

VINTAGE REPORT 2012

Conditions

Weather conditions in winter and early spring 2012 were mild across southern Ontario and the wine growing regions. It was particularly warm in March and the vines started the growth cycle early. After a few frost concerns in April, the rest of the spring season was warmer and drier than normal and the crop was already maturing ahead of schedule by the end of June.

The weather continued to be hot and dry starting in early summer. Monthly mean temperatures in June were 3 to 4 degrees above normal across southern Ontario. July was the driest in many years in the Niagara Peninsula and the daytime high temperature surpassed 30 C on 17 days, almost triple the normal. Similar conditions prevailed in Lake Erie North Shore and Prince Edward County but Prince Edward County

experienced more normal levels of precipitation. All appellations returned to hot, dry conditions in August and some areas required irrigation to combat the extremely dry weather.

All of this hot weather set the stage for a fast paced growing season, with most grapes ripening a few weeks ahead of a typical vintage. Conditions were close to perfect going into harvest.

Harvest

Harvest began as early as mid-August for some growers, especially in Lake Erie North Shore and for sparkling wine grapes. By September, the main harvest was in full swing and moving quickly. The continued warm days in September meant that most grape varieties were fast achieving ripeness and would need to be harvested in a much tighter time frame than normal. This, and the dictates of scheduling around

rainy days, led to an early but very busy season and long days for most winemakers. Harvest conditions varied among the major regions, with Lake Erie North Shore enjoying drier conditions than elsewhere, Prince Edward County receiving significant precipitation and Niagara just slightly wetter than normal.

Harvest reports on grape quality were excellent for all regions.

Preliminary registrations for Icewine and Late Harvest grapes show 5500 tonnes of grapes netted for the 2012 season. This is a substantial increase from last year's 3650 tonnes and slowly pushing back towards production levels not seen since 2007 when a record of nearly 7000 tonnes was netted.

Wine Expectations

2012 provided wonderful conditions for wine grapes and promises to produce some exceptional wines. Virtually all grape varieties performed well in this

growing season and the early and relatively short harvest window meant most grapes were picked in pristine condition. This will be reflected both in the core cool

climate varieties Ontario does best and should set the stage for some interesting and less common varieties to show well.