

Dan Aykroyd – actor, musician and vintner – is building a winery of his own in the Niagara Peninsula.

Name brands

Raise a glass this fall to a memorable crop of celebrity wines

You've watched them on the silver screen, on the links and on stage – but have you tried their wines? Celebrities have been turning out some fabulous wines under their own labels for decades.

Fess Parker Winery, for example, was established in 1989 in Santa Barbara County in California. You may remember it from the movie *Sideways* (it's the one where the server refuses to pour Miles a full glass of wine, so he guzzles the spit bucket instead). In the 1950s, Fess was the star of TV's *Davy Crockett*, a show that struck a cord with millions in its day. Now, his wines are the stars.

Closer to home, Ottawa-born comedian, leading man – and long-time wine-business investor – Dan Aykroyd is building his own winery in the town of Lincoln, Ont., in the Niagara Peninsula, where Birchwood Estates now sits. "I love the drinks and I love entertainment, and I think celebrity's a good fit," says Dan, who plans to bring his band to the opening party of the Dan Aykroyd Winery.

GOLFERS' VINTAGE

• Lately I discovered the marvellous wines of Ernie Els. His flagship Ernie Els Bordeaux-style blend is worth every penny of its high price. His Guardian Peak label offers much more accessible wines with forward fruit and good value pricing.

Whites



NHL Alumni Darryl Sittler Signature Chardonnay 2007
\$17.95

The goal of this Chardonnay isn't to be the best; it's made to appeal to wine neophytes – namely beer-drinking hockey fans – and seduce them over to the other side. Creamy and ripe with tropical and melon tastes, it's easy on the palate. (See sidebar: "New and Notable.")



Francis Coppola Presents Bianco Pinot Grigio 2006
\$15.45

This white from the lauded American filmmaker will have you saying, "I believe in America." It's like biting into a fresh peach. Mild, rounded and fruity, it's a friendly table wine for all-day drinking.



Andretti Winery Napa Valley Sauvignon Blanc 2006
\$24.95

Namesake and founder Mario Andretti is famous for speeding around the racetrack. You'll get a smooth ride from this racy white with tangy passion fruit and pineapple tastes. Quite full-bodied, it's impressive and in control on the palate.



Mike Weir Sauvignon Blanc 2007
\$15.95

A fine vintage from the Canadian golfer, its grassy notes will have you thinking the fairways have just been shaved. That's what you want in a cool-climate Sauvignon. Minerals, lemon-lime and hints of tropical make it a great all-rounder.

Dessert wines



Dan Aykroyd Signature Reserve Vidal Icewine 2005
\$79.95/375 ml

Produced by the actor in partnership with Diamond Estates Wines & Spirits, this Wine of the Year (per the Ontario Wine Awards 2008) is uniquely fermented and aged in French oak. Rich, dense with brown sugar and toffee notes, it's like drinking liquid apricot crumble.



Wayne Gretzky Shiraz Icewine 2006
\$55/375 ml

A sweetly seductive wine like this shiraz is sure to find many fans. Pretty pink-coloured with a strawberry-jam flavour uplifted by a nice tangy finish, this handsome offering from No. 99 is truly honeyed nectar.

Reds



Fess Parker Frontier Red Anniversary Edition Lot No. 81
\$20.95

Plump, soft with lots of ripe fruit and game flavours (think duck breast with a sweet berry sauce), this red blend of six varietals will have you tossing your imaginary coon hat in the air and hollerin' with joy. Send Mom a bottle so she can dream of that handsome Crockett.



Greg Norman Shiraz 2005
\$24.95

Some say shiraz wines are one of the most famous exports from Australia, but I say the Great White Shark's a pretty fine example of what the country has to offer. His wines are great, too. Rich but balanced, this smooth red has a smoky blackberry and mocha character with dark-chocolate undertones.



MacMurray Ranch Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 2006
\$21.95

Actor Fred MacMurray purchased the ranch in the 1940s, when his acting career was shining brightly. A lovely tribute to the late actor who starred in the iconic sitcom *My Three Sons*, this red will tickle your fancy with its spiced strawberry, cherry and earthy notes.

NEW AND NOTABLE

• The hockey players' association has entered the wine biz. California's Ironstone Winery supplies the wine, and the NHL supplies the iconic names for the NHL Alumni Signature Wine Series. For instance, Chicago Blackhawks greats Bobby Hull and Tony Esposito lend their names to a Chardonnay and a Cabernet, respectively. Toronto is such a hockey town that three marquee players have been venerated with a label: Wendel Clark (Merlot), Doug Gilmour (Cabernet Sauvignon) and Darryl Sittler (whose Chardonnay is reviewed above). Proceeds go to the Hockey's Greatest Family Fund and charities chosen by the players.



Wendel Clark Merlot 2006
\$17.95

Doug Gilmour Cabernet Sauvignon 2005
\$17.95

