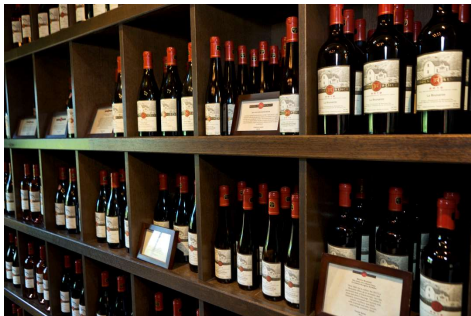


FROM THE CELLAR... HIDDEN BENCH VINEYARDS AND WINERY



YOU HAVE TO VISIT OUR WINERY BECAUSE...

“You’ll realize how much work goes into a bottle of wine.” – Harald Thiel, Proprietor and Vigneron.



Hidden Bench’s wine selection (above), and Harald Thiel explaining Hidden Bench’s winemaking philosophy (below).

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

August 1st, 2016

Arriving at Hidden Bench Vineyards and Winery, you get a sense of pride of ownership and forethought. The grounds are clean and maintained, the buildings homey and rustic. Overall, a consistency ties together each aspect of the estate.

THE LAY OF THE LAND

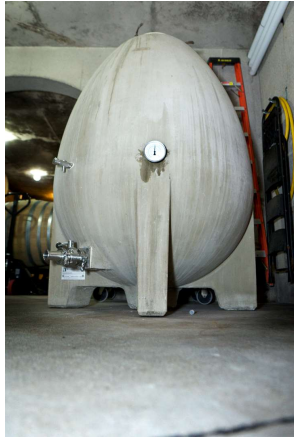
Hidden Bench Vineyards and Winery sits on 84 acres. Proprietor and Vigneron, Harald Thiel, purchased the vineyard in 2003, with his first vintage coming to fruition in 2005.

All aspects of the winery align with Harald’s business plan, which blends terroir, technology, sustainability, and, above all else, passion. The winery’s premium wines come from its 20 to 30-year-old vines, though it also has Riesling vines dating back to 1976.

Part of Harald’s vision consists of leaving the land in a better, healthier state than when he inherited it, which, for him, includes using geothermal energy and solar panels. In a similar vein, Hidden Bench has been certified organic since 2010, and uses only natural yeast, a decision that necessitates an ultra-clean cellar.

WINEMAKING PHILOSOPHY

Unabashedly a “*terroirist*,” Harald, with the aid of his winemaker, Marlize Beyers, strives to produce premium wines reflecting the vintage (year) and soil (terroir). Through a “non-interventionist” approach, Hidden Bench endeavours to create wines in as sustainable a manner as possible. To this end, the team relies on great attention to detail, gentle handling, and above all else, patience.



An egg-shaped amphora being tested.

ONE-ON-ONE WITH HARALD THIEL, PROPRIETOR AND VIGNERON OF HIDDEN BENCH VINEYARDS AND WINERY

While meandering through the winery's vineyards in a Kubota utility vehicle, Harald, with his trusty canine sidekick, Bismarck, occupying the front seat, opened up in a candid, personable way about his wines, his winery, and the wine industry. A hands-on owner by nature, Harald waxed lyrically about what he does, how he does it, and why.

Q: What do you like most about wine?

A: Every bottle reflects time and place, memories. You remember when and where you drank a special bottle.

Q: Of all the wines you produce, which one is your favourite and why?

A: I have many children, and I love them equally (he smiles).

Q: What is your ultimate favourite wine and why?

A: A 1970 Château Cheval Blanc. Euphoric. It was 75 francs in a restaurant at the time.

Q: What's the best part of your job?

A: Seeing people enjoy our wines.

Q: What's the worst part of your job?

A: The lack of control over the weather.

"There's lots of B.S. in wine. I try to take the B.S. out of it." – Harald Thiel

Q: What is your most embarrassing wine moment?

A: My most humbling moment is tasting blind.

Q: Tell us one thing about you or your winery that nobody else knows.

A: I really didn't like Riesling until I started making it.

THE TASTING...

At the tasting bar, Harald treated us to a wonderful selection of Estate (premium) and Terroir (ultra-premium) wines, each highlighting the inherent qualities of the Beamsville Bench. We started with the Natur (Estate series), a sparkling wine made from Pinot Noir and Chardonnay grapes in the traditional, Champagne style, and we ended with the 2012 Locust Lane Pinot Noir (Terroir series).

In between, we tasted the:

- 2013 Estate Riesling

- 2013 Roman's Block Riesling (Terroir Series)
- 2013 Felseck Vineyard Riesling (Terroir Series)
- 2013 Estate Chardonnay, a gold-medal winner at the Canadian Wine Awards
- 2013 Nuit Blanche (Terroir Series), a blend of 94% Sauvignon Blanc and 6% Sémillon
- 2013 Estate Pinot Noir
- 2012 Felseck Vineyard Pinot Noir (Terroir Series)

“Canadians can serve this wine with confidence against any wine in the world.” – Harald Thiel

The Felseck Vineyard Pinot Noir intrigued us with its complex nose, a combination of cinnamon, allspice, leather, pencil shavings, and graphite. However, the Felseck Vineyard Riesling emerged as our favourite, with its light petrol nose, beautifully balanced acidity, and green apple taste.

To further tease the palate, we highly recommend the Nuit Blanche, Hidden Bench's take on a Graves wine from the Bordeaux region. Having tasted some Graves while in Bordeaux, we actually prefer Hidden Bench's version. It must be the terroir that makes the difference...



A three-wine-bottle gift package.

FINAL NOTES

The blending of terroir, environmental conscientiousness, and pride of ownership not only produces great wines, but it creates an authentic, harmonious experience, a distinguishing feature of Hidden Bench Vineyards and Winery. Every aspect of the estate holds together, from the high density planting, to the gentle hand-picking, to the choice of vessels used during production, and we digress. If you haven't yet had the privilege, you owe it to yourself to try any of Hidden Bench's international-caliber wines.

Contact Hidden Bench Vineyards and Winery

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