

Canada

Whites

91 Peninsula Ridge Ratafia 2005, Niagara (\$29.95)

Ratafia is what the French classify as a Mistelle-fortified grape juice. Widely available in his native Burgundy, Jean Pierre Colas has been producing this aperitif since his arrival at Pen Ridge. To the best of my knowledge it is the only one Canada. His recipe consists of blending Chardonnay juice with yellow plum brandy. Intense nose of yellow plums, cherries, honey and orange rind. Thick in the mouth with a long finish. Grab a few bottles for the holiday season and share with family and friends (ES)

89 Peninsula Ridge Beal Vineyards Inox Chardonnay Reserve, Beamsville Bench (\$19.95)

This is the first vintage where the Beal Vineyard designation has been added. Like its predecessors, the wine is completely vinified in stainless steel. Complex, with lots of peach, apple, honey, minerals/gun flint and pear. Excellent length with cream, pear, spice, white flowers and minerals on the tongue. Now to 2009. (ES)

88 Inniskillin Montague Estate Vineyard Chardonnay 2004, Niagara (\$17.95)

A deep gold colour with a nose which is oaky, but not overpowering. The caramel, spice and vanilla work in tandem with the figs, green apple and honey. Very good length, refined and good acid balance. (ES)

86 Inniskillin Chardonnay Reserve 2004, Niagara (\$14.95)

Green apple and spice are on the nose. The palate is creamy with medium length and green apples and caramel reverberating on the finish. (ES)

85 Jackson-Triggs Proprietor's Reserve Sauvignon Blanc 2005, Niagara

Textbook grassy, asparagus, fruit cocktail and cat pea aromas. In the mouth there is citrus, mineral and herbs. Good length. (ES)

85 Jackson-Triggs Riesling 2005, Niagara (\$11.95)

More intensity and a touch sweeter than the dry version. A bouquet of apricot, honey and spice lead the way to minerals and lime on the taste buds. Crisp finish. (ES)

84 Jackson-Triggs Proprietors Reserve Dry Riesling 2005, Niagara (\$11.95)

Shows moderate aromas of mineral, peach, honey and tropical tones. The palate is somewhat austere with mineral and lime flavours.

Red

91 Creekside The Lost Barrel 2002, Niagara (\$45)

There are only 69 cases of this wine in existence and if you are able to procure any via any legal method, please do so. This wine, which is made from the consolidated remnants of forgotten Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Cabernet Franc, Pinot Noir, Gamay Noir and Shiraz barrels is truly impressive. Medium to full bodied with lots of cocoa, plums, vanilla, violets and spice. Excellent length and at least 6 to 9 years ahead of it. (ES)

90 Creekside Reserve Meritage 2002, Niagara (\$34)

Without a doubt, Creekside has scored big with their 2002 reds. Every wine is truly impressive, as is the case of this one. A superb, complex nose of cassis, plums, spice, vanilla, smoky/roasted herbs and cedar. In the mouth there is concentration, elegance and definition. Long finish. Drink over the next 5 to 7 years. (ES)

87 Chateau des Charmes Cabernet-Merlot Estate 2002, Niagara-on-the-Lake (\$19.95)

I have become rather fond of this wine over the past few vintages. Mid weight with cassis, dark cocoa, cigar and raspberry. The palate is grippy with sweet cassis fruit, spice and tobacco tones. Needs food, so go beef and go big, like prime rib. Now to 2012. (ES)

86 Inniskillin Pinot Noir Reserve 2004, Niagara (\$16.80)

Toasty oak aromas weave together with dark fruits, wild berries and earth. Good depth, mid weight and medium length. I envision this with pork tenderloin encrusted in a dried porcini crust and served with a mushroom risotto. (ES)

86 Inniskillin Merlot 2004, Niagara (\$14.99)

Plums, spice, cherries, raspberry and vanilla are all present in this value priced offering. Light to medium body with a touch of heat on the finish. (ES)

84 Inniskillin Pinot Noir 2004, Niagara (\$14.99)

A rather pleasant, soft offering which serves up cherries, earth, plum and black pepper. Light bodied with a soft mouthfeel. This is one of those easy sipping reds, ideal with cocktail hour

canapés.

California

White

86 Beringer Founders Estate Chardonnay 2004 (\$19.95)

In the glass, the wine is golden with vanilla, toasty, green apple and caramel aromas. The mouth chimes in with roasted nuts, apple and fresh acid. Balanced and a perfect foil for halibut in a butter sauce. (ES)

Red

89 Robert Mondavi Cabernet Sauvignon 2002, Napa (\$39.95)

The classic Mondavi nose of cassis, vanilla, mint, cedar and spice is present. In the mouth it is mid weight with more cassis as well as tobacco and cherry flavours. Very good length, supple texture and soft tannins. Drink over the next 4 to 5 years. (ES)

89 Beringer Knights Valley Cabernet Sauvignon 2002, Knights Valley (\$44.95)

More intense fruit than the Mondavi, thanks to the warmer climate of Sonoma. Dark cherry colour and a bouquet of blackberries, dark cherries, spice and smoky chocolate. Medium to full body with lots of jammy blackberries and cherries shrouded in chocolate. Now to 2012. (ES)

