

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Appellation

A wine appellation is a place where grapes were grown to make wine described by a unique place name. These wines are known as appellation wines or wines of origin. Each appellation characterizes a particular area with unique characteristics that are found in the area, such as soil, geology, climate, and topography and may also have a reputation for a specific wine style or grape variety.

Bench

A land feature consisting of a strip of land that runs along a sloped area. Typically a step feature on the way down a hillside, the bench interrupts the rapid decline in elevation with a gently sloped area. Benches are typically formed by successive deposits and erosions by a river in a floodplain. In the case of the Niagara Escarpment bench, it represents the historic shoreline of ancient Lake Iroquois.

Escarpment

An escarpment is long ridge of cliffs or steep slopes that break the general continuity of the land by separating it into two levels. The Niagara Escarpment was formed by glaciers and is a major topographical feature of the Niagara Peninsula.

Frost-free Days

The number of days from the last spring frost to the first fall frost, during which uninterrupted vine growth and ripening occur.

Growing Degree Days (GDD)

Growing Degree Days is a calculation of the number of days each season where the mean daily temperature is above the minimum temperature required for vine growth. The cumulative mean temperature for all days above the minimum is the GDD for the season. On the VQA Ontario website, GDD figures are calculated for April through October. GDDs are used to assess the suitability of the growing season for particular crops or varieties and as a guide to anticipated planting and harvesting times.

Hybrid Grapes

Hybrid grapes refer commonly to those grape varieties which are the product of a crossing between two or more different *Vitis* species. Most VQA wines are made from *Vitis vinifera* species but VQA wines may also be made from a select group of 8 hybrid grapes. The most recognized hybrid variety in Ontario is Vidal Blanc, which has proven to be a stellar performer for Icewines.

Mesoclimate

The discrete climate conditions of a specific localized area. Mesoclimate falls between the larger macroclimate, for example Southern Ontario, and the smaller microclimate. It is often used to refer to a specific vineyard site or adjacent sites that are unique and very similar.

Regional Appellation

Regional appellations are smaller than a viticultural area but contain more than one sub-appellation. The Regional appellations of Niagara on the Lake and Niagara Escarpment are wholly within the Niagara Peninsula but both encompass several sub-appellations. These areas identify a collective of common geographical features and recognize historical name associations with each region.

Sub-Appellation

Sub-appellation are a smaller area within an appellation that have been identified with unique geographical conditions. Sub-appellations in the Niagara Peninsula were identified after a lengthy technical study identifying common and unique traits related to geology, soils, topography, climate and growing conditions.

Terroir

"Terroir" describes a special set of conditions that contribute to the character of a wine. Individual terroir of a vineyard or a larger region is defined by the type of soil, bedrock, weather and growing conditions, topography, type of grapes planted and wine making influences. These factors combine to give each wine its own personality and often a recognizable connection to the local terroir.

Varietal

A wine made principally from one grape variety and carrying the name of that grape on the label. For example Cabernet Franc, Chardonnay, Riesling. The dominant grape variety is often a signal of the taste and weight of the wine. Wineries may also produce wines that blend many varieties together – an art that has long been practiced to produce great wines.

Vitis Vinifera

Vitis vinifera is a species of grape originating in Europe and with a long history of winemaking. The so-called *noble* varieties have been established worldwide in wine producing countries including Canada and included the much recognized Chardonnay, Riesling, Cabernet, Pinot Noir, Pinot Grigio, Shiraz, Merlot, Gamay and hundreds of others.

Viticultural Area

A viticultural area is an appellation that is more specific than the Province but may contain sub-appellations. In Ontario, the term viticultural area is the legal term used in VQA regulations.

VQA Reporting Year

VQA Ontario reports statistics based on its corporate year of April 1 to March 31. The year referenced is the year in which the period ends. For example, VQA reporting year 2009 is the 12-month period ending March 31, 2009. Wine data such as volume or number of wines is based on the wines that were evaluated and approved during the reporting period – the reporting year is never equivalent to the vintage date.