



Regional Appellation Overview

Inspiring elevations, classic minerality, refreshing wines

Niagara Escarpment is one of two regional appellations within the Niagara Peninsula appellation. Regional appellations are a combination of smaller appellations with similar character and winemaking experience.

Representing the bench lands along the Niagara Escarpment, west of St. Catharines to Grimsby, this complex region encompasses three sub-appellations: Short Hills Bench, Twenty Mile Bench, and Beamsville Bench. The air circulation and frost protection provided by the bench topography and steady water supply define unique conditions for grape berry maturation across this region and contribute to the distinctive and refreshing style of bench wines.

NOTABLE FEATURES

The Niagara Escarpment is recognized by UNESCO as a World Biosphere Reserve and is the most prominent topographical feature of southern Ontario. This regional appellation draws together the three appellations that share the fossil rich sedimentary soils and dramatic topography adjacent to the escarpment ridge. The Niagara Escarpment supports a vital ecosystem, with hundreds of unique species of birds, mammals, reptiles, fish and flora, including 37 types of wild orchids.

STATISTICS

GROWING DEGREE DAYS (AVG.): **1415**
 FROST FREE DAYS: **205 (-2°C)**
 JULY MEAN TEMPERATURE: **22.5°**
 GROWING SEASON: **April to October**
 PRECIPITATION: **543mm (grow season)**
 COMMON VARIETALS: **Pinot Noir, Sauvignon Blanc, Cabernet Franc**
 PRODUCTION (2012 REPORTING YEAR): **33629 (9L cases)**
 NUMBER OF APPROVED WINES: **37**
 NUMBER OF WINERIES: **22**



Terroir Overview

Topography

The benchlands begin below the ridge of the Niagara Escarpment, a prominent feature cutting across the Niagara Peninsula. Below the forested ridge, a myriad of north-facing slopes characterize this appellation. The topography ranges from a distinct bench in the west Beamsville Bench, backed by steep cliff faces, through a double bench in the Twenty Mile Bench, to undulating hills in the east Short Hills Bench. Another important topographic feature are the many streams and their tributaries whose headwaters rise from the Escarpment. These streams have cut through the land, creating multiple slopes and are important both as a groundwater source and to provide water drainage during the spring melt.

Soil Characteristics

From highly variable soils consisting of water-stratified clay and silt to rich calcareous clay loam, most of this area's soils are deep and moderately drained with good water-holding capacities. Combined with ground water flowing from the base of the Escarpment during the dry summers, these soils provide steady moisture to vines throughout the growing season, while the slopes provide excellent natural drainage. The fossil enriched sedimentary dolomites that underlie this appellation contribute to the distinct minerality found in many bench wines.

Climate

Sheltered from the stronger prevailing southwesterly winds by the Niagara Escarpment, and enjoying lake breezes reflected by the escarpment ridge, the bench land micro climate is well moderated throughout the year. With the higher elevation, temperatures warm gradually in the spring, encouraging later bud-burst and avoiding risks of frost. In the fall, the escarpment slopes trap warm lake air and allow for an extended season for grape maturation.

