

## Ontario Wine Appellation Authority NEWS & TIPS APRIL 2021

**THANK YOU FOR RENEWING YOUR MEMBERSHIP!**

**Fee waiver is in effect – if you have not paid, please don't. If you have paid, standby for a credit.**

Many thanks to our members for renewing their VQA memberships on time.

In recognition of the uncertainty brought about by the pandemic and hardship for many wineries, the Board of Directors has authorized a waiver of the membership fee for the coming year. Although revenue at the Appellation Authority is down, we have worked hard to reduce expenses to provide some relief to member wineries. For those of you who have already paid the fee, a credit has been applied to your account to be used against pending or future invoices. To use the credit, you will need to select it with other invoices totalling at least the credit amount (>\$565). If you have requested a refund instead of a credit, please be patient as we determine how to process these in our new accounting platform. Please call if you have questions.

Don't forget to send in your valid Manufacturer's Licence by email to [info@vqaontario.ca](mailto:info@vqaontario.ca).

For those of you who have not yet renewed, please note that your membership in the Appellation Authority has expired (effective April 1, 2021) and your online account has been set to "inactive" status – access to online services has been discontinued and no wine approval applications will be accepted, or results issued. Please login and renew by going to the "edit profile" tab if you wish to continue your membership.

For wineries that discontinue their membership, approved VQA wines may be sold for up to 12 months after the membership ends using VQA regulated terms. After that grace period, all VQA terms must be removed from labels, and from any related descriptions of the wines or winery.

### TASTING PANEL TRANSITION

We are also excited to announce that the Appellation Authority has decided to transition our current "Ad-Hoc" sensory panel to a permanent program. Wineries will not notice too much change, since the Authority assumed this role temporarily in March 2020 due to COVID restrictions at the LCBO. Sensory panels are currently administered at the Authority's North York office, using an independent panel.

After a year of demonstrating successful operations of the ad-hoc panels through many adverse conditions, it is time to bring this core regulatory function in-house. Sensory evaluation is an important part of the wine approval process.

We are immensely grateful to the LCBO and their team of experts who have made up the VQA panels for over three decades, and the staff behind them that made sure thousands of samples were tasted professionally and efficiently. Now that we are doing this ourselves, we understand and appreciate all

the efforts they have made! We will continue to rely on LCBO Quality Assurance for chemical analysis and logistics as a critical part of the wine approvals process. Please join us in thanking them for their contribution to VQA.

The objective and procedures of the sensory evaluation will remain mostly unchanged, with panel composition being similar to the Independent (Appeal) panel set out in the Rules for Approvals. For now, COVID measures will remain in place until further notice:

- All samples should be delivered to the LCBO, 43 Freeland
- Tastings are held on Wednesday at the Authority office (extra days may be added when volume dictates)
- Second bottle tastings have been discontinued. Wine approvals submissions now require only 2 bottles, effective immediately (please note minimum size required for the lab is 500 mL so please plan accordingly if sending small format bottles)
- Panels are drawn from a roster of qualified tasters with formal training (winemakers, sommeliers etc.) who have completed a written exam specific to VQA wines

## ICEWINE GRAPE REGISTRATION – ENTER YOUR HARVEST INFORMATION

Don't forget to record all of your harvest data when you harvest grapes for Icewine and late harvest and enter this information into VQA Services online Icewine registration system 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 juice. You will also need the brix reading as tested by McKibbin and Associates. More information can be found at <http://www.vqaontario.ca/Regulations/Processes> under the Late Harvest/Icewine tab.

And please don't forget to pay you invoice for Icewine juice testing that was issued in March.

## YEAR END – PLEASE PAY YOUR OUTSTANDING INVOICES AND CLEAN UP YOUR APPROVALS

Please review the status of your invoices. As we prepare to close our financial year-end, we ask you bring your reports and accounts up to date.

Remember to report and upload your monthly sales reports to the secure VQA Services website each month, even if you have no sales. These reports are due on the 10<sup>th</sup> of the month (and gladly accepted up to the 20<sup>th</sup>). After that, you are overdue! For those wineries with small volumes of sales, payment can be consolidated every few months, but you must submit the reports monthly. **Please pay any balances up to and including the March sales report by April 20.**

Several hundred approval applications remain open where testing has been completed but no labels and/or no payment have been received. Please complete your applications. You may also wish to take this opportunity to make sure you are not inadvertently selling any wines that have not completed the

approval process. Passing the tasting and lab is not enough – you must see the green checkmark in the approval status column.

We will be contacting any winery with invoices or reports past due by 30 days or more in April.

From the Ontario Craft Winery Association

**ONTARIO CRAFT WINE CONFERENCE 2021: NAVIGATING NEW LANDSCAPES**

*Registration is now open for the third annual Ontario Craft Wine Conference 2021 which takes place virtually May 11 - 12, 2021. The annual Ontario Craft Wine Conference, presented by gold sponsor MNP, is a must-attend business, education, and networking gathering for wine industry leaders and professionals. Featuring quality presentations from leading local and international industry experts, the two-day interactive agenda includes education sessions in digital marketing, direct-to-consumer sales, wholesale channel, viticulture, climate change, sustainability, and automation. Attendees include winery owners, operators, vineyard, production, sales and marketing staff, suppliers to the industry, investors, government, and industry champions. You can register [HERE](#) for the conference. The formal announcement can be [found here](#).*