



tasting note^S

FALL 2009

A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER PUBLISHED BY MISSION HILL FAMILY ESTATE WINERY, OKANAGAN VALLEY, BRITISH COLUMBIA

"We believe conservation is the right thing to do for our environment and our business and at the end of the day, we are convinced that the sustainability initiatives we're implementing will improve our vineyards and our wines."

- John Simes, Chief Winemaker

The Sustainable Us

BY GUEST EDITOR JAMIE MAW

The delicate ecology of the Okanagan Valley demands carefully planned stewardship

Up here, at the northernmost tip of the Sonoran Desert, the fragile eco-system that describes this place—from untrammled desert in southern Osoyoos to the more temperate climate of Kelowna at mid-valley, where the moderating influences of Okanagan Lake take hold—also announces that green choices can no longer be mere altruisms.

MISSION HILL HAS ASSISTED BC WILDLIFE WITH THE RELEASE OF BIGHORN SHEEP INTO THE AREA

For viticulture, and the effects of climate change, are changing the landscape of the valley. In the south, where the sagebrush blow, vineyards shimmer in the summer heat, row on row. Their careful nurture, and that of the surrounding land, is required to ensure that the future is a sustainable one. It's not just about plunking down vines and adding water.

This is complicated and requires significant investment. And beyond altruism, smart growing and stewardship practices also foster commercial sustainability.

Many of Mission Hill's vineyards have been converted to drip irrigation. Although expensive—as much as \$2,000 per acre—water consumption is halved, and so is mowing and tractor work, resulting in less soil compaction, better drainage, and lower operating costs. Improved quality has also followed.

Large reductions in herbicide usage is also the new dictum—tolerating higher weed levels (mechanical weeding methods are being trialed) with the first organic vineyard—Fairview in Oliver—already underway. A registered staff biologist consults to the winemakers and viticulturists, and there is now a program to recycle grape skins as compost.

Land leased from the Osoyoos Indian Band has been set aside as a conservation area and is now being re-established with indigenous antelope brush to enhance the habitat and create wildlife corridors. Likewise, Mission Hill has assisted BC Wildlife with the release of bighorn sheep into the area above the winery's Naramata estates to re-establish the herd in Okanagan Mountain Park. And Mission Hill's snake training and transiting program (see 'The Snake Charmers'), has ensured their survival.

"Healthy vines deal better with cold snaps and heat waves, and deliver better fruit," says John Simes, Mission Hill's winemaker. "This is not about growing grapes, it's about *farming wine*."



The Snake Charmers

BY GUEST EDITOR JAMIE MAW



In the far southern reaches of the Okanagan Valley, where loamy soil begins to intermingle with the deep hot sand of the true desert, where summer temperatures can spike to 40 degrees, and where the vines for Mission Hill's big reds grow, well it's here you'll find the snakes too.

Long, slithery ones.

And if the Okanagan old-timers in this valley pursued them—Pacific Rattlesnakes and Gopher snakes that is—with rusty Colt 45's, and with a cavalier, blast-their-heads-off agenda of search and destroy, then today's vineyard bosses have adopted a new ethic: Search and Rescue.

"They were here first, by about 60 million years," says Graham O'Rourke, Mission Hill's viticulturists in the south valley.

O'Rourke, 38, knows his charges well—amongst many other things, he's also in charge of just about everything to do with snakes.

"Our job is to get out of their way and to help them on theirs," he says.

"Rattlers can live up to 20 years in the wild," O'Rourke says. "They migrate to the same feeding areas at the bottom of the Black Sage bench each year – they slowly scramble down to the Oliver canal about two and a half kilometers away – following the exact same track each spring." In Mission Hill's Osoyoos blocks, which broach the U.S. boarder, the snakes follow a similar pattern to Lake Osoyoos.

Four years ago, O'Rourke and his Mission Hill colleagues introduced an in-field training program to educate both vineyard managers and hands to the behaviours of everything that creeps and crawls.

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The Legacy

INGO GRADY, DIRECTOR WINE EDUCATION

Oculus and our Legacy wines—Perpetua, Quatrain and Compendium—show the wonderful fruit composition, depth and spectrum of flavours that lend them overall finesse, longevity, and perhaps most importantly, wonderful affinities for food. Call it a combination of precision fruit, like the Napa, complemented by the nerve and balance of Bordeaux: Our Legacy wines demonstrate the ripe fruit character of the hot summers in which they grew, and the mild autumn weather that adds its unique Okanagan character as the fruit matures.

That character is further promoted by the light sandy soil of the valley, the inland desert climate with the rain shield effect of the 'Cascade Curtain', long summer days that offer two hours more sunlight than the Napa, and the extraordinarily diverse mosaic of distinctive micro-climates and terroirs of our estates.

In other words, these are Okanagan wines that could only be made here, and here alone.

And in the words of others...

David Lawrason, September 17, 2009
Compendium 2006

The torrent of new premium labels from Mission Hill Family Estate Winery in B.C. continues with the debut of Compendium at a recent media event at Oasi Restaurant in Toronto. Hot on the heels of the Syrah-based Quatrain and Perpetua Chardonnay earlier this year, Compendium is a Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc and Petit Verdot blend assembled after barrel

selections are made for Oculus, Mission Hill's icon blend (indeed has very similar grape proportions). Ingo Grady of Mission Hill explained that younger vines tended to be the deciding factor for Compendium, which was apparent in the lighter feel when tasted directly beside the opulent Oculus. But this wine is no skinny kid next door. It is a very stylish, ripe, rich yet gentle wine with perfect ripeness. Blackberry jam fruit is coddled in new oak, vanilla and gentle underlying Okanagan sage. It's really very pretty, precise and very smooth, with very fine tannin and excellent length. **Rating: 91**

John Schreiner, October 4, 2009
Quatrain 2006

This is a blend of 41% Syrah, 32% Merlot, 14% Cabernet Franc, 13% Cabernet Sauvignon, fermented and aged in small French oak barrels for 15 months (only 45% of the barrels were new). Dark in colour, this is a full-bodied, satisfying red with spicy flavours of black cherry, blackberry, prunes and chocolate. The big ripe tannins and the chewy texture give this wine a long finish. **Rating: 90**

Perpetua 2007

No doubt it is a coincidence that this wine, now in its second vintage, shares the name of a Christian saint in Carthage whose father imprisoned her when she would not renounce her faith. That has nothing to do with the wine, although tasting this wine should convert those who have renounced Chardonnay in recent years. The winemaker stayed away from malolactic fermentation

in order to keep the fruit flavours fresh and lively. This wine begins with clean, delicate aromas of citrus, pineapple and tropical fruit, carrying through to the palate with citrus flavours and with a fine mineral structure. Extended lees aging added to the fullness of the wine on the palate. This elegant wine is drinking well now but has the potential to develop further complexity and richness over the next two or three years. **Rating: 92**

Anthony Gismondi, October 19, 2009
Oculus 2006

Oculus continues down the softer rounder richer path but slowly. Very peppery, spicy, minty nose with black olive, leather, mineral, liquorice and blackberry notes sprinkled with coffee, cassis, carrot top and vanilla aromas. The attack is dry and round with fairly tight tannins but with finesse. More black cherry fruit spiked with peppery, liquorice, smoky flavours with coffee, resin, tobacco, leather black olive and herbal notes in the finish. This has a solid future but like previous editions it will need 3-5 years to soften up and develop further. It needs a little less Medoc character and a little more Pomerol. **Rating: 91**



Sommelier's Corner

JESSE HARNDEN, SOMMELIER



2007 Perpetua

The sophomore vintage of Perpetua continues to showcase a deft handling of French oak and distinctive minerality. Aromas of orange and lime blossoms are beautifully counterbalanced by the earthier aromatics reminiscent of roasted hazelnuts and shaved vanilla bean. The palate is at once powerful yet elegant, and the finish is filled with mouthwatering citrus notes. Gentle fruit handling has produced a tightly structured, complex wine that will age gracefully over the next six to ten years.

2006 Quatrain

The second vintage of Quatrain is comprised of more Syrah and Cabernets than the 2005, which results in a ripe, juicy core of black cherry and blackberry fruit along with distinctive southern Okanagan notes of exotic spices, sage and coffee mocha. It continues to be a wine blessed by both power and suppleness, and while drinking beautifully already will continue to improve in bottle for several more years to come.

2006 Compendium

Lifted aromas of black raspberries, wild herbs and dark chocolate pour from the glass of this exciting new Merlot blend. The palate is rich and savoury with flavours reminiscent of dried herbs, toasty oak and dark red fruits layered over silky, fine-grained tannins. There is enormous length and depth of flavour, and while this wine is already extremely inviting it has the substance to age gracefully over the next five years or more.

2006 Oculus

The 2006 Oculus is the most complex and concentrated yet. Captivating aromas of black cherry fruit, dark chocolate and vanilla lead the way for densely packed flavours of blackberries, plum and bittersweet ganache. There are countless layers of deep, dark fruit, exotic spice, and inviting French oak notes. The long, full, persistent finish has ripe and well-integrated tannins providing a rich, inviting mouthfeel and the structure to hold up well over the next decade or more.

Feet In The Ground - notes from the vineyard

AN INTERVIEW WITH JOHN SIMES, WINEMAKER

As if the winter of 2007-08 hadn't been challenging enough, this year "saw the winter that just wouldn't go away," says John Simes, who leads Mission Hill's winemaking team.

"The bitterly cold dark months will likely see a few southern blocks with slightly lower yields," Simes says. "But the wind machines (which invert a warmer thermal layer downward towards the vines, and can raise the vineyard temperature by as much as two degrees), really helped, especially just before Christmas."

"We started the season with a three week shorter window," he says, "however warm weather from June through September enabled us to catch up for the season".

But just as the season has warmed, so too Simes' enthusiasm for what comes next in the anticipatory, high-wire act of winemaking.

"I'm really excited about our new areas coming into production, the ones that we planted four years ago," he says. "We saw some volume in our Mission Hill Pinot Noir vineyards, and we picked some small lots in our fourth year single vineyard Cabernet Franc and Syrah blocks too."

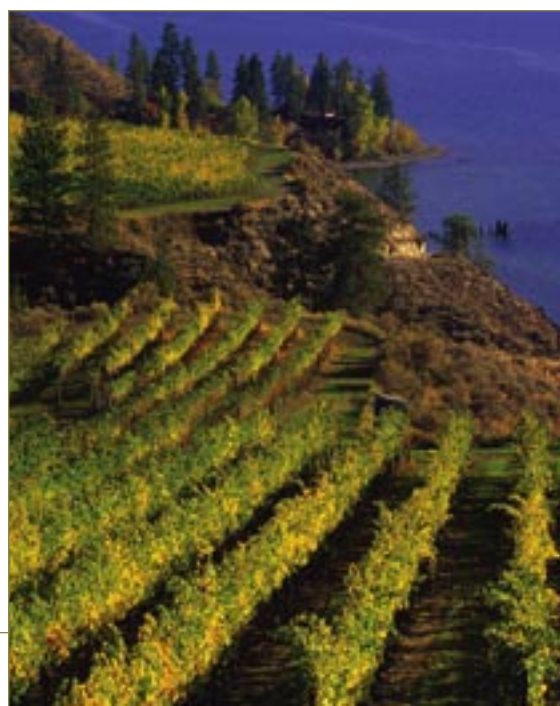
Those two grapes will head for small vats, then into the Bordeaux blends that describe Mission Hill's stylish Legacy Series wines.

The 2009 harvest began on Sept. 15 and with fruit that looked very good and the vineyards in great condition. The beautiful September weather was the warmest on record with daylight temperatures in the mid-20s and reasonably cool nights, ideal for harvest. A mid-October cold snap complicated picking, however careful vineyard management and extra hard work by the viticulture and winemaking teams to juggle tank space for fruit coming in faster than fermentations, has overall produced what we believe will be an excellent vintage. Simes commented, "we are excited about the quality of the young wines and will have both quantity and quality as good as 2008."



ENTHUSIASM FOR WHAT COMES NEXT IN THE ANTICIPATORY, HIGH-WIRE ACT OF WINEMAKING.

NARAMATA RANCH





Spot Prawn Bisque Cappucino

WINERY CHEF MATTHEW BATEY

*Enjoy with our
Chardonnay*

Arguably, the most regal of all soups. The lobster version of this dish has been a staple at one of my training grounds, La Belle Auberge, for over 25 years. Spot Prawns are a sweet delicacy for British Columbians that are local and certified sustainable. The season is not long, making the spot prawn all the more desirable. Our Chardonnays are the ideal accompaniment to the creamy richness of this bisque, which has enough weight to match the nice balance of the wine's oak and acidity.

Yield 6

INGREDIENTS

2 lbs	spot prawn shells – cleaned and chopped
100ml or 1/3 cup	unsalted butter
2	leeks – chopped and washed
2	onions – small dice
2	stalks celery – small dice
2	carrots – small dice
6	fresh thyme sprigs
30ml or 1/8 cup	tomato paste
50ml or 1/4 cup	cognac/brandy
75ml or 1/3 cup	all-purpose flour
1L or 4 cups	chicken stock
100ml or 1/3 cup	whipping cream
50ml or 1/4 cup	whipping cream – whipped with some freshly cut cilantro.

METHOD

Heat a large pot and melt butter. Add prawn shells and cook until brilliant red. Add vegetables and thyme and continue to cook. Flambé spot prawn shells with cognac. Add tomato paste and continue to cook for 1 minute. Stir to prevent burning. Add flour and cook for 1 minute to coat all that is in the pot. Stir to prevent burning. Add chicken stock and continue stirring to prevent sticking, add cream once stock has come to a simmer. Strain liquid and reserve.

*** Optional *** In large high speed blender, puree shells and vegetables until smooth. This may require the addition of some liquid to make it spin. Once smooth, pass through a very fine sieve. Add the passed mixture back into the bisque. Serve seasoned soup with a dollop of whipped cream.

“Wine is such an integral part of the culinary arts that we’re blessed to work in the ideal locale for epicurean craftsmanship. The bounty of the Okanagan valley offers both fresh, regional ingredients for the kitchen and wine of an international caliber.”

- Chef Matthew Batey

Complements to the Chef

AN INTERVIEW WITH MATTHEW BATEY, WINERY CHEF

THE ESSENTIAL COLLABORATION OF WINE AND FOOD.

For Mission Hill winery chef Matthew Batey, the wealth of choices provided by local farmers, ranchers and growers can be found in his summer menus on The Terrace each afternoon.

No secret there: Those relationships have been forged over years, and have led to The Terrace's critical and popular accolades.

But what few of Batey's guests might know, as they while away a languorous afternoon overlooking the lake and sipping, say, a Perpetua Chardonnay, is that chef begins with the wine, and only then constructs the food back to marry with it.

It's the exact reverse of what happens in most restaurants, and makes eminent sense when you're running a high profile winery restaurant.

But Batey has more tricks up his white sleeves that allow him to push the nuance of each dish. Located right outside chef's door is a kitchen garden that is arranged unlike any other. Each plot is named for a wine varietal, and in them, carefully nurtured and grouped together, are the fruit trees, herbs, fruits and vegetables that collaborate best with each wine.

To pair elegantly with that glass of cold Perpetua, hazelnut, apple and pear trees flank a melon patch, while herb beds of lemon balm and verbena, tarragon and cilantro lie in beside leeks, squashes, pumpkins and corn.

If all the best human endeavours come from collaborations—in this case of complementary flavours, textures and smells, as well as the people who deliver them onto the plate—then here I find them, in a kitchen garden, glass in hand.



ESTATE VARIETAL ORGANIC GARDEN



CHARDONNAY PLOT

"At Mission Hill Family Estate, we value food and wine in daily life, and are committed to the pursuit of excellence in oenology, gastronomy, and hospitality. British Columbian wines stand equal to the world's best, and fostering educational opportunities for local enthusiasts enables ongoing talent in the art of fine cuisine and wine."

- Anthony von Mandl, Proprietor

Culinary Workshops



WINERY CHEF MATTHEW BATEY & TERRACE CHEF RILEY BENNETT

Mission Hill Family Estate is pleased to once again offer a series of our extremely popular culinary workshops that will delight both the novice and the more experienced home cook. Winery Chef Matthew Batey will lead the classes, ably supported by Terrace Chef Riley Bennett.

Interactive as well as informative, the classes demonstrate cooking techniques, advice on ingredient procurement and special chef's tips that ensure successful outcomes in the home kitchen. Participants will be encouraged to ask questions and, of course, to sample the dishes the chefs prepare. All classes take place in our state-of-the-art Kitchen Theatre and are approximately three hours in length.

The schedule for the 2009 fall culinary series

includes several encore performances from last year that have been brought back by popular demand as well as numerous new classes. They sell out quickly so reserve your space soon!

Book online at www.missionhillwinery.com

- Desserts, November 3
- 100 Mile Diet, November 5
- Burgundy, November 17
- Singapore, November 19
- Bordeaux, November 25
- Cocktail Canapés, November 26
- Seafood, December 1
- Game, December 3
- *Vancouver Cooks*, December 8
- Christmas Dinner, December 10
- An Asian-inspired Christmas, December 15

The Snake Charmers (continued)

In early spring, while vineyard workers are busily 'suckering' the vines (a labour-intensive process where undesirable shoots are removed from each vine), the rattlers also stir from their hibernacula, or dens, stretch their winter skins, then begin their quiet descent.

"That's rush hour down the hill and towards the canal," says O'Rourke, "Until mid-June or so. They're programmed to find the water, because that's where their feed will congregate."

To minimize conflict, or even gridlock some days, trained handlers will gently carry up to a dozen snakes a day closer to their summer grounds.

But if there are too many snakes in transit, O'Rourke prefers to move the vineyard crews to another block, rather than move the snakes from their transit pathways.

He tells me that that the chief ambition of the Pacific rattler is to stay invisible. For the most part, their springtime migration is a silent exodus to water. Rattlers, he reassures me, recognize that humans aren't their food, and will only strike

if startled or threatened, rather like you or me when we've just gotten out of bed.

They also want to stay away from the prying eyes of the Okanagan's raptors, and most devout predators: eagles, ospreys and owls, who are also about to breed and are voraciously hungry.

Gopher snakes, whose markings are similar to Pacific rattlesnakes, can strike but are not venomous. Because of their similarity in appearance, they can startle workers, especially when they hang up in the vineyards during the summer. According to O'Rourke, gopher snake sightings "might outnumber rattlers in the vineyards about 20 to one."

"Snakes, which can't hear, will usually feel the vibration of humans working in the vines," O'Rourke says, "and then they usually leave."

"But they also like to hole up in the barns, coil in valve boxes, and even in the cartons that protect the bases of young vines – we train our workers to tap everything loudly first and ask questions later."

Out & About

JOIN US AT SELECT EVENTS ACROSS CANADA...

Okanagan Fall Wine Festival:
Okanagan - October 2-11

Vancouver Opera Golden Anniversary:
Vancouver - November 6

Sir Edmond Hillary Foundation Gala:
Calgary – November 6

Cornucopia:
Whistler - November 12-15

Gold Medal Plates:
Toronto & Vancouver, November 19 & 28

Mission Hill Annual Holiday Open House:
West Kelowna – November 21

Oakville Wine Club Holiday Fete:
Toronto - November 27

Gold Meets Cold Icewine Tasting:
Vancouver - December 10

Back in the City: Feature Restaurant

Housed in a handsome brick and beam converted warehouse in the historic heart of Yaletown, the Bluewater Cafe + Raw Bar is Vancouver's definitive destination for seafood. Executive Chef Frank Pabst known for his innovative and brilliantly executed West Coast plates, is a fellow member of the Oceanwise program and sources seafood only from wild and sustainable harvest.

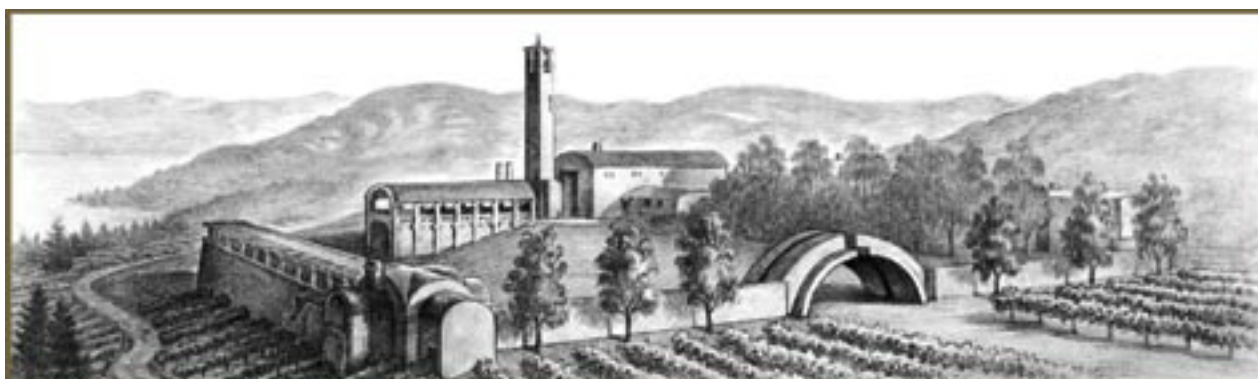
Honoured with *The Wine Specator's* Award of Excellence for 2009, their extensive wine list

is compiled under the direction of Sommelier Andrea Vescovi, who provides great selections for the novice and the seasoned palate alike, with a particular emphasis on wineries in the Pacific Northwest, California, and BC.

Named 2009 Sommelier of the Year at the Vancouver Playhouse International Wine Festival, Vescovi recently reserved an allotment of Compendium so they will have a sufficient supply for the upcoming 2010 Olympics, noting that "we did a tasting with

several leading sommeliers, comparing Compendium with other Bordeaux-inspired wines of the world, and were all pleasantly surprised by how well it showed".

**blue water cafe
+ raw bar**



From Our Cellar To Yours

Join our Wine Club and enjoy the convenience of fine wine delivered directly to your door. Members have access to library and pre-release wines as well as invitations to exclusive dinners, concerts, and member-only events hosted by our chief winemaker and sommelier.

Visit www.missionhillwineclub.com