

Localnews

WINE INDUSTRY

Ontario wineries prepping to invade Britain



Monique Beech
WINES & WINE

to sophisticated British palates, said organizer Bill Redelmeier, owner of Southbrook Vineyards in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

More than three decades ago, a group of rustic California wineries vowed a crowd of upper-crust French wine critics with its Chardonnay.

The 1976 wine tasting, dubbed The Judgment of Paris, pitted the New World whites against old-style French ones in what is now regarded as a turning point for the California wine industry.

Now, it's Niagara's turn to trumpet its table wines — with a twist.

On May 17, 35 Chardonnays made by Ontario wineries will be shipped to London, England, to be showcased before the country's top wine traders and writers, including internationally known wine critic Jancis Robinson.

The idea is not to copy the famous Paris competitive tasting, but to offer as many top-quality Ontario wines as possible

further such tastings," Redelmeier said he conceived the idea last year after Niagara's Le Clos Jordanne winery won over the palates of experts in a taste test sponsored by the Quebec magazine *Celler*.

"One of the things that we're trying to do with this tasting is, nobody will ever know what wine was No. 1, what wine was No. 35. We're all in this together."

The en masse tasting signals something else to Tony Aspler, a noted Toronto wine critic and author of *The Wine Atlas of Canada*.

"The first-of-its-kind travelling Ontario wine show will help demonstrate that the province does more than produce stellar icewine, said Aspler, among eight Ontario critics who tasted 60 Chardonnays and selected the creme de la creme of the bunch for the British tasting.

"It shows the industry really is looking beyond its own borders," said Aspler, a veteran wine writer and a native of London.

"They want to look at international markets for their wines. I think this is an excellent direction. It could be the first of

"One of the things that I'm trying to do is make the industry work together. To be honest, we're a fractured industry and no one is working together."

The goal is not only to expand the European markets for Ontario wine but to boost sales back home, Redelmeier said.

Sometimes, it takes affirmation from outside to spark an interest in homegrown products, he said.

The wines will be tasted at Canada House in Trafalgar Square in London. The event coincides with the London International Wine Fair.

For a complete list of the wines, go to coolchardonnay.ca. Want to share in the big Chardonnay tasting experience? A Toronto dress rehearsal for the London event, titled Ontario Chardonnay — Seriously Cool, is being organized by the Ontario Wine Society on March 24 at 6:30 p.m. at Toronto Lawn Tennis Club. The public will have the opportunity to taste many of the same Chardonnays featured at the London media tasting. Tickets cost \$39 for members and \$49 for non-members. Visit ontariowinesociety.com for

more information.



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Have interesting news about the Ontario wine industry to share? Contact Monique Beech at mbeech@standard.ca.

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