

FROM THE CELLAR... HENRY OF PELHAM FAMILY ESTATE



YOU HAVE TO VISIT OUR WINERY BECAUSE...

“We have back-vintage wines,
we have history... There’s
heritage here.” – Paul Speck,
President, Henry of Pelham

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

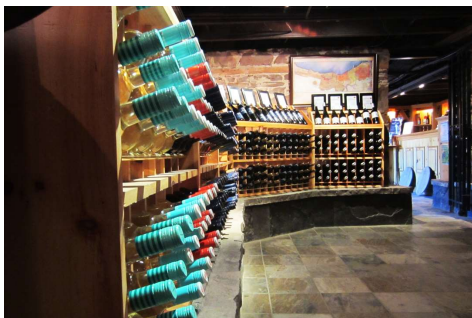
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Arriving on the grounds of the Henry of Pelham Family Estate, one of the oldest wineries in the Niagara region, we felt drawn to the rustic homestead, where tradition blends with ambition and good old fashioned hard work. We witnessed growth everywhere, in the vines and in the estate.

THE LAY OF THE LAND

The winery’s first Riesling and Chardonnay vines were planted in 1984. But, the family has held the land deeds since 1794! In 1842, the son of the original owner built an inn, a tavern, and a carriage house on the property. Today, these buildings serve as the tasting room and wine boutique.

Henry of Pelham produced its first vintage in 1988. Since then, the estate’s repertoire has expanded to include Sauvignon Blanc, Pinot Noir, and Baco Noir (our favourite). Today, the winery covers 275 acres, with this scheduled to reach 300 acres by next year.



*Paul Speck, President, Henry of Pelham Family Estate,
and a selection of his wines in the tasting room.*

WINEMAKING PHILOSOPHY

Paul, Matthew, and Daniel, aka the Speck brothers, strive to produce consistent wines from year to year, allowing the nuances of each growing season to shine through. They strive to compete on the world stage with every wine they produce and, in the process, showcase the Shore Hills Bench appellation.



A look outside the 1842 buildings now serving as the tasting room, wine boutique and the Coach House Café.

ONE-ON-ONE WITH PAUL SPECK, PRESIDENT OF HENRY OF PELHAM

In an exclusive tasting room on the second floor of the old farmstead, Paul Speck opened up about himself, his wines, and the wine industry. His candid, enthusiastic delivery brought a smile to everyone's face. He serves as a great ambassador for Henry of Pelham, the Niagara wine region, and the Canadian wine industry.

Q: What do you like most about wine?

A: I'm always amazed by it... I just like the diversity of it. I like to try wines from all over the world. I like that the same varietal can change depending on who makes it. It's like food. It never gets boring.

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

A: I have different favourites at different times of the year... When it's hot, I like to drink rosés, but I gravitate to Chardonnay and Pinot Noir all year long.

Q: What is your ultimate favourite wine and why?

A: In 1989, I was sitting in the vineyard. We had only 3 employees. We were bottling and had had a hell of a day. We had just finished our first Chardonnay and there was a partially-filled bottle, because something had screwed up. I poured a glass and tasted it. I still remember the oak. And, yeah, I loved it. Was it the best glass ever? No, but it was the first one where I sat down and truly appreciated a glass of wine.

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

A: It's always different. One minute I'm standing in the vineyard with Matt, then I'm meeting with Sandrine [Bourcier, our winemaker], then there's the tours. I love the agricultural component. Mother Nature deals you different things every year. It's a very small community and it's one of the only businesses that's still family-owned.

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

A: It's competitive behind the scenes, especially in the global market, and it can be frustrating sometimes.

"If a wine consistently earns medals and high ratings year after year, you know the house is good." – Paul Speck

Q: What is your most embarrassing wine moment?

A: There's a million of them (laughs). There was about 10 years when I didn't know sh*t about wine.

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

A: Keith Richards is my hero. I also like listening to heavy metal music.

[We thought his last answer paired well his Harley Davidson shirt. And, though he did not mention this, we know he and his wife love cheese, especially Riopelle. So if you stop by to say hello to Paul, feel free to bring some along.]

THE TASTING...

We tasted some great wines over the course of 2 hours, starting with the 2011 Carte Blanche, a Blanc de Blanc (i.e., Chardonnay-based bubbly) gold medal winner at the world Champagne tasting and ending with the 2014 Riesling Icewine, a sweet, yet refreshing desert wine long on citrus notes.

In between, we tasted the:



A look at Henry of Pelham's sparkling.

- Cuvée Catherine rosé brut (gold medal winner at the Ontario Wine Awards)
- Speck Family Reserve 2012 Pinot Noir
- Speck Family Reserve 2013 Chardonnay
- Speck Family Reserve 2013 Riesling (produced from original vines planted in 1984)
- 2015 Baco Noir "old vines"
- 2013 Bacon Noir Réserve (as of the 2014 vintage, it will be part of the Speck Family Reserve line)
- Speck Family Reserve 2012 Cabernet-Merlot
- Family Tree 2013 white (an interesting blend of Viognier, Chardonnay, Gewürztraminer, and Chardonnay Musqué)
- Family Tree 2014 red (a blend of Syrah, Merlot, Cabernet Franc, Cabernet Sauvignon, and Baco Noir)
- 2013 Cabernet Icewine

We're admittedly biased because Henry of Pelham's Baco Noir Réserve continues to hold the distinguished status of 'house red' in our home. Its medium ruby colour has notes of smoke, tobacco and Bing cherries in the nose, and cigar, leather, Bing cherries, vanilla and meat in the mouth. Cigar and leather dominate the finish.

Of the other wines sampled, the Riesling Icewine earned our top marks, with its light-to-medium gold hue, citrus and peach nose, and refreshing citrus sweetness in the mouth. The enduring citrus notes in the finish left us wanting more.

FINAL NOTES

A decorated, award-winning, family-based winery steeped in tradition, Henry of Pelham impressed us on numerous levels. Of all the wineries we visited on this trip, it distinguished itself through great attention to detail combined with an unwavering desire to compete on the world stage, something that will undoubtedly raise the bar for wineries in Niagara and across the country.

Contact Henry of Pelham

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