



tasting note^S

WINTER 2010



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

*“Liquid gold. The rich aromatic and pricey nectar is the truffles of the wine world.
A good Icewine is a pleasure to drink!”*

Lori Rackl, Chicago Sun Times

Definitely Not Dormant

BY GUEST EDITOR JAMIE MAW

Below Mission Hill, all is quiet down the lake on this December morning, the wind muted, finally, the air as still as spent lovers. Rosy-cheeked ice skaters hug the shoreline coves, whirling in the crack of cold, their scarves trailing their strides and spins.

The whole valley hibernates under the duvet of powdery snow, so dry that a good sneeze will clear the roads. The afternoons end just as the schoolchildren are released; evening is fully engaged by four o'clock.

At Mission Hill, the enormous courtyard that buzzes like a honey bee's nest in summer sees fewer visitors now. The bells in the tower toll the hours, and their sound, travelling across the lake in a cold carillon of bronze, protest the dropping of the light.

The sun sinks beneath the mountains that skirt the valley pan and the vineyards are starkly lit: the barren canes shoot short black sticks against the final truce of day. Fleecy figures are at work in the vineyards, cutting frozen grapes from the stalks, their hands frozen to their shears, their breath a fog.

DESPITE THE APPEARANCE OF A LONG DORMANCY, WINTER FINDS MISSION HILL'S VINEYARDS AND WINEMAKING CAUGHT UP IN FRENETIC ACTIVITY

For today began the annual Icewine harvest at Mission Hill, and this year it came early, before the birds had feasted on the fruit. The early morning temperature has dropped to -12°C, ideal for the harvest. The yield from the marble-like grapes is only about one-eighth that if the fruit has been harvested normally in early October.

Inside the winery, the press is immediate and rapid.

It is January now, and with the Icewine fermenting, it's time for Hopper, Mission Hill's Senior Viticulturist, to turn his attention to the next major task at hand—quite literally: the prune.

Hopper, who is Australian, holds twin degrees in applied science with a major in viticulture and engineering, manages about 700 acres of the winery's vineyards. His Swiss Army Knife responsibilities engage plant science, irrigation, canopy management, disease control and nutrition.

The diverse micro-climates of the Okanagan are demanding. The big red wine blocks at the southern reaches of the valley live in a habitat that also hosts sagebrush and rattlesnakes. "It's really remarkable that just 90 minutes divides the sandy desert environment from the volcanic soils that we see in our West Kelowna vineyards," Hopper says. So much so that Mission Hill has staged special soil dioramas that explain the different conditions of terroir for visitors to the winery.

But for Hopper and his crew of 40, between now and early March, it's all about the pruning. "I look at January as the start of the season, not the end," he says, "it's when we set and establish the vines for the next vintage. It's when we see the first signs of life for a million little births."



Frozen Drops of Honey

BY INGO GRADY, DIRECTOR WINE EDUCATION

Like the X-Games for skiers, Icewine represents a unique challenge for winemakers; this extreme late harvest wine can only be made in very few regions throughout the world and under very precise conditions.

Icewine in the Vineyard

In order for Icewine harvests to happen at all, the cooperation of Jack Frost is essential. Icewine must be produced from grapes naturally frozen on the vine, harvested and pressed in a continuous process while the air temperature is -8°Celsius (17°F). Vineyard crews often jump into action at midnight, finishing their frigid assignment during the coldest part of the night. A full moon is welcome in providing the visibility needed to collect the clean and deeply frozen grapes. Freezing at a minimum of -8°Celsius concentrates not just the sugar in the grapes, but also acidity and flavour extract.

Icewine in the Winery

Ideally, winemakers want a sharp freeze so that the hyper-concentrated juice has between 35 and 45 percent sugar. Once the frozen grapes, or marbles as they are sometimes referred to, have been delivered to the winery, they are immediately pressed. At this point, the water content of the grapes, in the form of ice, is easily discarded. What's left, and it isn't much, is a hyper-concentrated syrup. The must settles for 3-4 days and is then clarified by racking to the fermentation tank. Icewine fermentation can last 3-4 months before yielding the coveted nectar.



Continued on page 2

In the words of others...

INGO GRADY, DIRECTOR WINE EDUCATION

"B.C.'s Mission Hill named world's No. 1 icewine. Huge win places Okanagan wine industry on the map. A 2006 vintage, produced by Mission Hill named world's top icewine at the International Wine Challenge in London."

- Bruce Constantineau, Vancouver Sun



Reserve Riesling Icewine, 2006

"This hedonistic elixir captures the essence of ripe pears and peaches in a glass. A well-made, elegant icewine with classic notes of honey-suckle, lychee and orange marmalade. It's luscious yet lively, perfect for starting a new romance, or I guess, ending an old one. Life's bittersweet, isn't it? Pair with: peach cobbler, apple pie, almonds, bread pudding."

Rating: 94/100

Natalie MacLean, Nat Decants



S.L.C. Riesling Icewine 2005

"Concentrated richness and delicate elegance. The tingling acidity balances beautifully. Complex sweet-tart flavours of orange, peach and tropical fruit persist. The long, lip-smacking finish also resonates with ginger-spice and white pepper notes."

Rating: 93/100

Harry Hertscheg, Tidings Magazine

Reserve Vidal Icewine 2004

"Light gold colour. Dried apricot, butter, spicy, marmalade, menthol aromas. Ripe, rich, crisp, round palate but quite elegant with good acidity and sugar balance. Big dried apricot, peach, mineral, marmalade, floral, mineral flavours with a green apple finish. Clean and fresh without too much fat. Well done for Vidal, love the freshness."

Rating: 91/100

Anthony Gismondi, Gismondi On Wine

Feet In The Ground - notes from the vineyard

AN INTERVIEW WITH JOHN SIMES, WINEMAKER

The long, warm summer of 2009, stretching into early October, "was steady and just about perfect," says John Simes, "with lots of heat in July and August, and the classic Okanagan scenario of cool nights and warm days in September. Things are looking very good for this vintage."

Simes was less confident last spring, when I last interviewed him. The record-breaking cold of the 2009 winter, with two, 10-day deep freezes, saw some early bud loss throughout the valley. "Our yield was down somewhat in some of the blocks," Simes says, "but the quality is certainly there."

With the early cold snap this December, "the icewine harvest was smooth as well," Simes says. "To pick on December 7th, and in the daylight makes it that much easier. We got to the grapes before the birds and wind did."

And then the waiting game—for the major job of pruning through a mild, El Niño-sponsored January. "If we go in too early to prune," he says, "we risk the loss of buds later if the weather ratchets down again. You can never go back, and we're waiting as long as possible."

Mission Hill's largest project is now fully engaged: the redevelopment of the vineyards at Naramata Ranch north of Penticton.



JOHN SIMES

"THINGS ARE LOOKING VERY GOOD FOR THIS VINTAGE."

The work includes a wholesale upgrading of irrigation to a drip system, that will conserve as much as 75 per cent of the water formerly utilized by overhead sprinklers. "We're also upgrading all of the main irrigation lines with high quality pipe, as well as the sub-mains and drip tubes. Then we'll install the new filtration hardware and flow controls," Simes says. "It's a lot of work but a great investment."

"OUR YIELD WAS DOWN SOMEWHAT IN SOME OF THE BLOCKS," SIMES SAYS, "BUT THE QUALITY IS CERTAINLY THERE."

Simes is also supervising the pull-out and replanting of 15 acres of vineyards at "The Ranch", as he refers to the picturesque vineyards that hug Naramata's northern flank, that, under a former owner, had been planted in the mid-nineties in Pinot Blanc. "They'll be replanted in Pinot Gris and Riesling," he reports. While the crews are at it, they'll realign the vineyard contours, prepare the land, and run the final soil tests. "That should really optimize those magnificent blocks," he said.

Back in the winery, John and his winemaking team are moving the red wines, racking them off their lees after malolactic fermentation, painstakingly cleaning the barrels, and then replacing the wine. And then the barrels will be set down in the volcanic rock cellars, ready to perform that divine dance between wood and scant air and grape: the slow, stealthy approach of age that rounds and burnishes and ennobles, and which knows but one speed called patience.

Frozen... continued

BY INGO GRADY, DIRECTOR WINE EDUCATION

Serving Icewine

Okanagan Icewine is one of the finest delicacies in the wine world, surprisingly versatile, festive and luxurious. Enjoy with a wide range of food, from appetizer to dessert:

- Chill for an hour or so; ideal serving temp. is 5-7°C
- Serve roughly 2oz pours in small wine glasses
- Perfect if savoured all by itself
- If pairing with food, a good rule of thumb is not to partner it with anything sweeter than icewine as most sweet foods tend to overwhelm the icewine
- Strong cheeses work well

Icewine Affinity Chart

Seafood: tuna, lobster, crab, fresh oysters, shrimp

Cheese: washed rind, blue, triple cream, hard aged

Custards: lemon, lime, crème brûlée

Sauces: fruit-based, caramel

Herbs & Spices: ginger, vanilla, candied citrus zest

Sommelier's Corner

JESSE HARNDEN, SOMMELIER



WINTER REDS

2007 Reserve Shiraz

Dark, earthy and intense. On the palate the wine is rich and savoury with nuances of fine cocoa and a touch of smoky oak. Wonderfully layered with great structure and fine tannins complement notes of ripe figs for a full finish. Aged in French and American oak for 15 months.

2007 Reserve Merlot

This elegant wine is smooth and balanced with lush layers of black plum, cherry and ripe summer berries. The palate is enhanced by anise and cocoa, which mingle with alluring notes of sweet oak for a long finish. Rich and full bodied, the wine has been aged in French oak for 17 months.

2007 Five Vineyards Cabernet Merlot

A full-bodied wine with complex notes of dark cocoa and spice combine with rich plum and ripe cherries on a layered palate. This wine has a long finish and pairs well with a range of meat dishes such as lamb stew, roast duck, and grilled beef, as well as a variety of aged cheeses.

2007 Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon

Intense and full-bodied with aromas of dark plum and blackberry jam that follow with notes of black currant and dark chocolate. Elegant and supple with excellent structure, this mouthfilling red is nicely balanced with rich tannins. The wine has been aged in French and American oak for 17 months.



“Those Oculus cherries are, if not to die for, surely worth rolling over and begging for—plump, ripe Okanagan cherries in a sweet suspension made mostly of the winery’s rare and expensive signature wine, Oculus. The tab for a bottle is \$70 (the cherries are cheaper), and yes, you’re worth it.” - Jurgen Gothe, Georgia Straight

Complements to the Chef

AN INTERVIEW WITH MATTHEW BATEY, WINERY CHEF

THE PROVENANCE OF SUMMER

Winery Chef Matthew Batey and his skilled brigade live in an ingredient-laden fantasy land from May through October. Each day provides a wealth of choices and alternatives. Augmenting the winery’s own orchards, and those of neighbouring farms, the herb gardens just outside the winery’s kitchen door allow for last-minute harvests, with each fruit, vegetable and herb at its very peak.

But what of the bitter winter months, when cruel frosts and a foot of snow might hug the hillside?

The current vogue for canning and preserving—perhaps motivated by uneasy economic times—is inspired by thrift, but also for lightening winter’s load with the flavours of a sunny summer day. It’s a pleasant task that Mission Hill has taken up for many seasons.

Beginning in late May, when the first of the Rainier and Bing cherries are ready for the pick, and ending in September when the estate’s pears are married to seductive vanilla, Chef Batey announces the all-hands-on-deck alert for the canning of some 1500 kilograms of fresh fruit. It’s just one more way that the winery can match its terroir to its wines.

As Chef Batey says, “The focus of our canning program is to capture the es-

sence of the Okanagan when plentiful, so it can be enjoyed year-round—whether in your own home kitchen or when dining here at the winery.”

Perhaps the best known of the winery’s products are its Vanilla Pears and Oculus Cherries, both happy accompaniments to chocolate mousse (see the accompanying recipe), or a simple dollop of vanilla ice cream. Plum and Pinot Sauce, and Vidal and Rhubarb Compote, as well as Apricot and Raspberry jams, and a piquant Peach Chutney, are also available in the Winery’s Gift Shop and leading culinary stores. And this year, Chef Batey has launched small releases of Zucchini Pickles, Cascade Tomatoes, Verjus Pickled Haricots Vert, and Green Tomato Chutney, each redolent of the Okanagan’s warm provenance—and promise—of summer.



JARS OF OCULUS CHERRIES

Silky Chocolate Mousse

WINERY CHEF MATTHEW BATEY

Enjoy with our Shiraz

A perfect finale to a cold weather menu of osso buco and risotto Milanese. Our Shiraz is the ideal pairing with the intense richness of this chocolate mousse. The wine has excellent structure and elegance to balance with the silky density of the mousse.

Yield 4

INGREDIENTS

140g or 1 cup	70% cacao bitter dark chocolate such as Lindt or Valrhona
50g or 1/4 cup	unsalted butter
6	egg yolks
40ml or 1/4 cup	sugar
200ml or 1 cup	whipping cream (plus additional for topping, if desired)

METHOD

Gently melt the chocolate with the butter in a bowl over a bain-marie (water bath) or in a double boiler.

While the chocolate is melting, whip the cream to stiff peaks.

Using a mixer, whip the sugar and egg yolks together on high until they appear to be white.

Pour the warm chocolate mixture into the yolks and sugar, mix well.

Gently fold in the whipped cream.

Spoon into martini glasses or ramekins and store in the fridge for at least 2 hours to set the mousse.

This recipe can be very easily increased.

Serve with a topping of freshly whipped cream and Mission Hill Oculus Cherries or Sweet Cherries Preserves.

WHIPPING CREAM TOPPING

We recommend a vanilla bean infused whipping cream for the topping.

1 cup heavy cream
1 vanilla bean
1 / 8 cup sugar

Place cream in chilled bowl. Cut vanilla bean in half lengthwise, scrape seeds into cream. Cover and refrigerate for 1 hour. Strain mixture through fine sieve into chilled bowl, whisk in sugar until soft peaks form. Serve immediately with the mousse or cover and refrigerate for up to 2 hours.

*Chef hint – don’t discard the vanilla bean husk! Store in an airtight container with sugar for Vanilla Bean Infused Sugar, which is lovely with Earl Grey tea.

"Marvelous Mission: Two iconic BC companies that we wholeheartedly adore are pairing up to make a Valentines Day treat that even the Easter Bunny couldn't beat. Mission Hill Family Estate is taking their award-winning Okanagan Vidal Icewine – the closet thing on the planet to liquid candy – and infusing it into Purdy's famous chocolate truffles."

- Kelly Doody, Calgary Sun

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 2010 winter 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

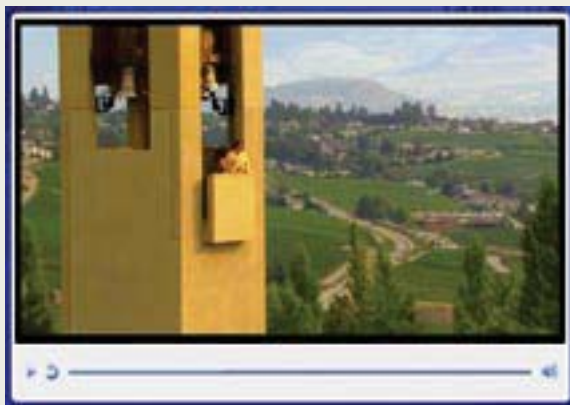
- Spain, January 21
- Jamaica, January 26
- China, February 2
- Valentines, February 9 & 11
- Thailand, February 16
- Julia Child Tribute, February 18
- California, February 23
- 100 Mile, March 2

You Gotta Be Here!

TOURISM BC AND MISSION HILL FAMILY ESTATE WELCOME THE WORLD

As a family owned and operated BC company, Mission Hill is proud to work closely with government officials to promote the Okanagan Valley during the 2010 Games.

This includes a Tourism BC commissioned commercial featuring celebrities along with images of our pristine province and footage filmed at our winery and in our vineyards. See the video at <http://yougottabehere.com/> in the media gallery section under videos for BC.



YOU GOTTA BE HERE IN 2010 – SUPER, NATURAL BRITISH COLUMBIA

We assisted with the Torch Relay procession in the promotion of the Thompson Okanagan Valley region as a culinary and wine tourism destination. View the video at: <http://www5.hellobc.com/2010-torch-relay/> (Day 88).

We are participating in numerous BC Wine Institute and BC government sponsored activities at various venues during the Games in downtown Vancouver and at Whistler.

Mission Hill is also involved in many "unofficial" events throughout the province, including sponsoring CAN Fund, Canadian Athletes Now Foundation, a national charity that supports Canadian athletes and their parents with their Athlete House Celebration Lounge. We encourage others to give generously to enable our athletes' future journeys and successes. Donate online at: www.CanadianAthletesNow.ca

We look forward to a phenomenally successful 2010 for our Olympians!

GO CANADA!

Out & About

JOIN US ACROSS CANADA...

London Food & Wine Show:
London – January 15-17

Pirouette Ballet Gala:
Kelowna – February 6

Canadian Athletes Now Foundation Celebration Lounge:
Vancouver – February 23-28

Mission Emp-Possible Battle of the Chefs:
Victoria – February 24

Montréal Wine and Spirits Show:
Montreal – March 25-28

Canadian Women in Communications Gala:
Ottawa – March 29

Sweet + Sweet = Sweet Idea

A sweetheart of a match! Purdy's truffles and Mission Hill's Icewine - the quintessential Canadian treat - that pairs two historic BC companies in the co-creation of Purdy's Icewine Truffle.

Each handcrafted Purdy's truffle is infused with luscious Mission Hill Vidal Icewine. A delectable dessert and an ideal pleasure for Valentine's Day romantics, the Icewine Truffles are available at Purdy's retail stores.

"Cultivated on our Naramata Ranch vineyards, the Vidal Icewine grapes burst with honey aromas and tropical notes on the palate, creating an ideal pairing with Purdy's rich, artisanal chocolates," says Mission Hill Family Estate Chief Winemaker John Simes.

"Purdy's chocolate combined with Mission Hill's Vidal Icewine make an extraordinary combination," says Purdy's Chocolates Head Chocolatier Gary Mitchell. "The numerous flavour notes

complement each other so well that the Purdy's Icewine Truffle delights the taste buds and satisfies the senses.

Both Purdy's Chocolates and Mission Hill are iconic Canadian brands that stand for quality and authentic, luxurious indulgences. Created in this spirit, Purdy's Icewine Truffles are a distinct treat for fine wine and chocolate lovers.



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