



Your Guide to  
BC's *Best* Wines

STORY BY DEE RAFFO

Known for its glorious mountains, lakes, and forests, British Columbia is also becoming world renowned for its award-winning wines. The Okanagan Valley is BC's most prolific wine growing region, spanning from Osoyoos Lake up to Salmon Arm. This 210-km stretch is blessed with a climate perfect for growing copious amounts of wine grapes. Rich in quality as well as quantity, the Okanagan produces over 90% of BC's wines and is Canada's second leading wine producer. The region is in the same latitude as famed European wine regions of Champagne and Rheingau and emerging as a serious wine destination for oenophiles.

Wines stamped "BC VQA" (Canada's Vintners Quality Alliance) are made 100% from grapes grown in British Columbia. In 2011, VQA sales reached an astonishing \$450 million, proving that Canada's vineyards are certainly making their mark. With over 200 wineries, from small family run operations to estate run vineyards, and over five different growing regions, there's definitely a great amount of options to suit every palate, mood and budget. With so many selections, the journey to discover the best of BC's wines is an immense pleasure worth savouring.

#### Perfect Summer Whites

*2008 Red Rooster Reserve Gewürztraminer Reserve, Naramata Bench, Okanagan (\$15-\$17)*

Best served while lounging outdoors, whether by a lake, pool or on the patio. Off dry and crisp with full citrus flavours. Grapefruit, orange blossom, and hints of spices give this wine a light aroma and easy sip-ability. Serve with lightly seasoned chicken stir-fry or caramelized onion Gruyère tarts.

*2010 Lake Breeze Pinot Blanc, Naramata Bench, Okanagan (\$18-\$22)*

This Lake Breeze Pinot Blanc has been a signature wine for several years. Intensely fruity, yet delicate enough to serve with foods like seared scallops, Greek salad, or a light pasta dish. The highly aromatic, citrus and crisp apple flavours will delight your palate—it's like tasting an Okanagan summer day.

*2010 Blasted Church Pinot Gris, Okanagan Falls, Okanagan (\$22-\$26)*

Eye-catching with its intriguing illustrated bottle, this Pinot Gris is golden coloured with hints of butter and vanilla over a citrus body. Crisp and dry, it's a refreshing white perfect for pairing with *'abi poke* or crab risotto.

*2009 Quails' Gate Chardonnay, West Kelowna, Okanagan (\$18-\$20)*

Cool summer nights and intensely hot days made this a weighty and rich wine. This Chardonnay is as ripe as the valley it grows in. With hints of green apple, hazelnut, grapefruit and honey, wait for the burst of buttery flavours as you sip. Pair with strong cheeses, hearty soups or herb gnocchi.





### Revel in the Reds

2009 *Burrowing Owl Cabernet Franc*, Oliver, Okanagan (\$27-\$33)

A signature Okanagan offering, many will agree that this is a big, ripe red. The aromas hint of blackberries and black currant jam; while on the palate, flavours are full of chocolate, cherry and tobacco with a peppery undertone, making this Cabernet Franc rich and smooth. Serve with roast beef and all the trimmings.

2009 *Laughing Stock Vineyard Syrah*, Osoyoos, Okanagan (\$35)

Laughing Stock's Syrah is a succulent wine that contains 8% Viognier to add a hint of softness to spiced plums, raspberries, and pepper that adds a little heat. With great balance, the palate is supple with a hint of mineral flavours. Enjoy jam-like notes from the generous amount of sweet berry fruits and serve alongside a rich lamb shank, falling off the bone.

2008 *Painted Rock Cabernet Sauvignon*, Skaha, Okanagan (\$35-\$42)

One to be enjoyed with meaty game such as bison burgers, rabbit stew or elk steaks. This wine has plenty of character from start to finish as roasted red bell pepper, blackberries and eucalyptus power the aromatics with many "forest" characteristics. Rich plums and blackberries are mixed with savoury spices and hints of tobacco and cedar add depth to this full-bodied wine.

2007 *See Ya Later Ranch Pinot Noir*, Okanagan Falls, Okanagan (\$20-\$22)

Ripe strawberries and cherry aromas give this full-bodied wine a rich berry flavor. Serve with tangy tomato lasagna or pan seared duck. There's a touch of spicy vanilla, tobacco and coffee, leaving an irresistible velvety finish in the mouth.

### Beautiful Rosé

2009 *Road 13 Honest John's Rosé*, Oliver, Okanagan (\$16-\$18)

This salmon coloured rosé will tantalize the palate with full strawberry flavours and a hint

of herbal character that is deliciously fresh and slightly mineral. Expect some sweetness mid-palate followed by a finish that is dry with fairly high acidity. Best for outdoor enjoyment, pair with shellfish like prawns or Dungeness crab.

### Add Some Sparkle

*Summerhill Pyramid Winery Cipes Rose Pinot Noir*, Kelowna, Okanagan (\$30)

Enjoy this romantic sparkling wine under the moonlight or on a picnic. This classic-dry bubbly is made from 100% organic Pinot Noir with aromas of strawberries and raspberries, while tones of citrus, apricots and peaches please the palate. This medium-bodied bubbly is perfect for a festive celebration or anytime you need a little sparkle.

### Taste the Sweet Chill

2010 *Nk'Mip Qwam Qwmt Riesling Icewine*, Osoyoos, Okanagan (\$60)

Harvested at -13° Celsius by the Osoyoos Indian Band, this harmonious icewine has layers of baked apple, honey, sweet citrus, and apricot. It's sweet on the palate with a powerful finish that contains a well-integrated acidity. Best served with cheese, fresh fruit, or simply on its own.

### Personal Favourite

2010 *Fort Berens Estate Winery Pinot Gris*, Lillooet, Fraser River Canyon (\$18)

This medium bodied white wine is from nearby Lillooet and is crisp and dry with a citrus edge, featuring aromas of pear and orange blossom. Perfect with linguine and a rich Parmesan sauce or great on its own enjoying summertime.

Venture from the usual suspects and try a variety of BC wines. Most restaurants in Whistler have a great selection of BC wines by the glass and knowledgeable sommeliers to help you choose. Discover new favourites by creating your own wine tasting. If staying in, try Blackcomb Liquor Store for the best selection and delivery (604) 932-9795.

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