

ONTARIO HIGHLIGHTS

A critic's guide to Niagara wineries

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Hidden Bench Vineyards and Winery

Harald Thiel ran a successful audio/visual business with his brother before cashing out in 2003 to focus on a lifelong passion. Settling on prime land in the Beamsville Bench district, he aimed for the stars. Fine restaurants soon flocked to his door begging for the superpremium rieslings and Burgundian-styled pinot noirs and chardonnays. The two best offerings, though, are based on the Bordeaux model, a superb \$40 white called Nuit Blanche blended from sauvignon blanc and semillon and an \$85 red called La Brunante, made from merlot, cabernet sauvignon, malbec and cabernet franc. 905-563-8700, www.hiddenbench.com.