

FOOD & DRINK

# Judgement Call

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*Photos Courtesy of The Judgement of Kingston  
and Ash Naylor Photography*





Even though it's just shy of noon, I'm not about to decline the perfectly chilled glass of white wine that's being placed in my hands as I settle comfortably into a 19th-century settee at Karlo Estates.

It's a brilliant summer morning in Prince Edward County, after all, and I'm meeting with Sherry Karlo and Saxe Brickenden to chat about the upcoming Judgement of Kingston, the Limestone City's premiere wine tasting event.

Crisp enough for the patio, smooth enough for cocktail hour, and dry enough for a dinner party, the winery's Three Witches Bordeaux blend that I'm sipping exudes a crisp citrus and wheatgrass scent; it's the perfect way to kick off our conversation.

*"The Judgement of Kingston offers an all-too-rare opportunity to put County wines against the quintessential wines of other regions,"* says Karlo, settling in beside me with her own glass of wine. *"It's really opened a lot of people's minds."*

### **The Judgement of Kingston**

Set to take place Nov. 2 at the Residence Inn by Marriot (*Water's Edge*), the highly-anticipated Judgement of Kingston has sold out each year since its inception four years ago, when a group of wine-loving professors from The Royal Military College and Queen's University – known as The Royal Winers – were inspired by the history behind the 2008 comedy drama *Bottle Shock*. In the film, California wines defeat world-renowned French wines in a blind



tasting that left the wine world open-mouthed – in more ways than one.

That first year, the blind tasting witnessed some of the best wines from PEC go glass-to-glass with some of the greatest California chardonnays. Prince Edward County's Rosehall Run took first, with the California wine placing second. Third place also went to a PEC wine from Closson Chase.

The years that followed have proven County wines can hold their own amongst some of the world's best, and there's no doubt that this year's competition – which will pit pinot noirs of the County against some from New Zealand – will continue to prove locally-produced wines have certainly earned their place on the world stage.

### **A Toast to Local Wines**

*"There some serious winemakers in Prince Edward County, who are doing great things with wine,"* says Lubomyr Luciuk, self-professed wine aficionado and the Judgement of Kingston's chief organizer.

While lovely sippers can be found in multiple locations across Canada, including the Niagara Peninsula, Niagara on the Lake, and the Lake Erie South Shore, why travel such a great distance when you can raise your glass a mere 40 minutes' drive away?

The Judgement of Kingston is the perfect way to toast to local wines, and the unique terroir that makes them possible.

*"The limestone-rich soils of Prince Edward County produce wines with an unmistakable sense of place,"*





## What's better than wine that supports a great cause?

The Judgement of Kingston is a completely volunteer-run and not-for-profit event. All wines and silent auction items are donated.

Since its inception, the event has raised more than \$10,000 for the University Hospitals Kingston Foundation and the Cancer Centre of Southeastern Ontario.

This year, proceeds from the event will be donated to Martha's Table and the Christmas Hampers of Hope Fund.

says the Prince Edward County Winegrowers' Association. *"The natural minerality of the soil is highlighted in the wines along with other flavours developed from the nutrients and minerals that the grapes absorb as they grow."*

Many of the wineries in the County specialize in refreshing chardonnays and luscious pinot noirs, which do particularly well in the region thanks to the moderating lake effect on the climate, and since these wine varieties tend to beautifully absorb the characteristics of the soil.

That said, there are County wine-makers with an *"adventurous spirit,"* says the Association, who are experimenting with Cabernet Franc, Reisling, Gamay, Pinot Gris, Baco Noir and Merlot.

More and more entrepreneurial wine-lovers are taking note of the opportunities available in the County, and are joining the nearly 50 wineries that can be found there. It's now one of the fastest-growing wine regions in all of Ontario.

*"The growth is the result of the County's unique and fortunate position of having great limestone soil*

*for the creation of elegant wines, a lovely rural ambiance, and a geographic position that puts it within a three-hour drive of almost 12 million people in the GTA, Ottawa and Montreal,"* explains David Lawrason, wine writer and educator.

Events such as the Judgement of Kingston are the perfect way for those tentatively putting a toe in the wine-drinking waters to sample what's growing right in our own backyard.

*"From my point of view, the Judgement is really good because it gives people the chance to see how good Ontario and Prince Edward County wines are relative to international wines,"* says Colin Stanners, owner of Stanners Vineyard. *"A lot of people don't realize how good the wines are right here at home. They think of California and France as being so much superior. This event is really good because it gives people a chance to see how these*

wines really do stack up to them. It lets people see how good our wines really are."

Brickenden agrees. "You really don't know how your wines compare, its characteristics, and how it manifests itself until you have the opportunity to taste them side-by-side, blind," he says. "It really is revealing."

Karlo and Stanners can attest to the absolute quality of their wine; they've each been awarded multiple accolades for their vineyard's mouth-watering wines.

Among many (many!) others, Stanners 2017 Pinot Noir was given a score of 93 points by Jamie Goode, a UK wine writer and judge, while Karlo Estate's 2017 Estate Chardonnay won a gold medal at the All Canadian Wine Championship.

These awards, and others like them that are being awarded to wineries across the County, prove without

a doubt that our wines — despite being produced in a relatively new region — have great flavour...and even greater potential. Let's all cheers to that, shall we?

### Making a Judgement

So, who will be crowned the winner at this year's event? It's anyone's best guess.

"New Zealand generally has a warmer climate than PEC, so the wines will have more ripeness of flavour, deeper colour and rich texture or body," says Lawrason. "But that alone doesn't make them better if using my definition of quality."

"Quality," according to Lawrason, is a measurement of balance, aromatic and flavour intensity, complexity, length of finish and how well its origin is expressed. These things can be applied to wine from anywhere.

And so, the winner, says Lawrason, will depend on how the judges evaluate the wines, and what their personal criteria is.

One thing's for sure, however: like past years, this year's Judgement of Kingston is sure to please the palate, no matter which wine is victorious.

"There has been such long-held negativity about Canadian wine," Lawrason says. "The wines were not good at one point. But Canada is making huge strides in quality and Canadians need to know that."

Not only that, it's just plain fun, says Luciuk. It's far from snobbish; anyone from an experienced connoisseur with a posh palate and a swirling tick, to a casual sipper that just enjoys a little tippie every now and again will enjoy the event.

So, let's raise our glasses and cheers to locally-grown grapes; after all, it's what's inside the glass — and on our palate — that counts.



## Who will be crowned as the victor this year?

When County Pinot Noirs go head-to-head with wines from New Zealand? Find out Nov. 3.

Don't miss out; tickets are available online. They're just \$85, and they are already almost sold out.

[www.judgementofkingston.ca](http://www.judgementofkingston.ca)