



Niagara Peninsula

Appellation Overview

Diverse terroir, vine friendly micro climates, remarkably complex wines

The Niagara Peninsula has the largest planted area of all viticulture areas in Canada. Situated at approximately N43 latitude this prime and diverse appellation is characterized by rich, fertile soils and unique microclimates, which provide ideal conditions for producing wine grapes with more complexity and intense flavour than in many warmer climates.

The classic cool-climate varieties such as Riesling, Chardonnay, Gamay Noir, Pinot Noir and Cabernet Franc flourish here, and the region now boasts over 32 thriving varietals across 13,600 acres. The Niagara Peninsula continues to shape a rapidly expanding premium wine industry in Canada as the home to approximately 85% of Ontario's wineries.

NOTABLE FEATURES

One of the deepest of the Great Lakes, Lake Ontario's water mass moderates air temperatures year-round. In concert with the appellation's second notable feature, the Niagara Escarpment, this shapes the perfect climate to nurture grape vines.

STATISTICS

- GROWING DEGREE DAYS (AVG.): **1413**
- FROST FREE DAYS: **198 (-2°C)**
- JULY MEAN TEMPERATURE: **22.3°**
- GROWING SEASON: **April to October**
- PRECIPITATION: **546mm (grow season)**
- COMMON VARIETALS: **Riesling, Chardonnay, Merlot, Cabernet Franc**
- PRODUCTION (2010 REPORTING YEAR): **967315 (9L cases)**
- NUMBER OF APPROVED WINES: **505**
- NUMBER OF WINERIES: **73**



Terroir Overview

Climate

The Niagara Peninsula is a cool-climate appellation ideally situated near N43° latitude, with relatively high shifts in day-night temperature and substantial sunshine during the growing season. This combination provides for the development of more complex and intense grape flavours during ripening than warmer climates can provide.

The constant circulation of off-shore breezes between Lake Ontario and the Niagara Escarpment, profoundly moderates seasonal temperatures across the appellation. In fall, breezes from the summer-warmed Lake waters raise land temperatures and prevent cold air from settling in lower-lying areas, and extend the growing season well into fall. In spring, breezes from the winter-cooled Lake slow down spring warming, holding back the development of fruit buds until the danger of late spring frosts has passed and ensuring an even start to the season. These lake effects vary considerably with distance from the lakeshore and topography, giving rise to remarkable flavour distinctions between grapes of lakeshore sub-appellations and those from further inland.

Topography

Bordered by Lake Ontario on the north, the Niagara River on the east and the Welland River and Hamilton to the south and west, the Niagara Peninsula is the largest and most diverse Viticultural Area in Canada.

The Niagara Peninsula can be divided into three broad physiographic areas: the Lake Iroquois Plain; the Niagara Escarpment; and the Haldimand Clay Plain. Passing directly through the appellation is the Niagara Escarpment, rising to some 335m (575ft.) above sea level. This north-facing cliff formation is the essence of the appellation, providing the slopes (determining sunlight) and elevations (determining the influence of breeze and lake effects) that distinguish unique sub-appellations and a diverse range of grape-growing conditions.

Soil Characteristics

Over the last 200,000 years, the Niagara Peninsula experienced several glacial and interglacial events that eroded and shaped the layers of sedimentary rock and ancient reef structures of the Niagara Escarpment. This extensive glacial history in the region also gave way to complex soil compositions in the area between the Escarpment and Lake Ontario, where thick layers of clay are permeated with silts and sands.

Variation in soil composition and drainage across the appellation allows for many different varieties to thrive and produces distinctive sub-appellation terroirs that contribute their own character to root development and, in turn, to vine and grape development and to the nature and personality of the wine.

