

DRINKING THE COUNTY Planning your Fall visit

In July, Kato and I had the pleasure of spending three days drinking the County with 28 fun-loving folks and here's a run-down of the places, people and wines that brought smiles and delight. Plus a few other wines that we've been enjoying. All County grown. I've listed the wineries in a 'west to east fashion' – so those of you coming from Ottawa/Montreal direction should read from back to front.

ROSEHALL RUN

Dan and Lynn Sullivan were County pioneers, and have seldom put a foot wrong at their Rosehall Run Winery. Extensive range of medium-priced, and high end wines offered in a newly renovated, relaxed tasting room. Food available from the on site 'Picnic' food truck.

PINOT NOIR 13 'Hungry Point' \$25 . . . lightish, exuberant Pinot in the bistro style. Lightly chill, and sip as you prepare, and then partner with a light supper – white meats/salmon.

CHARDONNAY Unoaked 14 'Hungry Point' \$20 . . low flavoured, but with a bracing freshness and the snazzy feeling of a good aperitif. Or oyster/seafood wine. Perfect partner for its Pinot sister.

SYRAH 12 'The Swinger' \$39 . . . super dry, medium-bodied with classic white pepper Rhone Valley Syrah character. Dare I say, feels like a manly edition of Pinot. Bring on the steaks. Lightly chill.

SPARKLING MUSCAT 'Indigo' \$25 . . . forget the Italian, slightly sweet edition, this is seriously Brut, and wonderfully refreshing. Another feature I love is the delicacy of the Muscat flavor – just a tease. And, I love the herbaceous 'green' freshness running through the wine. Novel aperitif, patio sipper. And hard to imagine a more exciting way to kick-off a brunch – this weekend, or all through fall and winter.

CASA-DEA

Another one of The County's first, Casa Dea, has gone through several owners/quality levels, but is now much improved under Italian stewardship. Hence a patio restaurant, Bocce courts, and a wide range of value-priced wines. Love those Italian priorities. Good Sparkling Rosé and Cabernet Franc, but my pick is Gamay.

GAMAY 13 \$15.75 . . . rustic red with a wonderful Fall-day-in-the-woods feeling. Light, tangy, but manages to feel nourishing. I could drink this with most of my suppers. Lightly chilled of course.

Also on Greer Road is the County's most celebrated winemaker **NORM HARDIE** who needs no endorsement from me. He makes excellent, high-end wines, and on the patio you can enjoy gourmet thin crust pizza – from a handsome stone, wood burning oven.

HINTERLAND WINERY

Sparkling is the show here which might explain why there's usually a happy buzz around the place. Also helps that owners Jonas and Vicki manage to appear relaxed even when it's three deep at the bar. Hear about their almost open brewery next door. More happiness.

WHITECAP 14 Sparkling \$22 . . . the County's edition of Prosecco. Refreshing, fruity and fun.

BOREALIS 14 Sparkling Rosé \$22 . . . pink edition of the above. Sure to have you seeing stars!

LES ETOILES 12 Sparkling Rosé \$37 . . . traditional 'in bottle' fermentation so expect a Champagne-style experience. For half the price.

THE GRANGE of PRINCE EDWARD COUNTY

Shades of France – as you cruise down the shady driveway. Magnificent, restored old barn, with a patio, by a pond. The Grange has had its ups and downs, but all the wines since the 2011 vintage have taken a turn for the best. You'll find a wonderful purity and expression of place. And currently the Grange is offering the best 'value/quality' County wine experience. Bravo Carolyn and Maggie Granger (mother & daughter).

THE GRANGE 13 Riesling 'Estate' \$16.95 (LCBO 28258) . . . has the cool/mineral feeling of of the best Ontario Rieslings. Off-dry, with citrusy flavours adding a super refreshing tang. Hard to imagine how it could be better. Perhaps a screwcap so the pleasure comes quicker. Get a case for party entertainment.

THE GRANGE 12 Gamay 'Estate' (LCBO 28258) \$14.95

THE GRANGE 11 Gamay Noir 'Select' \$20.75

. . . two Gamays. The 'estate' has the refreshing spirit of Beaujolais, with a little Italian gusto. Lightly chilled, it has an irresistible fun, 'gulp me' quality. Perfect for casual meals and times. There is more body/substance in the 'Select' and needs the dinner table. Anything in the bistro category.

THE GRANGE 13 Pinot Noir 'Estate' \$16.95 (LCBO 230227) . . . light, lively, tangy dry and super refreshing. Some classic 'barnyard' on the nose so not for everyone. But fans of Burgundy Pinot should be buying this by the case. Lightly chill. Think white meats, fall picnics, or a sipper as you prepare supper.

THE GRANGE 11 Cabernet Franc 'Select' \$21.75 . . . The Cabernet Franc 'Select' has the tangy tartness that's a hallmark of traditional editions of this grape. Refreshing and invigorating, with herbaceous flavours that compliment simply grilled meats – white or red. Not a crowdpleaser, but a must try for fans of dry, rustic reds.

BY CHADSEY'S CAIRNS

Don't be afraid of the name. You're sure to love the pastoral setting – even if it includes a graveyard. Very relaxed setting with picnic tables under the huge maples. Get on the list for info on concerts/dances in the barn. Medium-priced wines.

ROSE 13 \$21 . . . very south of France – dry with some substance. Food Rosé.

CHARDONNAY 13 \$23 . . . elegant feeling. Mid-range of everything. Best Chadsey Chardonnay yet.

PINOT NOIR 13 \$24 . . . also in an elegant style. Charmer.

CLOSSON CHASE WINERY

You cannot but love the bright purple paint job on this barn. I hope. And the opportunity to take a glass out to the garden. Kato's art exhibition runs the month of October with an opening reception on Thanksgiving Sunday. High-end winery, focused on Chardonnay and Pinot Noir.

CHARDONNAY 13 \$28 . . . luxurious, but not overdone. Classy dinner party white.

PINOT NOIR 12 \$30 . . . light, tart with the Burgubdy 'barnyard' character. Not for the beginner.

THE OLD THIRD

Bruno and Jens offer elegance in an old barn. Yes, it is possible. Crepes too, if you happen to be hungry. Burgundy is the model – even Birdie, the tractor is from there. Cider is a nod to Bruno's Normandy grandparents. High quality and prices to match.

SPARKLING APPLE CIDER Brut \$19 . . . made in the Normandy style so expect bone dry and refreshing – with a savoury, earthy quality. Novel aperitif.

SPARKLING Pinot Noir Brut \$59 . . . Classic Champagne styling.

PINOT NOIR 13 \$42 . . . a wow if you know red Burgundy. Forget cherry/fruity Pinot, this is the traditional, earthy style that has inspired artists and thinkers.

HUFF ESTATES

Ultra-modern space with a large café overlooking the vines. High-end Oeno Art Gallery on site, along with a must-see sculpture garden. Best enjoyed with a glass in hand, of course. County wines and Niagara blends at medium and high prices. French winemaker Frederic Picard has every reason to be proud of his Sparkling, Chard and Merlot.

SPARKLING ROSE Cuvee Janine \$30 . . . delicious, off-dry, party sipper. Think lunch, afternoons by the pool, weddings, and family events such as Thanksgiving and Christmas.

SPARKLING Cuvee Peter Huff 10 \$40 . . . caused quite the stir when first released with its Champagne-like character. A treat for mature palates.

CHARDONNAY 12 non-oaked, South Bay \$22 . . . forget the usual Chardonnay experience, this is more like a traditional Italian white – savoury, earthy and characterful. Wine with a voice. One of the most distinctive Ontario wines I’ve ever tasted. Fish partner for sure.

MERLOT 12, South Bay \$40 . . . seriously good red in the classic Bordeaux style. Needs a formal dinner.

DEVIL’S WISHBONE

Well worth the detour. Owner Paul Gallagher has forged a lovely harmony place, staff and wines – all very real. Restored barn enhanced with beautiful dry stone walls. Choose between two tasting bars in the barn, or a third on the beautiful patio – not an easy decision. Devil’s is the perfect wine stop-off after visiting Lake-on-the-Mountain, and before County Cider – which is a must-see County experience.

CABERNET FRANC 13 \$25 . . . Ontario red in its purest form. Earthy, invigorating, honest. Think burgers, or any bistro food.

PINOT NOIR 13 \$25 . . . typical County Pinot – delicate, charming and refreshing.

LONG DOG WINERY

James Lahti is the County’s most diligent vineyard farmer, and it shows in his wines. Wonderful County expressions. Because he spends every daylight hour with the vines, bottling tends to get behind schedule – so we get wines with a few years of ageing. Bonus. Always worth the drive to this remote location where you’ll find hands-on partners Victoria or Steven ready to pour.

SPARKLING Rosé \$25 . . . fun fizz with amazing Gamay fruitiness. Perfect for the patio, or winter pick-me-up.

CHARDONNAY 11 ‘Bella’ \$25 . . . lightish, with a little sexiness from oak ageing. Excellent white meat or seafood partner.

GAMAY 12 \$25 . . . fuller than usual for Gamay. A good-with-anything red.

PINOT NOIR 10 ‘Top Dog’ \$30 . . . a wine with five years of age, so expect a smooth, charming experience. A lot of seduction. Stock-up for Sunday roast chicken suppers. Also a great partner for grilled salmon.

LIGHTHALL WINERY

One day it will look nice, but for now ‘don’t judge the book by its cover’. Glen makes fab wines and sells them for a reasonable prices. Fresh, creamy cheese too.

SPARKLING Pinot Noir 14 ‘The Fence’ \$25 . . . delicious, refreshing pink bubbly from young Pinot grapes.

SPARKLING ‘Progression’ \$20 . . . most popular fizz in the County.

PINOT NOIR 13 \$30 . . . Glen’s Pinot has an earthy, bistro quality. Very food friendly.

**P.S. SAVE THE DATE. Billy’s Best Bottles County Wine Camp!
August 12-15 and August 19-22**

Details late fall / early winter.

Kato and Billy did it again! Such a fabulous three days of fun, learning, exploring, wining and dining as well as spending time with terrific people. I just love all your attention to detail that makes the weekend truly unforgettable.

Kate, Fergus

Thank you again for a fun packed weekend. Good food, good wine and new friends. It doesn’t get any better.

Jan and Art, Oakville

www.billysbestbottles.com