

## VINTAGE REPORT 2011

### NIAGARA PENINSULA – LAKE ERIE NORTH SHORE – PEELEE ISLAND – PRINCE EDWARD COUNTY

#### Conditions

Weather conditions in winter and early spring 2011 were relatively normal across southern Ontario and the wine growing regions. A few anomalies, including higher precipitation in southwestern Ontario and drier conditions in Prince Edward County were observed.

Temperatures dipped slightly below normal in January and some minor winter damage was reported but 2011 began with a normal outlook for the grape crop.



April and May saw a number of weather systems bringing rain to most areas of southern Ontario and a few bouts of

severe weather. In the wine regions, precipitation was higher than normal and sunshine hours were lower than normal well into the beginning of June. Although there were no late frosts to disturb the beginning of the season, bud burst was late and by early summer, the crop looked like it was starting the main growing season a week or two behind schedule.

Sporadic storms continued into June, but precipitation levels returned to normal in the wine regions and Niagara was slightly drier. The season began to turnaround with progressively better weather by mid June and July brought sunshine, warmth and beautiful weather for grape growers.

Temperatures hit record levels in many areas, and monthly mean temperatures were 2 to 3 degrees above normal across southern

Ontario. July was the driest in many years in the Niagara Peninsula where rain came in sporadic downpours, often leaving some of the Peninsula dry and providing just enough moisture to guard against drought. The various sub-appellations in Niagara experienced over 30<sup>0</sup> C temperatures from 16-20 days of the month, breaking several temperature records. Other regions saw similar hot conditions, but with more rain in Lake Erie North Shore and Pelee Island and normal precipitation for Prince Edward County. By the end of July, all regions were back on track towards a normal progression for the growing season. August continued to be warm and slightly drier in both Niagara and Prince Edward County, and warm and slightly wetter in Southwestern Ontario, but nothing like the extremes of July.

## Harvest

Harvest began for Sparkling wines in late August and early September and grapes were generally slightly ahead of the normal ripening schedule or right on target. Conditions varied significantly between the main growing regions in September. Temperatures in the Niagara Peninsula continued to be above normal but September rains made harvest scheduling difficult and kept wineries very busy. In Lake Erie North Shore and Pelee Island, it was both cooler and wetter, challenging wineries with disease pressures in the

vineyard and slowing the last stages of ripening. September conditions in Prince Edward County were more favourable, with average temperatures a few degrees above normal and less than normal rainfall.

With the warm summer, most of the earlier ripening varieties were brought in early and in good condition. Wineries were very busy in late September and early October managing the challenges of a rainy harvest season and precision in picking decisions was

important this year. Temperatures stayed mild into November and no early frosts appeared to complicate the end of the harvest.

Preliminary registrations for Icewine and Late Harvest grapes show that production is likely to almost double from 2010 but is still substantially lower than the records near 7000 tonnes set through 2006 and 2007. Subject to audit verification, a total of 3650 tonnes have been left hanging for use in Icewine and Late Harvest wines for the 2011 vintage.

## Wine Expectations

2011 is shaping up to be an interesting vintage and certainly one where grape growers and winemakers were kept on their toes by the weather. Worries at the beginning of the growing season were countered by

nature with the warm summer and a rapid catch up to maturity. Worries at the end of the season were mostly allayed by growers and winemakers through good decisions on vineyard management and timely

intervention with the harvest. Although it was a stressful season, brix levels indicate that most grapes reached optimum ripeness, suggesting good potential for the resulting wines.