

VINTAGE REPORT 2005

Conditions

Winter conditions preceding the 2005 season had a major impact on the 2005 grape crop.

In Lake Erie North Shore and Pelee Island, temperatures were moderate and vines over-wintered fairly well. In the Niagara Peninsula, typically the VQA viticultural area with the largest grape production, a severe cold event in January 2005 caused significant bud damage, particularly in the Niagara-on-the-Lake area. Many vineyards saw significantly lower average crop yields and a few did not produce a commercially viable crop. The overall availability of grapes for VQA wines was reduced by an estimated 50% in comparison to a full harvest. Data from the Grape Growers

of Ontario shows the tonnage of vinifera grape varieties decreased by approximately two-thirds when compared with the 2004 vintage.

The extent of winter damage varied widely depending on vineyard location, micro climates and the local topography. Grape production from tender varieties such as Merlot and Gewurztraminer was especially affected in areas where vines were still recovering from previous cold weather damage in early 2003. Other popular varieties fared a bit better however, including Riesling, Pinot Gris, Pinot Noir and Baco Noir. Also on a positive note for wine quality, natural yield limitations resulting from fewer viable buds set the

stage for good overall quality at harvest.

Once spring arrived, the primary growing season was excellent with warm and dry conditions. The combination of natural yield restrictions from the winter cold and abundant sunshine throughout the summer months ensured good progress in ripening to September. Harvest began relatively early – late August in Pelee Island and Lake Erie North Shore and mid-September for the Niagara Peninsula. Autumn rain was sporadic during the harvest season, causing delays in picking at some locations but without detriment to the final harvest.

Late Harvest and Icewine

As with the regular harvest, the Icewine harvest was less than one-half of the previous year's harvest. Very few vinifera grapes were left hanging for Icewine both because of their limited availability and the fear of breakdown due to early ripening. Harvest conditions for Icewine were excellent and the harvest began early in the season. The early harvest

protected against excessive deterioration and delivered grapes in good condition and so pressing yields were generally high. Vidal grapes provided a large majority of the juice pressed with the limited availability of juice from vinifera varieties this year.

Total tonnage netted for Late Harvest and Icewine was estimated at 2722 tonnes and

total volume of Icewine juice registered was 541,985 litres.

Icewine harvest began on November 24, 2005 and was completed on February 23, 2006. The majority of the crop was picked before January 1, 2006. Yields and sugar levels for both the Late Harvest and Icewine categories were good to excellent and quality is expected to be very good.