

BENEFITS OF MEMBERSHIP

VQA Ontario - Supporting 15 years of Ontario wine industry growth



“In an industry with incredibly tight margins, purchases that don’t provide a valuable return simply don’t get made. The fact that 155 Ontario wineries invest in VQA membership tells you that this is a purchase that provides significant value.” Ed Madronich, Flat Rock Cellars

VQA membership supports improved winery profitability

Research shows that engaged wine consumers are willing to pay more for wines of origin. In fact, in a 2014 Ontario-based study, nearly half of all recent wine buyers surveyed (48%) said country of origin was either an extremely or very important consideration in their wine purchasing decisions. VQA membership is the foundation for Ontario wineries to use appellation and sub-appellation labelling to build value by promoting this sense of place.

“The VQA designation sparks a wine conversation that is nearest and dearest to wine lovers and winemakers alike; ‘provenance.’ Nobody else has our appellation story and it is a story worth telling.” Mark Torrance, National Director of Estate Wineries, Andrew Peller Limited

VQA membership supports a better product

“VQA takes the risk out of purchase for consumers and mirrors our wineries’ commitment to provide high quality wines for Ontario consumers. To know that our whole region is held to a set of independent standards makes it easier for people to try a new VQA wine. For new wineries and new regions, this is a significant factor in getting started in the marketplace and becoming recognized at provincial, national and international levels.” Mike McArthur, Burning Kiln Winery

VQA establishes basic quality standards for production and VQA testing screens out excessively flawed wines, which protects the reputation of all of Ontario’s appellations. VQA Ontario facilitates sharing information through Winemaker Forums and Winery Report Cards to promote quality outcomes. The success rate of VQA wine approval submissions has improved from 80% to 97% over the past decade.

The VQA Act regulates the use of 37 different terms to ensure truth in labeling. This means that appellation terms can only be used if a wine meets the standards for content and quality. Enforcement of these rules creates a level playing field for wineries and transparency for consumers. Most importantly, VQA standards, testing and label integrity protect the reputation of Ontario’s wines of origin.

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VQA membership supports better product promotion

“As a small winery, I know that my message has been heard by many more consumers as a result of VQA marketing efforts than I could have reached on my own.”

Caroline Granger, The Grange of Prince Edward Vineyards & Estate Winery

VQA works closely with the Wine Marketing Association of Ontario (WMAO) and LCBO to support VQA promotions and marketing campaigns that support all VQA wineries' marketing efforts. For example, VQA Ontario:

- provides vintage reports, statistical data, appellation information and other support to the Wine County Ontario media and PR programs
- provides content to wine educators
- provides input related to LCBO merchandising on VQA issues
- directly supports the VQA marketing program with a \$250,000 contribution to support a focus on appellation

VQA certification is also a prerequisite for wineries to access a number of prestigious awards programs that can help spread the word about their wines and enhance the perceived value of their product, including:

- Lieutenant Governor's Award for Excellence in Ontario Wines
- Ontario Wine Awards
- Cuvee

VQA membership supports better brand profile and distribution

“To grow as a winery, you've got to think far beyond the cellar door. VQA certification gets our product into more hands, provincially, nationally and internationally, and that's a critical factor in continued growth for us.” Walter Schmoranz, Pelee Island Winery

From enhanced shelving allocation and Vintages eligibility at LCBO stores, to visibility with restaurants that demand wines of origin and exclusive access to the Ontario Farmers' Market channel, VQA certification provides the most direct path to Ontario's engaged wine consumers. For example, during the first year of the VQA Farmer's Market program, consumers bought almost \$1.5 million worth of VQA wines from 78 winery participants.

At the international level, VQA Ontario certification is required by the European Union for access to its member states and continues to be recognized by a growing number of world markets as a standard for access and streamlined entry.

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“Being a VQA member provides Hidden Bench with tangible benefits that make a significant impact on our bottom line, but that’s just the beginning. Our business is focused exclusively on wines from the Beamsville Bench Appellation and VQA takes us beyond the quality mark and guarantees the origin and authenticity of our wines. Appellation gives our brand a true sense of place, and that’s something that matters to our clients who seek out our premium quality terroir driven wines for this reason.” Harald Thiel, Hidden Bench Vineyards and Winery

Many Provincial and Federal programs provide significant value for wineries that make VQA certified wines. For example, the cost of annual VQA membership can be fully recouped by the incremental benefit from selling only 20 cases of \$18 wine to licensees. Governments rely on VQA’s third party assurance of origin and integrity to verify eligibility for agricultural and business supports.

Leverage the many benefits of your VQA membership

- Learn more about Ontario Government grants for wineries that produce VQA table wines:
www.ontario.ca/page/grants-local-wineries
- Learn more about LCBO marketing promotions for VQA wines here:
www.lcbo.com/content/lcbo/en/corporate-pages/about/media-centre/news/2014-09-17.html
- Learn more about the Lieutenant Governor’s Award for Excellence in Ontario Wines:
www.lgontario.ca/en/honours/pages/lgwineawards.aspx#more-info