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**Summer/Fall Hours:** We are open on Saturdays between 10:30am and 5:00pm.

Other times are by appointment or chance (if we are at the winery). If you would like to visit, please call or email us:

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**This issue** provides an update of the 2002 growing season, some guidance on when we expect to release more wine and our thoughts regarding the current furor over lady beetles.

**We are now only about three to four weeks away from the start of the 2002 harvest.** The days are getting shorter/cooler and our red grapes are beginning to show colour. (more about the harvest on the next page)

**We will be releasing the following four wines** in the fall and will let you know by email a few days before they are released. Included are the G.H. Funk Vineyard's 2001 Chardonnay and 2000 Rose Sparkling Wine, and the Sandstone Vineyard's 2001 Sur Lie Chardonnay and 2000 Estate Unfiltered Gamay. (The wines are described on page 2.)

**Over the next several weeks** you are likely to read or hear about an uncharacteristic aroma and taste in a few 2001 vintage Ontario wines that have been released by some wineries. This aroma/taste is attributed to trace concentrations of pyrazine a naturally occurring substance that is secreted by the Asian (Japanese) ladybugs (beetles) as a fear response when they are disturbed. We feel the issue is important enough that we would like to share our thoughts on the subject and provide you with some background information (see page 3).

**Our annual Christmas release event is December 7<sup>th</sup>.** Be sure to put this date in your calendar. Our next newsletter will provide more details.

**Our Agent.**

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**2002 Harvest:** After a mild winter with little or no bud damage, spring 2002 started cool and wet. The growing season fell about 10 to 14 days behind what is normal and several growers (ourselves included) had an atypical spring frost that seriously damaged early budding varieties such as Chardonnay. Fortunately the weather improved dramatically in July and we are still experiencing one of the warmest summers on record. The crop at this time looks good and there are no signs of mildew or insect damage. With all this heat, we are now only a few days behind normal.

Late August is generally a slow time, where we can do some of the things that you non-farmers enjoy such as take a couple of days off, visit a new restaurant or taste wine at that new winery down the road. Most of our summer chores in the vineyard (cultivating, leaf stripping to expose fruit, crop thinning etc) have now concluded. We are also caught up in the winery and have bottled much of last year's wine to free up tank space.

Preparations are already underway for the 2002 harvest. In the vineyard, we have started to cover the fruit zone with nets to minimize bird damage and have applied our last spray on the early ripening varieties. In the winery, we have cleaned all working areas, checked and serviced the machinery, ordered a few new tanks, French barrels, yeast cultures, winery chemicals etc. Needless to say we are starting to get excited.

This year's harvest will start with the hand harvesting of the Pinot Noir and Chardonnay that will go into our 2002 Premier Cuvée sparkling wine. We like to harvest these grapes at about 17 brix. This early harvest will be followed in October, starting with Pinot Noir, Chardonnay and Gamay, and ending with Nebbiolo and Riesling. The harvest dates for these grapes will depend on their ripeness and weather conditions.

## New Releases Coming

**2001 G.H. Funk Vineyard Chardonnay (\$20.00):** Erv and Ken have had so much success with this variety that Herb and Gunther have decided to give them some serious competition. Our effort was produced from 19 year-old vines, harvested at 24° brix, whole berry pressed and fermented in new French oak barrels. We removed the wine from the barrels after only 2 months to produce a wine that is fruit driven. The wine is currently with the LCBO lab (being analyzed/evaluated) and will hopefully be available by mid September.

The wine is made in the traditional burgundian style and is a nice counterpoint to the new-world style that Erv and Ken have adopted.

**2000 Rosé Sparkling Wine, G.H. Funk Vineyard (\$22.00):** the first 700 bottles of this perennial favourite will be available in early October. We will be disgorging in the next few weeks and then must wait until the LCBO evaluates the wine. We will hopefully have some more (last 300 bottles) available for our December 7<sup>th</sup> release.

**2001 Chardonnay Sur Lie Sandstone Vineyard (\$20.00),** a small portion of Sandstone's Chardonnay crop was made in the Sur Lie style. This non-oaked wine has great appeal and will fly off the shelves. It was cool fermented in stainless to preserve fruit and then left on the lees for several months to create an intense lees richness. Available in October.

**2000 Gamay Noir, Estate Unfiltered, Sandstone Vineyard (\$20.00)**, another super wine produced from Erv's excellent vineyard. The grapes that went into this wine were harvested at 23.5° brix. The wine is lighter reflecting the vintage, but perhaps more elegant than its predecessors, has great balance and some wonderful peppery notes on the finish. Even Gunther who is not a fan of Gamay is planning on putting a few cases away.

#### **LADY BEETLES continued**

As you will recall, most of Ontario and a good part of the Northeastern USA were inundated by swarms of lady beetles. Niagara was no exception with lady beetles being found in large numbers in the vineyards and processing areas of wineries.

By way of background, the Asian lady beetle was first introduced into North America (Florida) in

1916 as a biological control for certain nuisance insects. Additional releases of the lady beetle have periodically taken place since then and the beetles are now well established in North America and have become one of the primary "beneficial" insect predators that feed on harmful pests such as aphids, scale insects, mealybugs, mites etc. The large population of lady beetles observed in 2001 can be attributed to the abundance of prey insects, (aphids). Weather conditions in the central USA in 2000 and similar early season hot conditions in Southwestern Ontario in 2001 were ideal for soybean production. This led to massive populations of the soybean's primary pest the Soybean Aphid. The abundant supply of the lady beetle's favorite food source resulted in the population spike of lady beetles observed last year.

With the fall decline of its primary food source and in response to declining temperatures (a trigger to search for shelter), the lady beetles took to flight dispersing over Southern Ontario. It is speculated that the lady beetle is attracted to certain grape varieties where it lands on damaged fruit to obtain juice for its sugar content. The sugar is used as an energy source during hibernation.

The chemical that is causing all this furor, 'pyrazine', is common to many foods including green peppers, beans, peanuts, coffee and some grape varieties (Sauvignon Blanc). This substance is detectable by the senses at extremely low concentrations (parts per trillion). The aroma is described by some as grassy and herbaceous (higher concentrations) or nutty and peanut like (lower concentrations) and the taste has some astringency. Oddly enough, pyrazine adds to the complexity of some wines and complements rather than distracts from the flavours.

**It is important to note that the presence of pyrazine in wine is not a health issue.**



**25 year Old Vines Riesling in the G.H. Funk Vineyard and 50+ year old Winemakers.** Our friend Ted O'Neill, who shot the photo, caught us looking for lady beetles. From left to right are Gunther, Erv, Herb, and Ken. No bugs were observed.

Based on our field observations the beetle appeared to be attracted to aromatic varieties such as Gewürztraminer and Riesling. Populations of lady beetles were also reported to have been observed by other growers, on over-ripe Chardonnay, Pinot Noir, Gewürztraminer etc., probably because of fruit breakdown that provided easy access to juice.

For the most part, the 13<sup>th</sup> Street 2001 harvest went well and we experienced no unusual problems or conditions until late in October when we started seeing large numbers of lady beetles everywhere. By that time, we had harvested and processed all of our grapes with the exception of our Old Vines Riesling. Lady beetles from our perspective have always been associated with a positive image and the thought of processing the beetles along with the Old Vines Riesling worked against our nature. Therefore, as environmentalists (or “tree huggers” as some of our friends call us) we felt compassion for the ‘cute’ beetles and undertook to physically remove as many of the beetles as possible from the grapes during harvest. This was manageable at our small scale of production and involved simply shaking the grape bunch during hand harvesting to dislodge the beetles, although a few made the tractor ride to the winery.

We undertook additional care during processing. Essentially, the grapes are hand-sorted prior to going into the destemmer to remove any damaged fruit, debris, leaves and lady beetles. We then pressed at low pressure to minimize undesirable extracts. The juice after pressing was then allowed to settle over night in our cold storage, racked off the solids, bentonited, settled a second time and again racked. At this point the juice was visibly clear and ready to be fermented.

Were we successful? We think so, as the wine’s flavours are well integrated. Our 2001 Old Vines Riesling out sells our regular 2001 Riesling by two to one.

Please appreciate that before 13<sup>th</sup> Street and other wineries can market wine, it must undergo sensory evaluation by the LCBO tasting panel and analysis by the LCBO Quality Assurance lab. The LCBO is targeting wines that exhibit the uncharacteristic aroma or contain pyrazine at a concentration that masks varietal character. If these wines fail the LCBO’s screening process, the wines do not achieve Vintner Quality Alliance Ontario accreditation. We will only release wine that has LCBO approval and is able to display the VQA logo. By the way, the LCBO tasting panel scored our Old Vines higher than our regular Riesling.

In closing, we are concerned that this issue is being blown out of proportion and does not do justice to the many wineries who are committed to quality. Why would any of us want to sacrifice the good will we have worked so hard to develop? Our policy is, and has always been, that the customer should return any of our wines to the winery for a full refund if she/he is disappointed with the quality.

Feel free to contact us or drop by at the winery if you want to talk to us about lady beetles. We will also be disseminating additional information on this subject as it comes available, in future newsletters.