



Niagara Upstages the Easter Pageant


The huge March 20 release at Vintages stores has a broad international selection pegged as Easter wines. So I was going to write about Easter wines, but with trepidation because I have never really been sure what makes a wine an Easter wine. Then when I sat down to write and noticed that there is a strong contingent of Niagara wines as well, I knew I had could hatch an Easter escape. I'd much rather write about that the quality that Niagara is showing more routinely these days.

I have rated four of the ten Niagara releases over 90 points, and another three 88 or better. This is an impressive body of work. Two wineries lead the charge of what Vintages is calling "The New Guard". I have written before about Le Clos Jordanne, and all the steps winemaker Thomas Bachelder and his team are taking to deliver such impressive quality. My favourite pinot of the lot, the deep, elegant [Le Clos Jordanne Vineyard 2007](#) arrives Saturday, as does the powerful [Claystone Terrace 2007 Chardonnay](#), both rating 91 points.

The top scoring wine is [Hidden Bench Rosomel Vineyard 2007 Fume Blanc](#) which I have rated 93 points. This is from the same vineyard and grape varieties as the Nuits Blanches 2005 that was voted Canada's White Wine of the Year at the 2008 Canadian Wine Awards, with an identical score. The Fume is intense, exotic, beautifully balanced and downright intriguing. The 91 point [Hidden Bench 2007 Locust Lane Riesling](#) is yet another powerful, dry and layered riesling, a cousin again to the 2007 Rosomel Riesling that took gold at last year's Canadian Wine Awards. Hidden Bench is on a real roll, so it will be most interesting to see how new winemaker Marlize Beyers rides the wave. The young South African was hired last week after spending recent vintages making fine rieslings, chardonnays and pinot noirs at Flat Rock Cellars.

Hidden Bench Rosomel Vineyard Fumé Blanc 2007, VQA Beamsville Bench, Niagara Peninsula



[Sauvignon Blanc](#) 
Ontario, Canada

\$30.20 (68825)



Pronounced green tropical fruit notes, passion fruit, papaya, sautéed grapefruit, caramelized lime alongside pronounced yeastlees notes – a touch reductive; oak is certainly marked but not dominant. The palate is fullish, and surprisingly crisp, with pronounced lingering caramel-wood-yeast flavours. Long finish. A crowd-dividing, love-it-or-hate-it style wine, so take your side. Score – 88. (John Szabo, M.S., www.wineaccess.ca, May 23, 2009)

Release Date: Mar 20, 2010

Winery: [Hidden Bench Winery](#)

Related Vintages: