
WINES & VINES

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Experiencing Riesling

Conference focuses on varietal held in Ontario

by *Wine East* editors



Riesling vines are well-suited to the cold conditions prevalent in Ontario, Canada.

Increasing interest in Riesling as a possible signature white wine for Ontario, Canada, was the motivation behind the 2008 Riesling Experience conference held at Brock University in St. Catharines, Ontario, on July 17. The idea for the conference came in 2005, after New Zealand's David Jordan gave a lecture at Brock University, where he referred to Riesling as the "White Knight."

What he had to say about Riesling energized a number of listeners, including Len Pennachetti and Angelo Pavan of [Cave Spring Cellars](#), Barbara Tatarnic and others from the Cool Climate Oenology and Viticulture Institute (CCOVI) at Brock, as well as wine writer and educator Linda Bramble. They started talking about holding a conference of their own and began planning seriously when they found out they would have widespread support and sponsorship from the Grape Growers of Ontario, the Wine Council of Ontario, Agriculture and AgriFoods Canada, International Viticulture Services, [Inniskillin Wines](#) and [Peller Estates Winery](#).

More than 200 people attended the sold-out Riesling Experience at Brock University, and there was a waiting list going back two months. Angelo Pavan, vice president and winemaker at Cave Spring Cellars, chaired the event, and four speakers covered a range of topics.

Olivier Humbrecht of Domaine Zind Humbrecht in Alsace, France, focused on growing Riesling; Ulrich Fischer from the Research Institute in Neustadt and the DLR Research Station in Rheinland, Germany, spoke on marketing; David Peterson from [Swedish Hill Winery](#) in New York covered winemaking, and Jim Willwerth of Brock University reviewed Riesling *terroirs* in Niagara that impact wine varietal character.

A luncheon with a specially created "Riesling-friendly" menu by chef Jason Parsons of Peller Estates Winery Restaurant featured such dishes as ice wine suckling pig and ice wine-infused blue cheese.

Organizers of the conference hope that the 2008 Riesling Experience will lead to similar events in the future. Pavan said there was great feedback for the conference, and while an annual event is being ruled out, serious consideration will be given to holding a 2010 Riesling Experience.