

A timely spring update from British Columbia's world of wine

by [Kurtis Kolt](#) on April 27th, 2016 at 12:00 PM

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- Expect Chambar's adventurous wine program to be maintained under new wine director Kieran Fanning. Ema Peter

Spring is always a busy time in the world of wine, both in the vineyards and in the marketplace. The warm weather and longer, sunnier days are a bonus and seem to make the wine taste even better. This week, a little catch-up with some of the latest goings-on.

It's been quite a warm spring in the Okanagan and Similkameen valleys; bud break has happened in most vineyards, with shoots sprouting out from vines already reaching the four- or five-centimetre mark. This means the growing season is considered to be a couple of weeks "early" compared to the majority of previous vintages, although it was the identical scenario last year.

Many in wine country are wondering if global warming has made early the new normal. Time will certainly tell. In the meantime, if things roll along relatively smoothly, the first grapes for things like sparkling wines will be coming off the vines in early August.

A little shuffling has been going on among Vancouver's sommeliers, too. As the *Straight* recently reported, Chambar's Jason Yamasaki, who was British Columbia's 2015 sommelier of the year, has left his gig as Chambar's wine director, moving to the corporate wine-buyer position at the Joey restaurants. Stepping into his position at Chambar is Kieran Fanning, who has been promoted from the assistant-sommelier position and, at 24 years old, is likely the youngest guy with the biggest wine gig this town has seen in a long time. He's whip-smart, supermotivated, charming, humble, and everything else a guy or gal needs to be to knock it out of the park in a position like this. We're going to be hearing his name a lot in coming years. The adventurous spirit of the Chambar wine program shows no sign of slowing down anytime soon.

Speaking of Chambar, that's where I recently had the pleasure of meeting Nik Weis—the owner of, and winemaker for, Germany's St. Urbans-Hof winery—when he was passing through town. The winery has a long history of propagating old genetic material from various active and dormant vineyard sites, salvaging many clones of Riesling that were in jeopardy of being lost forever. "We've been creating a sort of Noah's ark for Riesling," he said.

In fact, cuttings from their nursery have made their way all over the world, even to our own back yard. When you enjoy a bottle of British Columbia's Tantalus or Sperling Vineyards "old vines" Riesling (and you should be doing so regularly, by the way), that fruit comes from vines that came from St. Urbans-Hof in the late 1970s. Do try some of the original stuff from Germany, though. St. Urbans-Hof 2014 Old Vines Riesling is full of apples, stone fruit, and well-balanced acidity, with just a touch of sweetness on the finish, and it's on B.C. Liquor Store shelves for \$24.99.



Provence Marinaside's Rachelle Goudreau oversees one of the city's best wine-by-the-glass programs.

Emrys Horton

Thibaut Marion, Domaine Seguin-Manuel's owner-winemaker, was also recently in Vancouver. Marion has been taking the winery, established in 1824, in a more natural, less interventionist direction. We're about to see a greater selection in our market, but for now—if you're looking to splurge a little—the Domaine Seguin-Manuel Les Lavières Savigny-lès-Beaune Premier Cru 2011 is a drop-dead gorgeous Pinot Noir from 45-year-old vines grown in alluvial soils. It's full of alpine forest aromatics, bright red fruit, and a little white truffle on the finish. Find it at private stores like Legacy Liquor Store in Olympic Village for just over 60 bucks.

If you're looking for one of the best by-the-glass wine selections in town, Rachele Goudreau's wine program at Provence Marinaside now boasts more than 140 wines by the glass, from an impressive B.C. selection on tap—which includes exclusives from the likes of Fairview Cellars in Oliver—to high-end wines like Domaine Latour-Giraud Les Genevrières Meursault Premier Cru 2012 (\$50 per glass). For wine fans, it's like being a kid in a candy store. Goudreau employs methods like the Coravin system, which extracts wine from the bottle without allowing in oxygen, to ensure each and every glass served is as fresh as can be.

Finally, who's into a little road trip? It's time once again for the Okanagan Spring Wine Festival, running from April 28 to May 8. You can dive into the early warm season in the Okanagan and attend everything from the big WestJet winetasting (the walk-around grand-festival-style event) to the Best of Varietal wine-awards reception to a Mother's Day rosé brunch at Watermark Beach Resort. All the info you need is at thewinefestivals.com/.