

VQA News and Tips — February 2016

TIME TO RENEW YOUR VQA ONTARIO MEMBERSHIP

Please renew your winery's VQA membership by March 31 by logging into VQA Services <https://office.vqaontario.ca/vqaservices>. Once logged in, click on "Edit Profile" then "Renew" and follow the instructions. Please make sure you follow up with a copy of your current manufacturer's licence and a cheque dated April 1, 2016 for the fee payment.

Special note for those that operate more than one manufacturer's licence issued by AGCO:

Effective January 1, 2016, each manufacturer that uses VQA-regulated terms must have an individual membership in VQA Ontario. If you are a winery operating with more than one AGCO manufacturer's license and you only have one VQA membership, please contact us.

WINEMAKER FORUMS

VQA Winemakers Forums are coming up on Thursday, March 10, 2016 (Lake Erie North Shore) and Friday, March 11, 2016 (Prince Edward County).

These forums are intended to foster informal discussions among winemakers about winemaking, vintage specific challenges and techniques that work best for our appellations and conditions. It is an opportunity both to share your expertise and learn from the experience of others.

Details will be circulated soon. Keep an eye out for an email or call the VQA office for more information.

LATE HARVEST AND ICEWINE GRAPE REGISTRATION – ENTER YOUR HARVEST INFORMATION

Don't forget to record all your harvest data when you harvest grapes for Icewine and late harvest and enter this information into VQA Ontario's online Icewine monitoring registry at <https://office.vqaontario.ca/vqaservices>. For each harvest batch, you will need to record the date, time, ambient temperature at harvest, actual (weighed) tonnes and the volume of the juice. You will also need the brix reading as tested by McKibbon and Associates. More information can be found at <http://www.vqaontario.ca/Regulations/Processes> under the Late Harvest/Icewine tab.

WINE APPROVALS

Wine approvals are at the very core of the VQA certification system. The most important thing you need to know as a winery is that you cannot use any VQA-regulated terms in association with a wine unless and until you have a valid approval. This is an offence under the VQA Act and can be prosecuted.

How do I confirm the wine is approved?

Look up the specific wine in your online VQA account. If the wine is approved, you will see a green checkmark in the status column in your VQA online account. Checkmarks in any of the other columns are not sufficient unless the status is complete and the wine marked approved. Don't be misled into thinking that completing the tasting and lab is enough – it isn't. All steps, including label review and payment must be completed before the wine is approved and can be released.

Tips for the month

- If you choose not to use the VQA logo on your label, the font size of the VQA appellation declaration must be at least 3.2 mm. If the appellation is too small, the label – and wine – will not be approved.
- If you receive an approval based on a tank sample, you must bottle it within 12 months of the tasting/lab testing or the approval will expire and the wine is no longer approved. A full re-submission is required to reinstate the approval. Best not to find this out after you have bottled.
- Many applications are delayed because payment has not been received or labels are not uploaded. We process a large number of applications and will not remind you something is missing. If you are wondering why an approval is not completed – please check the status indicators online or give us a call to find out!

New! Expedite your wine to the Independent Tasting Panel (by request only)

Effective immediately, member wineries will now have the option to have their wine expedited directly to the Independent Tasting Panel should it fail the tasting on the first submission. While the established process for resubmitting wines will otherwise remain in place, members who request a tasting by the Independent Panel will be able to skip the usual reassessment if they wish to shorten the traditional process. Please note that, as always, rulings by the Independent Panel are final.

WINERY AUDIT

On-site audits are conducted at least once a year to verify compliance with VQA rules. The most important thing you can do to make the audit go smoothly is be prepared. Here is what you will need to have on hand:

- Current tank records by volume, variety and vintage and current on/off site warehouse inventory so that we may verify the accuracy of the current inventory status
- Monthly reporting package (J10 and relevant monthly reports) and the sales ledgers and supporting documentation (invoices, sales slips, register tapes) for each applicable sales channel and promotional wine volume
- Part month sales activity through all channels and promotional product used up to the date of the audit (since the last monthly report)
- Records to support what blending has occurred and what bottling has been done since the last audit date. Also if you have disposed of wine, we will review supporting documentation for that as well
- GGO reports for any production that has occurred since the last audit date along with the volume of wine produced is also needed.