

**Reif Estate Winery****2002 First Growth Cabernet Sauvignon  
(Niagara River)**

This wine won the Gold Medal in the 2007 Ontario Wine Awards in the Cabernet Sauvignon category. It is rare for an Ontario red to be 100 percent Cabernet Sauvignon since this is a difficult variety to ripen fully (usually winemakers will add Cabernet Franc and Merlot). The 2002 vintage was unusual in that the growing season began late with overall cooler temperatures and more rainfall than average. But July temperatures soared, surpassing seasonal highs, and maintained throughout the summer period. This allowed longer hang time.

These grapes from Reif Estate's 14-year-old block of Cabernet Sauvignon – thinned to 2 tonnes per acre – were harvested on November 2nd with Brix levels at 22.6°. The ripe fruit underwent fermentation using selected yeast for 14 days in 40 percent French and 60 percent Hungarian oak and spent 36 months in barrel before being bottled unfiltered. Only 150 cases were made.

The dense ruby colour still holds its purple hue to the rim of the glass. An immediate bouquet of cedar and pencil shavings opens to red berry fruit with a floral grace note. Medium to full-bodied on the palate, savoury flavours of licorice and currants mixed with spicy oak offer great length. A lovely wine in Médoc style.

Reviewed September 3, 2007 by [Tony Aspler](#).

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**THE WINE**

**Winery:** [Reif Estate Winery](#)

**Vintage:** 2002

**Wine:** First Growth Cabernet Sauvignon

**Appellation:** [Niagara River](#)

**Grape:** Cabernet Sauvignon

**Price:** \$50.00

**THE REVIEWER****Tony Aspler**

Tony Aspler has been reviewing wines since 1975 and will continue doing so until he gets it right. Although his license plate is *CLARET*, he enjoys all wines except sparkling Retsina. He says he's not a wine critic but a wine evangelist because he wants to turn readers onto wine rather than turn them off. His style is telegraphic rather than poetic because there are only so many ways to say 'mellow tannins'.