ONTARIO WINE APPELLATION AUTHORITY WINERY SERVICES GUIDE

A Reference for VQA Wineries

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Appellation Authority Winery Guide

Contents

OVERVIEW

The Ontario Wine Appellation Authority (Appellation Authority) is a regulatory agency responsible for maintaining the integrity of local wine appellations and enforcing winemaking and labelling standards. VQA is the foundation for designating Ontario wines of origin and quality.

Our mission is to build and sustain a strong and credible appellation system, supported by relevant standards for quality and label integrity, and to raise the awareness and knowledge of each of Ontario's wine appellations and their unique features.

The Appellation Authority does not represent the commercial interests of the wine industry in Ontario and is not a marketing agency. However, participating in the appellation system by having your wines certified and labelling them using VQA terms can add value to your business by offering consumers an independent certification of origin and quality assurance. Research suggests that consumers associate a higher value with VQA wines that offer a distinct sense of place.

The VQA Act and regulations set standards for the composition and labelling of wines made from Ontario grown grapes and outline the regulatory processes to enforce these standards. The regulations establish a list of regulated terms that may be used only in association with wines that meet specified standards and are tested and approved by the Appellation Authority. Membership does confer approval to use VQA regulated terms but allows a winery to apply for approval for each individual wine.

Participating wineries are subject to regulatory obligations and should be familiar with requirements for the origin, production and labelling of wines in Ontario. Every wine that is described using regulated terms must first be submitted for testing and receive an official approval. Approvals must be obtained for each wine and the accompanying label and are not transferable or sharable amongst different wines produced by a winery.

HOW TO CONTACT US – Ontario Wine Appellation Authority

For general inquiries, membership, wine approvals, and all items related to wine testing:
Tricia Ramnath tricia.ramnath@vqaontario.ca

For audit, inspection and compliance:
Peter Harris peter.harris@vqaontario.ca

For Icewine monitoring, IT systems, website support and statistics:
Susan Piovesan susan.piovesan@vqaontario.ca

For accounting and finance: Stan Loree stan.loree@vqaontario.ca

For wine standards and approvals, wine transfers, communications, media, member relations and appellation resources: Katherina Radcliffe katherina.radcliffe@vqaontario.ca

For policy, governance, complaints, dispute resolution, government relations:
Laurie Macdonald laurie.macdonald@vqaontario.ca

General email: info@vqaontario.ca
Main telephone: 416-367-2002
Fax: 416-367-4044

Please mail correspondence and/or cheques to our office, located at:

5775 Yonge Street, Suite 1220
Toronto ON
M2M 4J1

Please send all wine samples for testing to:

VQA Submissions
LCBO
Quality Services Dept (#909)
43 Freeland St. 3rd Floor
Toronto ON
M5E 1L7

REGULATORY OBLIGATIONS

It is the producer's responsibility to ensure compliance. Be familiar with the rules that apply to the wine you are making and selling.

Wines

- Does the content and composition of the wine meet the standard?
- Check percentage varietal, vintage, origin
- Check any limitations on labelling (such as declassification to Ontario, no prohibited additions or processes)
- Check brix, alcohol limits, other chemical limits
- Check category specific rules (such as aging minimums for Sparkling, Icewine registration, varietal restrictions for Meritage)

Sales

- Do not offer any wine for sale using VQA terms unless it is approved (and you see four green check marks in the online wine approvals database).
- Do not advertise wine using VQA terms before it is approved unless you include a disclaimer that it is not yet approved and not yet available for sale
- Have internal controls to prevent your staff from shipping or stocking VQA wine before the approval is confirmed

Reporting

- You must complete and file a monthly VQA sales reports with the Appellation Authority, even if VQA sales are nil
- Monthly sales reports must be uploaded electronically to our website (please see P. 24 for further details)

Documentation

- You must obtain and keep the following documents for inspection
- GGO records of harvest, including specific location where the grapes were grown, grape variety, tonnes, brix and date of harvest for all grapes used in VQA wines
- Records pertaining to all purchases and sales or other disposals of grapes and wine
- Records of blending, packaging and labelling and the composition of all wines

Membership

- You must keep your company and contact information up to date on the Member Services website
- A winery must continue to actively produce VQA wines to continue membership. Membership will lapse after a period of 18 months where no approvals are issued

- Membership will be terminated if applicable fees are not paid in full or the annual renewal process is not completed
- Once a membership is terminated, wineries may continue to sell previously approved wines, subject to reporting and fee requirements for up to one year, after which, all use of VQA terms must be discontinued
- Membership may be reinstated through application and payment of fees for the lapse period

What is Regulated?

Regulations set out basic standards for grapes and wines. They cover:

- Grape varieties and ripeness (brix)
- Winemaking techniques
- Labelling requirements
- Sensory and chemical criteria for the finished wine

What is not Regulated?

The Ontario Wine Appellation Authority strives to maintain adequate regulation to protect consumers but not restrict innovation and progress within the industry. The VQA standards provide a foundation for label integrity and quality wines. Some examples of things that are not regulated:

- Vine density or grape yield in the vineyard
- Yeast types or fermentation temperatures
- Aging required (with some exceptions)
- All approved grape varieties are allowed in all appellations
- A wide variety of global wine styles are recognized

THE WINE APPROVAL PROCESS

The VQA approval process consists of three steps and takes 2 to 3 weeks to complete:

SUBMITTING AN APPLICATION

A request for VQA approval may be made by a registered VQA winery through the secure VQA Services website. Once logged in, the application process is accessed under "Wine Approvals" by selecting "New Approval". Have the following information ready: wine description, varietal content with litres and brix for all components, declarations that you intend to make on the label, and a pdf or jpeg version of your proposed label to upload, including a scale. Follow the instructions at the end of the application for sending wine samples and payment to be processed. All samples are collected at the LCBO and distributed for testing.

SENSORY EVALUATION

Taste tests are conducted on Wednesdays by a panel of qualified tasters. All tasting is conducted blind at the Appellation Authority office tasting facilities. Time and space are limited, especially in busy periods. Winery members can check the Members News & Announcements page for any changes to the procedure. Please plan accordingly.
- Wines delivered after 3:00 p.m. are not received by LCBO until the next business day
- Wines arriving at the LCBO on Monday before 3:00 p.m. will be tasted on Wednesday. Wines arriving after that time will be held and tasted the following week (Wednesday).
- Do not send your bottles to the Appellation Authority office - this will result in a delay of at least two days and up to a week.

LABORATORY ANALYSIS

Laboratory analysis is conducted weekly over a period of days. Results are typically available on Fridays. Every Wednesday the laboratory prepares a line-up for the following week. Wines received after Wednesday at 12:00pm will not make it into the following weeks line-up but will be held over until the second week.

PACKAGING REVIEWS

Packaging reviews are normally conducted within a few days of the taste test.

- If you are using a standard VQA capsule (with the official VQA logo(s)), or sticker you may simply check of this statement on the application and do not need to include it with the packaging images. Applications processed without a sample of the VQA logo will pass if otherwise compliant and include a note that the logo was not submitted. It is the winery's responsibility to ensure the logo in present and compliant on all final packaging in the authorized colours. No colours other than black and gold are permitted.

- Mock-up labels are acceptable if they include all VQA terms intended for use and all federally mandated terms (e.g., if the application for approval requests a vineyard designation, it must appear on the label)
- If the approval is denied because labels do not meet the standards, make sure the application is resubmitted (online) and that new labels are uploaded with the necessary changes. Once an approval is granted for the corrected labels, make sure these correct labels are applied to the wine. It is strongly recommended you wait to print your labels until after receiving approval
- Visit the label review page for any particular wine to see comments on the label including reasons for failure, or other "warnings" that may not have caused a failure but that you may wish to note
- Labels may be changed after approval if they remain in compliance with the VQA regulations (wine found to be retailed with label violations will be ordered removed from the point of sale until re-labelled). Check with the office if you are unsure.

RUSH SERVICE

Currently unavailable (due to COVID-19 restrictions)

A "rush" laboratory service is available from the LCBO for an additional fee. A rush request can be made online or by calling our office. If extenuating circumstances require that you need your result urgently, please call the VQA office and best efforts will be made to accommodate your needs. Please plan ahead to leave some contingency time to complete the approval process and minimize emergencies.

If a RUSH request is accepted, the wine must be received at the LCBO before the end of business day on the Friday before the laboratory testing cycle requested. An additional fee of $142.50 + HST is charged for this service. If the rush request can be accommodated by LCBO, you will be advised and invoiced for this service.

INTERIM RESULTS

You may check the status of testing anytime by logging into your online VQA Services account. Keep in mind that passing one part of the process, such as tasting, does not guarantee that the wine is approved – bottle and label at your own risk.

LCBO reports the results of all lab testing to VQA – they will not release information directly to the winery.

Approval applications must be completed within 12 months of the initial submission. Applications that remain active because of missing samples or labels will be closed and finalized as not approved. Approved wines that were evaluated based on ready to bottle tank samples must be bottled within 12 months of the date the samples were received for evaluation.

DOCUMENTATION

The Appellation Authority reviews the tasting, testing and label results to ensure VQA rules have been met and issues a "Notice of Completion" by email. You then access your account to see the results of the application for approval. The wine is not approved until the results are finalized as "Approved" on the Wine Approvals page on the VQA Services website. Approved wines are indicated by a green checkmark under status in the listing of your applications. Please look over the label review page for every wine – approved or not – to see VQA comments on label compliance.

A confirmation of approval and certificate of origin is available for all approved wines under the "Forms & Reports" tab for each wine. Here you can print a "Proof of VQA status" suitable for LCBO or other customers or a detailed report on the assessment process for your internal files.

Laboratory certificates are available for printing directly from your online account once the approval has been completed. Certificates are released only for approved wines and not for wines that have not been approved for any reason. Access your certificate of analysis is through the "Forms & Reports" tab. Please contact the office if you do not find your certificate posted to the online site.
If you have any questions during the approval process, contact the office.

No approvals will be issued if:
- Any one of the taste test, lab test or packaging review is either not passed or not completed
- All fees have not been received
- There are discrepancies with declared information about the wine and audit finding

You may not sell your wine using any VQA terms before having received a formal approval.
After receiving a "Not Approved" result for any reason, the online re-submission process must be followed to re-activate the application. Do this by clicking on the wine ID and then clicking on "Re-Submit Application" and following the instructions. If there is more than one test that failed (ie. tasting and label), please ensure both items are re-submitted. The wine will then be reset to "Submitted" status.

Do not assume that you can correct identified deficiencies, such as correcting the alcohol on the label, and then release the wine without resubmission and approval. Also note, that although a wine may have passed all three components of the evaluation, it may not be granted approval if the required fee is not paid. You cannot release any wine using VQA terms until the approval process has been formally completed and the wine's status has been changed to "Approved". Selling a VQA wine without a formal approval is an offence under the VQA Act, independent of whether the wine might be found compliant in future.

RE-SUBMISSIONS

A wine that fails may be re-submitted for retesting and further evaluation for all or some components. The re-submitted wine must be identical in content to the original submission. Treatments such as clarification, filtering, copper treatments, aeration or other mechanical treatments are permitted but changes in the content are not. If the creation of a new sample involves re-blending and any change in varietal or vintage content, any change in pH, residual sugar, or other chemical or flavour attributes, the wine must be submitted as a new request for approval. Adjustments to sulphur and sorbic acid are permitted. The approval process, including all re-submissions must be completed within 12 months.

Re-tasting: A wine that fails the sensory portion of the evaluation may be submitted for reconsideration twice. If the wine fails all three tastings, it may be submitted for a further evaluation by an independent taste panel. The decision of the independent panel is final.

Re-testing: A wine may be resubmitted for laboratory testing for one or more chemical attributes. For example, if a wine fails because of unacceptable levels of Free SO2, it may be retested for this attribute alone. The content of the wine must not be altered from the originally submitted sample.

Re-submission of labels: Revised labels may be resubmitted at any time during an active application. The label that appears on the final product must match the label that was submitted and approved. If additional labels are added after a wine is approved, contact the office and we will approve and upload them for you.

The Appellation Authority conducts regular sampling of approved wines after release and performs chemical analysis to confirm that the wines are the same as the samples submitted for approval. Regular label checks are also conducted. Discrepancies between samples and content of approved wines and verification samples will result in the suspension of the wine approval and removal from sale.

USE OF VQA REGULATED TERMS BEFORE A WINE IS RELEASED

The use of VQA terms for pre-release advertising will be acceptable when the wine is not yet approved if it is clearly eligible for approval and the use of terms is accompanied by a disclaimer. The following standardized disclaimer must be used:

Disclaimer - This wine has not yet been approved by the Appellation Authority . The use of certain descriptive terms that are regulated under the VQA Act is subject to final testing and approval by the wine authority.

The disclaimer must appear in printed or electronic documents and media that describe a particular wine that is not yet approved. It must appear in a legible fashion in a location that is reasonably close to where the VQA terms are used. VQA terms may never be used on the labels or packaging of a wine that is not approved and, in the event that the wine has been submitted and not approved, all references to VQA terms must be immediately discontinued in promotional materials.

KEY LABELLING REQUIREMENTS -check list

Quick Reference VQA Labelling Guide

Federal Mandatory	Where	Rules/content
Alcohol Net contents Product of Canada Common name (Wine)	In a single field of vision with each other (consumer can see all without turning the container)	□ Bilingual □ At least 1.6 mm font size, format correct □ Numerals in net contents at least 3.2 mm □ Alcohol within +/- 1% of actual tested □ Alcohol within min/max limits for category (eg. 7.0 - 14.9% for table wine) Example 12.5% alc./vol., 750 mL, Product of/Produit du Canada, Wine/Vin
Allergen warning	Anywhere	□ Contains sulphites/contient des sulfites Must be distinct and separate, see https://www.inspection.gc.ca/food-label-requirements/labelling/industry/list-of-ingredients-and-allergens/eng/1383612857522/1383612932341?chap=0#s8c2s
Producer name and address	Anywhere	□ Name, city/town, province or Canada
VQA Mandatory		
Appellation with VQA letters	Principal display panel (the "real front label" as determined by the Appellation Authority)	□ At least 2 mm, clearly legible with contrast □ At least 3.2 mm if no VQA logo on package □ Same typeface, colour and size, on same line □ At least 85% (100% for sub-apps) from stated appellation □ Consistent with application (label cannot make an origin claim more specific than what is stated on the application) □ Ontario only for hybrids, Sparkling that does not meet traditional method requirements
VQA logo (not required if appellation is at least 3.2 mm in size)	Anywhere	□ Gold on black □ Size between 15-25 mm, square □ 10mm for bottles less than 375mL
Vintage date (optional for Fortified, Sparkling and Table wines)	Anywhere	□ Wine content at least 85% from year on label □ Displayed as four digits
For Sparkling wines: Method of production for Traditional and Charmat	Anywhere	□ Method declared for Traditional or Charmat/Cuve Close □ No reference to method of production for sparkling wines that do not meet the first two method requirements, optional for sparkling Icewine
Hybrid grape varietals	Anywhere	□ If any hybrid content, varietals are declared including the hybrid under varietal rules
VQA optional		
If grape varieties appear anywhere on the label		**□ Wine meets varietal labelling rules**
Single grape variety	Anywhere	□ At least 85% of named variety
Two grape varieties*	Anywhere, in descending order	□ At least 90% of named varieties, at least 15% of second
Three grape varieties*	Anywhere, in descending order	□ At least 95% of named varieties, at least 15% of second, 10% of third

More than three varieties	Anywhere, in descending order	□ At least 95% of named varieties
No varieties on label, back or front	Proprietary name anywhere	□ Must be 100% vitis vinifera
Meritage	Anywhere	□ Contains only Cab Sauv, Cab Franc, Merlot, Petit Verdot, Malbec OR Sauv Blanc, Semillon, Muscadelle
Skin Fermented White	Principal display panel	□ Skin Fermented White is at least 2 mm and adjacent to variety name if a varietal wine □ Skin Fermented White is at least 3.2 mm if no grape varieties declared □ If used "orange" wine in no bigger than skin fermented white

<mark>* If the wine does not meet dual/triple requirements, 2 or 3 varieties can be named only if percentages are included</mark>

VQA optional	Where	Rules
Vineyard name	Anywhere	□ 100% of wine is from named vineyard □ If naming more than one vineyard, exact percentages are included
Virtual wineries – a name other than the name of the VQA member winery	Anywhere	□ Name of VQA winery or registered brand/operating name is on the label
For Sparkling Wines: Sweetness Descriptors (optional)	Anywhere	□ Natural Brut, Brut, Extra Dry, Dry, Medium Dry, Sweet – check meets the required Total Residual Sugar Level for each descriptor
All labels		□ Wine content matches rules for terms used on labels, all claims, descriptions are true and accurate □ No appellation names that the wine is not entitled to, such as Bordeaux, Burgundy, Port

Alternate (non-glass) packaging	Where	Rules/content
Permitted containers: • stainless steel • aluminum • polyethylene terephthalate (PET) • multi-layer containers (such as TetraPak or bag-in-box) Maximum container size: 4 L For licensee (wholesale) sale only - maximum container size: 20 L	All mandatory/optional labelling rules apply. Certain terms prohibited: • Estate bottled • Traditional method terms including Fermented in this Bottle • Icewine	□ Filling date appears in plain language (e.g. December 1, 2013, 28-Jan-14 etc.)

WHERE TO FIND THINGS

Most things you need to know about VQA requirements can be found on our public website at
www.vqaontario.ca. Information is also available through the VQA Services member's site, accessed by
logging in to your account – https://office.vqantario.ca/VqaServices/ or click on member login at top
right of the Authority's public website.

Abbreviated site map:

The Appellations
- Description and data on each appellation and sub-appellation

The Wines
- A primer on VQA wines aimed at providing basic information to consumers
- Vintage Reports
- Wine Search, provided for members of the public to search for specific VQA approved wines

The Wineries
- A list of VQA wineries by appellation in which the winery is located, with website information
- Wineries logos uploaded by members via the member's website are displayed on this page

About the Appellation Authority
- News
- Annual Reports and statistics
- Governance documents, Board and Committee lists

Resources
- Library of important documents, reports, booklets and brochures
- Glossary of terms
- Links to related websites (and other wine regulations)
- Industry Corner (newsletters, regulation updates, and events)

Regulations
- Links to the legal text of the VQA Act and regulations, brix charts, chemical limits, permitted grape varieties
- Summary of packaging, labelling, logo requirements
- Summary of wine testing and approval processes, Icewine monitoring, audit, inspections and process to change a regulation
- Summary of forms and fees, downloadable sales report template (Excel), lab fees

Future Wineries
- Tips for wineries considering becoming a VQA member
- List of VQA Reserved terms

OTHER REGULATORS

Alcohol and Gaming Commission (AGCO) www.agco.ca

- rules related to manufacturing license, wine content Act, agents, retail store authorization and sales (including online and farmers markets), licensee sales, grocery sales, tied house sales

Liquor Control Board of Ontario (LCBO)   www.lcbo.com   www.**doingbusinesswithlcbo**.com

- reporting template
- requirements that apply to doing business with LCBO

Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA)   http://www.inspection.gc.ca

- Federal labelling rules

Health Canada (HC) http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/legislation/acts-lois/act-loi_reg-eng.php

- Wine additives
- Allergen labelling

QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE – REGULATED TERMS

The following terms are regulated and may be used only with authorization from the Appellation Authority and on wines that meet the associated standard. Variations such as alternative spellings, abbreviations or using any portion of these terms are not permitted without approval.

General	Geographical indications and terms indicating origin	Terms related to process and composition
Vintners Quality Alliance	Ontario	Meritage
VQA	Niagara Peninsula	Icewine, Icewine Dosage, Dosage of Icewine, Sparkling Icewine
	Niagara-on-the-Lake	Botrytized, Botrytis Affected, B.A., Totally Botrytized, Totally Botrytis Affected, T.B.A.
	Niagara River	Late Harvest, Select Late Harvest, Special Select Late Harvest
	Niagara Lakeshore	Vin du Curé
	Four Mile Creek	Blanc de Noirs
	St. David's Bench	Skin Fermented White
	Niagara Escarpment	
	Lincoln Lakeshore	
	Creek Shores	
	Beamsville Bench	
	Twenty Mile Bench	
	Short Hills Bench	
	Vinemount Ridge	
	Lake Erie North Shore	
	Prince Edward County	
	Estate Bottled	
	Vineyard (when used to specify a specific named location where the grapes were grown)	

QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE – BRIX
MINIMUM AVERAGE BRIX FOR VQA – BY GRAPE VARIETY

Vinifera varietals	The Appellation Authority	VQA Appellation	Wine category	Lot Minimum	Min Average
Cabernet Franc	18.0	20.0	Botrytis Affected	26.0	26.0
Cabernet Sauvignon	19.0	20.0	Icewine	32.0	35.0
Chardonnay	18.0	20.0	Late Harvest	22.0	22.0
Chardonnay Musqué	18.0	18.0	Nouveau, Fortified, Liqueur Wine	18.0	18.0
Gamay Noir	18.0	19.0	Sparkling Icewine	32.0	35.0
Gewurztraminer	18.0	19.0	Sparkling Wine	n/a	n/a
Merlot	19.0	20.5	Select Late Harvest	25.0	26.0
Muscats	17.0	17.0	Special Select Late Harvest	28.0	30.0
Pinot Blanc	17.5	18.0	Totally Botrytis Affected	34.0	34.0
Pinot Gris / Grigio	17.5	18.5			
Pinot Noir	18.5	19.5	**Hybrid varietals**	**VQA Ontario VQA only**	
Riesling	17.0	17.0	Baco Noir, Marquette	19.5	
Sauvignon Blanc	17.0	18.0	Chambourcin	18.0	
Syrah/Shiraz	18.0	19.5	Marechal Foch	19.0	
Viognier	18.0	19.0	Vidal Blanc	18.0	
All others	17.0	18.0	Others	17.0	

Notes:

Rosés and blanc de noirs (labelled as such) only need to meet the Ontario minimums even when they are labelled with a more specific appellation

Vin de Curé wines must meet the minimum for the grape variety at harvest and the second minimum for vin de curé

All component grapes used in VQA wines must be at least 17.0 º Brix, except for Sparkling Wines.

Foreign appellations – is the term I want to use prohibited?

Look it up at http://www.ic.gc.ca/cipo/listgiws.nsf/gimenu-eng?readForm

Questions? Contact the Appellation Authority at info@vaontario.ca or 416-367-2002

VQA ONLINE SERVICES

www.vqaontario.ca

The Appellation Authority operates a public website with information on the VQA program and Ontario wine appellations. The public site also offers comprehensive information for member wineries such as regulatory guidance, newsletters, statistics, links and corporate and governance information.

Secure website and account management

https://office.vqaontario.ca/VqaServices

The Appellation Authority administers most regulatory processes with its winery members through its secure website. Each winery is provided with an administrative login and is responsible for managing access and security for its own account. The winery administrator should be familiar with the basic tools required for adding and deleting winery accounts, updating member information and accessing documents on the site. A technical guide to the VQA Services website is provided in this Handbook.

The VQA Services website is a portal for the following services:

- Membership application and renewal
- Creating and managing user account access to member services
- Wine approval applications and status of results
- Printable Certificates of Analysis and Certificates or Origin for approved wines
- Registering bulk wine transfers between VQA wineries
- Printing APEC export certificates (for Asia) and ordering VI-1 export certificates (required for Europe only)
- Icewine grape and harvest registration and harvest monitoring
- Uploading monthly sales reports
- Accessing, managing and paying invoices

VQA Services also provides quick access to reports, news, schedules and reference documents.

MEMBERSHIP: MAINTAINING YOUR INFORMATION ON THE AUTHORITY'S ONLINE SYSTEM

Accessed by clicking on "Edit Profile" after logging in (top right on main menu):

Members must maintain their own profile data, the Authority does not edit this information; this includes organization profile, personnel accounts, location and credit card information.

<u>Organization Profile</u>

General organization information
- The information located on the "General" tab is originally loaded with the information obtained by the member winery when they fill in their registration information. The *Organization Name* field on this tab should be the official registered winery name. (Note that wineries that begin with the word "The" should use the following format *"Member Winery, The"*).

Winery website information
- The *Winery Name* entered here is the name that will be listed on the VQA Public website
- The *Winery Website* is the url link to the winery's website. Website users will be redirected to the specified website when they click on the winery's website url or the winery logo image
- The *Appellation* selected from the dropdown list should be the location of the winery's main retail store; this is also the page the winery will be located on under "The Wineries" link on the VQA Public website.

Registration and ongoing membership
- Click "Renew Now" when the renewal period is active (begins the first week of February) and must be completed by March 31. If you miss the deadline your account will automatically be set to "Inactive", and you will not be allowed to submit any wines for testing until you have

completed the renewal process. After 30 days, your account will expire, and you will be notified by the Authority of the rules and requirements for "resigned" memberships.

Brands
- Brands are used when a winery wishes to use an "operating" or "virtual" name (instead of, or in addition to your legal winery name). Add all your wine brands here before you begin filling out your wine approval applications since these brands are selected during the application process. Click on "Add Brand," enter the brand name and click "Save". Brand names can only be removed by Authority staff if entered in error.

Personnel

General guideline:
- DO NOT allow two people to sign on simultaneously using the same ID and password – when a user logs in, session data is stored locally on their computer. If two people are working on the same account at the same time your data may become corrupted.
- Your online access is secure and provides access to confidential information for your winery, including wine approval information and corporate information. It is important that you keep your login information secure and control access appropriately.
- Your membership profile can be accessed by clicking on the "Edit Profile" link at the top right of the page when you are logged in.
- The "Personnel" tab contains a list of all accounts that have been created on VQA Services for your winery. your contact information and is used to distribute all approval results, compliance notices and information. Please make sure you keep it up to date. It is your responsibility to keep this information up to date and ensure that the Authority has the correct address(es) to send you information.

Here is how to allocate personnel roles:
- Decide who will have "administrative authority" for your winery (who will be allowed to make changes to the accounts). This can be assigned to any (or all) accounts
- Have an administrator set up additional personnel accounts to provide separate and secure access for all employees who will use the system. Do this by clicking on "New Personnel" and filling in the information. Each account will begin with a 3-letter acronym of your winery name. We suggest using the name of the person for the ID (e.g. xxx.john).
- For your own security, it is important that a single ID and password is not passed around between many individuals. This is important since the system has an auditing feature that keeps track of system usage by username. Make sure that all users keep their passwords secure and change them periodically.

VQA Services has preset types of personnel based on roles:

Owner – super user, has all privileges, can authorize membership renewal
Admin – can modify company profile, manage all users
Compliance – receives email notices,
Finance – can manage sales reports, invoices, make payment using credit card on file
Operation – can submit and manage wine approvals, transfers, Icewine and Skin Ferment registrations

Special account settings:

Primary Contact - Only one account for the winery can be designated as the Primary contact (receives all core notices, is default for compliance and regulatory notices). This account will receive all important notifications like compliance orders, enforcement actions and audit reports.

Administrative Authority (Admin) – Any account can be granted administrative authority. Administrators can add new personnel or edit and delete existing personnel. They can also make changes to winery info. If an employee leaves your company, Admin can delete the account or reset the password.

Online payment

Register credit cards under "Edit Profile" – "Payment Cards" tab

The VQA Services application uses a third-party service called Stripe to process payment by credit card. Before using the "Pay by Credit Card" option on the Invoices page, the winery must first set up a credit card with Stripe (the Authority does not have POS credit capability and does not store your credit card information). To set up a credit card, click on "New Payment Card" under the Payment cards tab. Make sure to check off on the "Enabled" box for all cards you want to be active on the system. Card entries that are no longer valid should be removed from the system by either unchecking the "Enable" box or clicking on the "Delete" button. All enabled cards will then be available to pay any invoice selected on the "Invoices & Payments" page.

WINE APPROVALS

Page Summary

"Filter by Application Status" – check all boxes to display on the Wine Approvals grid; Search for a specific Wine ID by entering the ID in the text box (enter with format 9999.9999 and click Select button); Click "Reset all Filters" to revert back to the system default settings which shows all applications except for those that have been withdrawn or revoked.

"Legend for Activities" – refer to these icons to read the approval status in most columns in the Wine Approvals grid. Click on each individual Wine ID number to view application details. Note that all grid columns are sortable by clicking on the column title name.

"Wine Approval Search" – this link displays a new page with advance search capability which enables you to search and filter through all your VQA applications for details such as vintage, 1st variety, wine category, brand names and appellation. For example, if you are looking for all sparkling wines you have submitted, this is available on the search page.

Information on main grid:

- Wine ID – the unique number assigned to the wine submission and subsequent approval.

- Reference, brands, vintage, category – basic descriptive information on the wine. Note that the wine category shows the most basic category (ex. Table, Sparkling, Icewine)

- Overall status – current status of application (Waiting on Shipment, In Progress, Approved, Not Approved, Withdrawn Cancelled or Revoked).

- Request Date – date of the last request submitted by the winery. Initially this is the date of first application. The date will change each time a wine is "Re-Submitted"

- Shipment Date – date the bottles were received by LCBO.

- Label Review – status of label review. Normally completed only after all other tests are complete and payment received.

- Lab Test – status of lab testing

- Taste Test – status of taste testing

- Taste Test Date – scheduled upcoming tasting date

- EU Export (VI-1) – status of the certificate for export certification to Europe, if requested

- Number of rows to display per page at the bottom of page

- Submit a "New Approval" button at the bottom of page

Information on individual approval applications

When you click on a wine approval ID# on the main approvals grid, you can access the following detail via links on the main navigation bar:

General – main page with information from the application

History – a history of steps/processes that have been completed for this application

Shipments – status of sample shipment at LCBO

Taste tests – results of the sensory evaluation when complete, including reasons for failure if applicable

Lab tests – analytical results when complete for alcohol, Free SO2 and reducing sugars, and any analyte that exceeds limits

Label reviews – results of the label review with comments (both advisory and requiring correction if the label is not compliant)

Edit Application – to edit the application (only before your samples are received). For changes post-sample receipt, please contact the office.

EU Export (VI-1) – To request a VI-1 certificate after a wine has been approved or to request additional original copies. Initial request for the VI-1 certificate required a test for Total Acidity (fee applies).

Re-Submit Application – this link will only appear only if a wine has failed a test and has the status of "Not Approved".

Add-ons – several options can be added to your initial application, including EU Export VI-1 certification or a "Rush" service. "Rush" service requests much be accepted by the LCBO - the Authority will contact you to advise you if the request is possible.

Forms and Reports – Shipping Form, Certificate of Origin, APEC Export Certificate, and Certificate of Analysis. The C of A is not available until the wine is Approved, please contact the office if you wish to see analytical data for wines that are Not Approved.

Withdraw Application – request to stop the processing of a VQA application at any stage of the approval process. Any expenses associated with partially completed testing will be invoiced.

WINE TRANSFERS

View all wine transfers to and from your winery
- Seller (tab) - enter new transfers to other wineries and view previously entered transfers
- Buyer (tab) – view transfers to your winery from other wineries
- Transfer information can be exported to an Excel file for manipulation and viewing

MONTHLY SALES REPORTING

Submit mandatory monthly VQA Sales Reports
- Upload reports
- Review status of reports
- View adjusted reports

All wineries must complete and file a monthly VQA sales report (VQAO sales, part of Winery Reporting Template "J-10"). The report is due on the 10th day of the month following the month of the reporting period.

The reporting package may be downloaded from the VQA public website at
https://www.vqaontario.ca/Regulations/Forms

Complete the sales report form and go to the Sales Reporting page. Have the electronic report file and total VQA litres sold for the period ready when uploading.

Select New Sales Report, then select the applicable month, enter the total litres and upload the excel version of the Winery Reporting Template (J-10) or extracted sales report page.

A VQA sales report must be filed even if the winery has no VQA sales for the period. In this case, select the applicable period and check "no sales for this month".

An invoice for sales levies owing will be generated and appear under the Invoices & Payments page. Please also remember to submit your Winery Reporting Template separately to the LCBO by email.

Adjustments to VQA sales reports

Uploaded sales reports that report a different value for total litres than entered with the submission will be rejected. If a report is rejected, please recheck the litres entered against the litres reported on the form (Total VQA sales in all channels – top right on the "VQAO Sales Report" sheet in the excel package) and re-enter the report with the correct litres. If you have difficulty, or require an adjustment after a report has been filed please contact the office.

IMPORTANT TO NOTE

The Appellation Authority uses sales reports as part of the overall reconciliation of wine production, content and sales. It is important that these reports are accurate. Missing reports and overdue payments may lead to a suspension of your VQA membership.

Inaccurate reports may lead to discrepancies when audited and could ultimately lead to enforcement actions if declared production volumes or sales cannot be verified.

INVOICES & PAYMENTS

- Displays invoices for all VQA services.
- View of print invoices by clicking on the Adobe icon in the right column
- Pay by cheque or online using a credit card. A credit card must first be set up under the "Payments" tab (go to Edit Profile at top right of page).
- Unpaid invoices with an outstanding payment will have the selection box available.
- To pay an invoice, select the box adjacent to the invoice and then "Choose Payment Method". Select cheque or credit card. If you select cheque – please write the invoice # on your cheque and send it to us, it will be recorded as paid when received.   If you select credit card, it will charge the payment to the card set up with the Stripe payment service.
- To pay multiple invoices with a single payment, select all the boxes adjacent to the chosen invoices (or "Select All" to pay all outstanding invoices). The total will be displayed in the "Amount" box and then select "Choose Payment Method" to choose online or cheque payment. An aggregate invoice will be created with a list of all individual services and the total amount. These aggregate invoices can be found under the separate tab "Aggregate (Bulk) Invoices".
- Invoices can be filtered in various ways – by status, type, time range, etc. If you have difficulty finding an invoice, make sure you have unselected all filters.
- View invoice details by clicking on the "+/-" column
- Please remember to note the "Invoice ID" on your cheque and please contact us if you notice a cheque has not been posted long after it was mailed.

SKIN FERMENTED WHITE WINE TRACKING

Register your grapes that might be used to produce Skin Fermented White wine by November 15 of the current vintage year. Failure to pre-register grapes for this purpose will disqualify the grapes or juice for use in VQA Skin Fermented White wines. We recommend you register these grapes if you think you might make this style of wine – you can repurpose them to table wines later if desired.

ICEWINE JUICE MONITORING

Register Icewine and Late Harvest grapes, record grape Harvests, juice Pressings and juice Transfers.

Failure to pre-register grapes for Icewines and Late Harvest wines with the Appellation Authority will disqualify the grapes or juice for use in VQA Late Harvest wines and Icewine. You must complete the

registration no later than November 15 of the current vintage year. You do not need to register grapes use in Table Wines that are picked after November 15.

Before November 15:

- Select "New Registration" to enter new Icewine and Late Harvest registrations.
- Go to "Manage Vineyards to set-up vineyard location and varietals prior to creating new registrations. A separate vineyard must be created for each grape variety. We recommend using descriptive names for each vineyard including the variety, ex. Home Farm Vidal or Smith Block Cab Franc.
- Complete the registration and don't forget to click "Save"

Not more than 30 days after harvest:

- Enter details of harvest
- Have actual, brix from McKibbon's test and litres ready to enter

To transfer Late Harvest juice or Icewine to another winery or grower:

- Go to the transfers page – have the IMS registration number handy

AUDIT AND INSPECTION

The Appellation Authority is responsible for maintaining the integrity of Ontario's wines of origin by ensuring compliance with rules made under the VQA Act. Verifying compliance is achieved through wine testing and a winery audit and inspection program.

AUDIT

The VQA audit program involves an annual review of winery records and inventory to review compliance with VQA regulations. An auditor will contact you to schedule the audit.

QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE – PREPARING FOR YOUR AUDIT

Audit Task	What you will be expected to provide	Who needs to be available to explain
Grape records - verify origin, variety, origin and reasonable recovery	☐ E-grape records ☐ Weigh bills, harvest date, variety, brix information, tonnes, grower location ☐ Volume of juice resulting from all grapes harvested or purchased	Winemaker/Production Staff

Production records - verify claims made with respect to origin, variety vintage, VQA content rules are met - verify production and wine content is reasonable with respect to documented grapes crushed	□ Up to date tank records - Volume - Variety - Vintage □ Log books or day records showing blending details - Full accounting of blend showing varietal and vintage content and origin □ Bottling records - Detailed content - Volumes - Dates	Winemaker/Production Staff
VQA applications for approval - verify application claims match production records	□ Information on VQA applications □ Production records relevant to each application (see above)	Winemaker/Production Staff Possibly Admin Staff
Inventory - account for all increases and decreases in inventory since last audit, verify no unaccounted inputs or outputs	□ Bulk □ Transfers □ Cased goods □ Sales and disposals □ Explanation of losses/overages - Loss allowances 5% for first 6 months (Oct-Mar), 1.5% for next 6 months, 3% thereafter	Winemaker/Production Staff Possibly Admin Staff
Sales and Disposals - verify sales reports are correct and fees paid	□ J10s since last audit □ VQA sales reports, detail by all channels - Winery retail, online to consumers - LCBO - Direct Delivery - Out of Province - Export - Duty free - Other □ Promotional use □ Disposals - Date - Volume - Reason - Documentation as appropriate (eg sale to vinegar manufacturer, environmental disposal) □ Transfers	Winemaker/Production Staff Bookkeeper/Office Manager Retail staff/manager

SAMPLE PRODUCTION RECORDS

This is an example of how simple manual records may be kept. Any format is acceptable for production records as long as they are detailed and allow the origin and content of the wine to be determined at any given time during the production process. Other documentation such as e-grape records and sales information will also be required.

Wine Name: 2013 Chardonnay Prince Edward County	Date	Description/Comments	Volume (litres)
Harvest info: South Vineyard 5 tonnes, 22 brix, 3250L North Vineyard 3 tonnes, 20.5 brix, 2100L	Oct 2/13	Crush	5350
	Oct 3/13	Pressed and racked into tank 3, loss 100L	5250
	Nov 15/13	Transferred to barrels, loss 25L	5225
	May 2/14	Transferred to tank 4B, fined, SO2 added, loss 40L	5185
Added 1015L 2013 unoaked Chardonnay from Tank 4A (Smith Vineyard)	Jun 21/14		6200
Added 600L 2012 Riesling from tank 13 (Jones Vineyard – Niagara)	Jun 30/14	Check vintage and appellation still eligible (<15%)	6800
	Jun 30/14	Adjust residual sugar	
	July /14	Cold stabilize etc.	
	July 31/14	VQA approval 2014.1234	
	Aug 15/14	Bottled 3600L (400 cs)	3200
	Sep 3/14	Blended into "White Blend"	(3200)

Wine Name: 2013 White Blend Ontario	Date	Description/Comments	Volume (litres)
Blend components			
1. 2013 Chardonnay (note contains 9% 2012, 9% Riesling)	Sep3/14	From tank 4B – 3200L	3200
2. 2013 Riesling (Niagara)	Sep 3/14	From tank 1 – 1000L	4200
3. 2013 Pinot Gris	Sep 3/14	From tank 8 – 1500L	5700

4. 2013 Gewurztraminer	Sep 3/14	Transfer from ABC Winery – 1000L	6700
5. 2012 Riesling	Sep 3/14	From tank 13 – 1000L Check vintage still eligible (<15%) - NO it is now 16.6%	7700
Added 1000L 2013 Chardonnay	Sep 30/14	Transfer from XYZ Winery Checked vintage still eligible (<15%) - it is now 14.7%	8700
	Oct /14	Cold stabilize etc.	
	July 31/14	VQA approval 2014.1235	
	Aug 15/14	Bottled 8700L	(8700)

INSPECTION AND INVESTIGATIONS

The Appellation Authority conducts regular unannounced inspections at winery retail stores and other retailers, including reviewing online advertising, social media and other platforms where wines are represented to consumers. The most common forms of non-compliance are selling a wine using VQA terms before approval is received or using labels that have been changed from the approved version and are not compliant.

ENFORCEMENT AND PENALTIES

It is a provincial offense to violate provisions of the VQA Act and regulations and non-compliance is subject to enforcement action and penalties. The Appellation Authority is a law enforcement agency and has statutory powers to support its mandate.

Many potential violations of VQA regulations are discovered before a wine is approved or released and preventative corrections are often sufficient.

If a violation of VQA regulations is discovered, the first step is to assess the seriousness of the infraction and the potential for corrective actions. The majority of non-compliance is resolved through corrective actions or warnings. Failure to correct infractions or respond to warnings, major violations or chronic non-compliance may result in escalating enforcement actions including compliance orders, wine approval revocations and removal from sale, or charges under the Provincial Offenses Act with fines up to $100,000.

IMPORTANT TO NOTE

If you receive correspondence from the Appellation Authority advising you of a rule violation or requesting corrective action – do not ignore this. If you are not clear about the request, or you don't

agree with what you are being asked to do, contact the office to discuss your options. Our goal is to find a path to compliance, and there may be ways to resolve the situation without escalating to an enforcement case.

EXPORTING VQA WINES

Each country has its own product standards and customs procedures. It is highly recommended that you find out what they are before your shipment leaves Canada. Shipments without proper documentation or that do not comply with local requirements are often impounded, delayed or destroyed at significant expense to the producer.

Countries within the European Union – Export certificate required for entry

An original, serial numbered, stamped and signed export certificate (known as a VI-1 form) is required to accompany each wine in each shipment. This form must be issued by the Appellation Authority.

Small shipments may be exempted if the total consolidated shipment is less than 100 litres (including all wines in the skid, container etc. even if from different producers). Therefore, if 10 wineries get together to each ship a single case of wine to a competition, each wine will need to be accompanied by a VI-1 form.

VI-1 forms require an additional laboratory test for Total Acidity and can be ordered as part of the wine approval application process or can be ordered after a wine is approved (online under Wine Approvals). A fee is charged for the initial order but unlimited extra copies may be ordered free of charge for additional shipments of the same wine.

The Appellation Authority cannot issue a VI-1 form for any wines or grape products that are not VQA-approved.

Other Countries

Asia Pacific Economies (APEC)

For VQA-approved wines to be exported to APEC member economies, a "Model Export Certificate" is available from the Forms and Reports report page under each individual wine ID. Use this form to accompany your shipment. Other documents may also be required – consult customs or your importer. The Canadian government is currently negotiating formal acceptance of this form plus the Certificate of Analysis to replace the Certificate of Origin, Certificate of Hygiene and Certificate of Free Sale.

For more information or assistance, please contact any of the Ontario Wine Appellation Authority team.