

Blasted Church Winery Bursts Out of the Chute

First there was the blast heard through the South Okanagan. That was 73 years ago.

Then, earlier this summer, came the gasp heard 'round the entire province. Suddenly we had one more British Columbia winery. But this one is no wallflower wannabe. This one started with a bang. This one is Blasted Church.

For one, how can you resist at least a look at a wine called Blasted Church? What's that name all about, anyway?

And when you do see your first bottle, you'll probably gasp like everybody else does. *This* is a B.C. wine label? But it's so...outrageous, colourful, cartoony, off-the-wall, and—this is the clincher—nothing at all like a B.C. wine label.

Let's face it: while some of our wineries have created graphically pleasing labels, none has taken things to the heights of Blasted Church. These stickers leap out at you from all the rest—they want to jump off the shelves. They say (all *Alice in Wonderland*-like), "Drink me!" Bet you can't buy just one; they're characterized by graphics of grinning characters; big, bold colours; topsy-turvy typography; not a faux chateau anywhere; not a quasi-Deutscher name in sight.

And marketing consultant Bernie Hadley-Beauregard wanted it that way. It's exactly what he set out to do: show off a new winery with a blast. Hadley-Beauregard got the go-ahead from Chris and Evelyn Campbell, the owners of the fledgling winery. First, they said, let's

do something about the name.

Someone needed to do something about the name: when the Campbells bought the winery in May, it was called Prpich Hills. Although the original owner was named Dan Prpich (who therefore had every right to name the winery after himself), his initial labels bore an uncanny resemblance to those of a similarly vowel-bereft California winery called Grgich Hills.

All right, Prpich had to go, but was Campbell a great winery name? Thought not. So the new owners engaged designer, marketer, and creative guy Hadley-Beauregard to do it all: new name, label design, promotional stance, the lot. A little historical research got him the name, a few phone calls with illustrator Monika Melnychuk got him the graphics.

(He had contacted Ralph Steadman about doing some design, but the two couldn't come together on it; anyway, Melnychuk's work is, based on what I've seen here, brilliant.)

So here's a little history: In the spring of 1929, a crew set out from Okanagan Falls for a deserted mine site. Their mission: to dismantle a wooden church and bring it back to town. The plan called for a controlled blast of dynamite sticks,

inside the church, in order to "loosen the nails". Oddly enough, the explosion spared the wood from damage and did just that; today the 103-year-old church stands proudly on its second footing, right there in OK Falls. Okay, they did lose the steeple in



Uncorked
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the process, but so it goes.

On to the wines: There are already four whites and two reds; you can ask for some of them at restaurants like CinCin, Coco Pazzo, Owest, Raincity Grill, Zefferelli's, and at a few of the private wine stores. So far for whites we have Pinot Blanc, Chardonnay, and Riesling, as well as a blend of Chasselas, Gewürztraminer, and Optima known as Hatfield's Fuse. All except the Chardonnay are 2001s. (The name of the blend comes from local lore: one Frank Hatfield had the honour of lighting the fuse that set off the church blast.) The two reds are a Lemberger and a Merlot-Cabernet, both 2001.

In the right-hand column we find a spread from \$12 (Hatfield's Fuse) to \$17.90 (Merlot-Cab). We liked the Chardonnay and the Riesling, but we absolutely *loved* old Hatfield: lovely aromas, an unusual, complex rush of flavours (it is a unique blend,

not just for the Okanagan, but anywhere), good depth and balance—come next summer I expect we'll be sipping on lots of it. The fact that it's the cheapest of the wines doesn't hurt, either.

The Merlot-Cab (\$14.90) wants to rest for a couple of years but shows plenty of promise; I just think it's still way too young to drink. The Lemberger is the one to get started on (although it, too, could safely keep four or five years, no worries).

The winery has all of two acres of vines, so there won't be a lot of Blasted Church about; I'd consider getting a box or two into the basement. Think lamb chops, grilled with just fresh mint and oregano, and a tomato-onion salad...

So that's the story so far: Blasted Church wines came out of the chute with a big bang. Sit back and sip some. I think there's going to be some serious wave-making here. ■