoa fill the mouth, while black currant, cocoa and toasty notes linger endlessly on the finish. (65% Cabernet Sauvignon, 18% Merlot and 17% Cabernet Franc. It was barrel aged in 100% French oak for 24 months. Note that 2007 vintage rated as "best ever" in Ontario.