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ccovinews

A newsletter from
the Cool Climate Oenology
and Viticulture Institute



Cool
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Institute

Brock University

How Fizz Club is Shaping Canadian Sparkling Wine

They came from across the country to taste and talk about sparkling wine with the goal of making the Canadian product even better. This is Fizz Club.

As the name suggests it's a special club for sparkling wine and those who make it. A rare opportunity to compare notes, exchange ideas, build friendships and hear the latest research, all in the name of making great sparkling wine.

Fizz Club was created at Brock University in 2013 with a handful of winemakers. It's organized by the Cool Climate Oenology and Viticulture Institute (CCOVI) and led by Senior Scientist Belinda Kemp to provide the technical foundation for the growth of Canada's sparkling wine industry.

Now in its sixth year, it has now become a national event. This year's was the largest gathering to date with winemakers from across Canada travelling to Brock to be part of the club.

"The first Fizz Club was a few of us hanging out tasting wines in a lab," said Lawrence Buhler, winemaker at Henry of Pelham. "You can see how valuable something like this is based on how fast this group has grown. It is great to see people attend from across the country, including veterans in sparkling wine who you can learn a lot from and people who are pushing the boundaries when it comes to winemaking."

"Talking about some of the alternative yeast strains was pretty interesting. Back in the day those were some that maybe we were slightly afraid of and now we are learning to embrace them and use them for what they can do in the cellars and in our final wines," said Buhler.

It's not every day these winemakers get the chance to step out of their cellars and network like this.



Sparkling winemakers taste sparkling wines and discuss the latest research from Brock's Cool Climate Oenology and Viticulture Institute.

"The winemaking community doesn't have a lot of opportunities to come together and spend time face-to-face with other winemakers across the country," said Simon Rafuse, winemaker at Blomidon Estate Winery in Nova Scotia. "To focus in on one specific style of wine, which is one we do extremely well here in Canada, and to be able to spend the time to hear the latest research being done at Brock is a great opportunity."

As an outsider, one doesn't hear much about what's discussed behind the Fizz Club doors. It's an off-the-record, members-only gathering, giving winemakers a chance to openly discuss triumphs and challenges relating to sparkling wine production and learn about new research developments.

"It is the first-ever national event for winemakers. Fizz Club continues to have an impact on sparkling wine quality in Canada," said Kemp. "We have seen an increase in Canadian wines winning medals in national and international competitions

and the profile of these wines will continue to grow as we collaborate and work together."

Kemp shared the latest research CCOVI is doing to help local grape growers and winemakers produce quality sparkling wine, including new results from studies regarding how different soil types affect sparkling wine flavour, mouthfeel and texture.

"CCOVI is always embracing the opportunity to take research and make it applicable for the industry, they really are serving the industry well," said Buhler. "Belinda brings that research back to the industry with something like Fizz Club or maybe even a glass of wine over lunch, she is very open and willing to try anything that will help make Canadian wine better."

With some 300 sparkling wines available for tasting, Fizz Club is a special gathering.

CCOVI Hosts World's Largest Tasting Of Canadian Sparkling Wine



Tom Stevenson, right, and Treve Ring, left, visited CCOVI this week for the world's largest Canadian Sparkling wine tasting with CCOVI Senior Scientist Belinda Kemp, centre.

More than 130 bottles of sparkling wine from four provinces were popped at Brock University's Cool Climate Oenology and Viticulture Institute (CCOVI) Thursday, Nov. 29, in the world's largest tasting of Canadian sparkling wine.

Tom Stevenson, regarded as one of the world's leading sparkling wine experts, travelled to Brock from the United Kingdom to taste sparkling wines from Ontario, Quebec, B.C. and Nova Scotia.

"I am really pleased because there are a lot of really good sparkling wines here," said Stevenson. "After the first flight I found a few potential gold and silver wines."

Stevenson has been tasting top sparkling wines blind in the Champagne and Sparkling Wine World Championships (CSWWC), which he founded and is the head judge for. He said Canada is a strong contender and hopes some of the producers he earmarked will be encouraged to participate in the global competition.

"It would increase the profile of Canadian sparkling wine. We haven't typically had many entries from Canada in the past to really see what these producers have available from a competition perspective," Stevenson said.

Over a number of hours, he tasted the wines alongside wine writer and judge Treve Ring, who said the top wines stood out in the tasting room when it came to balance, complexity and depth.

"I think the top wineries in Canada are making sparkling wines that can easily stand shoulder to shoulder with some of the top wineries around the world," Ring said. "It was fantastic to see such diversity of wines and styles, everything from ancient method through to traditional method sparkling wine that has been aged for years."

The tasting was organized and hosted by CCOVI Senior Scientist Belinda Kemp. Her lab, dubbed 'The Bubble Lab,' is recognized for its leading sparkling wine research and outreach work, helping grape growers and winemakers produce quality sparkling wines through initiatives such as Fizz Club — a networking group for Canadian sparkling winemakers.

"I'm so pleased we were able to showcase wines from so many wineries, especially with our annual Fizz Club taking place next week," said Kemp. "It is quite incredible to watch the progress of Canadian sparkling wines as we raise awareness of production techniques and tackle challenges with CCOVI research. This is just the beginning for Canadian sparkling wine."



More than 130 bottles of sparkling wines from across Canada were part of a tasting at Brock University's CCOVI.

Winery Hosts OEVI Students for Tour and Co-op Opportunities

Students from Brock University's Oenology and Viticulture (OEVI) program stepped outside the classroom for an exclusive behind-the-scenes tour of Pillitteri Estates Winery recently.

The winery invited them on the in-depth tour which included tasting the first barrel sample of Corvina produced in Ontario because it is offering four co-op positions for next year and wants to hire students from Brock.

"Brock's Cool Climate Oenology and Viticulture Institute (CCOVI) has a great reputation and we are seeing a lot of talent come out of Brock," said Jamie Slingerland, Director of Viniculture for Pillitteri Estates. "We have several employees right now that have proven that."

Pillitteri Estates winemaker Alex Kolundzic (BSc '04) is a Brock Alumni, as is assistant winemaker Susan Rissling (OEV '03), and third-year student, Jacob Gigliotti, who is now working part time in their retail store after completing a vineyard co-op.

The OEVI students toured through the retail area, production building, press, tank and bottling rooms, as well as the lab and barrel cellar, then finished with a wine tasting and food pairing lead by Gigliotti.

"It was quite interesting to see and try the different styles of wines that they make, like the 2015 Corvina," said third-year student Lauren Barber.

Pillitteri Estates makes Ontario's first and only appassimento-style Corvina, made from the traditional Italian grape variety. Appassimento wines are the result of a labour-intensive winemaking process using grapes that are dried post-harvest to further ripen the fruit off-vine to concentrate sugars and flavours.

The Niagara-on-the-Lake winery has partnered with CCOVI researchers on a five-year Appassimento Project looking at different ways to dry the grapes.

"It was great to get to see a winery of such a large scale being able to produce such a wide array of wines, using different techniques and not being afraid to innovate further and try new things," said Seth Jex, who is completing his certificate in grape



Pillitteri Estates Winery Director of Viniculture, Jamie Slingerland and winemaker Alex Kolundzic take OEVI students on a behind-the-scenes tour of the production facilities.

and wine technology. "It is really engaging and interesting to find individuals as passionate as Jamie and Alex."

Engaging these students is exactly what Slingerland wanted to do, hoping they will apply for the co-op positions. With a major expansion underway that will increase production, the winery is also planning to hire one of these graduates to be part of its winemaking team in the next two years.

"We want to recruit from the people who have had experience here at the winery," said Slingerland.

That's why he reached out to Melissa Beamer, Brock's Manager of Senior Employer Development and Co-op Education, to set up the tour and create co-op opportunities in the winery.

"Jamie is our dream co-op employer because he is committed to learning, quality and making it an amazing experience for our students," said Beamer.

Slingerland said his goal was to show the Oenology and Viticulture students the production facilities at the family-run winery, known globally for its Icewine, and introduce them to all the winery has to offer. The group wrapped up the day in the still-under-construction, 12,000-square-foot production building, which will feature a new area where the public can learn about the winemaking process.

"I think I have tweaked a few interests and I am going to see some resumes coming in for jobs, and that is exactly what we're looking for," said Slingerland.

WHAT'S HAPPENING AT CCOVI

2019 CUVÉE WEEKEND

Please join us for Cuvée 2019 on March 22 to 24.

The Grand Tasting will take place March 23 at the Scotiabank Convention Centre in Niagara Falls.

Tickets are on sale now. Visit cuvée.ca to purchase and learn more about the event.

CCOVI LECTURE SERIES

Grape and wine experts from across Canada share their latest research findings at the CCOVI Lecture Series. The series run every Monday until March 18. Attend in person or watch live online.

Visit brocku.ca/ccovi for more information

CONTINUING EDUCATION COURSES

Course opportunities are available both in-class and online for wine, spirits and cider. WSET (I,II,III), Certificate in Ontario wine & Cider and Perry Production To learn more visit:

brocku.ca/ccovi/continuing-education

ONTARIO FRUITS AND VEGETABLE CONFERENCE

Visit CCOVI and the Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Conference February 21-21 at the Scotiabank Convention Centre in Niagara Falls, ON.

Industry Giants and CCOVI Builders, Ziraldo and Kaiser Cited with Elite Award

Canadian winery icons Donald Ziraldo and Karl Kaiser, who revolutionized an industry and then helped create Brock University's renowned grape and wine research centre CCOVI, have been honoured with the first Lifetime Achievement Award ever presented by the Ontario Chamber of Commerce.

The partners were feted as "the pioneers of Ontario's wine renaissance" at a gala at Toronto's Exhibition Place, where Ziraldo was joined by Andrea Kaiser, who accepted on behalf of her late father. The award was sponsored by Brock University, and presented by Brock President Gervan Fearon and Board Chair Gary Comerford.

Ziraldo and Kaiser began their journey in 1975, when they obtained a licence for a new winery they called Inniskillin. Ontario wines of that era were typically sweet and syrupy, due to the region's hardy labrusca vines that could survive Canadian winters. But Ziraldo and Kaiser believed that European vitis vinifera vines could produce world-class wines and also cope with the local climate. They soon began winning major international awards, such as the Grand prix d'Honneur at Vinexpo in Bordeaux, France. Inniskillin went from cottage winery to global success, and the reputation of Canadian wines went viral.

Since then, Niagara has become carpeted with vineyards and known as "Napa north", a destination for connoisseurs and wine tourists alike. When Inniskillin received its licence, the first to be issued in half a century, there were only six other wineries in the province. Today there are nearly 200, and grape and wine is a \$9-billion national industry that contributes to thousands of jobs. While sales flourished, however, the industry lacked the research support and regional science that is crucial to keeping an area's vines healthy and its quality high.

By 1996, a group of winemakers, grape growers and Brock scientists met regularly to identify the needs of the rapidly expanding industry. The group included Bill Cade, then Brock's Dean of Mathematics and Science, who brought in industry leaders like Ziraldo, Kaiser, Paul Bosc, John Howard and others.

Wine writer Linda Bramble recalled the energy: "I remember Donald (Ziraldo) repeating, 'Every significant wine region in the world has a research institute associated with it. We need this, too!'"

Before the year was out, Brock launched its Cool Climate Oenology and Viticulture



Brock President Gervan Fearon presents the Lifetime Achievement Award to Andrea Kaiser, as Board Chair Gary Comerford, left, and Don Ziraldo look on.

Institute (CCOVI), which has been a working partner of the industry ever since. Two years later, CCOVI would move into its new home, named Inniskillin Hall in honour of a generous gift from Ziraldo and Kaiser.

At the Lifetime Achievement Award ceremony, Ziraldo praised his longtime partner. "Karl's genius with Icewine created an opportunity to build a global luxury brand," Ziraldo said. "I deeply appreciate the recognition by the Chamber, and encourage young vintners to continue our quest for greatness" Andrea Kaiser recounted how her father very nearly did not become a vintner. After emigrating from Austria in the late 1960s, he found his education credentials were not recognized in Canada. However, his plans to go back to school and become a teacher changed after a chance meeting with Ziraldo.

"But even in winemaking he remained a teacher, always eager to share his winemaking techniques," she said. "He was so honoured to be invited back to Brock to teach at CCOVI as it combined his two passions in life, wine and learning."

Fearon said the vision and innovation shown by Ziraldo and Kaiser will continue to inspire generations of entrepreneurs and leaders.

"It is hard to think of two individuals whose vision and commitment to quality and excellence better exemplifies dramatic growth in the competitiveness and vitality of the Ontario industry landscape," said Fearon. "I am proud to say that Brock, through CCOVI, was a partner in these developments reflecting our commitment to supporting transformative regional community and economic growth."

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