



# The Ottawa Citizen (Ottawa, ON)

Order/Commande

150505

Date 18.11.2010

Circ. 121664

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## Wine snobbery is not dead

Two words  
to puncture  
pomposity:  
Blue Nun



ROD PHILLIPS

**W**ine snobbery is dead" is about as accurate as "God is dead."

God is clearly alive in the minds of millions of believers, and snobbery is alive in the minds of millions of wine consumers — despite the fact that thousands of wine writers and educators are hard at work, "demystifying" wine for them, and showing the ignorant masses the evils of snobbery.

But, for evidence that snobbery is alive and well, I need only look back over the last week. First, I was invited to Toronto for a tasting of [yel-

low tail] Reserve Shiraz and Cabernet Sauvignon. (Yes, the square brackets and lowercase letters are intrinsic to the brand.) These wines are made slightly differently from the entry-level they're aged in barrels, rather than treated with oak chips, for example — and cost a few dollars more. If they come to the LCBO, they'll cost \$14 to 15.

When I mentioned to a couple of wine-savvy friends that I was going to the tasting, I got a WTF look (meaning I was taking Wine Too Far). One of them blurted out, "You're really flying to Toronto to taste Yellow Tail?" (He was so upset that he forgot the square brackets and the lowercase letters.)

If I'm honest, I had a similar reaction when the invitation came — [yellow tail] has never been a favourite of mine. The style — fruity, with low acidity and some sweetness — hits the right spot with lots of consumers (they sell 11.5 million cases, or nearly 140 million bottles, a year), but not with me.

But I (and another dozen writers and consultants) took the plunge and were rewarded with the interesting experience of tasting these wines blind in flights with other

Australian shirazes and cabernets.

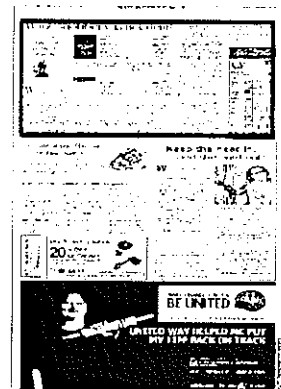
The result? [yellow tail] Reserve Shiraz emerged as my second favourite of four shirazes, and [yellow tail] Reserve Cabernet was my first choice among four Australian cabs. The other wines in the lineups were well-known and more expensive Australian wines. Overall, it was a good showing for the wallaby with the brown and gold tail.

The second event was a tasting I led at the Ottawa Wine and Food Show. It was a retrospective on the last 25 years of wine (this was the show's 25th anniversary), and I presented a dozen wines blind. When I asked how many in the audience liked the first wine, more than half raised their hands. Who didn't like it? Half a dozen people.

Then I revealed the wine, one of the LCBO's veterans that have been on the shelves for more than a quarter of a century: Blue Nun.

Everyone laughed, but I think I was right when I said I bet that no one who liked that wine would actually go out and buy it.

Call it what you like, but judging a wine by its brand, rather than its style and flavour, shows a little bit of snobbery, and I suspect most of us share it.





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### Trout Valley Riesling 2008

This New Zealand riesling won Best White Wine at the Ottawa Wine Challenge. Look for concentrated fruit flavours and

a lovely clean, refreshing texture. It goes well with seafood and white fish, as well as many pork dishes.

12-per-cent alcohol; \$14.95 (177790)



### Fat Bastard Sauvignon Blanc 2008

A sauvignon blanc from the south of France, this shows solid, consistent fruit from start to finish, decent

complexity, and a crisp and fresh texture. Drink it with seafood, white fish, and with mild, creamy cheeses.

12-per-cent alcohol; \$14.95 (G10659)

### Santa Digna Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon 2008

Made by the well-known Miguel Torres company, this Chilean

cabernet delivers quality right through. It's rich and complex, with a tanny texture, great balance, and easygoing tannins. It's a natural for red meat dishes. 14-per-cent alcohol; \$14.95 (177451, Vintages Essential)

### Carmen Reserva Merlot 2009

This is a straightforward merlot from Chile that delivers above its price. You'll find the flavours concentrated

and quite rich, the texture smooth and slightly tangy, and the balance good. Drink it with ribs, burgers and seasoned red meats. 14-per-cent alcohol; \$10.95 (248625)