

Women in Wine

SALUTE A FEW OF THE BEST,
WHO SUPPLY OUR DAILY WINE

By Lindsay Groves



Sue-Ann Staff MEGALOMANIAC

Looks like Sue-Ann Staff has it all covered. Pedigree? Five generations of Niagara grape/wine heritage. Expertise? Undergrad in horticulture at the University of Guelph, topped with an oenology degree from the University of Adelaide. Experience? A bunch of vintages in Niagara at Pillitteri and a couple more at 20 Bees. Accolades? The first woman awarded the title of Winemaker of the Year with the 2002 Ontario Wine Awards. Also nominated as one of the Top Four Women in Wine in the world at the London International Wine and Spirits Competition in 2004. Is it really a surprise that John Howard snapped her up to make his Megalomaniac label? In her spare time, Sue-Ann decided to launch her own label: Look for her self-named wines to debut in June. Megalomaniac, 888-634-2561, megalomaniacwine.com; Staff Estate Winery, staffwines.com



Deborah Paskus CLOSSON CHASE

For serious Ontario wine geeks, the Chardonnays that Deborah Paskus made in the 1990s with wine writer Stephen Temkin are the stuff of legend. The Temkin-Paskus "experiment" proved that Niagara could turn out Chardonnays of exceptional quality. Growing up on Niagara's doorstep in Hamilton, Deborah majored in horticulture at the University of Guelph. Smitten by the terroir of Prince Edward County, she settled on a property in Hillier and established Closson Chase Vineyards in 2002. With 30 acres now under vine, she continues to make gorgeous Chardonnay and Pinot Noir. Closson Chase Vineyards, 613-399-1418 or 888-201-2300, clossonchase.com.



Lydia Tomek HERNDER

How's this for focus: Lydia Tomek decided to be a winemaker before she could legally drink. The homegrown Niagara honey has been the winemaker at Hernder and Harvest Estates since 2006, with formative stints at Hillebrand and Jackson-Triggs, after studying oenology and viticulture at Brock. An active philanthropist, she created a lip-smacking rosé called Pink to raise funds for the Niagara Cancer Centre. "Wine symbolizes good life, good friends, and culture.... Many years ago it was used for health remedies. So I asked myself, 'Why couldn't wine be used today for that same purpose?'" This month, look for Blue, a sparkling Riesling to benefit the new Walker Family Cancer Foundation in St. Catharines. Hernder Estate Wines, 905-684-3300, hernder.com; Harvest Estate Wines, 905-682-0080, harvestwines.com



Ann Sperling SOUTHBROOK

Ann Sperling is a woman with wine in her blood. Her family can claim the first vine plantings in Kelowna, B.C., in 1925. She completed a food sciences degree at UBC and made her mark at Port Moody and Cedar Creek Estate in the Okanagan. Eventually settling in Ontario in 1995, she presided over a string of vintages at Cilento and Malivoire. Her work at Malivoire earned her the title of 2004 Winemaker of the Year. "What I love about winemaking in Niagara is the terroir—how the vines interact with the soil and climate... Niagara doesn't take a back seat to anyone in the world with chardonnay—ours are layered with complexity and richness but have the finesse to be fabulous food wines." She's taken Malivoire's organic philosophy further since joining Southbrook in 2006, and last month released Canada's first biodynamic wine, the 2008 Cabernet Rosé. Southbrook Vineyards, 905-641-2548 or 888-581-1581, southbrook.com.