

Cuvée

GRAND TASTING

Reviewed by Natalie Worden

On the weekend of March 24th, Niagara Wine Country hosted its 28th annual Cuvée Grand Tasting event. Proceeds from the events of the weekend went towards research initiatives at Brock University's Cool Climate Oenology and Viticulture Institute (CCOVI).

As someone who is still finding their way in the world of Ontario wines, Cuvée 2017 was the perfect place to cultivate a deeper understanding of the passions and creations of the Niagara region.

The Cuvée Grand Tasting itself was a showcase of wines, wineries, and winemakers. While there, I met winemakers who were truly passionate about their craft; who explained the details of the wines and their attributes, and shared their reasoning behind their wines of choice. Peter Rotar of G. Marquis Vineyards gets an honorable mention here for his ability to explain the nuances of his Silver Line Epic 2013 Red to even the most prosaic of palates. (By which I mean mine...)

I approach wine a bit differently than most. With a slightly underdeveloped palate, my wines of choice may not resonate with others. However, the highlights of my evening included the shockingly crisp Small Talk Vineyards' Big Ideas 2016 Riesling, and Stratus' peppery 2012 Cabernet Franc.

With a smorgasbord of seafood, tons of tapas, and gelato galore, the food pairings at the event were drool-worthy. Executive Chef James Price of the Scotiabank Convention Centre showcased his innovative creations, including parmesan ice cream with mushroom paté and pickled spruce tips. Long lines formed for all of the food stations as the night went on, with the longest queue being for the Fallsview Casino's Executive Chef Raymond Taylor's pan-roasted scallops. They were truly worth the wait!

Not being much of a seafood fan, I was surprisingly enchanted by Tide and Vine Oyster House's selection of East and West Coast oysters. Although this could be due to the charming men working at the station...





The most memorable part of my evening was getting to know the attendees. Wine truly does break barriers and bring people together from all walks of life. I met many interesting people that evening, including an older gentleman named Joseph who radiated a zest for life. Having attended Cuvée countless times before, he was a very well-connected individual; shaking hands and chatting with many of the higher profile attendees.

I took a breather from the main event to sit and drink some water in the foyer, and was joined by three couples. The couples consisted of a tech mogul and an owner of a consignment shop, two LCBO employees, and two general lovers of wine. Despite their varying knowledge of the industry itself, the topic of tasting and wine appreciation sparked a lengthy discussion.

The general consensus was that one's personal palate is the most important part of the tasting process. Similar to how external smells can affect your perception of a wine (as made evident by the overzealous frying at a food station during the evening), so can external opinions.

Ultimately, a wine that you love needs no detailed defense, which I think was truly the main theme of the evening. The wines at the Cuvée Grand Tasting were a selection of wines that resonated with the winemakers themselves. Some were expensive, some were affordable. Some were older vintages, some were younger. Some were complex, and some were very simple. But to the winemakers of the featured wineries, these wines brought joy to their palates, and to the palates of those attending Cuvée.



BELL PEPPER

