

≡ VARIETAL



CSV  
*Estate Bottled*  
  
**CAVE SPRING**  
2004  
RIESLING  
VQA NIAGARA PENINSULA • VQA  
CAVE SPRING CELLARS, JORDAN, ONTARIO  
WHITE WINE • PRODUCT OF CANADA • VIN BLANC / FRUIT  
12.0% alc./vol.

  
**HENRY of PELHAM**  
FAMILY ESTATE  
2004  
OFF-DRY  
RESERVE  
**Riesling**  
VQA • NIAGARA PENINSULA • VQA  
750 mL • WHITE WINE • VIN BLANC • 12.0% alc./vol.  
PRODUCT OF CANADA • PRODUIT DU CANADA

  
**JACKSON-TRIGGS**  
PROPRIETORS' GRAND RESERVE  
2004  
*Riesling*  
VQA • NIAGARA PENINSULA

**RIDGEPOINT WINES**  
Riesling  
VQA • Niagara Peninsula • VQA  
2004  
  
WHITE WINE • VIN BLANC  
13% alc./vol. 750ml  
Ridgepoint Wines Inc.  
Vineland Ontario, Canada  
Product of Canada • Produit du Canada  
[www.ridgepointwines.com](http://www.ridgepointwines.com)

# THE ESSENCE OF niagara

## **IF NIAGARA VINTNERS ARE SERIOUS ABOUT ESTABLISHING A REGIONAL IDENTITY, RIESLING DESERVES THE SPOTLIGHT, CHRISTOPHER WATERS REPORTS**

**BEFORE I KNEW ANYTHING ABOUT WINE, I KNEW THAT NIAGARA RIESLING HAD THE CAPACITY TO THRILL.** During my university days, I spent my summers working as a tour guide at Hillebrand Estates Winery in Niagara-on-the-Lake. In that capacity, I would conduct a walking tour of the facility, delivering the sanctioned information at each stop along the way as outlined in a bulky burgundy-coloured binder that I received upon being hired. Tours would conclude with a tasting of four wines.

It was in such tastings that I first experienced Niagara-grown Riesling's ability to win over a crowd. Sandwiched between samples of Etienne Brûlé Blanc, a blend of various French hybrid grapes and Cuvée 1812 Burgundy, a blend of, well, your guess is as good as mine, I would present Hillebrand's 1988 Riesling. The tall brown bottle was adorned with Gothic script and Germanic heraldry, which I can only vaguely remember.

But I won't soon forget how that wine was packed with plenty of aroma and a vibrant freshness. It was stunning, and most of the people who tasted it were shocked, knowing they had discovered something truly special.

That shock of recognition was brought home again when I participated in the organization of this year's Experts' Tasting at the Cool Climate Oenology and Viticulture Institute, Brock University. The tasting, which brings together wine professionals from the viticulture, winemaking, sales/marketing, service and journalism arenas, begged the question: is Riesling our White Knight? Which is to say, is Riesling the grape that will earn an international reputation for Ontario wines in the same way that Sauvignon Blanc did for New Zealand's industry?

I think the answer is yes. And, I'm not alone in this opinion. Niagara Riesling deserves special attention, particularly as the region's traditional Riesling specialists, notably Cave Spring Cellars and Vineland Estates Winery, are being joined by attentive new producers, such as Fielding Estates, Flat Rock Cellars and Ridgepoint Wines. It is an exciting time for Riesling in Niagara, which means lovers of the fruity and electric white can count on being spoiled with selection in the coming years.

A recent tasting of dry and off-dry Rieslings from the 2004 vintage illustrated how irresistibly fresh and charming these wines can be as well as how intense and richly concentrated the best examples are. Forget about Niagara Riesling being a mere Knight — it's the region's once and future King.



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## NIAGARA RIESLING



★★★★☆

**Cave Spring Cellars 2004 CSV Riesling** *Niagara Peninsula* \$30 (566026) Yes, the price is dear. And, yes, there is also great joy to be found in Cave Spring's 2004 Reserve at half the price. But who said wine appreciation flows along rational lines? This is the style of Riesling that Niagara is building its international reputation with. The provocative lime and citrus fruit invade your senses. The classic CSV focus and finesse is there, but with more length than usual at this early stage. It is already showing its true beauty. [www.cavespringcellars.com](http://www.cavespringcellars.com)



★★★★☆

**Flat Rock Cellars 2004 Nadja's Vineyard Riesling** *Niagara Peninsula* \$19.95 Made in a lively Mosel style, this offers fresh aromas of lime and pink grapefruit with some mineral character. The lime-accented flavour is crisp and focused, with a very fine finish. This is an ideal candidate for cellaring, with an added bonus. The wine's screwcap closure eliminates the risk of cork-taint. After its spell in the cellar, there's no worry about the wine being spoiled by a bad cork. [www.flatrockcellars.com](http://www.flatrockcellars.com)



★★★★

**Cave Spring Cellars 2004 Riesling Reserve** *Niagara Peninsula* \$17.95 (286377) You can count on Cave Spring Riesling Reserve to deliver a soaring aroma, with abundant lime and flinty mineral floating above every glass. The 2004 vintage possesses serious structure and well-balanced acidity. It tastes dry thanks to the zesty acidity. The pure, crisp, exciting fruit is delightful to behold. [www.cavespringcellars.com](http://www.cavespringcellars.com)



★★★★

**Château des Charmes Wines 2004 Riesling Estate Bottled** *Niagara Peninsula* \$15.95 (277228) I have tasted this wine on a number of occasions now and am continually impressed by its refreshment factor. The aroma is packed with mineral and petrol notes that add interest to the lithe, balanced flavour profile. A great example of how good Ontario Riesling can be. [www.chateaudescharmes.com](http://www.chateaudescharmes.com)

★★★★

**Fielding Estates Winery 2004 Riesling Reserve Rosomel Vineyard** *Niagara Peninsula* \$20 A classic expression of Niagara Riesling from an established vineyard, this offers intense citrus and lime aromas and a concentrated palate of lemon, lime, pear and grapefruit flavours that continue on to the long finish. This is extremely enjoyable right now and has the concentration and acidity to merit keeping a bottle around until 2010 to see how it shows when it reaches maturity. [www.fieldingwines.com](http://www.fieldingwines.com)



★★★★

**Henry of Pelham Family Estate Winery 2004 Off-Dry Riesling Reserve** *Niagara Peninsula* \$14.95 (557165) Look for lively lime and citrus flavour, which is presented with a slight sweetness and refreshing acidity on the palate. This is an age-worthy wine, but it is so delicious right now that it would take a titanic effort to stave off the impulse to drink it all this summer. [www.henryofpelham.com](http://www.henryofpelham.com)



★★★★

**Jackson-Triggs Niagara Estate 2004 Proprietors' Grand Reserve Riesling** *Niagara Peninsula* \$16.95 An excellent effort from Jackson-Triggs, which I daresay has never made a dry Riesling this good before. There is great vitality and intensity to the presentation. This is a delightful wine with wonderful, pure citrus fruit flavours. [www.jacksontriggswinery.com](http://www.jacksontriggswinery.com)



★★★★

**Ridgepoint Wines 2004 Riesling**

*Niagara Peninsula* \$17 This is a beautiful expression of Niagara Riesling, with evocative apricot, peach and tropical aromas, nice fruity flavours and a lingering finish. This slightly off-dry wine has a purity of expression that is easy to appreciate. [www.ridgepointwines.com](http://www.ridgepointwines.com)

★★★★

**Thirteenth Street Wine Co. 2004 Riesling**

*Niagara Peninsula* \$16 This wine's distinctive fruit cocktail and fleshy peach aromas can be traced to the carefully cultivated Riesling vines on Gunther Funk's property. That fruit was blended with Riesling grapes sourced from vineyards in Niagara-on-the-Lake and Beamsville to create an exciting wine with vibrant fruit character. [www.13thstreetwines.com](http://www.13thstreetwines.com)

★★★★

**Vineland Estates Winery 2004 St. Urban**

**Riesling** *Niagara Peninsula* \$20 This reserve class Riesling offers the classic lime note associated with the Weis 21B Riesling clone and a tantalizing mix of minerals, pink grapefruit and pear flavours. Made in a medium-bodied, racy style, this would be a great match for smoked salmon. [www.vineland.com](http://www.vineland.com)

★★★☆☆

**Coyote's Run Estate Winery 2004 Riesling**

*Niagara Peninsula* \$16 Provocative citrus and mineral aromas set the stage for a crisp, nicely structured white, with good intensity and harmony on the palate. This goes down as gulpable in our books. [www.coyotesrunwinery.com](http://www.coyotesrunwinery.com)

★★★☆☆

**Henry of Pelham Family Estate 2004**

**Reserve Riesling** *Niagara Peninsula* \$13.95 (283291) There is always an unwavering note of lime and minerals on the nose of this consistently delicious wine. Fruit from older vines is turned into this well-balanced and focused white, which is wonderfully crisp and refreshing with good length. Great value. [www.henryofpelham.com](http://www.henryofpelham.com)



★★★☆☆

**Jackson-Triggs Niagara Estate 2004 Delaine Vineyard Riesling**




*Niagara Peninsula* \$18.95 (623462) The young vines in the Delaine Vineyard continue to show tremendous promise. The newly released 2004 Riesling showcases a nice tension between sweet and sour elements (notably citrus and lime zest) that make this mouthwatering wine an ideal dinner partner. [www.jacksontriggswinery.com](http://www.jacksontriggswinery.com)

★★★☆☆

**Lailey Vineyard 2004 Riesling**

*Niagara Peninsula* \$14 This delicious wine offers a mix of ripe fruit (peach, apricot and yellow plums) with just a hint of sweetness on the palate. A refreshing white like this is proof positive why Riesling is the ultimate unwind wine. It is the yummiest aperitif there is. [www.laileyvineyard.com](http://www.laileyvineyard.com)

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## NIAGARA RIELSING

★★★☆☆

**Peller Estates Winery 2004 Private Reserve Dry Riesling** *Niagara Peninsula* \$14.95 (641969) A nice, clean, refreshing Riesling, with characteristically Niagara notes of lime, pear and peach. This is simple, straightforward stuff for everyday drinking. [www.peller.com](http://www.peller.com)

★★★☆☆

**Reif Estate 2004 Riesling** *Niagara Peninsula* \$10.25 (111799) A honeyed apple aroma greets you on the nose of this soft and fleshy model of Riesling. The core of apple fruit flavour is countered by a vibrant lemony acidity that sweeps across the palate on the finish. This appealing and refreshing wine is tailor-made for warm, sunny days. [www.reifwinery.com](http://www.reifwinery.com)

★★★☆☆

**Ridgepoint Wines 2004 Riesling Medium Dry** *Niagara Peninsula* \$14.95 Another impressive showing from Ridgepoint and winemaker Arthur Harder, this enjoyable white makes the most of its peachy, citrus and floral character. It has a pleasantly fruity flavour, which means that it is an ideal wine to enjoy by the glass. [www.ridgepointwines.com](http://www.ridgepointwines.com)

★★★☆☆

**Grange of Prince Edward County 2004 Trumpour's Mill Riesling** *Niagara Peninsula* \$14.95 Produced from Wismer Vineyard fruit, this enjoyable Riesling offers a mix of peach and pear aromas and flavours. The palate is slightly off-dry with a lingering lemon/lime note on the finish. [www.thegrangewines.com](http://www.thegrangewines.com)

★★★☆☆

**Hillebrand Estates 2004 Trius Dry Riesling** *Niagara Peninsula* \$14.95 (303792) This fine Riesling will be best enjoyed in its first blush of youth. Some toffee notes on the nose and good weight and balance on the palate makes for a Riesling that is dry, rounded and easy to drink. [www.hillebrand.com](http://www.hillebrand.com)

★★★☆☆

**Inniskillin Wines 2004 Riesling** *Niagara Peninsula* \$11.45 (83790) A crisp, clean Riesling, with typical citrus and lime aromas and flavours. A bright splash of lemony acidity helps refresh the flavours on the finish. [www.inniskillin.com](http://www.inniskillin.com)

★★★☆☆

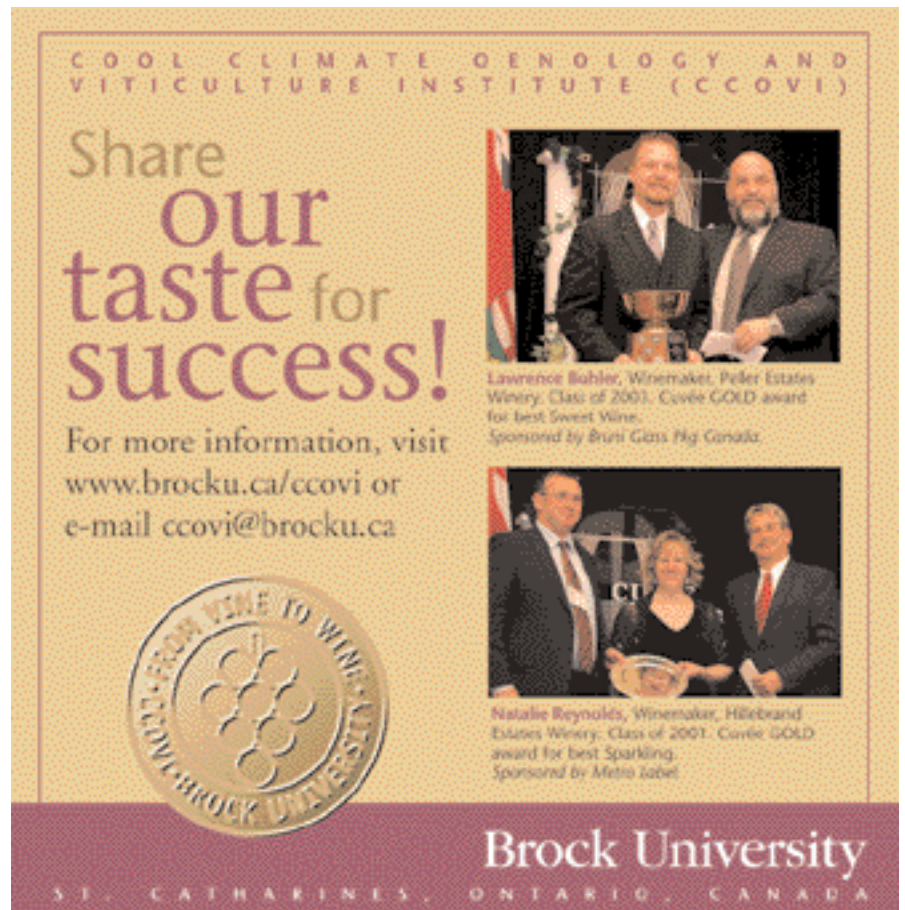
**Thirty Bench Vineyards 2004 Limited Yield Riesling** *Niagara Peninsula* \$18 This is unusual for Thirty Bench. It's a simple, pretty wine as opposed to the poised and focused Rieslings typical of the property. There's a candied element to the flavour profile and softer acidity than you might expect, but those traits lend this a crowd-pleasing, commercial appeal. [www.thirtybench.com](http://www.thirtybench.com)



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Lawrence Buhler, Winemaker, Peller Estates Winery. Class of 2001. Cuvée GOLD award for best Sweet Wine. Sponsored by Brusi Glass Pfg Canada.

Natalie Reynolds, Winemaker, Hillebrand Estates Winery. Class of 2001. Cuvée GOLD award for best Sparkling. Sponsored by Metrotabel.

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