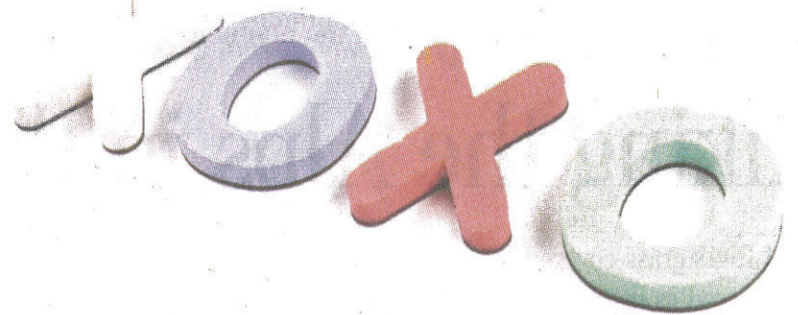


## SINCERELY (WITH LOVE)

Columnist Judith Timson wonders if xoxo is a proper email sign-off, T6



# TRAVEL & LIFE

> WINE LOVER'S ESCAPE



Hidden Bench store and barn at sun-up. This boutique winery in Beamsville, Ont., is adored by aficionados for its super-premium wines.

# Niagara Escarpment

*Celestial food, sublime wine and a heavenly setting; there's no better way to spend 36 hours*

**CAROLYN EVANS HAMMOND**  
SPECIAL TO THE STAR

On your behalf, I tripped to the Niagara Escarpment and tasted far and wide to find you the best bottles, food and lodgings in the region to map the quintessential wine-lover's 36-hour adventure.

The thrills include a 93-point bubbly, a fish dish and Riesling pairing that makes you believe in God and riveting reds and whites to wow even the most jaded wine snob.

Plan to arrive at about 11 a.m. for a glass of 2011 barrel-aged Blanc de Blanc (\$10) in the serene gardens of Kew Vineyards Estate Winery on King St. in Beamsville, Ont.

If you like Krug Champagne, you'll love this local expression of wooded sparkling Chardonnay at a fraction of the price. Cooked apple, lemon tart, buttered toast and roasted nut flavours shot through



Vinyasa White has just 70 calories per glass. It is sold at champion Canadian golfer Mike Weir's eponymous winery.

with mouth-watering acidity are a great way to start the adventure. I scored it 93 points.

Next, drive to Mike Weir Winery at 4041 Locust Lane in Beamsville. The famous Canadian golfer's winery makes some very fine juice, including the lowest calorie red and white in Ontario — 2014 Vinyasa White (just 70 calories a glass) that teems with chin-drip peach, and the 2014 Vinyasa Red (80 calories a glass) with saturated black forest fruit, cocoa and red meat. Don't miss the tightly coiled 2010 Reserve Merlot.

For lunch, visit Vineland Estates Winery in Vineland, Ont., and dine in the restaurant overlooking the vineyards. Try the pan-seared pickerel with chorizo, guacamole, peppernade, salsa verde and fingerlings with a glass of the 2014 St. Urban Vineyard Riesling.

NIAGARA continued on T4

>> TRAVEL

# In Beamsville, a highly acclaimed wine awaits



NIAGARA from T1

The off-dry, lime-rich Riesling with attractively salty finish refreshes and seasons the palate between each smoky-fresh-picante bite: greater than the sum of its parts.

Around 3 p.m., check into the Inn on the Twenty in Jordan Station, Ont. (rooms start at \$219). Ask for a suite with a private garden or loft for optimal charm. The inn is owned by Cave Spring Winery, so drop by the on-site boutique and taste the juicy-silky 2013 Gamay (\$16.95) and the luscious 2013 Riesling icewine (\$49.95) that brims with layered flavours of stone fruit, cooked apple and brown sugar.

For dinner, drive westward to Peninsula Ridge Estates Winery at 5600 King St. W. in Beamsville and dine on the verandah of the 1885 restored Victorian manor, with magnificent views of the escarpment, vineyards and lake. The grilled beef tenderloin with shaved foie gras, red wine reduction, fondant potatoes and wilted greens pairs perfectly with the lush 2012 AJ Lepp Merlot Reserve. At \$11 a glass, it is worth every penny.

After a good night's rest and breakfast at the Inn, visit Hidden Bench

Peninsula Ridge Estate Winery's dining verandah offers great views.

Vineyards and Winery at 4152 Locust Lane in Beamsville for 11 a.m. Taste why this boutique winery is adored by aficionados for its super-premium wines.

The 2012 Chardonnay Tête de Cuvée (\$45/bottle) could be mistaken for fine white Burgundy with its silky suggestions of orange oil, lemon blossom and buttered popcorn. And the 2013 Pinot Noir is all seamless finesse with tinned strawberry, violet, dried herbs and beetroot. Buy a bottle to tuck away for Thanksgiving.

Last stop: Rosewood Estates Winery at 4352 Mountainview Rd. in Beamsville, which makes award-winning wine, keeps bees and makes mead, a fermented honey drink thought to have first been made 40,000 years ago. A sip of the 2014 Mead Royale, swirling with buttered pecan, caramelized mango and lemon zest, makes a great finish to the day.

Carolyn Evans Hammond is a Toronto-based wine writer and London-trained sommelier and author. All visits to wineries, restaurants and lodgings were covered by Wine Country Ontario.



The Mike Weir Winery makes the lowest-calorie wines in Ontario.