

**Domaine de Grand Pré****2006 Castel Vintner's Reserve
(Nova Scotia)**

Castel is a French American hybrid (specifically a V. riparia X Gamay cross), which was bred to take severe winters, ripen early with high Brix (fermentable sugar) and produce big crops. My own experience twenty-five years ago as a winegrower/maker with this variety was disappointing: The grape did all of the above, but the wine sure didn't inspire a letter home to Mom. That said, Grand Pre winemaker Jurg Stutz would be wholly justified to send off proud letters to the family back in Switzerland about his achievement with this 2006 Castel.

The breakthrough with Castel in Nova Scotia begins with grower John Warner, who has positioned the variety on the higher slopes of his Lakeville vineyard, the largest commercial vine growing operation in Nova Scotia. John is rather more stingy with buds than I was in my day, and that is probably evident in the superior concentration of flavors in the fruit he was able to deliver to the Grand Pre winemaker.

To be sure, this is a fruit-forward wine, albeit not in the long hang-time over ripeness that we often associate with "fruit bombs". The alcohol here is a hard-earned, naturally produced 13 percent. But the blueberry/blackberry/rhubarb compote nose and flavors come immediately at you, flowing in an amazingly violet opaque wave, that resembles free-run Baco Noir spilling out of the press. There is also a touch of leafiness (where over-ripe wines just offer candy) and a nice sprightly acidity to remind us that, for all its fruitiness, this is a cool climate production. Jurg Stutz has made a promising début for Castel. In fact, I believe the great fruit of this wine could, in the future, carry more wood and tannin. A variety and winemaker well worth watching grow in stature.

Reviewed February 6, 2008 by [Roger Dial](#).

THE WINE

Winery: [Domaine de Grand Pré](#)

Vintage: 2006

Wine: Castel Vintner's Reserve

Appellation: [Nova Scotia](#)

Grape: Castel

Price: \$16.00

THE REVIEWER**Roger Dial**

Under various hats

(winegrower/maker/negotiant/writer)

Roger Dial has been tasting wine professionally for 40 years. He regards varietal and regional diversity as the best virtues of wine, and is

ever-suspicious of the quest (by producers and critics, alike) for "universal greatness". His tasting regime is simple: Is the wine technically sound? Is it interesting? Warning: he's a sucker for all aromatic varieties.