

Canada

Whites

90 Flat Rock “The Rusty Shed” Chardonnay 2004, Niagara (\$24.95)

“The Rusty Shed” is derived from the fact that Flat Rock’s Chardonnay vineyard encapsulates an old, run down...shed. The name reminds of d’Arenberg’s quirky/historical/fun labeling practices, something which I quite like. What I enjoy even more is the quality of this wine. At first, the nose greets you with oak but the fruit is quick to appear. Mid weight with aromas of fresh toast, caramel, green apples, pear and spice. Finishes long. My preference would be to drink this wine over the next 3 to 4 years. Yummy stuff! (ES)

89 Angels Gate Single Vineyard Gewurztraminer 2004, Niagara (\$18.95)

I tasted this wine at Cuvee and it completely “wowed” me with its intense peach, honey, lanolin and spice aromas. In the mouth it is oily, with loads of peach juice and a touch of grapefruit bitterness. This is what a good Gewurz is supposed to be about. Job well done! (ES)

88 Chateau des Charmes Riesling Reserve 2004, Niagara (\$15.95)

CDC’s second vintage of this wine is a more intense/plumper version than its older sibling. This is due two factors- first, great growing conditions for Riesling in 2004 and second, the use of an Alsatian clone, rather than more abundant German “Weiss 22B” which is grown throughout Niagara. Lime, peach, tutti frutti and minerals with very good length. Drink until 2011. (ES)

88 Malivoire Estate Chardonnay 2004, Niagara (\$22)

Like a symphony orchestra, all the components of the wines are in unison, working together in great harmony. On the nose there is green apple, mineral, toast and vanilla. The mouth serves up much of the same with added minerals, pineapple, guava and spice. Now to 2010. (ES)

86 Featherstone Riesling 2005, Niagara (\$13)

Peach, mineral, and lime zest and honey are the calling card of the wine. Light to medium body, medium length and a finish which reverberates with minerals. (ES)

Rose

89 13th Street Wine Corp. Cabernet Rose 2005, Niagara (\$16)

To date, this is my highest scoring Rose out of Ontario. It really packs in the strawberry, cream, raspberry and plums as well a subtle undertone of herbs. Long finish with just a hint of residual sugar. There is enough weight here to pair with grilled fair as well as being your every day patio sipper. A mandatory purchase for the summer and early autumn months. (ES)

Red

91 Pillitteri Family Reserve Merlot 2002, Niagara (\$50)

Sue Ann Staff's hot hand continues with her 02 Family Reserves. Like her Cabernet Franc which took top red wine at Cuvee, this is another rich offering with a magnificent nose of chocolate, black cherries, plums, blackberries, cassis and earth. Full bodied with excellent length and fresh finish. Now to 2015. (ES)

89 Stoney Ridge Wismer Vineyard Cabernet Franc 2004, Niagara (\$29.95)

Very impressive and somewhat surprising considering the cooler growing season of 2004. Wall to wall blackberries and cocoa with a concentrated, sweet mid palate and a lengthy finish. Drink over the next 5 years. (ES)

88 Creekside Estate Cabernet Sauvignon Reserve 2002, Niagara (\$29)

Creekside strikes again, this time with there 02 Reserve Cab Sauv. Dark cherry colour and an oak dominated nose of roasted espresso, cocoa, toast, plums, cassis and blackberry. Full bodied with loads of sweet dark fruit. Really persistent finish. Now to 2011. (ES)

88 Peninsula Ridge Merlot Reserves 2002, Niagara (\$39.40)

Winemaker J.P. Colas tale for this wine is "6 weeks on its skins after fermentation to give the extract/body and then aged in a combination of new and 1 year old barrels." Aromatically, the wine flatters the nose with cassis, plums, smoke and chocolate while the palate is still tight. It also displays firm, yet ripe tannins, which necessitate cellaring before consumption. Drink from 2008 to 2015.

88 Colio Merlot Reserve 2002, Lake Erie North Shore (\$22.95)

The 02 Merlot is a medium bodied offering which is driven by smoke and chocolate. In second gear there is sweet fruit, notably cherries and plums. It then kicks in with spice and earth and cruises elegantly to the finish line. Now to 2010. (ES)

87 Fielding Estate Cabernet Sauvignon Reserve 2004, Niagara (\$32)

This is a rather pleasant wine, offering up a bouquet of tobacco, dark cocoa, dill and plums. The palate is linear bur lengthy with sweet cherries and plums and tingling chocolate notes. Now to 2008. (ES)

87 Fielding Estate Syrah Reserve 2004, Niagara (\$28)

Last year I was blown away by the quality of Fielding's white wines. Success continues with their reds, even though the 04 vintage was a cooler one. No doubt, the decision to leave the red grapes on the vine until mid November to extract every last bit of heat and sun from Mother Nature really helped. This Syrah has a distinctive peppery personality which weaves around cocoa, herbs, plums, strawberry, toasty oak and caramel flavours. . Drink over the next 2 to 3 years. (ES).

87 Lakeview Cellars Syrah Reserve 2004, Niagara (\$49.95/1.5L)

To commemorate their 15th anniversary, Lakeview has released this very limited edition Syrah in 1.5L bottles. Made from 3 year old vines, it displays an impressive ruby/purple colour and a bouquet of raspberries, black pepper, mint and cassis. There is a lingering finish with flavours that copy the nose, as well as an unusual Armagnac/yellow plum note. From 2007 to 2011. (ES)

France

Red

Loire

88 Le Grand Clos 2003, Bourgeuil (\$23.95)

It has been a while since I've tasted a Loire Cabernet Franc this good. Undoubtedly, the 2003 heat wave in Europe helped to rev up the quality. The wine displays an opaque black colour with a purple rim as well a nose of cassis, fresh bread, tobacco, smoke and animal undertones. Medium bodied and still a tad disjointed so hold off until 2007 and drink until 2012. (ES)