

Moring, Al

Niagara climate natural

# Ontario wines among the best says expert

By Jack Evans

The Intelligencer

Canadians who continue to view domestic wines with disdain are out of touch with the new reality says Al Moring.

Ontario and Canadian wines are now award winners on an international basis, picking up some of the most prestigious awards available in the industry.

But even Moring, wine expert with the Belleville liquor store, admits that for many years domestic wines were inferior.

What happened, about 20 years ago, he explained, is the introduction to Ontario wine growing areas of "noble grape varieties" imported from Europe.

The climate of the Niagara area, for openers, was almost natural for the new varieties, which replaced native varieties cultivated from the wild about 100 years ago. Other major Ontario areas, such as the north shore of Lake Erie and Pelee Island were able to sustain the new vines with some creative cultivating practices such as plowing extra earth around the roots during the winters.

So in a space of only about two decades, Ontario wines have gone from being justifiably described as some of the worst in the world, to some of the best in the world, Moring told the Rotary Club of Belleville Monday.

He also qualified his update by adding that not every wine produced in Canada is an award winner, but a quality-assurance organization called Vintage Quality Alliance has been formed, and wines containing that label can be relied on to be of international standards quality.

"This is an exciting time to be discovering Ontario wines," said Moring, a Belleville native, who is now one of 50 professional wine tasters in the LCBO stores staffs.

There is scientific technology behind the reform, but also a natural climate, from an area which varies between being south of most of the wine growing area of France and parallel with California, cool fall harvest seasons and well-drained soils.

Quality wine is also a "balance between science and art, with decisions required at every one of six stages," said Moring.

Moring's main role is to promote product knowledge both among LCBO store staff members and the public, stock and maintain adequate wine products in the store, and assist customers as a consultant.



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Al Moring spoke to Belleville Rotary Club this week.

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