



- [05/01/09 Mother's Day Brunches in Vancouver and Victoria](#)
- [04/29/09 The Whole Hog](#)
- [04/21/09 Local Grain: Rip-off or Rebellion](#)
- [04/16/09 Wine Islands Tasting Notes](#)
- [04/14/09 The Village Family Market](#)
- [04/10/09 Jamon Iberico de Bellota](#)
- [03/25/09 Food Security Forum: What's in our Regional Food Basket?](#)
- [03/24/09 Bringing Burgundy Wines to Canada. Canadians experience Burgundy wines with three wine trade events](#)
- [03/17/09 Spinnakers' Cask Beer Festival](#)
- [03/12/09 What Is Slow Food?](#)

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04/28/09 The Naramata Bench Spring Release

KATHRYN MCAREE



The Naramata Bench Spring Release events held in both Vancouver and Victoria last week were a smashing success. Sold out in both cities, I was thrilled the winemakers brought the Naramata Bench to Vancouver Island!

I attended the Victoria tasting overlooking the harbor at the **Inn at Laurel Point**. It's a stunning spot and was a real treat to see the setting sun from the patio where Skyla and Oz from Greenlaw were performing their stylin' tunes. I may have been on the patio in the queue for the crispy duck risotto more than once... Chef Brad Horen and team did a fabulous job of scallop and mango ceviche, mini lamb burgers, and a vast cheese table...but it was the crispy duck risotto that had me going back for more. I even made others who were awaiting their risotto with empty glasses replenish as it was a sin not to pair! Luckily **D'Angelo Estate Winery** was nearby and their *Pinot Noir* accompanied the risotto nicely. There was a great vibe in the room and people were really enjoying themselves.

I know the idea of a tasting is to make your way around the room, but I found myself stuck in front of many tables. First there was the *2007 Pink Elephant Methode Champenoise Sparkling* from **Elephant Island Orchard Wines**. The dry, raspberry bubbles are divine. I also spent an inordinate amount of time at the **Kettle Valley Winery** table enjoying their *Pinot Gris*, the fabulous *Gewurztraminer* from **Hillside Estate Winery** and even longer sipping *Riesling* from **Red Rooster Winery** which paired well with the scallop and mango ceviche. Loved the **Red Rooster Reserve Merlot** as well. Everyone was talking about **Laughing Stock Vineyards' Portfolio**, a Bordeaux blend aptly named by the former stockbroker vintner, but it was the classically blended *Legacy* from **Poplar Grove Winery** that stopped me in my tracks.

Perhaps I should have been doing more spitting... I couldn't help myself in both the silent and live auction led by Terry David Mulligan. (If you're a child of the 80's as I am, you'll know who Terry David Mulligan is...if not, there's always *Google!*) There were some great wine collections as well as a whole line-up of magnums all signed by the vintners. I ended up with one of the five 3 litre magnums...don't ask me how much that set me back! Just know I can hardly wait to savour the collaborative Bordeaux blend from **Hillside Estate Winery**, **La Frenz Winery**, **Lake Breeze Vineyards**, **Laughing Stock Vineyards** and **Soaring Eagle Winery**. The Naramata Bench certainly knows how to do it up right!

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