

Master classes of Terroir

by Michael Godel –taken from Godello.ca



A Gamay Masterclass, Terroir Hospitality Symposium, May 11, 2015, Arcadian Court

The Terroir Hospitality Symposium took place on May 11, 2015 at Arcadian Court in downtown Toronto. The one day food and wine colloquium was a massive simmering feast set in sprawling fashion within an undersized, intricate urban labyrinth. Despite the frenzied and condensed action in the downtown venue, that congress merely offered a look at the tip of the proverbial Terroir iceberg. With upwards of 30 team members leading the charge, the movement left the big fat city address and trekked to set up shop at a local farm and out to the rock at the eastern outermost edge of the country. Terroir moves outwards, onwards and upwards, taking it to the fields and the oceans.

The Terroir Best Practice Culinary Mission went to St. John's, Newfoundland from May 14th to 17th. The One Fish expedition travelled "to meet fishing industry experts, to explore and examine both the history and the current

realities of an Atlantic community built on an economy of the fishing industry.” There was also “the feast that keeps on giving,” at which the [Feast Ontario](#) team was hosted at [Grandview Farms](#) in Thornbury, Ontario

Led by Founder & Chair [Arlene Stein](#), Vice Chair & Awards [Rebecca Leheup](#), [Terroir Talk](#) the dextrosinistral/sinistrodextral enterprise is an undertaking of the extreme variety.

A look at [#Terroir2015](#) in images

Terroir is an event, a series of gatherings, a notion, a philosophy and a way of life. Its mandate is this: “Terroir Hospitality brings together innovative and creative influencers from the field of hospitality, including chefs, food and beverage experts, writers and business leaders.” It’s also not without [detractors](#). There are some who feel it is a negative representation of the culinary and cultural scene in Toronto. That it’s “white, urban, Euro-centric. It ain’t Canada, or 2015. Not funny.”

If the list of participating speakers, chefs and winemakers had been correlated with shortsighted discrimination, ill-curated and preordained with exclusive, malice prepense, you would have been hard-pressed to get an interview with any guest who would have chosen to speak about the called-out lack of representation or narrow-minded decision-making. If the culture and the colour of the event needs to change it will do so with holistic bias and sympathy, with the right sort of urging from the global culinary and vinicultural community. If the pundits are correct, future sessions will reflect the will of the people. In 2015, the atmosphere was wholly copacetic.

The 2015 [Terroir wine sessions](#) were marshalled with “an effort to raise the academic standards of the wine side of our symposium,” in three assemblies, to educate and entertain. These Masterclass jams, [Gamay, Terroir, and Clone Wars](#) were coordinated by Good Food Revolution’s [Jamie](#)

Drummond and Magdalena Kaiser with great support from Wine Country Ontario.

The connection between food and wine is an intrinsic one. They are like chicken and egg, contrary to reason in electing which comes first. Chefs and winemakers, purveyors of the land from which their produce grows, transmuted into cuisine and fermented into wine. Facilitators of *terroir*, harvesting at optimum ripeness and then initiating the transmogrification with immediate haste, in urgency, to capture, lock in and bottle aroma, flavour and texture, before any chance of deterioration or spoilage.

But what the f*** *is terroir*? The most used word in the language of wine is in fact, *terroir*. Nothing else compares, comes even remotely close, or causes as much debate. Except for minerality, but those who concern themselves in the matters of ridicule, dismissal and denial ignore the fact that the opposite of fruit is simply, unequivocally and finally, incontestably, mineral.

Were the notion of *terroir* to be a belief as simple as “what happens in the vineyard, through environment, by geology, geography and topology, from naturally occurring elements and microbes in the soil, by air and of climate. Were it just a matter concerning “the impossible creator of perfect storms, from out of riddle and enigma,” well, then, we could all just go home. It’s much more complicated than that and real.

Most winemakers will agree, in principle, to this. “The final goal is to make the finest wines that express *terroir*.” Organic and biodynamic are important. *Terroir* is more important. But winemakers are no fools. They know that “during the grape’s life cycle, genealogy and climate shape its development. But even after it is plucked from the vine it still carries no true identity, in so far as what it will become as a wine. This is the point where nature gives way to nurture. Environment now acts as the catalyst to shape the wine’s life. Wine does not evolve because of natural selection. It evolves at the hands of the winemaker.” Anti-terroir?

At this year's Terroir Talk Symposium, Gamay was chosen as the first wine session's go to grape variety, to investigate both the serious and not-so serious sides of its existential weightlessness. To revel in its lithe, brightness of being and to unearth its deep roots. That we have come to a time in history where both aspects can be studied in Burgundy and in Ontario is fortuitous indeed. As a Gamay groupie, I feel blessed to be born under a good sign, at the right time.

As a reminder, it's always the right time to be with the Gamay you love. I have been urging Ontario farmers to plant, cultivate and nurture Gamay; for winemakers to make it more and more. I made "a proclamation in favour of a great grape and one that forges signature wines out of Canadian soils. I am an ardent supporter of and a willing rider on the Gamay bandwagon, in the name of *connaitre* and *savoir*, *kennen* and *wissen*, recognition and understanding."

Related – [Go Gamay Go](#)

It's working. Rosewood Estates just planted it for the first time. Gamay is poured at the cellar door, at tasting events and in private gatherings all the time now. Bottom line is Gamay costs half of the price compared to Pinot Noir and Syrah and it thrives in Ontario. It can make serious Cru quality reds and even at the highest end, sell for less than \$30. It has been, continues to be and will always be [#GoGamayGo](#) time in Ontario.

Related – [It's go Gamay go time](#)



Moderator Chris Waters and the Gamay Masterclass panel: Jamie Drummond, Magdalena Kaiser, Martin Malivoire, Shiraz Mottiar, Bill Zacharkiw and Guillaume de Castelnaud

The first Masterclass: Gamay The Next Little Thing

“The intent of the first of the three wine sessions, was meant to investigate how it performs in Ontario and elsewhere in the world.”

The Panelists:

- Winemaker Guillaume de Castelnaud, Chief Winemaker/Director, Château des Jacques, Louis Jadot Beaujolais (Beaujolais, France)
- Vigneron Martin Malivoire (Malivoire, Beamsville Bench, Ontario, Canada)
- Winemaker Shiraz Mottiar (Malivoire)
- Wine writer/Sommelier Bill Zacharkiw (Montreal Gazette/Wine Align, Montreal, Quebec, Canada)

The Moderator: Wine writer Chris Waters (Vines Magazine/Intervin, Ontario, Canada)

To many, Gamay is a wonderful drug and though much maligned, its suitors and supporters can never tire of its freshness and its lightness of being. Moderator Chris Waters refers to Gamay as “a gateway grape, to transition drinkers from white to red wine.” In a world according to Guillaume de Castelnau, “Gamay is lazy, generous and fragile.” Bill Zacharkiw minces nothing, not words, nor feelings. “I love Beaujolais.” In the Terroir Master Class, there were 13 variations on Gamay, from semi-carbonic to old and baked, with many shades, hues, intensities and variations in between. Here are my notes.



Ontario Masterclass Gamay

Malivoire “Le Coeur” Gamay 2014, VQA Niagara Escarpment, Niagara Peninsula, Ontario ([Winery](#))

Shiraz Mottiar refers to the young, Beaujolais impressionist as “Sammy Carbono,” a semi-carbonically macerated Gamay, with one foot in Nouveau and the other in a dusty, freshly spirited aromatic whirl. The tanky feel makes it accessibly gulpable. Like a leaping horse it is also twitchy, hopping in dressage, popping in the mouth. Fun if beside the point. Drink 2015. Tasted May 2015

Malivoire M2 Small Lot Gamay 2013, VQA Niagara Escarpment, Niagara Peninsula, Ontario ([Winery](#), \$19.95, [WineAlign](#))

A month later the pepper runs from white to black, by way of red. Terrific sour edged fruit. Strawberry and cranberry tied together by citrus. Will need two years minimum to fully integrate.

From my earlier note of April 2015:

The profundity of tart, keen, briny berries dilates in its own very useful layers of citrus, tannin and concentration, beyond even what was observed in 2012. The zesty, spritely argot resonates from the unfurling of floral essentia out of a Gamay in desperate need of time. The flavours and overlay are somewhat impenetrable and yet leave quite an impression. While patience might be the virtue and the reward, if #gogamaygo is the modus operandi, a swig from the bottle like gentlemen of the road is certainly not out of the question. Drink 2016-2021.

Last tasted May 2015

Leaning Post Gamay 2013, VQA Niagara Peninsula, Ontario ([Winery](#), \$25.00)

A year has clarified the must into a venerable, beneficial decay, like effulgent, liquid rust. The shine of antiquity and then a blast of cinnamon dominates for the first major swirl. So lithe and profound like wise Pinot Noir, minus the Niagara coat of arms and lacquered veneer. Whatever anxiety may have held down the brightness has eased to deliver this current, optimum drinking window. Drink 2015-2016. Tasted May 2015

From my earlier (tank sample) note of May 2014:

Guiltless and virtuous straight out of stainless, the meaty side of Gamay game boldly goes where few from the Bench have gone before. Like a rare venison steak sitting in a silky pool of lavender-scented *demi-glace*. Floral like Fleurie and despite zero new oak, vanilla joins the gravy. A Senchuk steal of quality Wismer (McLeary...sort of) fruit sets this Gamay up for easy sell success.

Fielding Gamay 2013, Niagara Peninsula, Ontario ([Winery](#), \$19.95, [WineAlign](#))

Time has been a friend to the '13 Fielding Gamay, a wine who's elevated tones of floral fruit and acidity have settled in the name of structure. Dusty ground nubbins and mint swirl with layered if yet rigid fruit. Low-cropped vines are on display, in single-vineyard like attention to specific detail, akin to Malivoire's Courtney. This is in fact sourced from a single-vineyard up on the cool Vinemount Ridge sub-appellation. The site is a couple of kilometres south of Peninsula Ridge's McNally Vineyard, the source of Ilya Senchuk's terrific Leaning Post 2012 Pinot Noir. The Procyshyn family has been farming this plot (without fanfare) for decades in Beamsville. The pristine fruit that Theo and Shelley Procyshyn grow, along with their three sons, Nolan, Dalton and Brayden, yield as low as 1.5 tonnes and up to 3.5 tonnes per acre, depending on the year. The '13 was around 3 t/a. Fielding has never labelled this Gamay 'single vineyard' because they have always hoped to bring in new Gamay blocks on as part of that wine, but that's not yet worked out. The '13 is very, very red raspberry, with a craggy, spiked point of liqueur, like a weeping peak upon that Vinemount Ridge in the afternoon sun. Has Beamsville's upper reaches written all over its corporeal self. Drink 2015-2017. Tasted May 2015

13th Street "Sandstone" Gamay 2013, VQA Four Mile Creek, Niagara Peninsula, Ontario ([Winery](#), \$19.95, [WineAlign](#))

May just be the first Gamay with a simulacrum towards a style best described as appassimento, what with the overripe fruit, aromatic cure, baked and sun-dried flavours. Sniff the confluence of black raspberry, scorched earth and roasting game bones, its sinew crackling over humid old growth wood. Gets rich into the vanilla, reeking of late harvest lavender and then a mutton funk. Could easily pass for a wealthy, unforgiving style of Cru Beaujolais, like Chénas from Christophe Pacalet. Or it could just be acting older than its age, by seven or eight years. Most prepossessing and confounding Gamay. Drink 2015-2018. Tasted May 2015

Stratus Gamay 2012, VQA Niagara On The Lake, Ontario ([Winery](#), \$29.00, [WineAlign](#))

Esteem elevated by structure, matched in poise and presence mottled in smears of darker, richer black cherry. If a slight absence of brightness is sensed due to the syrupy compression, like New World, west coast Pinot Noir, the gleaming from acidity and tannin times perfectly the effluent escape.

From my earlier note of April 2015:

It may not be the most idiosyncratic Gamay in Niagara but the Stratus 2012 is without a doubt the most advanced and complex. Gamay fusion is on display, at once a bottle of Niagara's finest pulchritudinous veneer and then a charcuterie board laid ample with cured bovine parts and sun-dried grapes. Maximum ripeness and then even later picking, to no one's surprise, have led to this. Two years of ageing in neutral oak barrels has brought about a humid roundness and yet the centre is controlled by Oz-like mint and eucalyptus notes. The jam is gelid, as opposed to temperate. Rarely does Gamay go to such depths, of blackberry, chalk and grain, with an overlord of tannin. Quite serious stuff. Drink 2017-2020.

Last tasted May 2015



Château-De-Jacques and Malivoire Courtney in the Gamay Masterclass

Château-De-Jacques Morgon 2013, Ac Beaujolais, France (653584, \$24.95, [WineAlign](#))

The flushed scarlet animation des is active and astir, like a soft serve swirl of dusty, cherry molasses, bathing in its own natural acidity. Has the presence of wine to integrate chalk, grain and Morgon tannin, in equal, opposite and variegated layers. Nothing shy about this gateway Cru Beaujolais. Drink 2015-2019. Tasted May 2015

Château-De-Jacques Morgon Côte du Py 2013, Ac Beaujolais, France ([Agent](#), \$53.95)

In this rigid and stoic Morgon, the south-facing, blue volcanic slopes of the Côte du Py have provided a measure of firm fruit that will require a minimum two to three years to crack. The gears of the Gamay machinery may be grinding but the windows are yet open, the doors locked tight. This is the least

forward, most inwardly introspective and least gregarious of the CdJ Beaujolais. Sharp sapidity, biting tang and piercing penetrating tannin deny immediate or even short-term access. Even the middle palate seems lifeless, devoid of cherry fruit and seamless layering, medicinal even. Judgement should be reserved, with knowledge of pedigree and how a bottle such as this will suddenly, effortlessly spring to life with time. Drink 2018-2022. Tasted May 2015

Château-De-Jacques Moulin a Vent 2010, Ac Beaujolais, France ([Agent](#), \$36.95)

The undergraduate's blend comes from the appellation's Château des Jacques parcels; Carquelin, Rocheigrès, Champ de Cour, Thorins and La Roche. Granite soils from each spice with symptomatic diversification and combine for a flippant funk that hitches straightforward out of the gate. Here Gamay leaves dusty behind with an urging away from humble and towards nobility. Richly aromatic, amplifying into palate. Such acidity and such grain. For this MaV the time is now, the arrival already announced. A late sense of veneer on the lengthy bitter finish indicates more good times ahead. Drink 2015-2020. Tasted May 2015<

Château-De-Jacques Moulin a Vent Clos de Rocheigrès 2010, Ac Beaujolais, France ([Agent](#), \$44.95, [WineAlign](#))

From the appellation's highest parcel, the red sandstone soils of the Clos de Rocheigrès are gently sloping and fed by underground streams. I always sense salinity and an effusive, stony energy in wines blessed with subterranean irrigation. The drinking window for this 2010 is wide open and the funk meets age introduction has been made. Already in display of a dried fruit shrivel, the '10 acts like Sangiovese of a similar senescence, like CCR or Vino Nobile with three to five years of age. The liqueur of roses, the earth and the cherries are culpable and yet the varnish and the baking spice crusting ensure that no one conclusion can yet be made. This is highly seasoned and not quite unfurled

Gamay. Two more years should complete its conditioning. Drink 2017-2020. Tasted May 2015

Château-De-Jacques Moulin a Vent Clos de Rochegres 2007, Ac Beaujolais, France ([Agent](#), \$43.95, [WineAlign](#))

Poured from a magnum, the 2007 Clos de Rochgeres is the portal in which to peer, to see what can happen with Gamay. Baked, caked, figgy, funky and oxidative, more than ample fruit was present and persists, with the savoury edges now integrated throughout. Strawberry rhubarb pie comes to mind, with eyes closed and sniffing senses heightened. A bit indelicate, the humidity in tomato leaf and *garrigue* add to the idea of age though the citric punch and lactic texture are reminders of Gamay's fun side. There is no shortage of complexity and evolution here. That said, consumption time is now. Drink 2015-2016. Tasted May 2015

Malivoire Gamay Courtney 2007, VQA Beamsville Bench, Ontario ([Winery](#), \$29.95, [WineAlign](#))

The wow aromatics can't be denied, fully explained nor perfunctorily taken for granted. Age has educated the fruit, stratified and fully saturated this Gamay. Strawberries have shot from an adrenaline cannon and structure has been fully realized with (non-Gamay) Old World confidence. A note of orange blossom, like an early evening Sevilla garden, is rousing. The natural evolve of such a Gamay, with wood, yeast and fruit in expert harmony, recalls the impossible acts of red wines like those made by Emidio Pepe. If the stretch is considered a conceit of poetic licence, so be it. The yet beating heart of raging acidity circling plenteous fruit and so much savour is nothing short of a Gamay miracle. Power and masculinity, by way of a conduit in oak, have been used to great advantage. This has life yet to live. Drink 2015-2020. Tasted May 2015

Château-De-Jacques Morgon Côte du Py 2006, Ac Beaujolais, France ([Agent](#), \$53.95)

Seamless and eminently structured, developed low and slow. The blue volcanic soil has procured an evolutionary subsumption, a roasted, developed personality. The seeping liquor oozes, of earthy cherries, again like Sangiovese, but inelastic and close-grained, as per the Côte du Py idiom. This '06 offers clarity and gives reason to forgive the brutal '13, to abstain for commenting further. This wine is quite ferric and still tannic. The oak remains a factor. Through the walls the Gamay fruit does transude and so the master plan is coming into effect, perhaps not immediately but will be very soon. Just around the corner. Drink 2016-2020. Tasted May 2015



Moderator Sara d'Amato and the Terroir Masterclass panel: Magdalena Kaiser, Dr. Jim Willwerth, Emma Garner, Stuart Piggott and Dr. Kevin Pogue

The second Masterclass: **A Different Look At Terroir: How Much Do Soils Actually Matter?**

“In this seminar/tasting we ask what the term really means, and how much do its many different elements actually influence the character of the finished wine?”

The Panelists:

- Dr. Kevin Pogue Phd. Geology, Whitman College, Walla Walla, Washington State, USA
- Dr. Jim Willwerth Phd. Biological Sciences: Plant Sciences; Oenology and Viticulture (CCOVI, Brock University, Niagara, Canada)
- Winemaker Emma Garner (Thirty Bench, Beamsville Bench, Ontario, Canada)
- Winewriter Stuart Pigott (Author of Riesling: Best White Wine On Earth, Berlin, Germany)

The Moderator: Wine writer/Sommelier Sara d'Amato (Wine Align, Toronto, Canada)

Dr. Willwerth offered up his opinion on how minerality is achieved in Riesling. “If you don’t get maturity in the variety at the end of the growing season, you won’t get the full expression of minerality. Overripe will eliminate minerality.” In Ontario, “The Bench is home to a mineral wealth of local Riesling, singular in composition not only by way of a global comparison, but also from plot to plot, soil to soil and vineyard to vineyard.” That persuasion has spread, down to the shores of Lake Ontario, by Niagara-on-the-Lake and in Prince Edward County. “Riesling brokers the nescient consumer with the gift of grape enlightenment.”

Seven Ontario Rieslings were tasted in the Masterclass. The notes.



Riesling Masterclass

Cave Spring Riesling Dolomite 2013, VQA Niagara Escarpment, Ontario ([Winery](#), \$16.95, [WineAlign](#))

This is Cave Spring's bridge, offering safe passage from Estate to CSV Riesling. Vinified with consistency in a quasi-Kabinett style, its elevated though classic numbers steadfast in sugar (17.55 g/L) and acidity (7.2 g/L TA). The dolomite limestone of the Escarpment means business in this calm, fit, chiseled and consumer-lissome Riesling. Palate is really the thing, seamless to attraction, from fruit to stone. Orchards and citrus groves alight to rock. Phenolically ripe yet shy of the tropical planet. Is there transference here? Absolutely. Drink 2015-2018. Tasted May 2015

Château Des Charmes Old Vines Riesling 2013, VQA Niagara On The Lake, Ontario (277228, \$16.95, [WineAlign](#))

The happy place effect by age in the Château Des Charmes' vines coupled with location is usually enough to carry this Riesling through an obvious and readily identifiable tunnel but 2013 confounds. The elemental ratio, derived from multiplying reduction by altitude leans thoughts to the Vinemount Ridge or the Cave Spring Escarpment Vineyard. The compound aromatic waft, or more succinctly, the deconstructed stone, the breaking down of periodic Hollywood squares is a force to reckon. That this arrives from such close proximity to the lake is nothing short of amazing. It's as if this Riesling is the product of stressed vines and the pierce is just so pinpointed. Less accessible than '12 for sure, so drink up previous vintages going back at least three before even thinking about getting to know 2013. Drink 2018-2022. Tasted May 2015

Norman Hardie Riesling 2014, Prince Edward County, Ontario (Tank Sample)

At this prepossessed stage the terpenic fruit might fail in competition but succeed in the marketplace. Easy access, smelling of perfumed must, juicy, with citrus and burgeoning acidity. Low alcohol and good length stretch out an endless lemon summer. The wine will reverse itself within a year and beat impossible odds. A Hardie always does. Tasted May 2015

Thirty Bench Riesling Small Lot Triangle Vineyard 2009, VQA Beamsville Bench, Niagara Peninsula, Ontario ([Winery](#), \$30.00, [WineAlign](#))
The brilliant hue slides through patina and heads for gold. Some fumes have emerged with age, part petrol, part pure mineral, but of what kind and more importantly how, or why? Viscous, near oily, waxy and the most Glück of the three Thirty Bench single-vineyard Rieslings. Tossed with spice, pepper, lemon and honey that is more molasses than clover. The mineral is a result of the lowest water retentive soil as compared to Steel Post and Wood Post. The transmission for (orchard or tropical) fruit is minimized, the vigour low. The result is mineral. Drink 2015-2020. Tasted May 2015

Thirty Bench Riesling Small Lot Steel Post Vineyard 2009, VQA
Beamsville Bench, Niagara Peninsula, Ontario ([Winery](#), \$30.00, [WineAlign](#))

Balance is and therefore always was struck. The match percusses flint for a mere nano-second, with just a brush on cymbal, the rock bleeds but is quickly clotted because the fruit shines still, like around the clock light. The steely aspect is a posterior one, antithetical and yet purposed, from this vineyard. Youth tells common sense to think 2011. The Riesling behaviour seems to play that part, of a chalky, piercing acidity, so typical of that vintage and so distinctly Thirty Bench. That the wine is older is not a big surprise because 2009 is the bomb. It may just be the best Riesling vintage, from on that Bench, in the last 10. Drink 2015-2025. Tasted May 2015

Thirty Bench Riesling Small Lot Wood Post Vineyard 2009, VQA
Beamsville Bench, Niagara Peninsula, Ontario ([Winery](#), \$30.00, [WineAlign](#))

Age is a factor but less so than its Bench sisters due to a fine sense of calm. Showing less evolution, less viscosity, less wax and honey. More than that, the periodic table has yet to fill in. The Wood Post exhibits more warmth, savour and balm. A taste offers a sapidity that combines toasted fennel and candied lemon. Poised and yet incomplete, the vineyard fetters this Riesling to breath slowly and take its (will get to) sweet time. Drink 2017-2027. Tasted May 2015

Flat Rock Cellars Riesling Nadja's Vineyard 2009, VQA Twenty Mile
Bench, Niagara Peninsula, Ontario (578625, \$19.95, [WineAlign](#))

Going back a few years, this Flat Rock Weis 21 clone Riesling from atop the Niagara Escarpment was made by former winemaker Ross Wise. Six years has concentrated both aromas and flavours while concurrently reducing the cutting drill. The hyperbole is read by tablet, of etchings in stone, immortalizing the *terroir* (not so) long before it was truly known how this could happen. What sticks out the most is the bleeding limestone texture and the striking aridity. Later vintages of Nadja improve on the flesh. Drink 2015-2017. Tasted May 2015



Clone Wars Masterclass

The third Masterclass: **“The Clone Wars”**: What Do Different Clones Bring To The Glass & Why?

“Looks at Riesling, Cabernet Franc and Pinot Noir. The varying clones utilized are a point of pride for some winemakers, and yet not even mentioned by others. Over the course of this detailed seminar/tasting we hope to answer why this is the case.”

The Panelists:

- Dr. Kevin Pogue Phd. Geology Whitman College, Walla Walla, Washington State, USA
- Dr. Jim Willwerth Phd. Biological Sciences: Plant Sciences; Oenology and Viticulture (CCOVI, Brock University, Niagara, Canada)
- Winemaker Angelo Pavan (Cave Spring, Jordan, Ontario, Canada)

- Winemaker Jay Johnston (Flat Rock, Beamsville Bench, Ontario, Canada)

The Moderator: Sommelier Katy Moore (Langdon Hall, Cambridge, Ontario, Canada)

Dr. Jim Willwerth asserts that “clones are essential for viticulture, propagated asexually, through cuttings.” Angelo Pavan notes “clonal research to cold heartiness is very important for Niagara and also for yields.” Clones no doubt drive the industry, at least behind the scenes, but when it comes to making great wine, is it the be all, end all? “I still believe plot trumps clone,” says Jay Johnston. The defence rests. Here are the wines tasted in the final Masterclass.



Clone Wars Masterclass line-up

Greenlane Riesling Old Vines 2011, VQA Lincoln Lakeshore, Niagara Peninsula, Ontario (351486, \$21.95, [WineAlign](#))

While aridity suggests Alsace Clone 49, this is actually Weiss 21, made saline and arid out of Lincoln Lakeshore soil. The herbal aspect has propagated to combine with Twenty Bench like distinction and with less citrus than Vinemount Ridge or Beamsville Bench. The Mosel density has developed with time in bottle. Drink 2015-2019.

From my earlier note of October 2013:

Cracks the mineral whip, froths lime into foam and atomizes stone fruit into sweet and sour heaven. Wants to be semi-dry but never quite goes there. Walks a fine line, a tightrope actually. Up there with Charles Baker and Thirty Bench for sheer madness.

Last tasted May 2015

Trius Winery At Hillebrand Showcase Riesling Ghost Creek Vineyard 2013, VQA Four Mile Creek, Ontario ([Winery](#), \$25.00, [WineAlign](#))

The Ghost Creek Riesling comes from the shadow of a river bed vineyard planted to the Alsace clone 49. The fruit is much richer than most, coupled with the aridity and salinity that former stony wadi plots and this particular clone will conspire to effect. The citrus intensity is however tempered by a humidity that comes from seemingly sunburnt fruit, tanned and wet down by the revenant reservoir. Drink 2015-2017. Tasted May 2015

Cave Spring Estate Bottled Chardonnay Musqué 2013, VQA Beamsville Bench, Niagara Peninsula, Ontario (246579, \$15.95, [WineAlign](#))

Produced from the 77 clone, the vintage has heightened the high herbal and feigned sweetness aromatic pastis. The palate is extraordinarily viscous, with Yellow Muscat and Gewürztraminer attributes, not so out of the ordinary considering Cave Spring's older world execution. Drives from lemon to mandarin, through almond pit and into peach. Always solid Musqué. Drink 2015-2017. Tasted May 2015

2027 Cellars Chardonnay Wismer Vineyard Fox Croft Block 2012, VQA Twenty Mile Bench, Ontario ([Winery](#), \$30.00, [WineAlign](#))

In the hands of winemaker Kevin Panagapka, Craig Wismer's fruit retains an underlay of power not recognized in other Foxcroft Chardonnays. Neither Thomas Bachelder nor Ross Wise (Keint-He) make anything near spirited as this 2027 take. Chardonnay loves the sun in the Foxcroft Block and Panagapka loves to see that sun hook up with the inside of a barrel. This '12 makes a nice date for a wood wedding. A product of the Dijon 96 clone, the reduction in this Chardonnay drives its fresh, spritely if mettlesome nature, with a bark and a barrel bellow, but longevity will not suffer as a result. This could take 30 years to oxidize, it's that audacious and also courageous. Let it and its buttered popcorn rest a while. Drink 2017-2025. Tasted May 2015

Malivoire Chardonnay Moira 2011, VQA Niagara Peninsula, Beamsville Bench, Ontario (243113, \$39.95, [WineAlign](#))

When it comes to clones, winemaker Shiraz Mottiar distills the Moira Vineyard into the realm of "field selection." Not to be confused with field blend though I suppose that's what it is, of sorts. The '13 is the dictionary entry for Moira, typically balanced, from pedigree, in warmth, amiability, gathered and distributed, from acumen and confidence, to customary placement. Fruit and acidity relax on a sofa of equilibrium, taking little in the way of risks, making no mistakes. Reduction isn't even a twinkle in its fresh versus oxidative eye. The vintage and the handling purports to throw infantile, developed and matured into one big machine for a readout that grants immediate gratification. Exemplary take on cool-climate, Niagara Peninsula, slightly warmer Beamsville Bench Chardonnay proper. Not for the long-term. Drink 2015-2019. Tasted May 2015

Flat Rock Pinot Noir Pond Block 2011, VQA Twenty Mile Bench, Ontario ([Winery](#), \$29.95, [WineAlign](#))

Assessed blind it smells just like the Flat Rock's Gravity Pinot Noir yet singled out in fractions. Here the mellifluent block, of sweet crooning fruit, careening and submissive to Siamese brother triplet Summit's tension.

From my earlier note of October 2013:

Crosses the twain between Bruce and Summit. A cottony touch, most pronounced perfume and of the three, the lowest acidity. Mellow, easy, J.J. Cale peaceful, void of chalk, grain or angst. Speaks in a cherry voice, smells like cherry and returns that cherry to taste. Ripe and soft. "Sweet as a morning sunrise, fresh as a mountain dew."

Last tasted May 2015

Flat Rock Pinot Noir Summit Block 2011, VQA Twenty Mile Bench, Ontario ([Winery](#), \$29.95, [WineAlign](#))

The most perfumed and yes, Burgundian of the three blocks, the Pommard in the group. Still limestone chalky and gaining weight. This is a single-block wine to me made again. From my earlier note of October 2013: This block's base is slightly deeper, spreading over dolomite limestone. Diminished average temperatures mean berries develop lower and slower, hang longer (up to three weeks) resulting in higher phenolic ripeness. Summit may be the caveman of the three, seemingly in dire straits, covered in leaves, snapped twigs, truffles and porcini mushroom but damn if impossible Burgundy does not come to mind. This is one to ask where do you think you're going? It will surely reply, "if you ain't with me girl, you're gonna be without me." Last tasted May 2015

Flat Rock Pinot Noir Bruce Block 2011, VQA Twenty Mile Bench, Ontario ([Winery](#), \$29.95, [WineAlign](#))

The light and delicate place translates to hue, texture and ultimately elegance. Yet there persists an underlying anxiety, essential for gravity.

From my earlier note of October 2013:

From the northern most block, up at the Escarpment/Bruce trail. Thin, one foot deep soil meshes flaky limestone at this elevation. Smallish berries predominate and an earthy mote accents the flowers, cherries, strawberry and classic purity of this bonny Bruce. A Oregonian lightness of being, if you will. From one of the few south-facing slopes in Niagara (because of 20 Mile Creek), where the limestone chalk imparts fine-grained tannin so apparent to taste.

Last tasted May 2015

Good to go!

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<http://www.winealign.com/profile/2058-mjg>