

# London Calling



Written by Rosemary Mantini | 05 March 2010

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## Preview the Top Chardonnays in Toronto on March 24th

Cool climate VQA Chardonnays from Ontario will be showcased in London, England when British wine writers and the wine trade gather at Canada House in Trafalgar Square on May 17th to sample a select group of wines. The tasting will feature 34 of Ontario's top Chardonnays from 21 wineries chosen by a panel of Ontario wine critics.

"Britain is a huge market for wine, but the country only has a tiny domestic wine industry," notes Bill Redelmeier, owner of Southbrook Vineyards in Niagara-on-the-Lake, who initiated the tasting. "The opportunity to showcase Ontario wines in London can provide a real boost for our product. A generation ago, the New Zealand wine industry launched Sauvignon Blanc in Britain, and it put New Zealand wines on the map."

The 34 VQA Chardonnays chosen to travel across the ocean were selected at a blind tasting by a judging panel led by wine writer Tony Aspler and wine experts, Linda Bramble, Konrad Ejbich, Steven Elphick, David Lawrason, Michael Pinkus, Gordon Stimmell and John Szabo, MS (Master Sommelier). The tasting was organized by Sadie Darby, Wine Tasting Maven, and held at the LCBO Summerhill store in Toronto.

"Most people think Icewine is Ontario's signature wine, but actually it's Chardonnay," says Aspler, who will be in England for the tasting in May along with Bill Redelmeier and other Ontario producers. "The London tasting will give the British press the opportunity to discover wines that are food-friendly and reminiscent of fine white Burgundies."

Chardonnay is the most widely produced VQA wine in Ontario, according to VQA Ontario. The province's expanding wine industry now boasts 113 VQA wineries; it's estimated more than 90 produce Chardonnay. Like Tony Aspler, Bill Redelmeier is convinced Ontario VQA Chardonnay will impress the Brits. "We see a lot of people who say they don't like Chardonnay, but when you pour a cool climate Chardonnay, they change their minds," Redelmeier says. "Cool climates make for a much different and much superior Chardonnay."

A Toronto dress rehearsal for the London event, entitled Ontario Chardonnay-Seriously Cool, is being organized by the Ontario Wine Society on March 24 at 6:30pm 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 are \$39 for members and \$49 for non-members. Visit [ontariowinesociety.com](http://ontariowinesociety.com) for information on purchasing tickets, or call 416.921.9798.

Redelmeier conceived the idea for the British media tasting after Niagara's Le Clos Jordanne won a prestigious competition last year in Montreal pitting French wines against wines from the United States. Le Clos Jordanne's Chardonnay served as the "ringer" in the contest and emerged victorious in the category. Hearing Le Clos winemaker Thomas Bachelder say in a radio interview that any number of wineries in Ontario could have won the contest, Redelmeier came up with the idea of promoting Ontario Chardonnays as a group effort. "A rising tide lifts all boats,"

he says, describing his personal philosophy. "It's wrong to be very competitive with each other. The guy down the road is not the competition. The guy in Chile is the competition."

To that end, the London event at Canada House will be a collegial tasting, not a competition, with sampling tables spread from Ontario east to west – from Prince Edward County, Niagara to Lake Erie North Shore – to mimic the geographical distribution of the participating wineries. "We're all in this together," says Redelmeier. "The event is as much about producing fellowship as promoting our wines. What we're trying to do is build the Canadian brand."

In keeping with the egalitarian theme, Canadian judges determined that only two wines per winery would be sent to England. They also allowed a winery to submit one library wine older than five years. "That means no matter how big the winery," Redelmeier says, "only the best will be showcased."

The 34 Ontario VQA Chardonnays from 21 wineries to be poured at Canada House in London on May 17, 2010 include:

Cave Spring Cellars CSV 2003  
Cave Spring Cellars CSV 2005

Chateau des Charmes Barrel-Fermented 2007

Chateau des Charmes Musqué 2008  
Closson Chase Kocsis Vineyard 2007

Colio Estates CEV 2006  
Colio Estates Musqué 2007  
Coyote's Run Black Paw Vineyard 2008

Creekside Estate Queenston Road Vineyard 2008  
Flat Rock Cellars Reserve 2007

Flat Rock Cellars The Rusty Shed 2008

Henry of Pelham Barrel-Fermented 2007  
Henry of Pelham Speck Family Reserve 2007

Hidden Bench Tête de Cuvée 2006  
Hidden Bench 2007  
Hillebrand Showcase Wild Ferment 2008  
Huff Estates South Bay Vineyard 2007  
Lailey Brickyard Vineyard 2008

Le Clos Jordanne LCJ Vineyard 2006  
Le Clos Jordanne Talon Ridge 2007

Malivoire Moira Vineyard 2004  
Malivoire Moira Vineyard 2005  
Norman Hardie Unfiltered 2008  
Peller Estates Signature Series Sur Lie 2007

Peller Signature Series Sue Lie 2008  
Peninsula Ridge Reserve 2007  
Ravine Rowan Vineyard 2008  
Ravine Rowan Vineyard Reserve 2008  
Rosehall Run Rosehall Vineyard 2008  
Rosehall Run Cuvée County 2008

Southbrook Poetica 1998

Southbrook Poetica 2005  
Southbrook Triomphe Certified Organic 2008  
Tawse Quarry Rd Vineyard 2007