

ONTARIO WINE  
APPELLATION AUTHORITY



*Ontario's wine*  
**APPELLATIONS**





## NOTE

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Production statistics are based on the year April 1 2022 to March 31 2023. Statistics are updated annually on our website at [www.vqaontario.ca](http://www.vqaontario.ca).

Annual Production by geographical area includes VQA-certified wines that carry an appellation included in that geographical area. For example, Niagara Escarpment includes all wines that carry the following appellations: Niagara Escarpment, Beamsville Bench, Twenty Mile Bench, Short Hills Bench.

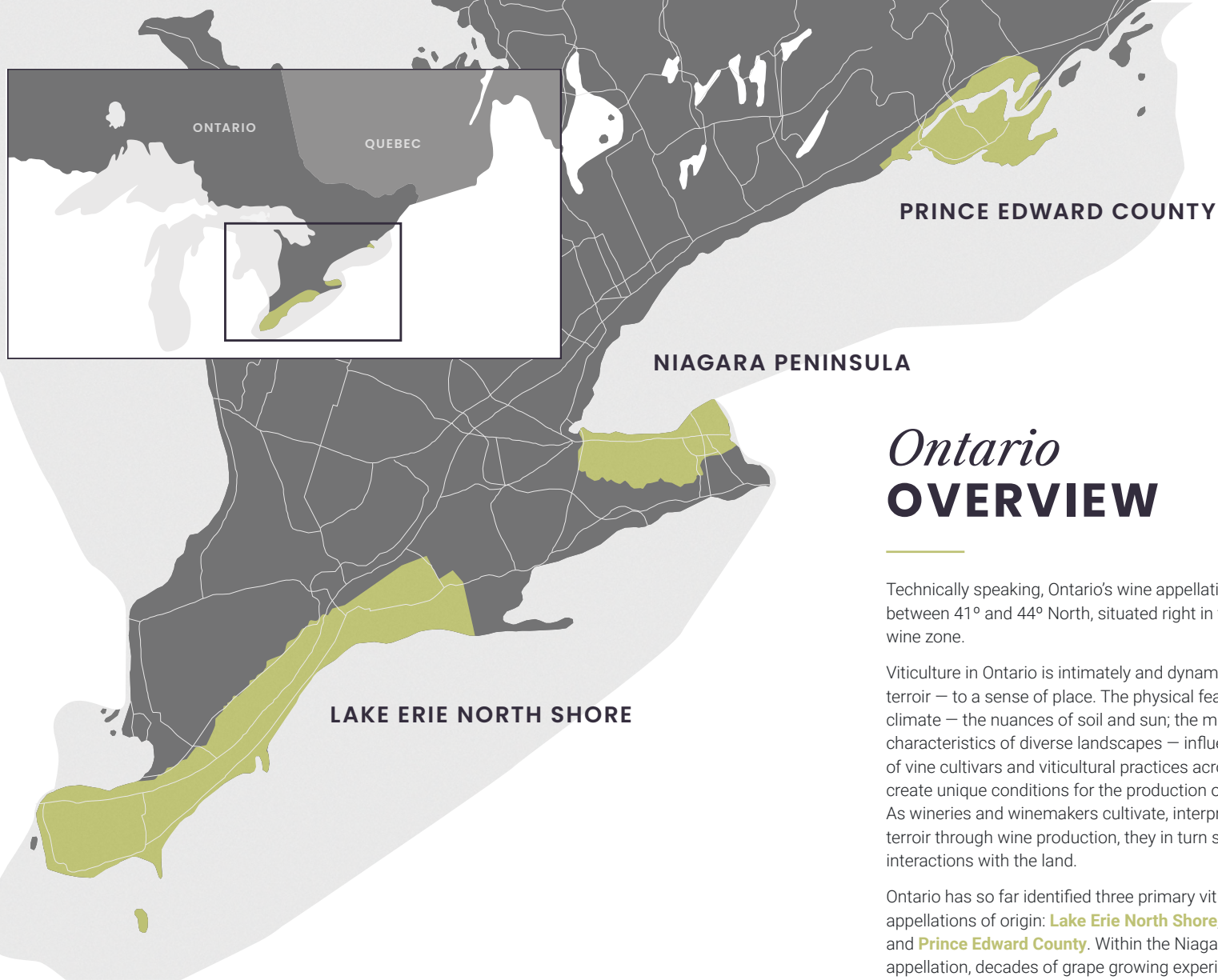
Common Varietals listed are the top varieties across all production (single varietals and blends) for each appellation.

For more information please email us at [info@vqaontario.ca](mailto:info@vqaontario.ca)

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### NOTABLE FEATURES

Stretching along the centre of the world's cool-climate wine belt, Ontario appellations share similar growing season characteristics with some of the most recognized and respected wine-growing regions of the world.

## Ontario OVERVIEW

Technically speaking, Ontario's wine appellations are located between 41° and 44° North, situated right in the world's fine wine zone.

Viticulture in Ontario is intimately and dynamically related to terroir — to a sense of place. The physical features of land and climate — the nuances of soil and sun; the minerality and taste characteristics of diverse landscapes — influence the choice of vine cultivars and viticultural practices across Ontario and create unique conditions for the production of grapes and wine. As wineries and winemakers cultivate, interpret and elaborate terroir through wine production, they in turn shape our tastes and interactions with the land.

Ontario has so far identified three primary viticultural areas or appellations of origin: **Lake Erie North Shore**, **Niagara Peninsula**, and **Prince Edward County**. Within the Niagara Peninsula appellation, decades of grape growing experience and extensive geographical research has identified ten distinct growing areas. These sub- appellations include areas on the plains close to Lake Ontario and the benchlands of the Niagara Escarpment.

**ANNUAL PRODUCTION (2022-2023):**  
2,791,123 (9L cases)

**NUMBER OF WINERIES:** 193

**NUMBER OF VQA WINES:** 2,329

## 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 creates the perfect climate to nurture grape vines.



# Niagara Peninsula APPELLATION

## DIVERSE TERROIR, SHELTERED SLOPES, LAKESIDE VINEYARDS, A WORLD OF CHARACTER IN ITS WINES

The Niagara Peninsula has the largest planted area of all viticultural areas in Canada. Situated at approximately 43°N latitude this diverse appellation is characterized by rich, fertile soils and unique meso climates, 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. The region supports a diversity in viticulture, boasting over 46 thriving varieties across 13,600 acres. The Niagara Peninsula continues to shape an expanding premium wine industry in Canada, being home to approximately 55% of Ontario's VQA wineries.

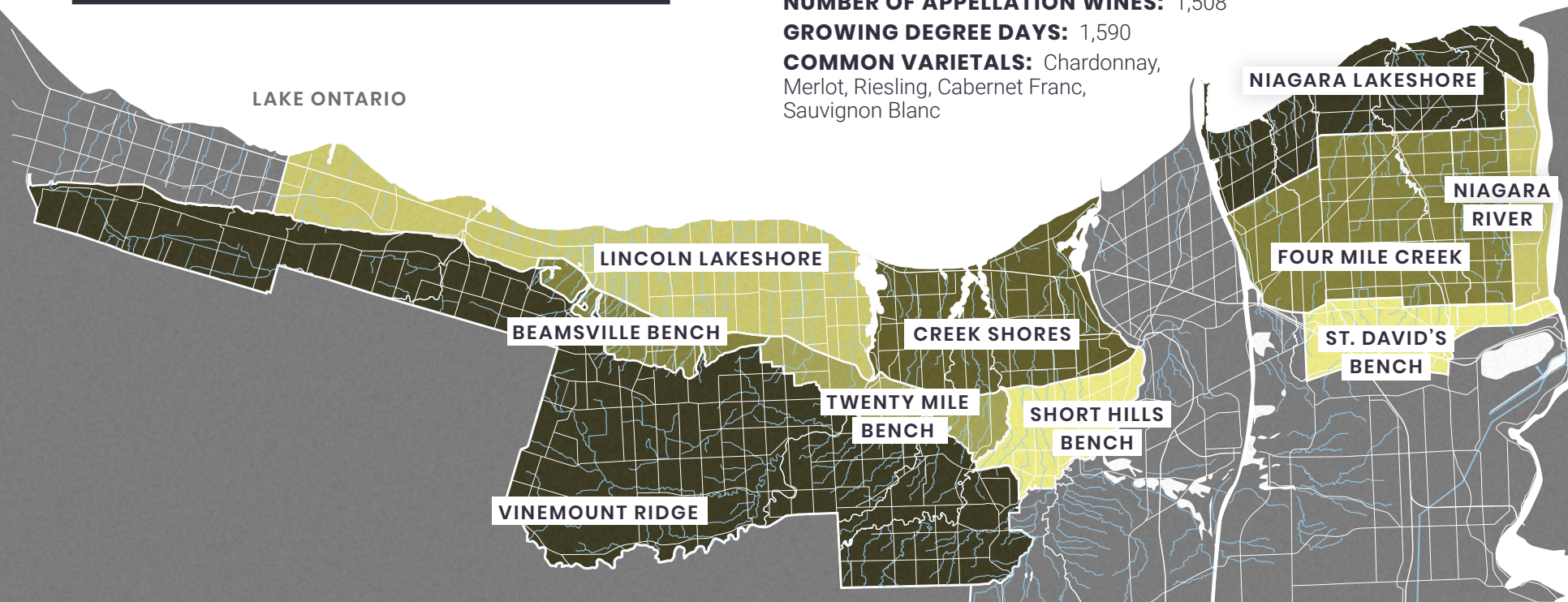
**ANNUAL PRODUCTION (2022-2023):** 1,205,074 (9L cases)

**NUMBER OF WINERIES:** 104

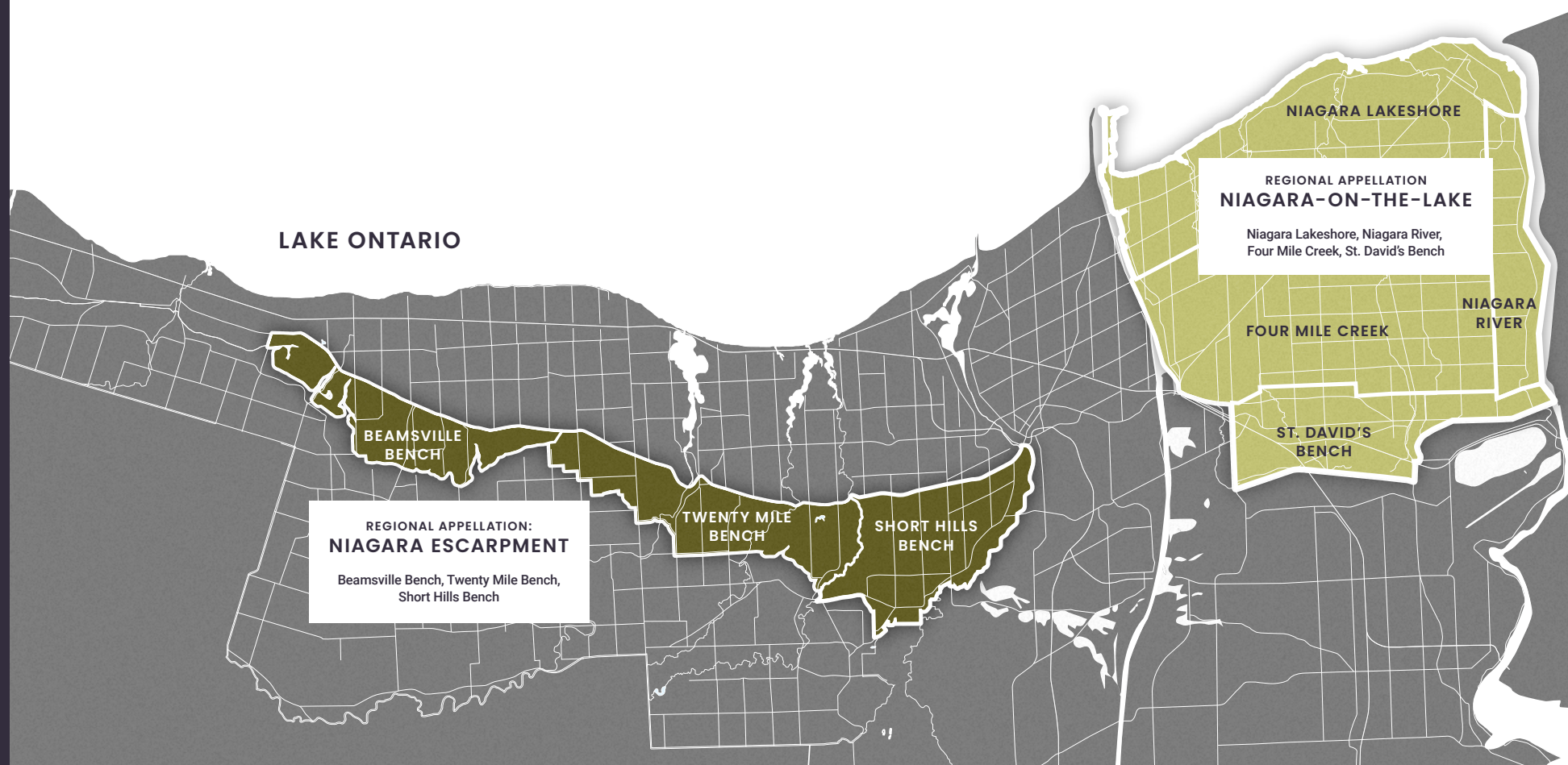
**NUMBER OF APPELLATION WINES:** 1,508

**GROWING DEGREE DAYS:** 1,590

**COMMON VARIETALS:** Chardonnay, Merlot, Riesling, Cabernet Franc, Sauvignon Blanc



# *Niagara Peninsula* **REGIONAL APPELLATIONS**





## NIAGARA PENINSULA

*Niagara-on-the-Lake*  
**REGIONAL  
APPELLATION**

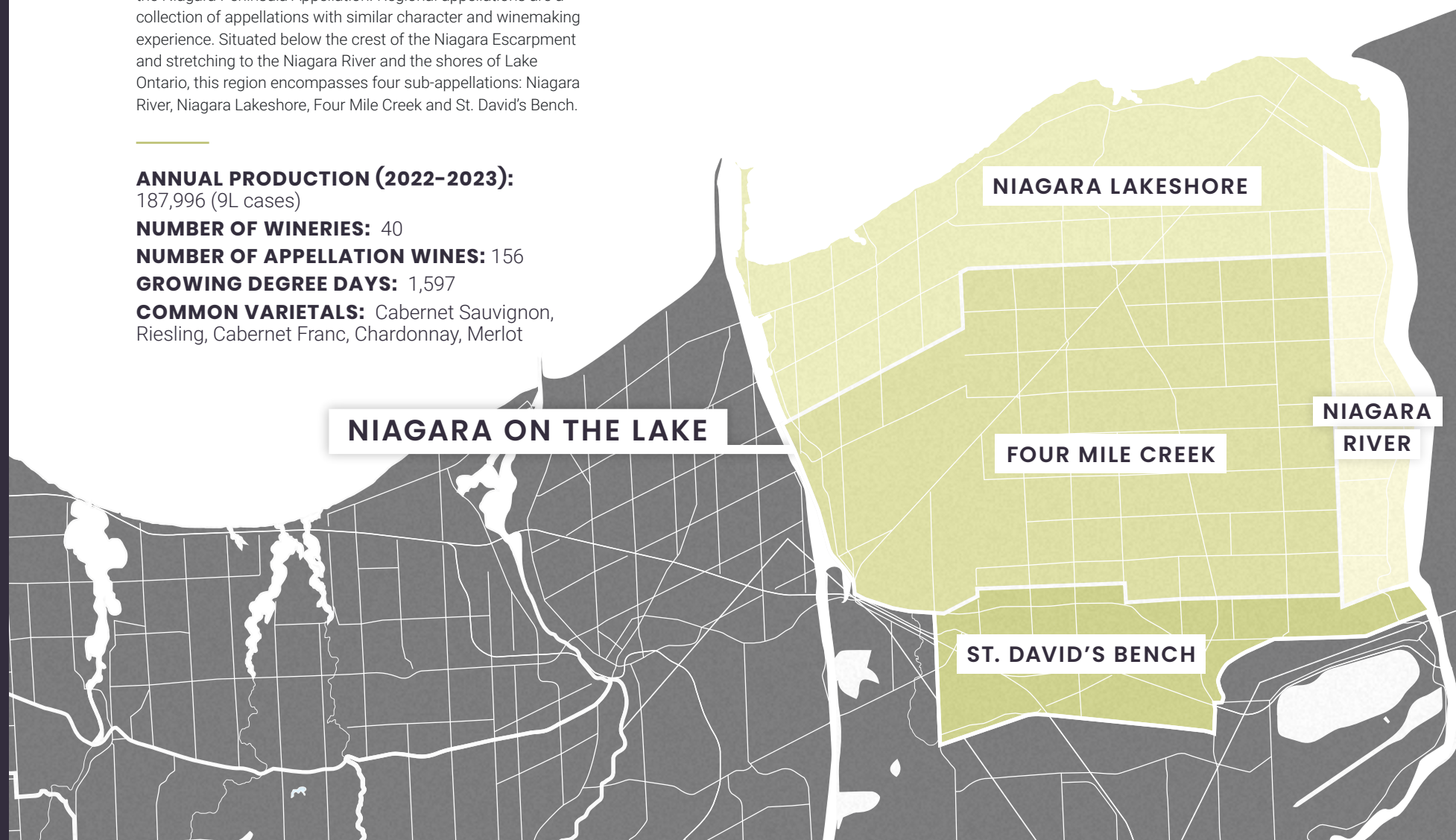
Niagara-on-the-Lake is one of two regional appellations within the Niagara Peninsula Appellation. Regional appellations are a collection of appellations with similar character and winemaking experience. Situated below the crest of the Niagara Escarpment and stretching to the Niagara River and the shores of Lake Ontario, this region encompasses four sub-appellations: Niagara River, Niagara Lakeshore, Four Mile Creek and St. David's Bench.

**ANNUAL PRODUCTION (2022-2023):**

187,996 (9L cases)

**NUMBER OF WINERIES:** 40**NUMBER OF APPELLATION WINES:** 156**GROWING DEGREE DAYS:** 1,597**COMMON VARIETALS:** Cabernet Sauvignon, Riesling, Cabernet Franc, Chardonnay, Merlot**NOTABLE FEATURES**

Niagara-on-the-Lake is the heart of Ontario wine culture and a world-renowned wine country destination. The region is becoming well known for its annual celebrations of terroir-focused foods and wines.



## NIAGARA PENINSULA

*Niagara Escarpment*  
**REGIONAL  
APPELLATION**

The 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.

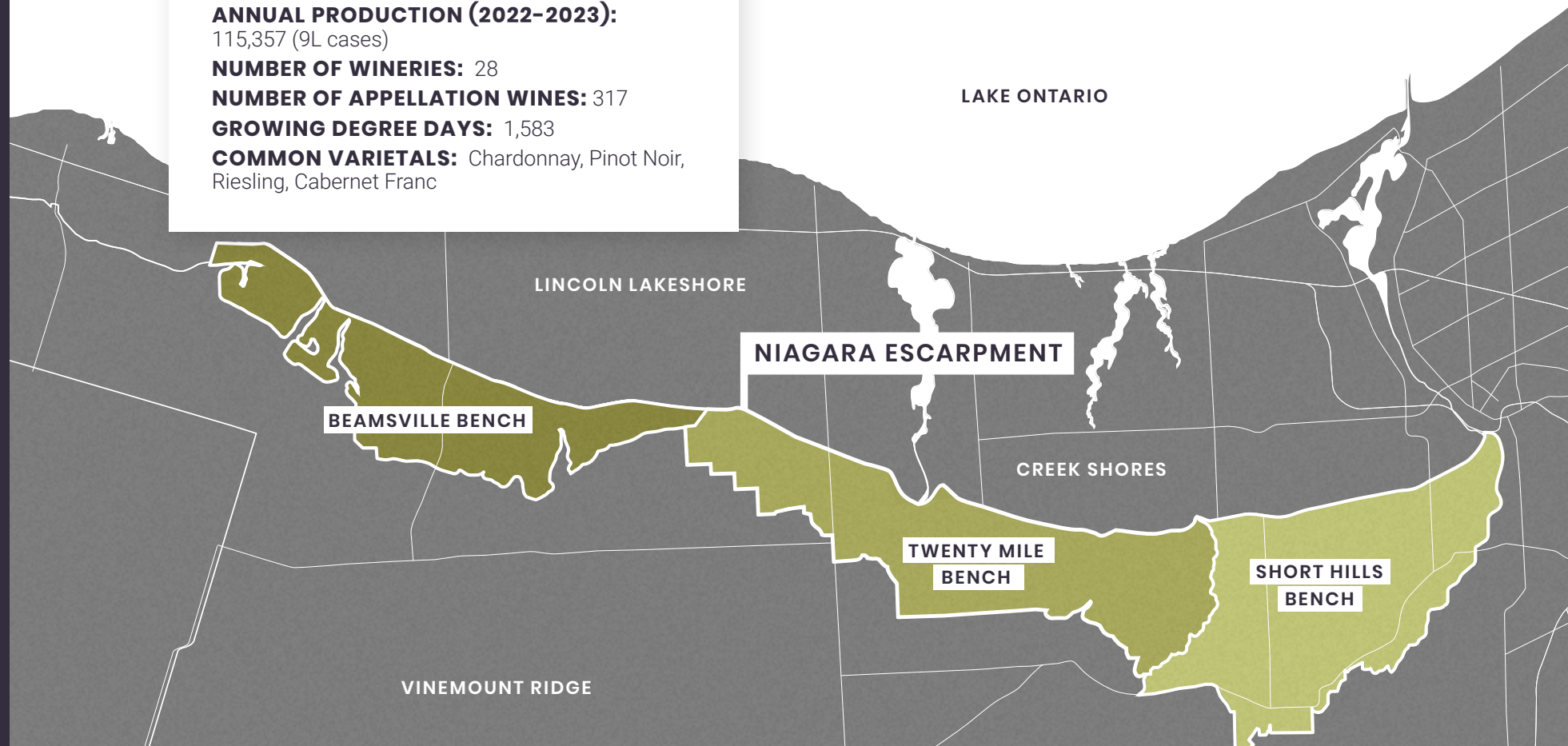
**ANNUAL PRODUCTION (2022–2023):**

115,357 (9L cases)

**NUMBER OF WINERIES:** 28**NUMBER OF APPELLATION WINES:** 317**GROWING DEGREE DAYS:** 1,583**COMMON VARIETALS:** Chardonnay, Pinot Noir, Riesling, Cabernet Franc**NOTABLE FEATURES**

Niagara Escarpment is recognized by UNESCO as a World Biosphere Reserve and has the most prominent topographic features 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.



### NOTABLE FEATURES

The mineral rich soils and complex landscape of the Beamsville Bench provide ideal conditions for growing grapes. Sloping vineyards backed by the escarpment, moderating breezes and excellent drainage all contribute to the natural character of the wines from this appellation.

### NIAGARA PENINSULA

## *Beamsville Bench* SUB-APPELLATION

### SLOPING BENCHLANDS, LIMESTONE ENRICHED SOILS, FRESH ELEGANT MINERALITY

The Beamsville Bench, running from the creek gully just west of Cherry Avenue to Park Road west of Beamsville, is the narrow plateau sloping gradually from the cliff of the Niagara Escarpment northwards to Regional Road 81, marking the bottom of the crescent-shaped Lake Iroquois Shore Bluff. To the west, the Bench rises into the moderate slopes of the Bell Terrace, where many of the area's vineyards are located, on steep slopes above deep, wooded ravines and on the sides of small ridges and slopes of the numerous streams that cut through the landscape. This sub-appellation reaps the benefits of the bench topography which provides the continuous air circulation that moderates temperature and results in consistent growing conditions. Soils are generally deep and well drained and numerous streams provide seasonal water supply.

### ANNUAL PRODUCTION (2022-2023):

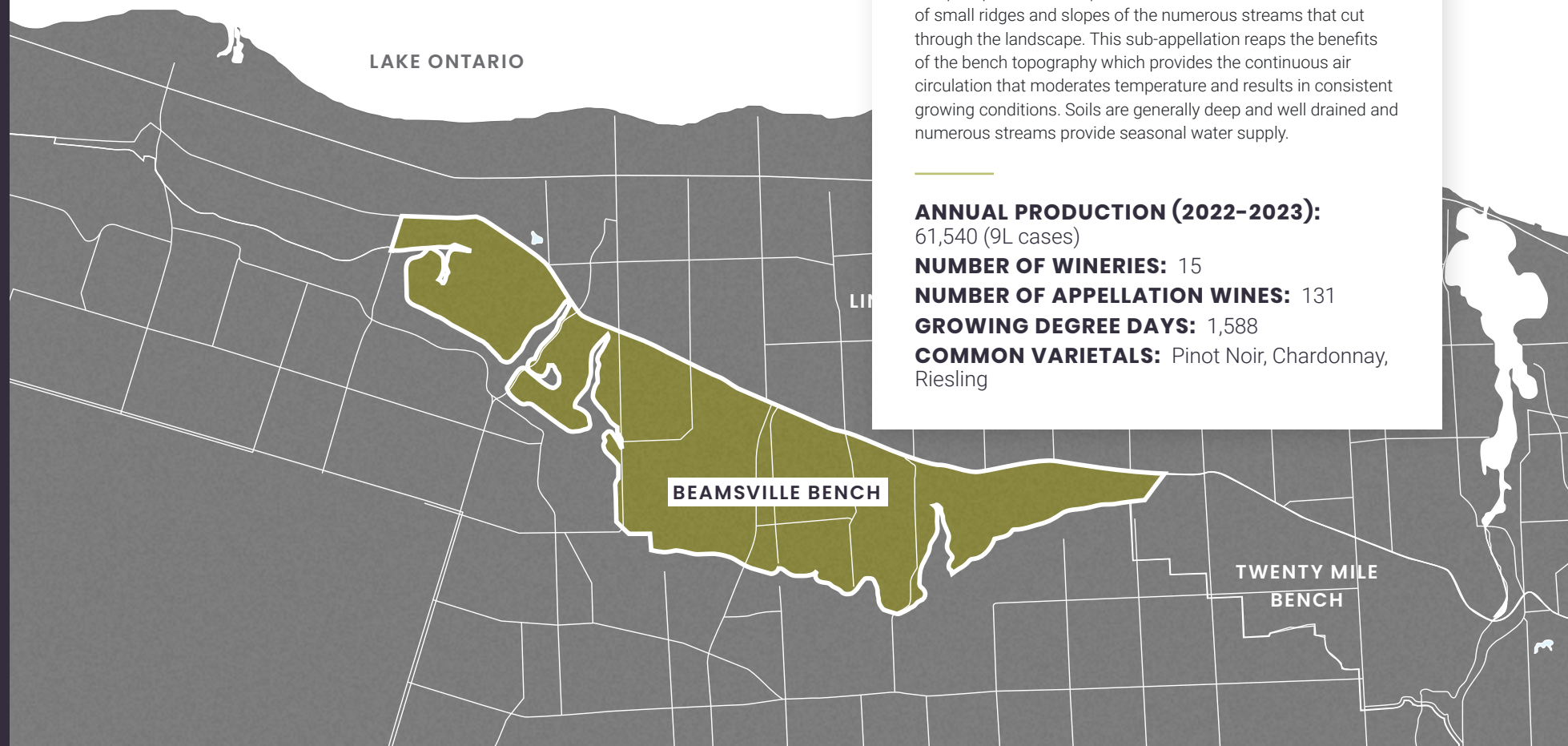
61,540 (9L cases)

**NUMBER OF WINERIES:** 15

**NUMBER OF APPELLATION WINES:** 131

**GROWING DEGREE DAYS:** 1,588

**COMMON VARIETALS:** Pinot Noir, Chardonnay, Riesling





### NOTABLE FEATURES

With its relatively high elevation, and double bench formation, Twenty Mile Bench enjoys long periods of sun exposure during the summer and fall. Lake breezes pushing up against the Escarpment circulate the warm air and extend warm daytime temperatures into the evening, encouraging an even and continuous ripening process.

### NIAGARA PENINSULA

## *Twenty Mile Bench* SUB-APPELLATION

### COMPLEX TOPOGRAPHY, DOUBLE BENCHES, DEEP SOILS, REFLECTIVE WINES

The Twenty Mile Bench stretches east to west from Fifteen Mile Creek to west of Cherry Avenue. Bisected by Twenty Mile Creek, it has a complex topography with a distinctive double bench formation west of Twenty Mile Creek, and short, varied slopes that roll to the brow of the escarpment. The sheltered north-facing slopes and the air circulation from Lake Ontario provide for year round temperature moderation, setting up an ideal growing season for quality grapes.

### ANNUAL PRODUCTION (2022-2023):

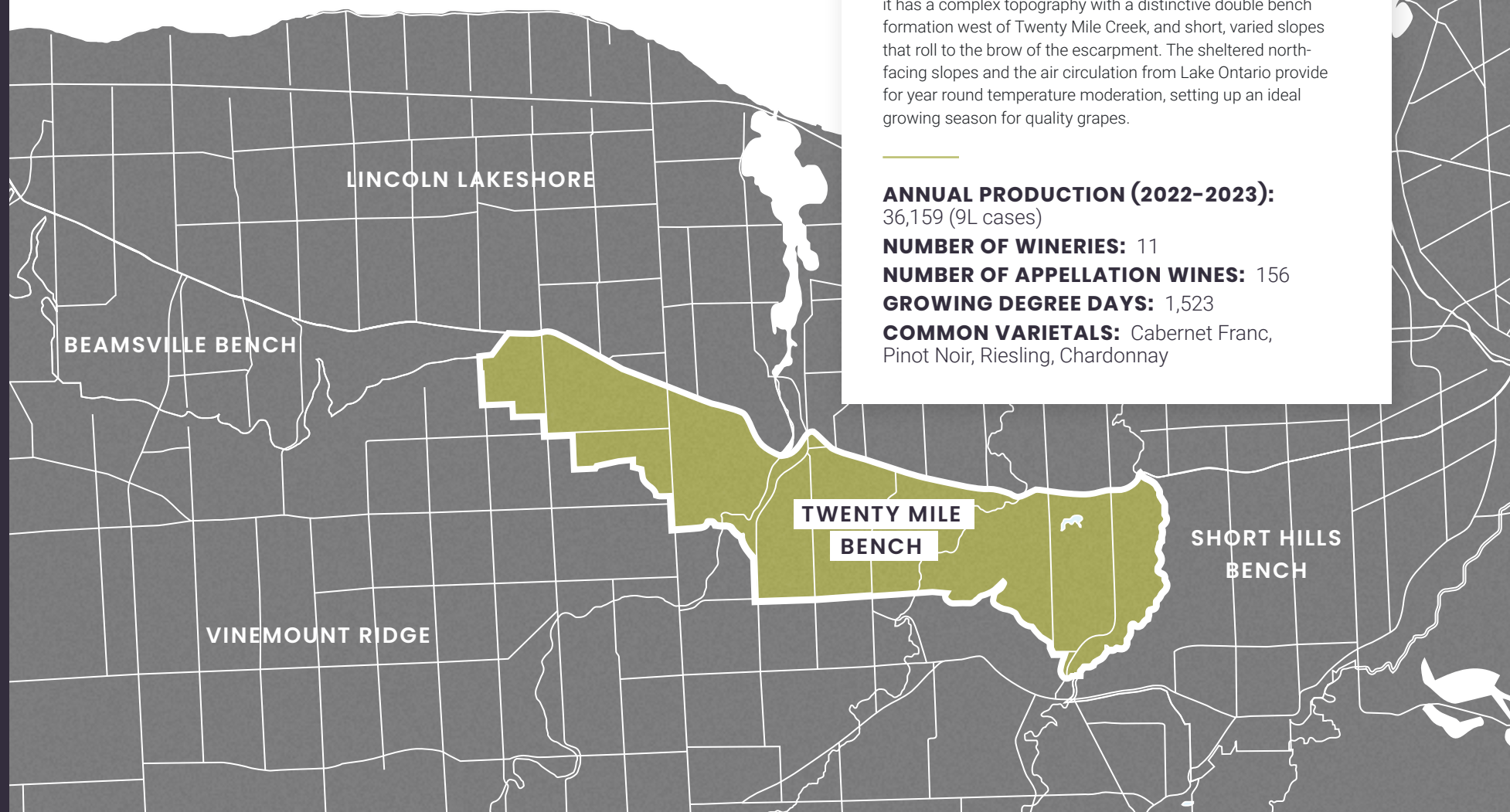
36,159 (9L cases)

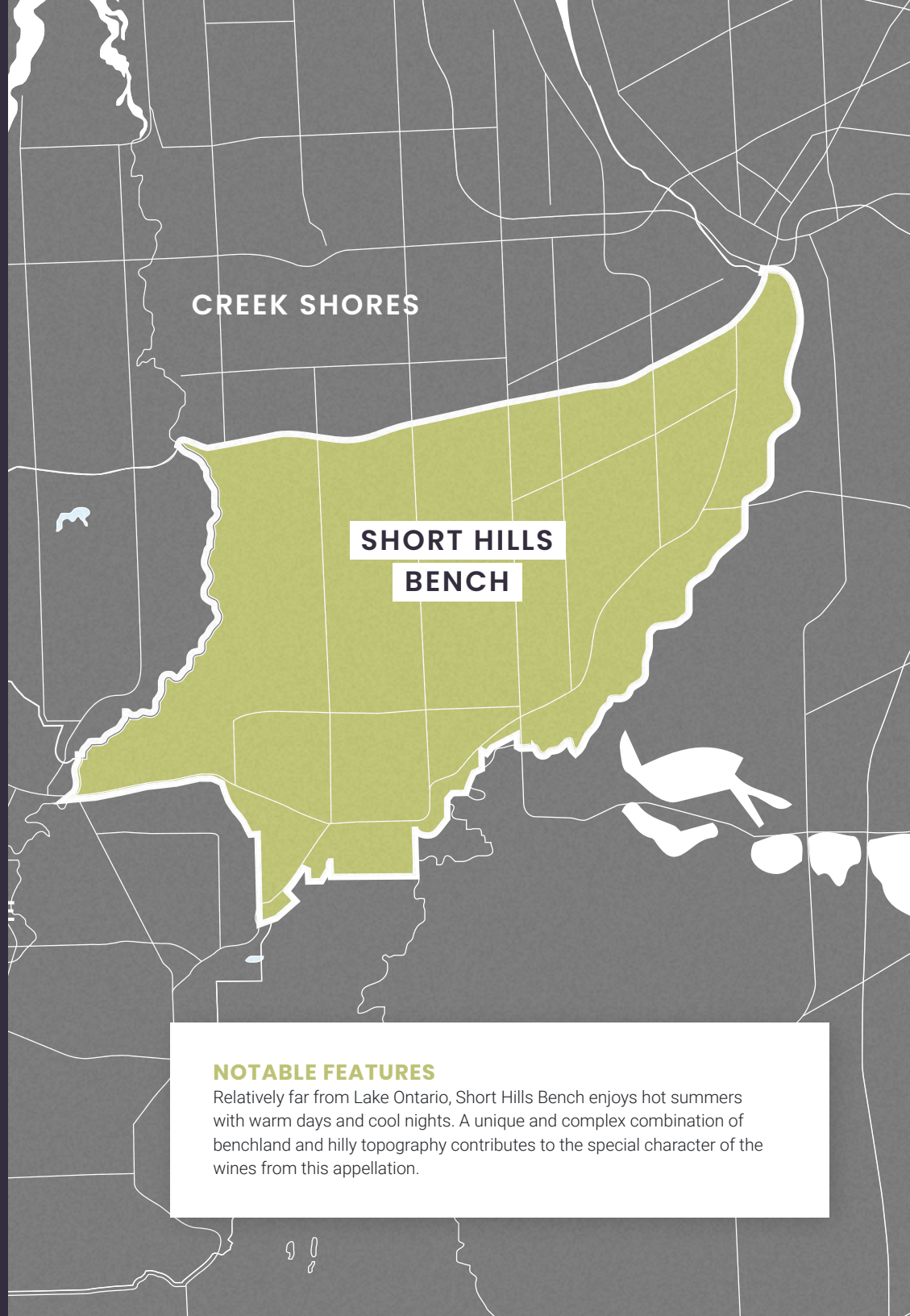
**NUMBER OF WINERIES:** 11

**NUMBER OF APPELLATION WINES:** 156

**GROWING DEGREE DAYS:** 1,523

**COMMON VARIETALS:** Cabernet Franc, Pinot Noir, Riesling, Chardonnay





CREEK SHORES

SHORT HILLS  
BENCH

#### NOTABLE FEATURES

Relatively far from Lake Ontario, Short Hills Bench enjoys hot summers with warm days and cool nights. A unique and complex combination of benchland and hilly topography contributes to the special character of the wines from this appellation.

NIAGARA PENINSULA

## *Short Hills Bench* SUB-APPELLATION

**WARM SUNNY DAYS, COOL NIGHTS,  
COMPLEX SOILS, INTENSE GRAPE  
FLAVOURS**

Short Hills Bench is the most easterly of the sub-appellations located within the Niagara Escarpment. It encompasses the land rising up from the plain of the peninsula (south of Regional Road 81) to the Escarpment Brow and is situated between Twelve Mile Creek and Fifteen Mile Creek. The undulating hills and valleys of the Short Hills, which rest on an ancient buried valley that once cut through the Niagara Escarpment and connected the basins of Lake Ontario and Lake Erie, provide long gentle slopes with excellent drainage and sun exposure.

**ANNUAL PRODUCTION (2022-2023):**  
3,187 (9L cases)

**NUMBER OF WINERIES:** 2

**NUMBER OF APPELLATION WINES:** 7

**GROWING DEGREE DAYS:** 1,561

**COMMON VARIETALS:** Chardonnay, Pinot Noir,  
Gamay Noir



**NOTABLE FEATURES**

Early spring warming and subsequent early budburst are a feature of this appellation. Further setback from Lake Ontario than other Niagara appellations, and with a slightly shorter growing season, the hot summers ensure that grapes are fully mature at harvest.

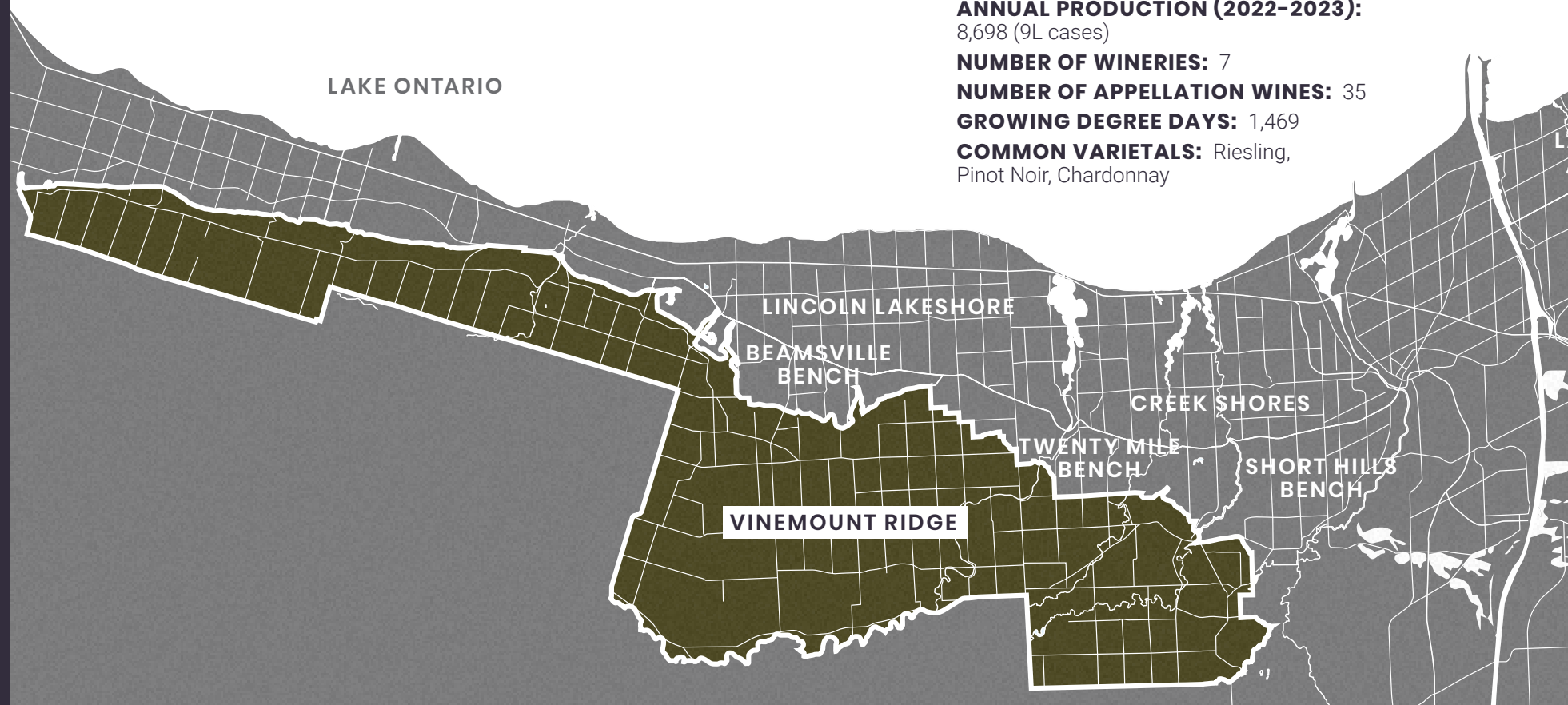
## NIAGARA PENINSULA

*Vinemount Ridge*  
**SUB-APPELLATION****SOUTH AND EAST-FACING SLOPES, EARLY SPRING WARMING, HOT SUMMERS**

Vinemount Ridge lies just above and south of the brow of the Niagara Escarpment. This appellation covers two prominent geological features - the Fonthill Kame to the east and the Vinemount Moraine on its western edge. Erosion from the several streams that cross this appellation have produced a gentle, undulating landscape with many shallow east- and south-facing slopes, unique within the Niagara Peninsula.

**ANNUAL PRODUCTION (2022-2023):**

8,698 (9L cases)

**NUMBER OF WINERIES:** 7**NUMBER OF APPELLATION WINES:** 35**GROWING DEGREE DAYS:** 1,469**COMMON VARIETALS:** Riesling,  
Pinot Noir, Chardonnay

## NIAGARA PENINSULA

*Creek Shores***SUB-APPELLATION****CRISSCROSSED WITH CREEKS AND STREAMS,  
GLACIAL DELTA, RICH FERTILE LANDS**

Creek Shores is rich in waterways and with Lake Ontario to the north, Twelve Mile Creek to the east, Twenty Mile Creek and Jordan Harbour to the west, is almost entirely surrounded by water. Temperatures are well moderated with gradual spring warming and bud break. Most vineyards are located on the rich fertile lowlands above the active floodplain, where the former riverbeds of the Fifteen Mile, Sixteen Mile and Twenty Mile Creeks widen, and receive maximum exposure to sunlight.

**ANNUAL PRODUCTION (2022-2023):**

13,368 (9L cases)

**NUMBER OF WINERIES:** 8

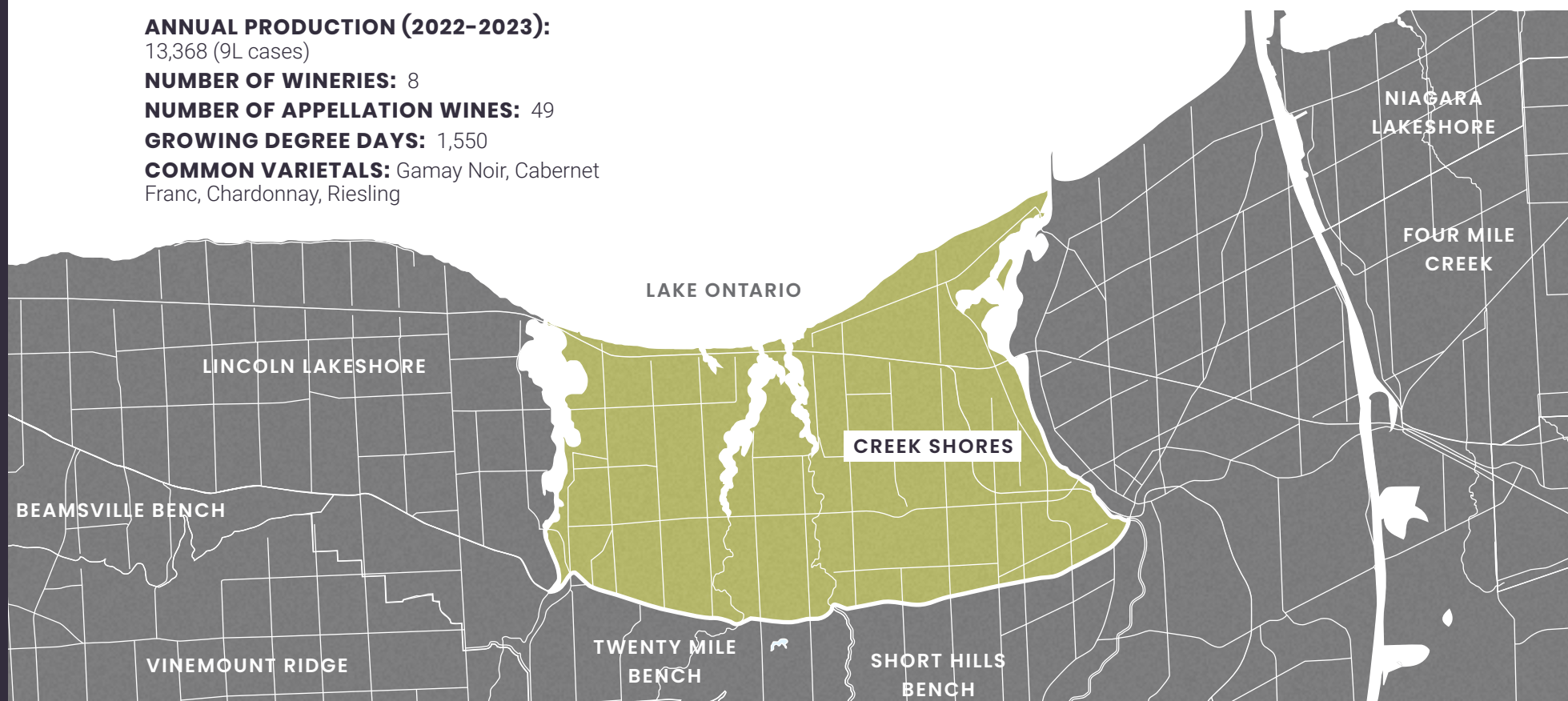
**NUMBER OF APPELLATION WINES:** 49

**GROWING DEGREE DAYS:** 1,550

**COMMON VARIETALS:** Gamay Noir, Cabernet Franc, Chardonnay, Riesling

**NOTABLE FEATURES**

The complex glacial soils of the Lake Iroquois Plains and lots of unobstructed sunlight define the terroir of Creek Shores and contribute to concentrated, full bodied wines.



**NOTABLE FEATURES**

The Lincoln Lakeshore has an especially long and temperate growing season and mild winter climate owing to the full exposure to the moderating effect of Lake Ontario. Ideally suited to viticulture, even tender varieties, this area is also a major producer of tender fruit.

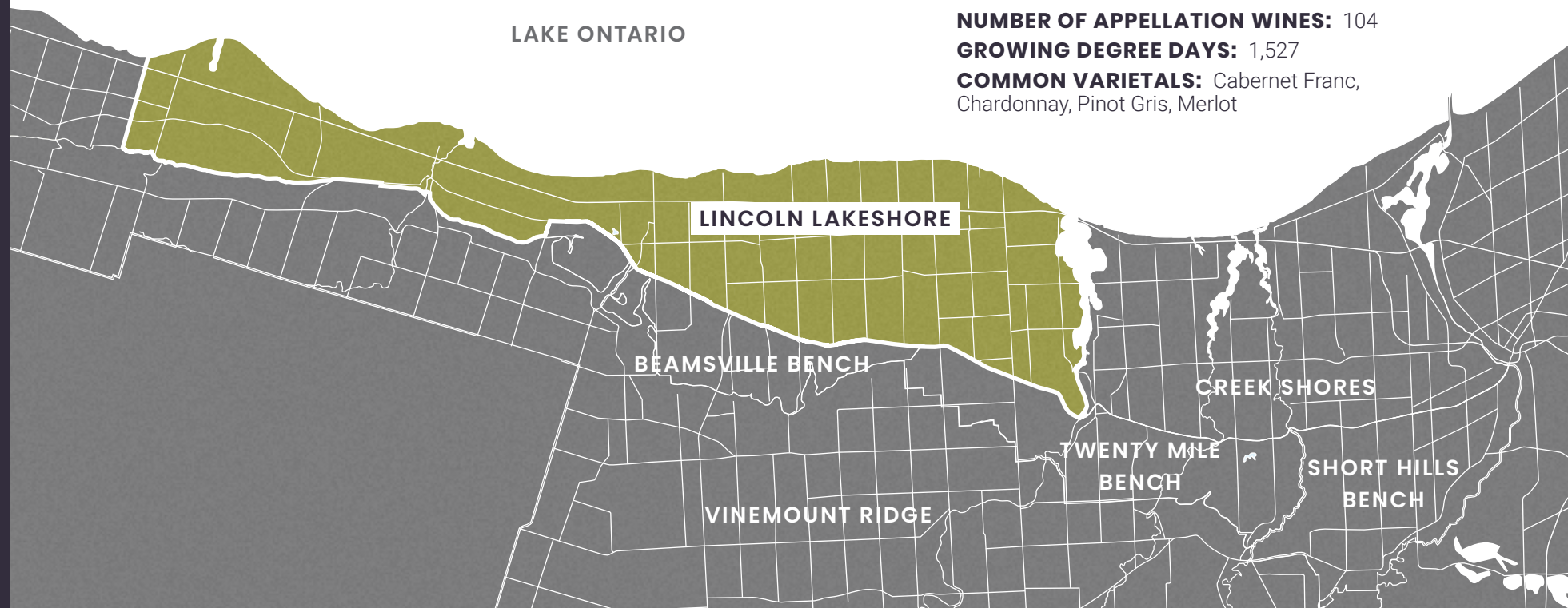
## NIAGARA PENINSULA

*Lincoln Lakeshore*  
**SUB-APPELLATION****DOMINANT INFLUENCE OF LAKE ONTARIO,  
LONG TEMPERED GROWING SEASON,  
SEASONAL STREAMS**

The Lincoln Lakeshore runs along the Lake Ontario shore from Winona Road to Jordan Harbour and Twenty Mile Creek, and is backed by the foot of the escarpment bench on its south boundary. Breezes from over the deep lake waters cool the sun-drenched vineyards in the summer, and warm them in the cooler seasons, resulting in a longer growing season and moderate conditions for steady, even ripening.

**ANNUAL PRODUCTION (2022-2023):**

20,397 (9L cases)

**NUMBER OF WINERIES:** 15**NUMBER OF APPELLATION WINES:** 104**GROWING DEGREE DAYS:** 1,527**COMMON VARIETALS:** Cabernet Franc,  
Chardonnay, Pinot Gris, Merlot

## NIAGARA PENINSULA

*Niagara Lakeshore*  
**SUB-APPELLATION****DOMINANT INFLUENCE OF LAKE ONTARIO,  
LONG CONSISTENT GROWING SEASON FOR  
FLAVOUR DEVELOPMENT**

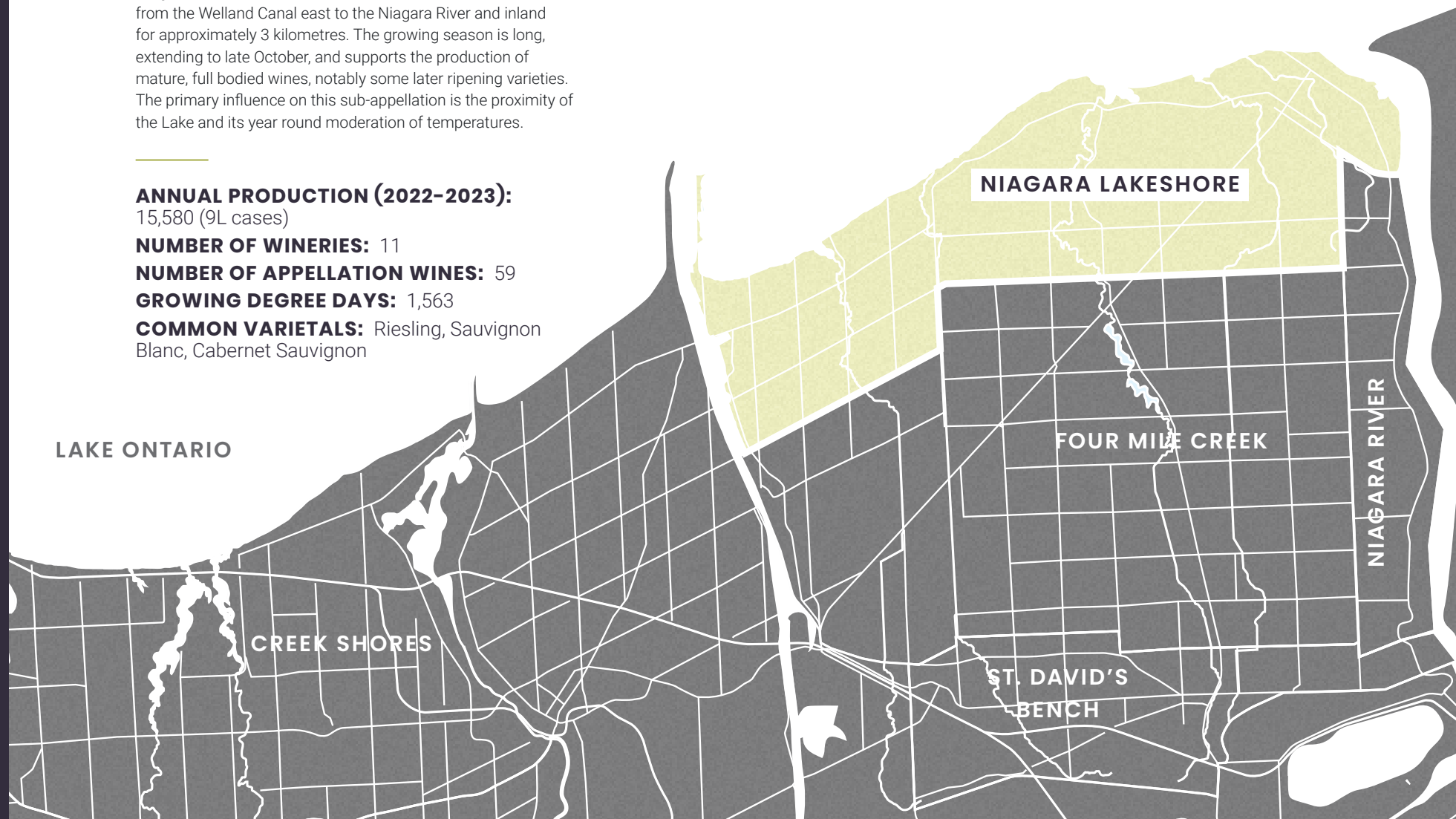
Niagara Lakeshore follows the shoreline of Lake Ontario from the Welland Canal east to the Niagara River and inland for approximately 3 kilometres. The growing season is long, extending to late October, and supports the production of mature, full bodied wines, notably some later ripening varieties. The primary influence on this sub-appellation is the proximity of the Lake and its year round moderation of temperatures.

**ANNUAL PRODUCTION (2022-2023):**

15,580 (9L cases)

**NUMBER OF WINERIES:** 11**NUMBER OF APPELLATION WINES:** 59**GROWING DEGREE DAYS:** 1,563**COMMON VARIETALS:** Riesling, Sauvignon Blanc, Cabernet Sauvignon**NOTABLE FEATURES**

Lake Ontario has a substantial and immediate effect in moderating temperatures along the Niagara Lakeshore. In the summer, cooler lake air replaces rising warm air above the land, reducing daytime temperatures, while at night the reverse effect, with relatively warmer lake air replacing low-lying cool air to keep the air temperatures from falling.





## NIAGARA PENINSULA

# *Niagara River* SUB-APPELLATION

### EASTERLY FACING, GENTLE SLOPES, LONG GROWING SEASON MODERATED BY THE NIAGARA RIVER

The Niagara River sub-appellation is a small strip of land running along the river from John Street to Dee Road and inland approximately one kilometre. Soils in the area are primarily stratified fine sands, providing natural drainage and strong encouragement for vines to develop deep root penetration. The large and fast flowing Niagara River creates convectional currents that draw cooler air into the gorge, moderating vineyard temperatures and extending the growing season.

**ANNUAL PRODUCTION (2022-2023):**  
22,404 (9L cases)

**NUMBER OF WINERIES:** 6

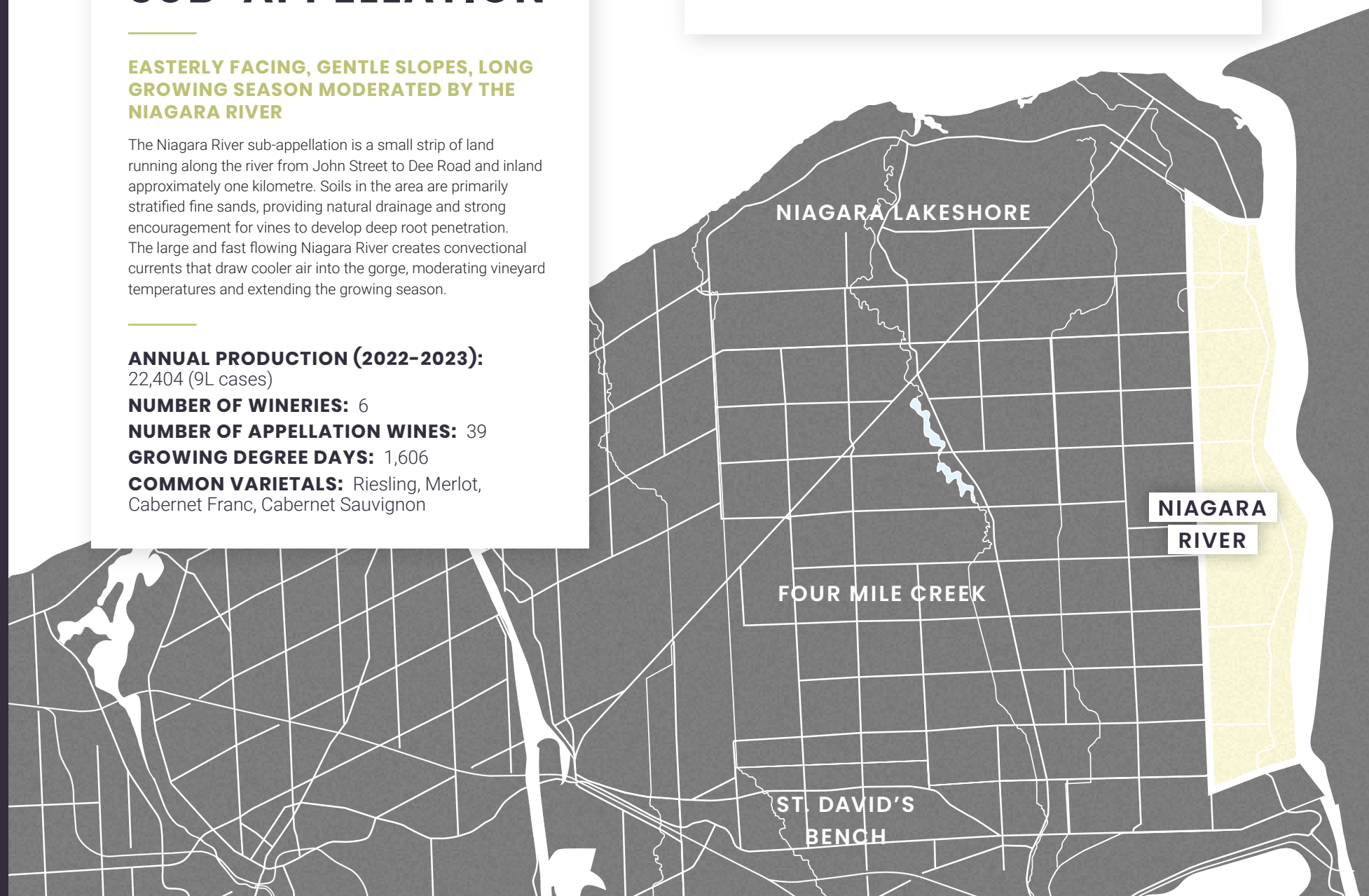
**NUMBER OF APPELLATION WINES:** 39

**GROWING DEGREE DAYS:** 1,606

**COMMON VARIETALS:** Riesling, Merlot,  
Cabernet Franc, Cabernet Sauvignon

### NOTABLE FEATURES

The Niagara River sub-appellation is characterized by east facing slopes and the effect of the mighty Niagara River. Together they influence the microclimate and play an important role in developing this appellation's distinct and crisp wines.



## NIAGARA PENINSULA

# *Four Mile Creek* SUB-APPELLATION

### EXPANSIVE VINEYARDS, ABUNDANT FULL SUNLIGHT, WARM INTENSE GROWING CONDITIONS

Four Mile Creek is the fertile plain that makes up central Niagara-on-the-Lake. It lies slightly inland from the lake and below the bench of the Niagara Escarpment, providing for warm days and cool nights during the growing season. The relatively flat topography leads to abundant exposure to sunshine and warm days giving growers the opportunity to grow many varieties.

### ANNUAL PRODUCTION (2022-2023):

30,692 (9L cases)

**NUMBER OF WINERIES:** 15

**NUMBER OF APPELLATION WINES:** 100

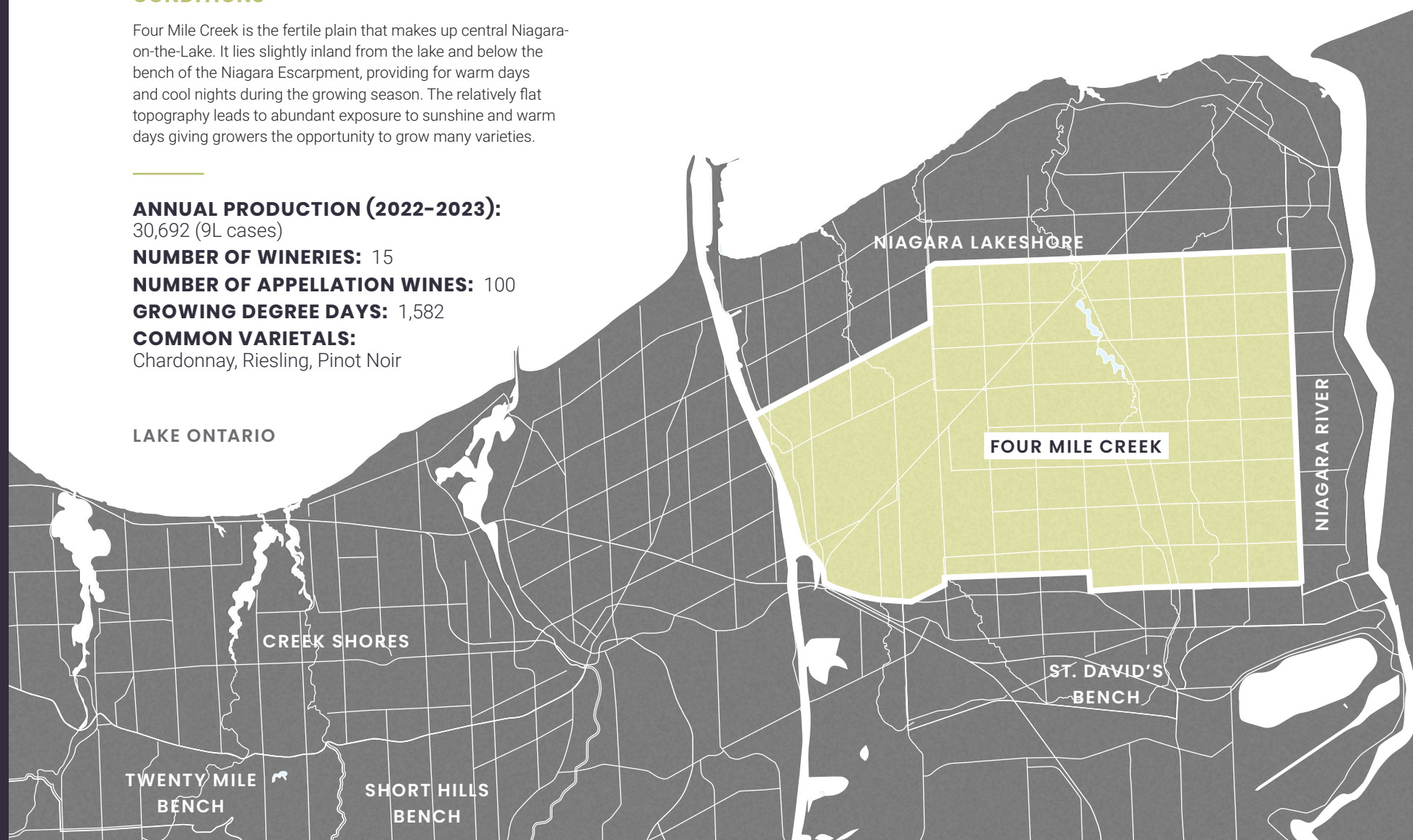
**GROWING DEGREE DAYS:** 1,582

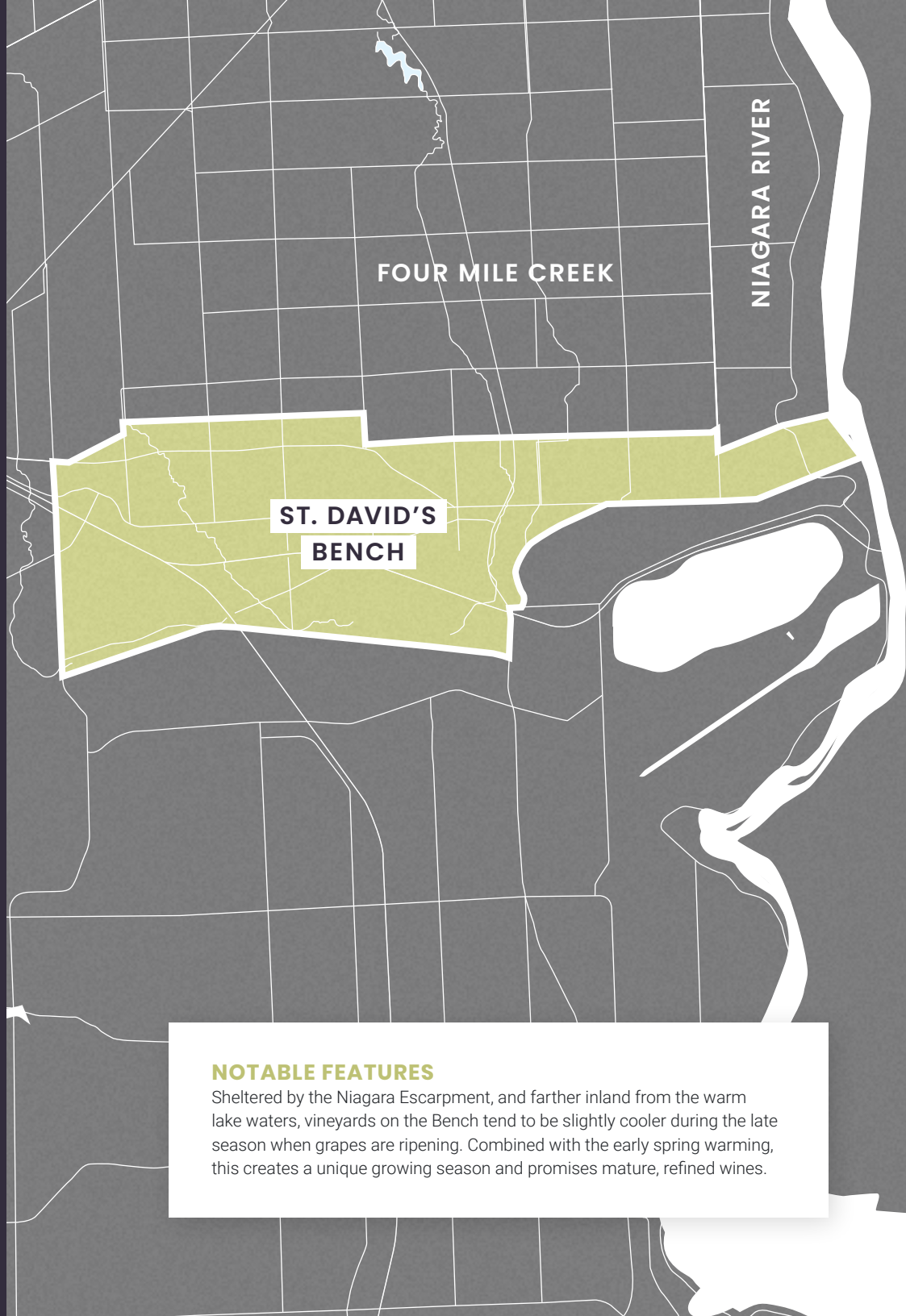
**COMMON VARIETALS:**

Chardonnay, Riesling, Pinot Noir

### NOTABLE FEATURES

Four Mile Creek is the largest sub-appellation in the Niagara Peninsula, accounting for a significant portion of premium grape production. With excellent sun exposure, this appellation is known for full bodied red varieties.





**ST. DAVID'S  
BENCH**

**NOTABLE FEATURES**

Sheltered by the Niagara Escarpment, and farther inland from the warm lake waters, vineyards on the Bench tend to be slightly cooler during the late season when grapes are ripening. Combined with the early spring warming, this creates a unique growing season and promises mature, refined wines.

NIAGARA PENINSULA

*St. David's Bench*  
**SUB-APPELLATION**

**EARLY WARMING IN SPRING,  
GENTLY SLOPING BENCH, GENEROUS  
PRECIPITATION**

St. David's Bench lies 10 kilometres south of the shore of Lake Ontario and several metres above the Lake Iroquois Plain. This bench, formed when glaciers carved out the Niagara Escarpment, rises from the historic shoreline of Lake Iroquois towards the base of the escarpment. Vineyards in St David's Bench are mostly located on north-facing slopes on the upper portion of the bench and along its southern boundary at the Lake Iroquois Shore Bluff.

**ANNUAL PRODUCTION (2022-2023):**  
10,491 (9L cases)

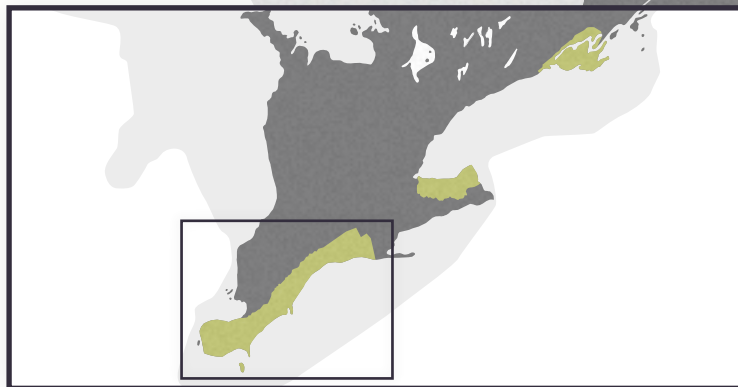
**NUMBER OF WINERIES:** 8

**NUMBER OF APPELLATION WINES:** 40

**GROWING DEGREE DAYS:** 1,637

**COMMON VARIETALS:** Chardonnay, Pinot Noir, Merlot, Syrah





LAKE ERIE NORTH SHORE

LAKE ERIE

## *Lake Erie North Shore* **APPELLATION**

**COOL LAKE BREEZES, ABUNDANCE OF  
SUNSHINE, RIPE FRUIT WITH GOOD  
BALANCE**

Located at a latitude of approximately 42°N and stretching along the bow-shaped shoreline of Lake Erie from Amherstburg to just east of St. Thomas, including the South Islands, the Lake Erie North Shore appellation encompasses the vineyards in the southwestern extremity of Ontario.

This location, combined with the warming effect of the shallow waters of Lake Erie, allow this appellation to enjoy a long growing season and ripe fruit with a perfect balance between natural sweetness and acidity.

### **NOTABLE FEATURES**

Plantings in Lake Erie North Shore are well developed close to the Lake Erie shoreline, where topographic and climatic conditions are particularly favourable and support full and balanced ripening of grapes.

**ANNUAL PRODUCTION (2022–2023):**  
29,828 (9L cases)

**NUMBER OF WINERIES:** 16

**NUMBER OF APPELLATION WINES:** 66

**GROWING DEGREE DAYS:** 1,515

**COMMON VARIETALS:** Cabernet Franc,  
Riesling, Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot



MIDDLE SISTER ISLAND

NORTH HARBOUR ISLAND

EAST SISTER ISLAND

HEN ISLAND

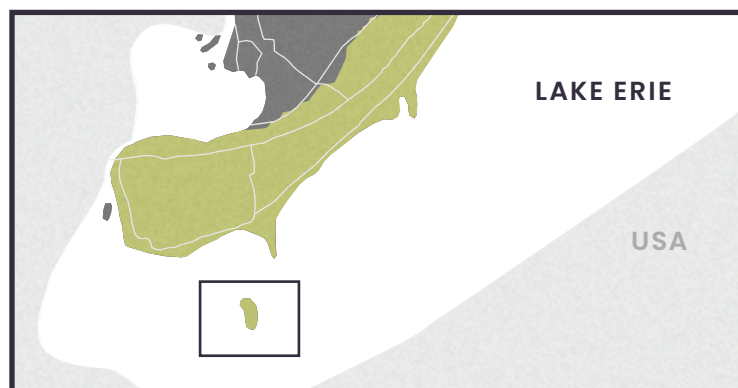
CHICKEN ISLAND

BIG CHICKEN ISLAND

LITTLE CHICKEN  
ISLAND

PELEE  
ISLAND

LAKE ERIE



MIDDLE ISLAND

LAKE ERIE NORTH SHORE

*South Islands*

**SUB-APPELLATION**

**ISLAND BREEZES, WARM SUMMERS,  
EARLY HARVEST**

The South Islands are the nine islands that comprise the municipality of the Town of Pelee Island and are part of the Lake Erie North Shore appellation. South Islands was declared a sub-appellation in July 2015. Grapes are grown on the largest island, Pelee, which is approximately 10,000 acres in total land area and situated at Canada's most southerly point of latitude of 41°45'N. Located in Lake Erie about 20 kilometres off the shoreline, South Islands enjoys the longest growing season of any wine appellation in Canada. Warm breezes off of Lake Erie moderate summer and fall temperatures, with harvest usually beginning two to three weeks earlier than in the other regions — often in August. The long, warm growing season favours some varieties that are unusual for Ontario, including Tempranillo.

#### NOTABLE FEATURES

Pelee Island is the site of Canada's first commercial winery, VinVilla, which began operations in 1866. A hundred years later, its vineyards of native grapes were replanted with premium *Vitis Vinifera* vines.

#### ANNUAL PRODUCTION (2022-2023):

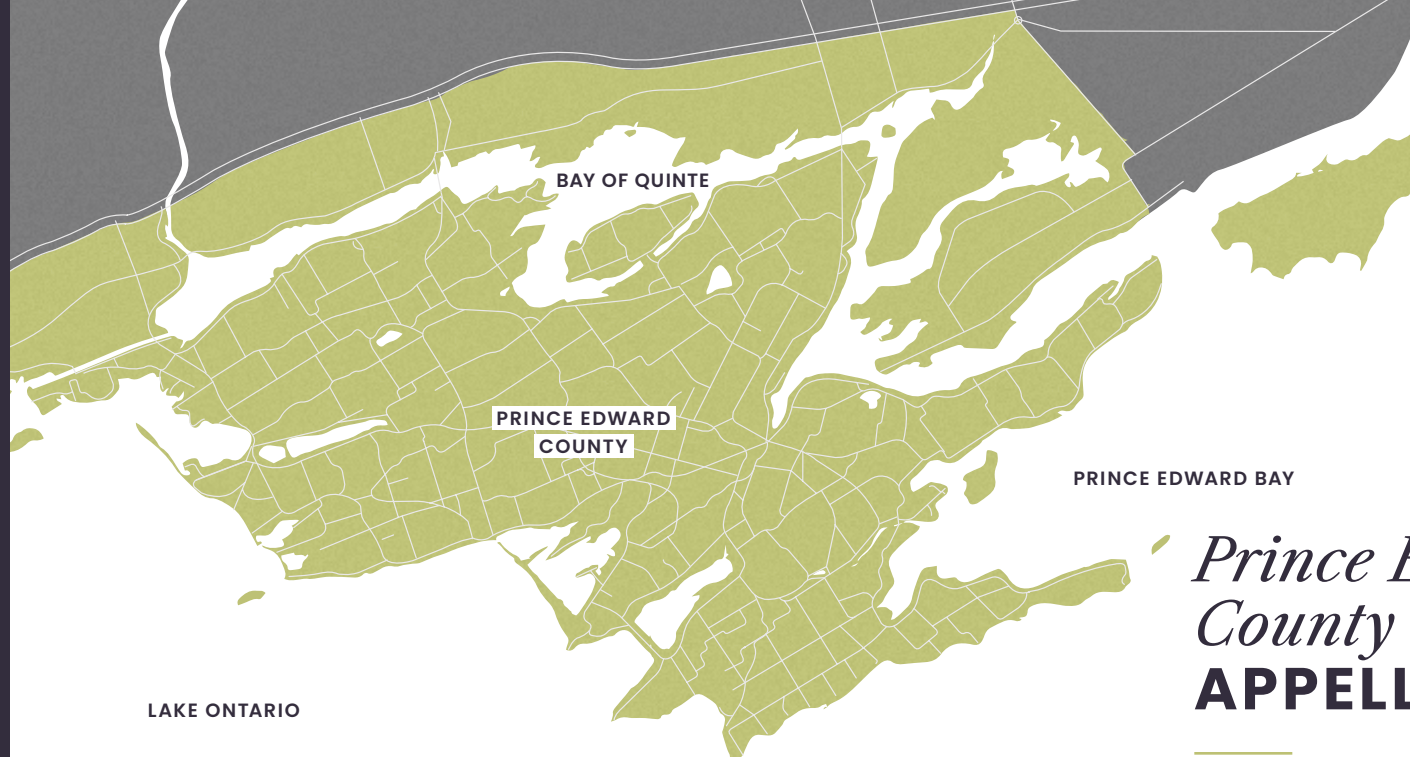
12,444 (9L cases)

**NUMBER OF WINERIES:** 1

**NUMBER OF APPELLATION WINES:** 8

**GROWING DEGREE DAYS:** 1,592

**COMMON VARIETALS:** Cabernet Franc, Riesling



## Prince Edward County APPELLATION

### LIMESTONE BEDROCK, STONY SOILS, LOW YIELDS, EXCELLENT FRUIT CONCENTRATION

Prince Edward County is located at the eastern end of Lake Ontario, just south of Belleville, and encompasses the County, Amherst Island and a narrow strip of land to the north. At a latitude of 44°N, this is Ontario's most northern appellation. Vineyards here rely on the lake to provide a moderated and productive cool climate growing season. Much of the area under vine is completely surrounded by water — the Bay of Quinte, and Lake Ontario. The area has more than 500 miles of shoreline, including the well-known Sandbanks beach.

Prince Edward County was officially identified as an appellation of origin in 2007.

### NOTABLE FEATURES

The broken limestone bedrock and stony soils of this appellation allows for excellent drainage in the spring and acts like a wet sponge throughout the growing season, forcing vines to grow deeper during the hot summer months and produce small yields with concentrated flavours.

### ANNUAL PRODUCTION (2022–2023):

28,875 (9L Cases)

**NUMBER OF WINERIES:** 29

**NUMBER OF APPELLATION WINES:** 121

**GROWING DEGREE DAYS:** 1,366

**COMMON VARIETALS:** Pinot Noir, Chardonnay, Cabernet Franc, Pinot Gris



# ONTARIO WINE

APPELLATION AUTHORITY



*VQA is the starting point for every authentic wine of origin and quality in Ontario. The Ontario Wine Appellation Authority is the regulatory agency responsible for the integrity of local wine appellations, enforcing wine composition and labelling standards, and ensuring consumers have the information they need to make an informed choice when buying VQA certified wines.*

**Ontario Wine Appellation Authority**

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Toronto, ON M2M 4J1

**VQAONTARIO.CA**