



Volume 1, Issue 3
January 2007

Featured Winery: Stonehill Estate Winery



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THE WINE OF THE
MONTH CLUB BC

Phone: 604.677.8379
Toll Free: 1.866.505.WINE
Email: info@bcwineclub.ca
Website: bcwineclub.ca

BC Wine Club News

TRUTH OR MYTH

It's the new year and we'd like to make a toast to all of our members - old and new! Here's to a year filled with health, happiness and, of course, fine wine!

Speaking of fine wine, in this issue we thought we might explore some of the myths and truisms hallmarking a wine worthy of BC Wine Club selection. With so many new to the Club, we thought this may work as a guideline in terms of what to expect and look for with our wines.

Below you'll find a few statements, true and false, representing just some of the things we consider when making our selections. You'll find the reasoning behind these points, and an insightful question posed by discerning member **Bill Masse**, on page 3. In addition, we are pleased to announce we have *finally* found the "Mystery Connoisseur" who contacted CBC Radio about the Club—find out more on page 4.

You Can Believe It!

1. Balance is everything in a fine wine
2. Constant temperature is a major key to cellaring wine
3. Red wines tend to age better than most whites
4. Plastic corks are not the sign of a bad wine.

Not A Chance

1. If its expensive, it's a better wine
2. High alcohol content is always the sign of a fine wine
3. "Wine diamonds" present in a wine means the wine has spoiled
4. There is no such thing as wine shock

EXCITING NEWS

Stonehill Estate Winery has arranged for BC Wine Club members to preview their **2005 Zweigelt!** Bernhard Shirrmeister, Stonehill's master wine craftsman, and owners, Lynn & Keith Holman, decided our members should be amongst the first to sample this fantastic wine prior to its official release. **Membership does have its privileges!**

Please Note:

Your Wine has made a long journey to get to your door. Please allow at least 48 hours for your wine to rest from the shock of travel.

Stonehill Estate Winery

Natural Progression

Keith and Lynn Holman's understanding of the exact combination of terrain, climate, nurture and science required to grow fine fruit is born from years of experience. In 2003, after 30 years in the orchard business, the Holman's followed a natural progression into the world of wine with the creation of Spiller Estate fruit winery. Obviously, the wine business was a perfect fit as they soon found themselves purchasing a vineyard in 2004 on which they established Mistral Estate Winery.

In September 2004, they purchased Benchland Winery, just next door to Mistral, and renamed it **Stonehill Estate Winery**. This was a very savvy decision indeed, as the land boasts the very first planting of Zweigelt grapes in B.C.! Knowing these vines to be a very special asset, the Holman's immediately asked their talented wine craftsman, **Bernhard Shirmeister** to create an exceptional wine using the bounty of these mature vines. The result - Stonehill's 2005 Zweigelt— is just that... exceptional!

An Austrian Gift from Canada



What exactly is Zweigelt? Well, this is an Austrian varietal that, as Stonehill's **Tiffany Schneider** would say, "is fast becoming a cult favorite...". There are two reasons for this— first, in the right craftsman's hands, Zweigelt can render a gorgeous, smooth bodied wine to satisfy even the most discerning of palates. The second wonderful feature of this wine is its **relatively low histamine level!** For all those who have steered away from red wine after suffering headaches, flushing, or other allergic reactions, this wine offers an invitation to once again enjoy the dark side of wine, without the nasty repercussions. With these qualities, no wonder *The Georgia Straight's* Jurgen Gothe has remarked on being "keen to look at (2005's) vintage" as the "promise is definitely there". Enjoy this wine—a gift from Stonehill to You!

Living Up to the Family Legacy

Crafting fine wine is extraordinarily difficult—as we discuss on the following page, balancing wine properties to achieve a notable wine is an exacting art form not for the faint of heart. When a young Bernhard Shirmeister set his sights on becoming a master craftsman, few doubted his ability but, as the grandson of the Director of one of Germany's oldest baronial wineries, expectations were high. Bernhard did not disappoint. After apprenticing in the famous Rheingau region in the '80's, he went on to achieve the distinction of master craftsman from the University of Applied Sciences— Geisenheim in 1995. Since then he has excelled in every aspect of the wine business, garnering more awards on both sides of the Atlantic than we have space to print. These awards are a testament to Bernhard's constant pursuit of excellence. We invite you to taste his Stonehill creations and sample the difference passion can make.

Bernhard Shirmeister Master Wine Craftsman



Photo courtesy of the Penticton Herald

Truth be Told

1. Balance is probably the most important character of fine wine—without which it is merely plonk. Finding the exact ratio of fruit, tannin, sugar, alcohol and aging is truly an art form that takes years to perfect.
2. Perhaps the most important factor in ensuring your wine meets its full potential is proper cellaring. The connoisseurs amongst us know temperature fluctuations can mean the difference between beauty and the beast.
3. Although there are certain whites which age admirably, it is red wine, especially those with higher levels of tannin, that usually benefit from a good nap. Most Cabernet Franc and Sauvignon, Merlot and Shiraz should be put down for between 2 and 5 years from vintage date for best enjoyment, while Pinot Noir and the youthful Gamay tend to see less benefit from this process.
4. More and more wineries are utilizing the plastic cork—although they are usually reserved for wine that requires less aging. Plastic corks have terrific sealing ability and are impervious to cork taint—making them perfect for a fine wine to be consumed in a youthful stage.

False Statements

1. An expensive wine is not necessarily a better wine. Many factors determine the price of a wine, from availability to vintage, to demand. Our rule of thumb is to follow the advice of a wine connoisseur or columnist you trust—they may find a wine at \$12 with qualities normally found in a much more expensive version.
2. Although most fine wines generally have higher alcohol levels, this is not always true. A wine with too high an alcohol content is considered to be “hot”, as in it tends to cause a burning sensation on the tongue – definitely not indicative of a fine wine. True, cheap wine tends to have a lower alcohol level but there are definitely many fine, gentler bodied wines which would be ruined by a higher level.
3. “Wine diamonds” or potassium crystals formed from the wine’s tartaric acid are not harmful to the integrity of wine. Usually found in a higher acid content wine that has aged over a long period of time, these crystals can be removed with proper decanting.
4. Wine or bottling shock is definitely not a myth. Wine is very susceptible to constant movement or vibration and can almost have a fizzy quality if opened immediately after shipping. This is why we urge our members to heed our advice and allow at least 48 hours from the time you receive your shipment before enjoying our selections.

The Connoisseur's Query

Following December's shipment, BC Wine Club member **Bill Masse** sent us this excellent question;

“The cellaring recommendations for the Canoe Cove Cab/Merlot in our December package is a minimum 3 years, and watching it over the course of the next 5. But this wine is from 2003 so it is already 3 years old. Do your recommendations start now, or from 2003? Cheers, Bill Masse”

To which the Wine Club responded;

Thank you for the excellent question! This wine has certainly benefited from its 3 year nap and is extremely drinkable now - dare we say "a treat". Usually our cellaring notes are based from the time our connoisseur does the tasting - but in this case you should indeed take into account the vintage date and only consider cellaring it for an additional two years. This is a blend and, as such, ages slightly less admirably. That said, this wine could become one of our best selections to date within the next year or so.

See us on-line!
www.bcwineclub.ca

Mystery Connoisseur Revealed

We are very excited to have found our mystery connoisseur! **Paul Macey** is the wonderful gentleman who tipped off **CBC Radio** about the BC Wine Club. Paul had, in past, purchased a gift membership that was very well received and felt he would share his gift giving success with others. As a result of his thoughtfulness, he has introduced many new people to the joys of membership. To thank him, Paul received a bottle of the Canoe Cove Shiraz which, we are told, was enjoyed on a recent excursion. Thank you Paul - the Club is truly grateful!

Fabulous Food Pairings

This fine main course accents the full fruit body of Stonehill's Zweigelt perfectly.

MARSTON CORNISH HEN

Enjoy this sumptuous hen with a rice pilaf and braised vegetables—simply elegant.

- 6 Cornish game hens
- 1/2 clove garlic per bird
- 1-2 fresh sage leaves per bird
- salt
- green peppercorns, crushed
- 1 cup red wine vinegar
- 1/2 cup olive oil
- 1/2 cup soy sauce
- 2 tbsp grated ginger
- 4-6 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 tbsp salt
- 1 tbsp smoked Spanish paprika
- sprig or rosemary

Clean hens. Stuff each cavity with garlic, clove, sage and a small pinch of salt and peppercorns. Mix vinegar, oil, soy sauce, ginger, minced garlic and remaining seasoning. Pour over hens and marinate for 4 hours in the fridge. Cover with foil and oven roast for 35 minutes at 375°F, remove foil, baste with butter and continue roasting for an additional 25 minutes until golden. Serves 6

The combination of sweetness and spice found in this mussel recipe is perfect for our Riesling selection.

MUSSELS MARIE

These fabulous mussels can be served as a teaser or main course with a side of saffron rice. Either way, make sure you offer a baguette to soak up the fine broth!

- 2 tbsp red Thai curry
- 2 cans coconut milk
- 3-4 Kaffiar lime leaves
- 1/2 stem lemon grass cut into large chunks
- 3-4 leaves Thai basil
- cilantro (optional)
- 1 tbsp fish sauce
- 1 tbsp brown sugar
- 2 to 3 lbs fresh mussels or clams
- (note: the mussels must be cleaned and rinsed several times before cooking)

Heat the 2 tbsp of curry paste in a large pan or wok - add 1/2 can of coconut milk and mix well until blended. Add the rest of the coconut milk and mix well. Add kaffiar, lemon grass, cilantro, fish sauce, brown sugar and mix well. Boil and let sauce thicken a little - add mussels or clams - mix with sauce. Cook for about 4 to 5 minutes. (*mussels should open when ready - do not overcook.)

Unbelievably Good!