

Pinot Noir

Difficult vines to grow; difficult wines to make: Pinot Noir earns this reputation more often than not—but that's why grape growers and winemakers become obsessed by the variety. And when the soil and the season are right and everything goes well in the winery, results can be spectacular. Earlier this year, English magazine *Decanter* declared a Niagara Pinot Noir, Le Clos Jordanne 2006, the best red wine in the New World—a huge mark of respect, but no surprise to the diehard Pinot fans who make their annual pilgrimages to Niagara and Prince Edward County, comparing vintages and value. Here are some other favourites. Stoney Ridge Warren Classic Pinot Noir 2007 VQA (LCBO 156125, \$15.05) shows off the ripe warmth of that banner year with gorgeous flavours of cherries and spice, and at a bargain price. Iconic winemaker Jim Warren has returned to Stoney Ridge after an absence of 12 years with a mission of restoring the winery to its former glories. This wine should jump-start that process.

But you don't need a big hot year to make delectable Pinot Noir. Henry of Pelham Pinot Noir 2008 VQA (LCBO 13904, \$16.95) is all about elegance, its light colour and weight bearing a surprisingly intense flavour of raspberry and red cherry with a hint of oaky spice. Alvar Pinot Noir 2008 VQA (LCBO 458521, \$14.95) may be an unfamiliar name but it's actually a new premium brand from Pelee Island Winery. This wine is simply delicious, with warm, ripe red berry aromas and flavour and a full degree more alcohol than the Henry of Pelham—a reflection, perhaps of Pelee Island's more southern location. If you haven't had a wine from this area in a while, you're in for a happy surprise.



SUPERSTAR TREATS

PINGUE PROSCIUTTO

Their father used to cure prosciutto as a hobby but when Fernando Pingue and his brother Mario Jr. decided to go into the prosciutto business full time they knew what they had to do—leave Niagara and go to Italy to really learn the ropes. Today, their company, Niagara Food Specialties, is hugely successful, providing all sorts of salumi, pancetta, capicollo, guanciale but especially prosciutto to restaurants and retailers across the province. For a list of places to buy it, go to www.pingueprosciutto.com.

ACETO NIAGARA

"It's Canada's answer to balsamic," says winemaker turned vinegar master Martin Gemmrich. Inspired by Germany's gourmet sipping vinegars, Gemmrich and his business partner, grape farmer Wolfgang Woerthle, have developed a unique product—a vinegar that starts out as real icewine and is then aged for years in oak barrels. Heavy, intense, non-alcoholic and altogether delicious, it's a completely natural product, super on ice cream, as a component of cocktails or sipped in tiny amounts as a deluxe digestif. Gemmrich has no retail outlet but a number of gourmet stores carry the cherry-flavoured or pure icewine aceto as well as the little company's range of regular fruit vinegars (tomato, peach and cherry are my favourites). Find a list of them at www.acetoniagara.com.

GUERNSEY GIRL CHEESE

A new cheese from the Upper Canada Cheese Company is always newsworthy. Guernsey Girl is named for the Comfort family's herd of Guernsey cows who supply the raw material for this mild-flavoured treat, developed specifically for cooking. Cut a slice and fry it in a pan or put it on the barbecue until a golden crust forms... Divine! The dairy's welcoming store is also an invaluable source of gourmet treats from over 50 local suppliers.

4159 Jordan Road,
Jordan Station, 905•562•9730,
www.uppercanadacheese.com



- 1 Fernando and Mario Pingue Jr.
- 2 Pingue prosciutto
- 3 Aceto Niagara gourmet sipping vinegars
- 4 Guernsey Girl cheese
- 5 Upper Canada Cheese Company



BOTTLE SHOTS BY JODI PUDGE. PINGUE PHOTOS (#1 & 2) BY PER KRISTIANSEN; ACETO NIAGARA PHOTO (#3) BY VINCE NOGUCHI