

FROM THE CELLAR... ANGELS GATE WINERY

YOU HAVE TO VISIT OUR WINERY BECAUSE...

“We have the best view, and
the best location.” – Philip
Dowell, Winemaker at Angels
Gate



FIRST IMPRESSIONS

August 1st, 2016

The Angels Gate Winery grounds exemplify, not only the name of the estate, but its missionary history. Designed with care and forethought, the retail space feels vast, light, and refined. Beneath it lies an impressive production area with even grander ambitions.

THE LAY OF THE LAND

Purchased in 1995, the property sits on land previously owned by the Congregation of Missionary Sisters of Christian Charity. The winery planted its first vines in 1996 and opened its commercial doors in 2002. With 180 acres (equivalent to about 40,000 cases per year), the winery is expanding its production portfolio, having recently purchased a bulk facility down the road and a new, equally outstanding winery, [Kew](#).

WINEMAKING PHILOSOPHY

Winemaker Philip Dowell believes in wines expressing their origins, that is, where they're from and where they're made. They must be, according to him, as true as possible to their roots (pardon the pun). At the same time, he believes people should be free to taste and enjoy wines. If people take things too seriously, wine becomes boring, at least in his view.

ONE-ON-ONE WITH PHILIP DOWELL, WINEMAKER AT ANGELS GATE WINERY

During a scrumptious al-fresco lunch consisting of wood-oven, Italian-style pizzas and a glass of Archangel Chardonnay Brut 2011 (a 2016 All Canadian Wine Championships double-gold and sparkling wine of the year), Philip opened up about himself, his wines, and the wine industry. He shared his wealth of knowledge, as well as his ambition and pride. His honest and passionate delivery made for a refreshing afternoon.



A row of Angels Gate bottles with their clean labels (above) and Philip Dowell explaining the importance of the escarpment's geography (below).



A look inside Angels Gate's tasting room.

Q: What do you like most about wine?

A: Variability. Every wine is different and reflective of where it was made, when it was made. Wine is a memory. Every bottle you put in the cellar is a memory. Every wine has a story.

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

A: The sparkling wines... I started the sparkling business from scratch. This is the wine that can compete internationally.

Q: What is your ultimate favourite wine and why?

A: Château Latour, any year. It's good even in bad years. That classic Bordeaux, the consistency. I've had it as a birthday wine... If I had unlimited funds, it would be the one I would get.

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

A: The variability, the seasonality. Every vintage is new, there's no routine. And, it's a very social business.

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

A: Dealing with ladybugs. I've dealt with everything. I just can't deal with ladybugs.

Q: What is your most embarrassing wine moment?

A: I blew up the fermenter. I overfilled it and it blew the cover while fermenting.

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

A: When I was studying wine science, I worked externally. During that time, I worked as a ski instructor.

“Wine has to be fun. It's about the experience. Time is too short” – Philip Dowell

THE TASTING...

We spent two hours with Philip discussing wines and the wine industry. In fact, we ran out of time, so, with a list in hand from Philip, we returned the following day to sample Angels Gate's range of wines.

Our tasting began with the 2010 Riesling and ended with what emerged as our favourite, the 2011 Snow Angel Riesling Icewine. This medium yellow gold nectar tasted of clementines, tangerines, and pink grapefruit, with a hint of Riesling's characteristic petrol. Not overly sweet, it had a nice balance of sweet citrus and mineral notes in the finish.

In between, we tasted the:

- 2010 Mountainview Gewürztraminer
- 2013 Mountainview Semillon
- 2014 Pinot Gris

- 2014 Pinot Noir, our second favourite wine, a classic Pinot Noir, with cherry, plum, leather, raspberries and green oak notes
- 2013 Cabernet Merlot, a blend of 50% Cabernet Franc, 30% Cabernet Sauvignon and 20% Merlot

The wines' value pleasantly surprised us. All the wines we tasted cost below CAD\$20, with the Riesling, Gewürztraminer, Pinot Gris, and Cabernet Merlot coming in under CAD\$15.



Angels Gate tastings.

FINAL NOTES

The light, airy, and refined feel of the winery boutique left an enduring, favourable impression, as did the depth of Philip's knowledge. With an ambitious vision, Angels Gate Winery has the potential to be one of marquee estates in the Niagara region. As a bonus, each of its wines are an outstanding value.

You have to visit if you enjoy sparkling wines, Pinot Noir, and, especially, icewine (although they don't promote it much). And, if you have the time, make sure to stay for a wood-oven pizza on the terrace, so you can enjoy one of the best views in the entire region.

Contact Angels Gate Winery

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