

Maple sap wine among many stars at wine and food show

There were so many excellent wines at last weekend's Ottawa Wine and Food Show that I'm not sure which will give out first, my liver or my wallet.

It seemed that every booth you visited had something new and excellent to offer. I've already ordered far more wine than is prudent from a budget point of view.

I was amazed, for example, by a sparkling wine made with maple sap, called Sapling. It's the product of the imagination of Luca Gaspari, an Italian born Montreal winemaker who uses the Charmat method to produce Sapling.

Right: off you'd expect sweet, maple syrup flavors. Like me, you'd be wrong. The wine has a lovely, yeasty bouquet, loaded with peaches and pears. It finished almost dry on your tongue, and if you search your senses hard you can find a hint of maple flavor amongst the fruit.

The wine's balance is so good that I surmised correctly on tasting it that the winemaker has added something to boost the acid. It requires about 40,000 gallons of maple sap to make 200,000 bottles of Sapling. Sacrificing syrup for a wine like this is quite OK by me.

You can get Sapling through Colio Wines, which did the bottling, at 250 Greenbank Road in Nepean. Price—\$9.95 a bottle.

I was also blown away by a red wine from the central part of Sicily near

Mount Etna's slopes, called Cent'Are. From Doxa di Castelmonte, this 1992 wine combines the fire you might expect of a Sicilian wine with a lush, fruit-filled smoothness. It won a silver medal in the show for its class.

My enthusiasm soared even higher on the discovery of a \$10.95 price tag for this beauty, plus the fact that it's available at Vintages. It will be a regular on our table from now on.

Probably my favorite white wine was Herbert Konzelmann's off-dry Late Harvest 1995 Gewurztraminer, which offers conclusive proof that the Ontario 1995 vintage was superb. Mind you, Herbert Konzelmann has the best Gewurztraminer clone in the Niagara area.

This wine is loaded with lychee nuts and tropical fruit, and it has an almost oily quality, demonstrating the concentration of taste. It will be a regular for us with Asian foods, with a great Sengalese soup that my wife, Jane, makes, or simply as an afternoon tippie. Price: \$11 (LCBO #200650).

Jim Warren, of Stoney Ridge, offered a 1996 Gewurztraminer ice wine, \$45.95 for a half bottle, which takes the concentration of Gewurztraminer flavor to new heights, and is worth the high price for a special occasion treat. Not many people have made Gewurztraminer ice wine in Niagara. Jim will do it every year it's possible after the rave reviews this wine is getting. It's available only at



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the winery.

Two white Australian wines impressed, Butterfly Ridge and Classic Reserve Sauvignon Blanc, both from Angrove, a southeast Australia producer.

Butterfly Ridge, 1996, is a light, refreshing wine at \$7.95 a bottle, which is made with a blend of 85 per cent Columbard and 15 per cent Chardonnay just enough to give a hint of Chardonnay power to the fruity/flowery general impression of the wine. The wine is LCBO #306324. It's made in the Murray Valley, about 250 kilometres northeast of Adelaide.

A real winner is the 1996 Angrove Sauvignon Blanc, Classic Reserve, which will be coming on the Vintages shelves for less than \$12 sometime soon, hopefully December. It's LCBO #086595.

It's a wine that offers an excellent concentration of Sauvignon Blanc character, clover, herbs and something like spring flowers. It will be su-

Wines recommended this week:

Sapling Sparking Maple Syrup wine, \$9.95, Colio Wines store, 270 Greenbank Rd.

Cent'Are, \$10.95, Vintages
Konzelmann's Late Harvest 1995 Gewurztraminer, \$11, LCBO #200550

Stoney Ridge, 1995 Gewurztraminer ice wine, \$45.95 for a half bottle, only at the winery (1-905-643-4508)

Butterfly Ridge, \$7.95, LCBO #306324

1996 Angrove Sauvignon Blanc, Classic Reserve, less than \$12, and coming to Vintages sometime soon, LCBO #086595

Stoney Ridge Iced Apple, \$15.95 a half bottle, only at the winery (1-905-643-4508)

per with medium to heavy fish — dill sauce comes to mind — or with chicken and light meats.

Accolades too for those great great California wines such as Wente's Chardonnays, particularly the Rivera 1994, and a particular favorite that costs more than \$40 a bottle when you can get it: Murrietta's Well red.

For the rest of this week the Château Laurier's chef, Keith Jones, will be joined by Wente's chef, Kimball Jones, in presenting menus and

wines from California's Livermore Valley at Wilfrid's restaurant at the hotel.

Make time to try some of the specialty menus and don't miss either the Wente Chardonnay or the Murrietta's Well, both of which were stars at the show.

Two other wines really should be mentioned. They are both a refined variety of apple cider, one made by Lakeview Cellars' Eddy Gurinskas, the other by Stoney Ridge's Jim Warren.

Both men decided to try the frozen technique for concentrating apple flavor, and both were successful.

They pressed fresh apples to get cider, then froze it in five-gallon pails. The frozen lump was then allowed to thaw until about a gallon of concentrated apple liquid appeared. The concentrated liquid was then allowed to be sent.

The result in both cases is an exquisite concentration of apple flavor with enough acid to make your salivary juices squirt and enough apple to suggest mom's best pie.

Jim Warren calls his Iced Apple and it sells for \$19.95 a half bottle at the winery. Lakeview's version is also \$19.95 and, unfortunately, sold out.

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