



tasting note^S

WINTER 2010

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

“A commitment to producing the finest wines and a stunningly rich architectural winery have made Mission Hill a destination for wine, food and travel lovers.”

Michael Crevin, Oh Canada – The North Rising Star

The Architecture of Mission Hill

BY GUEST EDITOR JAMIE MAW

It is late November. The lake has gone leaden grey, a duvet of snow snugs the Valley floor, the bitter northerly has died. Yesterday the Icewine grapes came in early – and in the still, cold dawn, the bells of Mission Hill ring out across the silent water.



Ten years ago, in the warm summer of 2000, my daughter and I found our way along the orchards of Boucherie Road and turned up the steep hill – Mission Hill – that lifts visitors quickly into the view of Okanagan Lake. I was on assignment for The Globe and Mail, covering the opening of my old schoolmate’s new winery.

I already knew the backstory, of how Anthony had rescued a fruit-fly infested cidery from Ben Ginter, the colourful brewer of discount suds. Of how he had turned the operation around, investing in physical plant, and sound vines from Europe. And I certainly knew how Mission Hill wines were earning a reputation – even internationally - following the 1994 ‘Best Chardonnay in the World’ award, for John Simes’ inaugural 1992 vintage, at the IWSC competition in London.

We wanted to see the four enormous brass bells too. Cast at the Paccard bell Foundry in Annecy, France, and mounted on massive wooden yokes (the largest bell weighs almost 800 kilos), unique

to Mission Hill, they had also quickly become an icon for the Valley.

But little prepared us for what we saw at the crest of the hill: through the tall concrete gate onto a widening esplanade, framed in rose gardens and steep vineyards. The Latin word proscenium literally describes ‘in front of the scenery’, and the proscenium arch at Mission Hill, replete with pelican plaque, reveals all of the scenery, by degrees. Just outside the arch: the pistol blue of the lake and hillsides below and above. Step inside, and the eye narrowcasts into the courtyard of the winery, first straight ahead towards the soaring campanile bell tower, then broadening onto the Terrace restaurant, the amphitheatre, the tall metal doors of the Chagall Room, drinking it all in, which is, after all, what we’re meant to do here.

‘THE COMMON GOAL,’ HE SAYS, ‘WAS TO MAKE THE WINERY INTO SOMETHING THAT WOULD BE DEEPLY MEMORABLE FOR ALL VISITORS, HOPEFULLY FOR THEIR ENTIRE LIVES.’

Vision is both inward and extrinsic, as is great architecture. Mission Hill’s architect, Tom Kundig, today speaks gently of the design and construction process, almost five years in the making. ‘The common goal,’ he says, ‘was to make the winery into something that would be deeply memorable for all visitors, hopefully for their entire lives. I believe that Anthony and I saw it as a place that weaves the beautiful natural landscape of the Okanagan with the cultural landscape of the winery and its story, in a meaningful, even transcendent way.’

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Oculus: A Decade of an Original

BY INGO GRADY, DIRECTOR WINE EDUCATION

The wine’s 1997 debut vintage relied on a fusion of Old and New World winemaking traditions, rooted deep in the soils of the South Okanagan. Today, Oculus is a rich, elegant and refined wine that has caught the attention of sommeliers, collectors and consumers worldwide.

Oculus is both a Roman-inspired architectural feature as well as the winery’s signature wine – and carries with it the proprietor’s imprimatur. And like its namesake in Rome’s Pantheon, the Oculus (Latin for ‘eye’) at Mission Hill is the only source of natural light into the winery’s famed underground barrel cellar. So the name Oculus symbolizes both proprietor Anthony von Mandl’s vision and his focus, for the Okanagan wine region and the winery.

Earlier this year, the winery celebrated the 10th vintage of Oculus. “The 2006 Oculus is unquestionably the biggest and most powerful vintage we’ve ever produced – the freshest, roundest and ripest flavours, and tremendous tannins,” says winemaker John Simes.

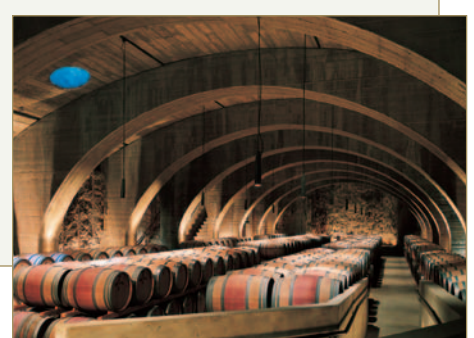
“The biggest change by far over the years is the maturity of the vineyards and our understanding of how to lift the quality of the grapes – the yields we need to give us the depth and structure we are after,” says Simes.

Like a proud parent, Simes recalls the planting in 1997 and ‘98 of what would eventually become Mission Hill’s finest vineyards. “As vineyards mature, it’s easier to prune them to produce low yields and get the intensity and characteristics you are aiming for.

Getting to know these vines intimately has also made a difference. “We have narrowed down those parts of the vineyards that year-over-year consistently yield the very best fruit. That’s what we hand select for Oculus.”

In 2005, with heavy investment from von Mandl, Simes’ wine studio began taking shape - the Oculus Cellar, a dedicated winemaking studio devoted to producing this flagship wine. This self-contained space has its own equipment separate from the winery’s main production area, where grapes are selected or rejected according to rigorous criteria.

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In the words of others...

REVIEWS OF OUR NEW RELEASES

Reserve Merlot, 2007

When I crave Merlot, this is the style I want in my glass... Very attractive aromas of plums in chocolate, sun-warmed summer berries, leather, warm spice and vanilla with a dark earthy heart. It's wonderfully plush on the palate, rounded and smooth with spiced berry, leather, mocha and tobacco flavours - the finish is long with plenty of oak spice lingering. Excellent!

Rating: 92/100

Daenna Van Mulligan, Wine Diva

SLC Merlot 2005

Here is a superb Merlot released at its peak. There is an alluring aroma of blackberries and boysenberries. On the palate, there are dollops of sweet fruit, but with good concentration and framed by ripe tannins. It is a very satisfying wine.

Rating: 91/100

John Schreiner

SLC Syrah 2007

A spectacular Syrah from one of Canada's best producers. This full-bodied red with hedonistically rich layers of blackberry, blueberry, violets and mocha almost overwhelms the senses, but fortunately leaves you in a steady enough state to ask for a top up. Richly structured and balanced, with incredible length, this is a cellar candidate. But why wait?

Rating: 92/100

Natalie Maclean, Nat Decants



Perpetua 2008

The new release of the Perpetua Chardonnay Osoyoos Vineyard Estate 2008 is very exciting... The team at Mission Hill should be commended for releasing such an elegant and restrained version of BC Chardonnay. The nose is a mix of green apple, citrus rind, light melon, orange and grapefruit aromas with a touch of vanilla and pear. Fresh, crisp, juicy and dry the palate is marked with ample acidity and bright mouth-watering flavours of grapefruit, mineral, green apple, spicy lees, light vanilla and butter with nectarine notes underneath. There is excellent finesse in a fresher style that should age well over the next few years. An excellent example of what can be achieved with restraint. Bravo.

Rating: 91/100

Anthony Gismondi, Vancouver Sun

Oculus... continued

BY INGO GRADY, DIRECTOR WINE EDUCATION

"First, Anthony purchased 12 small, 65-hectolitre oak fermentation vats from France. In 2006, we added more, along with equipment to carefully handle very select lots of grapes," says Simes.

That equipment allows hand-cut bunches of Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc and Petit Verdot grapes from select Oliver and Osoyoos vineyard blocks to be gently de-stemmed and hand sorted. The juice from each varietal is then gravity-fed into the oak vats for fermentation and extended skin contact, before transferring into small French oak casks and aged until the final blending. "We don't try to make a Bordeaux blend," notes Simes. "This is an Okanagan blend. The exact percentage is not a recipe - it's a matter of taste."

After 13 to 15 months of barrel aging, Oculus is bottled and laid down for a minimum of a year, ensuring it is ready to drink on release or cellar for a longer term. The result: heavenly, drinkable and constantly evolving.

**"THIS IS AN OKANAGAN BLEND.
THE EXACT PERCENTAGE IS NOT A RECIPE;
IT'S A MATTER OF TASTE"**

Among Oculus' fans is Pino Posteraro, executive chef and proprietor of Cioppino's Mediterranean Grill & Enoteca in Vancouver, which recently became only the third Canadian restaurant to be honoured by the Distinguished Restaurants of North America (DiRoNA) Hall of Fame.

"I have been serving Oculus since we opened a decade ago," says Posteraro. "We have seen the improvement year after year. It represents the best of B.C. and Canada - a perfect Merlot blend that reflects the Okanagan's unique soil and mesoclimates."

While John Simes appreciates the praise, he says, "We will always strive to do better. You never reach the goal line. You can always try new techniques to take the wine to its next level and it will always be that way."

Notes from the vineyard: A Season of Firsts

AN INTERVIEW WITH JOHN SIMES, WINEMAKER

"By June, we already knew that we were running late - significantly behind - that we would be short on time," John Simes says.

He was referring to the cold, wet spring weather that shocked the Valley's vines, and not a few winemakers. "In the Okanagan," John continues, "you can't depend on July and August to make up for lost time, you have to make adjustments."

Indeed, July and August would provide no easy panacea. The key summer months would prove uneven in their heat, some days slightly cooler than typical, with other days spiking very hot, so that the vines, especially the big reds in the southern blocks, would occasionally shut down.

"We spent a lot of time estimating our yields during the summer," says Simes, "especially in our premium red blocks, endlessly doing berry counts, because there was absolutely no margin for error this year."

Ultimately, the Mission Hill vineyard managers were dropping fruit down to two tonnes yield per acre, and opening up the canopy early and aggressively to deliver sunlight directly to the berries.

The first few weeks of September would be no friend either - a repeat of June, and by the third week of September, the heat unit count was three weeks behind 2009. Treat Mother Nature kindly though, and sometimes she'll return the favour: the weather turned favourably: late Septem-

ber and most of October would offer up warm days and cool nights.

On the Naramata Ranch estate the Pinot Gris, Chardonnay and Riesling vines performed well, with late-October readings of 23 Brix. Even more astonishing was how late the red harvest was extended by the warm autumn.

**"NEVER BEFORE HAVE WE HARVESTED
OSOYOOS FRUIT IN NOVEMBER.
THAT WAS TRULY UNUSUAL."**

"Never before have we harvested Osoyoos fruit in November," Simes says. "It was really about the lack of cold at night. We had very little frost that we couldn't manage with the wind machines. That was truly unusual, but our fruit drop and canopy management proved the right strategy - our yield is down a little but the quality is very sound. The whites, well the whites look particularly good this year."

November would deliver another unusual benefit: the second earliest Icewine harvest ever. Safe from the predation of animals and the freeze-thaw cycle of most years, the grapes were brought in at very low temperatures. This results in a lower yield, but a concentrated, high quality essence.

"Our Vidal showed an early Brix level of 46," says Simes, "and our Riesling 50. There's some lingering acid too," he says. "These are very similar conditions to our 2006 vintage (that won best Icewine in the world at the IWC), I think this year is going to be equally terrific."



JOHN SIMES

Sommelier's Corner

JESSE HARNDEN, SOMMELIER



HOLIDAY WINES

2009 Five Vineyard Pinot Noir

This Pinot Noir opens up with intense aromas of wild strawberries, licorice, figs and earth tones. The medium bodied palate shows plenty of red berry fruit and exotic spice notes, and is balanced by vibrant acidity. Pairs perfectly with a range of cuisines including cheeses, salmon, chicken, and Asian dishes.

2009 Reserve Chardonnay

Tropical pineapple, mango and caramel mingle on the palate with hints of jasmine and hazelnut. Rich and refreshing, the wine is balanced with crisp lemon flavoured acidity and has a clean, mouthwatering finish. The Reserve Chardonnay has been partially barrel fermented and aged sur lie in American and French oak for seven months.

2009 Reserve Riesling Icewine

A stunning Icewine with classic Riesling character: Deeply concentrated citrus and apricot flavours mesh seamlessly with the wine's vibrant structure. Intense and ultra-sweet with a graceful manner and super-long finish.



Coq au Vin with Truffles

WINERY CHEF MATTHEW BATEY

*Enjoy with our
Reserve Pinot Noir*

This classic Burgundian dish has historically used a cockerel. An ideal dish for winter, the poultry is braised in Pinot Noir until tender.

Yield 6

INGREDIENTS

- 1 large chicken – cut into 8 pieces (2 breasts in half, 2 legs, 2 thighs)
- 750ml Mission Hill Family Estate Pinot Noir
- 2C chicken stock
- 6 slices bacon – cut thick
- 4tbls butter
- 18 shallots – peeled
- 3 garlic cloves – chopped
- 2C assorted mushrooms – sliced
- 1tsp fresh thyme leaves
- 1 bay leaf
- 1 black truffle – sliced (optional)
- 4tbls chopped parsley for garnish
- salt and pepper to taste

METHOD

- Marinate cut chicken pieces in Pinot Noir for 24 hours – turn every 8 hours.
- Remove chicken and save. Pour wine into a pot and bring to a simmer. Carefully skim off any foam or scum that may come to the surface – simmer for 2 minutes – reduce to half volume and add chicken stock – keep warm until needed.
- Slice bacon into lardons and sauté in butter in a large pan until golden brown. Remove bacon and save.
- Pat chicken dry and brown in bacon fat – season with salt and pepper.
- Remove chicken and place in a large pot. Add whole shallots to bacon/butter – sweat off until golden. Add chopped garlic and cook until fragrant. Add mushrooms and cook for 1 minute.
- Add shallots and mushrooms to the pot with chicken – add thyme leaves and bay leaf. Pour hot wine reduction and stock over top and bring to a simmer. Simmer over very low heat with a lid on for 1.5 hours until chicken is tender.
- Remove chicken and all garnish.
- Reduce sauce down until thickened.
- Add chicken, sliced truffles and saved garnish back to reduced sauce – heat through.
- Sprinkle with chopped parsley and serve.

Complements to the Chef

AN INTERVIEW WITH MATTHEW BATEY, WINERY CHEF

THE NEXT CULINARY VANGUARD AT MISSION HILL

That Stephanie Schnepf, an apprenticing chef at Mission Hill, should win third place at the Concours International des Jeunes Chefs came as pleasant affirmation to Winery Chef Matthew Batey. The competition, staged in Helsinki last summer, saw 24 of the finest young chefs in the world compete, clog-to-clog and knife-to-knife. Stephanie had already won the regional and Canadian national championships, but it was her high finish in Helsinki that provided another salute to the Okanagan's place on the world stage. Fittingly, Chef Batey had also won bronze when he competed in 2005.

Perhaps most remarkable is just how well young Canadian chefs fare in the competition. "By the age of 21, European chefs have six or seven years of training," Batey says, "whereas in Canada, it's only two or three. We have to make up for lost time to compete effectively."

**"OUR CULINARY FUTURE IS WRITTEN
IN MENTORSHIP AND A STRONG
CONNECTION TO THE LAND."**

– Winery Chef Matthew Batey

Indeed the training of young chefs in Mission Hill's kitchens is "a highly important facet of our culinary culture here," says Batey. "We work cooperatively with other industry leaders to ensure that talented young chefs are exposed to the Okanagan," he added.

Those chefs, usually in their early twenties, are often drawn from the Oliver and Bonancini restaurant group in Toronto,

the Fairmont Royal York and the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology. They arrive at Mission Hill in May. But instead of sharpening their skills in the kitchen, they spend their first week toiling at the farms that supply the winery throughout the summer. "A lot of young cooks are detached from the land," Batey says, "and there's nothing like a week of weeding and planting to connect them to their ingredients. It heightens their respect for the raw produce. For most of them it's an epiphany."

An epiphany that stretches throughout the summer. With the Terrace restaurant hosting thousands of international visitors to the Valley, and many special events staged in the winery's courtyard, the young chefs are tasked with long days and sometimes longer nights.

"Disciplined technique, understanding ingredients, stamina, grace under pressure. Those come first," Batey says. "Only then can we create the new and invent the future."

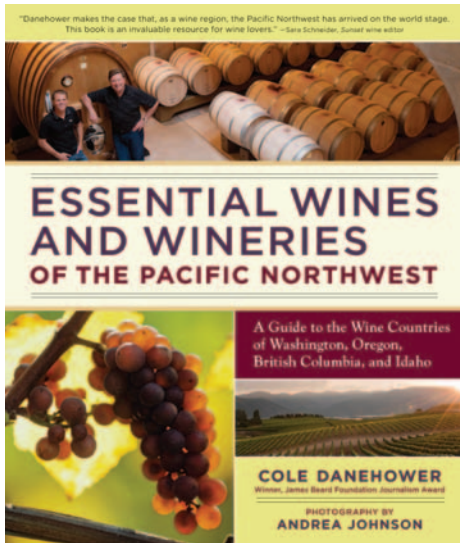


APPRENTICE CHEF - STEPHANIE SCHNEPF

"Mission Hill is really the standard bearer for Okanagan wines and wineries."

- Cole Danehower, Northwest Palate Magazine

Book Reviews



This October on a gorgeous autumn afternoon of the Okanagan Fall Wine Festival noted wine writer Cole Danehower from Portland, Oregon is busy signing his new book, *Essential Wines and Wineries of the Pacific Northwest*, in a bustling Mission Hill wine shop. He comments that it's fitting that he is here, as Mission Hill "doesn't just produce outstanding wines, it has really helped put the Okanagan wine region on the map with its commitment to wine and culinary tourism".

Cole has included a substantial section on Okanagan wines in his book, noting that "it's irrelevant that there's a political border going right through the region. Canada and the US share so many similarities when it comes to climate, soil, grape varieties and wine styles. BC is an integral part of the Pacific northwest geography and grape region."

This book is available on Amazon.com and at the Mission Hill Wine Shop and makes an excellent gift for an oenophile or loved one.

Book excerpt:

"Anthony von Mandl in 1981 bought a down-in-the-mouth winery west of Kelowna and transformed it into one of the most impressive wine estates in North America, and along the way helped raise the standards of wine quality for the entire province... There are few more impressive winery estates than Mission Hill. Resplendent on the side of Mount Boucherrie, Mission Hill stands as a beacon for the entire BC wine industry... Under the direction of winemaker John Simes, the winery today produces a portfolio of superbly made wines that express the power, grace and diversity of Okanagan Valley grapes... Supporting the Mission Hill wines is an amazing culinary program, and a visitor experience made impressive as much by the wines as the unparalleled architecture and grandeur of the winery grounds."

Architecture... continued from page 1

We soon found that transcendancy, in the vaulted caves carved out of the volcano, where row on row age barrels of wine, the lighting only barely suggesting their mysterious alchemy. Or on the arched promenade that abuts the clock tower; the only oblique angle in the courtyard, it cants southeast so as to find both the morning and afternoon light. Or the Chagall Room, which soars, perfect in its Palladian, high-ceilinged dimensions, the better to host the enormous tapestry that hugs its western wall.

Building Mission Hill was not without its challenges, especially given that – behind the grandeur of the architecture – beats the heart of a working winery. Kundig recalls "the delicate phasing and choreography of the construction, and patience from all sides." He cites the construction crew, especially Jack Seltenrich and Doug Desson, who "were critical to the success and spirit of the work, they were courageous and sensitive and tough, and they made it happen."

Of course Mission Hill might still be a paradise for wayward drosophila had it not been for Anthony's vision – interpolating a winery that says to its visitors, "This is for you." Kundig agrees. "Anthony is infinitely curious," he says, "and what you see today is testimony to him, because underneath the big vision he is always engaging in dialogue, always investigating, always improving."

I've been back to Mission Hill a hundred times in the past ten years, and each time I spot a new aspect, a new detail. But it was on the way to the airport a decade ago that my daughter and I discussed the design of Mission Hill. "It's really connected to the land," I said.

"Magnificent, but not overwhelming," she replied. "It looks outside and in. Lots of intimate spaces too," she added, "Like life itself."

Out & About

JOIN US ACROSS CANADA...

Seaforth Highlanders Centenary:
Vancouver: November 27

Provence Art Show for the Food Bank:
Vancouver: December 2

B.C. Children's Hospital Crystal Ball:
Vancouver: December 2

Mission Hill Decade of Bells Celebration:
Okanagan: December 11

Parksville Uncorked:
Vancouver Island: February 25-27

Mission Hill Winter Culinary Classes:
Okanagan: January 6 – February 24

Winter Okanagan Wine Festival:
Sun Peaks Resort: January 16-24

Back in the City: Feature Restaurant

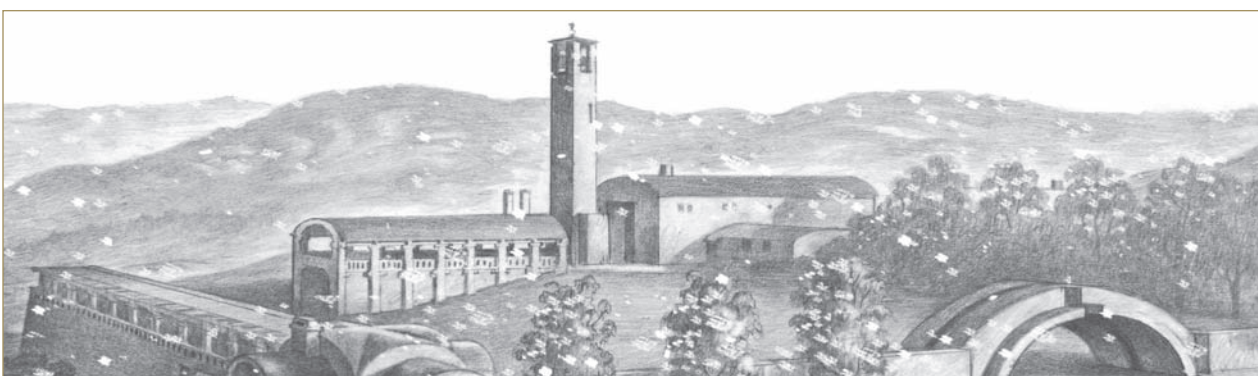
Nestled in the heart of the spectacular Canadian Rockies and the pristine wilderness of Banff National Park you will find the Village of Lake Louise and the cherished Post Hotel & Spa Dining Room.

Here, for more than 30 years, Swiss born brothers André and George Schwarz have been offering guests the luxurious traditions of European hospitality in their award winning Relais & Chateaux property. "The dining room is the heart of our operation and the reason so many of our

guests return year after year" explains André. With one of Canada's largest wine cellars, at just under 30,000 bottles, the Post has held the coveted Wine Spectator "Grand Award" since 2002. The cellar is a perfect complement to the restaurant's award winning fresh market cuisine –voted "Best Food in the Americas" by Condé Nast Traveler in 2008.

The Post Hotel & Spa in Lake Louise is an international tourist destination and as George Schwarz explains "our guests are interested in

exploring and discovering the best that western Canada has to offer and, of course, this includes food and wine. Inevitably, we end up discussing the Okanagan Valley and their best wines - it is always our pleasure to recommend the fine wines of Mission Hill Family Estate to our guests".



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