

## VINTAGE REPORT 2016

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Niagara Peninsula – Lake Erie North Shore – Prince Edward County

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### Conditions

The weather story across Ontario's wine growing regions was exceptionally good for the 2016 vintage. Winter was relatively mild and much more comfortable for grape growers than the few previous seasons. Early spring conditions were quite variable with some significant temperature swings but ultimately converging on averages.

By mid-May, the vintage settled into a sustained pattern of much drier than normal and slightly warmer than normal. Soil moisture levels were well below

normal for the entire growing season and drought was of some concern by late summer. Summer thunderstorms replenished water levels in some areas but they were erratic, with some vineyards experiencing downpours while their neighbours remained untouched.

Hot, dry weather prevailed throughout August, with lots of sunshine and just enough rain to keep drought conditions from becoming too severe. With their deep root systems, mature grape vines withstand dry conditions

well, and quality often improves as the vine focuses its energy on producing fruit when under stress. Targeted irrigation was required to sustain the young vines planted recently to fill in sporadic damage from the cold 2014 and 2015 winters. Weather conditions were very similar in all appellations with the exception of a short but major rain event in Lake Erie North Shore in September. In all, the growing season presented outstanding opportunities for grape quality across Ontario.

### Harvest

The warm summer meant an early start to harvest for some and the weather was very cooperative. Both September and October were warmer and drier than normal, with limited disease pressures, and providing optimal conditions for final ripening and harvest. Grape

quality is reported to be very high for both white and red varieties.

Preliminary registrations for Icewine and Late Harvest grapes show 4210 tonnes of grapes netted for the 2016 season. This is a slight decrease from last year's

4860 tonnes and likely reflects continued strong demand for VQA wines and the need to rebuild supply in the table wine category after two years of smaller grape harvests. The Icewine harvest officially began on December 14, 2016.

## Wine Expectations

2016 provided close to perfect conditions for wine grapes and promises to produce some great wines. Virtually all grape varieties performed well in this

growing season and the dry and pleasant harvest season meant most grapes were picked in pristine condition. This quality should be evident in both the core cool climate

varietals where Ontario excels and for the many less common but very interesting varietals grown here.