

VQA ONTARIO  
Ontario's Wine Appellation Authority  
NEWS & TIPS FEBRUARY 2021

**IT'S BUSY SEASON FOR WINE APPROVALS!**

Please note that high volume periods (normally February, March and August) may result in longer than normal turnaround times for tastings and lab processing, especially this year with the added restrictions due to COVID. Samples are generally handled on a first come first served basis, but if you submit many samples at once they may be distributed over several tasting sessions and/or several lab weekly lineups. If you need assistance navigating the system, please call or email [Katherina.Radcliffe@vqaontario.ca](mailto:Katherina.Radcliffe@vqaontario.ca). As always, we will work closely with the LCBO to accommodate any requests.

Here are some important things to know:

- Wines delivered after 4:00 p.m. are not received by LCBO until the next business day.
- For tasting: wines arriving at the LCBO by end of day Monday will normally be tasted the following Wednesday. During high volume weeks, a second tasting will be held on Friday (for overflow and wines received by end of day Wednesday).
- For lab: the laboratory line-up for the following week is completed on Wednesday. To get your wines into the lineup for lab testing, please ensure they reach the LCBO by noon on the previous Wednesday at the latest.
- Although tastings are happening at the VQA office, DO NOT send your bottles to the VQA office – the office is not staffed full time so deliveries are not guaranteed. All samples should continue to be sent to the LCBO.
- Call or email us if you need information or have an urgent need to get a wine through the approval process.
- The LCBO is currently not accepting any “RUSH” requests.

As always, we greatly appreciate screw-capped bottles, labelled with only the VQA ID#. Also please check you wine approval applications to make sure that they are complete and approved before releasing the wine. If we are waiting for labels or payment, that wine is not approved.

**CHARMAT METHOD SPARKLING**

Many wineries are making aromatic sparkling wines with minimal time on lees. Although the secondary fermentation is done in tank, these wines typically do not qualify as Cuve Close or Charmat wines because the production period is less than 6 months. Sparkling wines submitted for approval in January 2021 with 2020 vintage grape content do not meet the requirement and should not be labelled “Charmat” or “Cuve Close”. It is permissible to reduce the time on lees from 80 to 30 days by using a mixer in tank but this does not exempt the wine from the following section of the regulation:

*The winemaking process from the start of the alcoholic fermentation designed to make the wine sparkling, including aging at the domicile where the wine was made, shall not be less than six months.*

We have had several inquiries recently about forced carbonation. This is not permitted in any VQA wine! The carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) contained in any Sparkling or Effervescent VQA wine must result exclusively from the alcoholic fermentation of the “cuvée” from which it was prepared.

### PÉTILLANT NATUREL (That is you “Pet-Nat”)

If you are experimenting with wines made in the Pétillant Naturel style, please be reminded that this is not a VQA wine category and your wines must fit into a VQA category if you wish to get them approved. The terms Pétillant Naturel and Pet-Nat are not regulated by VQA but we encourage you to use them in a way that is consistent with the general meaning of the term to avoid confusing or misleading consumers.

Here are some tips to succeed at the lab and tasting panel when submitting wines in this style:

- Determine the appropriate category for your wine: Table wine (less than 2 bar pressure), Effervescent Wine (between 2 and 3 bar pressure) or Sparkling Wine (>3 bar pressure).
- For Effervescent Wine, select Table wine “with Effervescence” on the application.
- Minimum Brix levels apply for all varieties and components.
- If the wine is unfiltered and/or Bottled with Lees, please specify this on the application.
- Unless the wine is within turbidity limits, the exact terms “Unfiltered” and/or “Bottled with Lees” must be declared on the label as applicable (see table).

<b>Turbidity Limits</b>	No declaration	Unfiltered	Bottled with Lees
White wine	5.0 ntu	20 ntu	No limit
Rosé wine	8 ntu	30 ntu	No limit
Red wine	10 ntu	40 ntu	No limit

- Keep in mind you cannot use terms associated with Traditional Method Sparkling wines such as Fermented in this Bottle unless the wine fully qualifies as a Traditional Method wine.

### SALES IN NON-STANDARD CONTAINERS

Liquor regulations have changed during the pandemic. Licensees are now permitted to sell wine for takeout as long it is in a container that is “securely closed” to give them more flexibility to sell mixed drinks and growlers. However, wineries selling VQA wine from their retail store must still sell only “sealed and unopened” containers with compliant VQA labels in permitted containers.

Permitted containers for VQA wines are glass, aluminum, plastic (PET), multi layer containers such as TetraPak or bag-in-box, and stainless-steel kegs. Permitted sizes for sale to a consumer are 50, 100, 200, 250, 375, 500, or 750 millilitres, or 1, 1.5, 3 or 4 litres. Containers up to 20L may be sold to licensees only.

### FOR WINERIES EXPORTING TO THE USA

The U.S. Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau has amended its regulations governing wine containers to add seven new standards of fill: 355 mL, 250 mL, 200 mL.