



Sub-Appellation Overview

Island breezes, warm summers, early harvest

The South Islands are the nine islands that comprise the municipality of the Town of Pelee Island and part of the Lake Erie North Shore appellation. Grapes are grown on the largest island, Pelee, which is approximately 10 000 acres in total land area and situated at Canada's most southerly point of latitude of N41°45'. Located in Lake Erie about 20 kilometres off the shoreline, South Islands enjoys the longest growing season of any wine appellation in Canada.

Warm breezes off of Lake Erie moderate summer and fall temperatures, and harvest usually begins two to three weeks earlier than in the other appellations – often in August. The long, warm growing season favours some varieties that are unusual for Ontario, including Tempranillo. These unique conditions have ensured a long history of successful wine grape growing on the Island.

NOTABLE FEATURES

Pelee Island is the site of Canada's first commercial winery, VinVilla, which began operations in 1866. A hundred years later, its vineyards of native grapes were replanted with premium *Vitis Vinifera* vines.

STATISTICS

GROWING DEGREE DAYS (AVG.): 1592

FROST FREE DAYS: 195 (-2°C)

JULY MEAN TEMPERATURE: 23.2°

GROW SEASON: April to October

PRECIPITATION: 568mm (grow season)

COMMON VARIETALS: Cabernet Franc, Cabernet Sauvignon

PRODUCTION (2018 REPORTING YEAR): 5,778

NUMBER OF APPROVED WINES: 2

NUMBER OF WINERIES: 1



Terroir Overview

Soil Characteristics

This sub-appellation has a soil make up very similar to the mainland in southwestern Ontario, sandy loam and clay over a limestone bedrock. The soils here have only moderate drainage due to the underlying bedrock but dry out later in the season as dry conditions often prevail later in the season. The majority of vineyards are planted on the southwestern corner and centre of the main island, where the soils are the deepest and allow for root systems to properly set. Careful stewardship of the soils, with the help of drainage canals and protective dykes, have made for a productive experience with viticulture.

Topography

The topography of the South Islands sub-appellation is simple but ideal for ensuring even sun exposure and ripening. The highest point is only 12 meters above the lake at an elevation of about 174 meters above sea level.

Climate

South Islands has been characterized as humid continental, with warm summers and cool winters. As the shallowest of the Great Lakes, Lake Erie warms quickly and has the warmest surface temperature of the five lakes. This warms the islands during the spring, summer and fall, and contributes to the exceptionally long growing season, sometimes thirty days more than on the mainland. This makes South Islands Ontario's best location for long season, late ripening grapes.

