



## *Vintage* **REPORT 2021**

### **FOR ONTARIO WINERIES, 2021 WAS AN UNFORGETTABLE YEAR.**

Unpredictable weather challenged even the most experienced winemakers and grape growers. Record setting temperatures, intermittent drought, high rainfall and humidity – Ontario saw it all this year – led wineries to pay extra attention to vineyard management to ensure a good outcome. Fortunately, the outlook for the 2021 vintage is still positive.

Looking at the year in review, it was defined by extremely variable weather, from start to finish. The year started off warmer than average with January temperatures milder than in previous years. Mid-January, most of the province, including all wine appellations, was hit hard by snow and some regions experienced significant snowfall over the second half of the month complicating the last of the Icewine grape harvest.

Moving into February, the weather story was largely defined by lake effect snow around the Great Lakes Ontario and Erie covering many vineyards.

March temperatures rose quickly and much of Southern Ontario was without snow by April 1<sup>st</sup>. Lake Erie North Shore suffered high winds associated with the rapidly changing season but May settled into seasonal temperatures and generally dry conditions across the Province – a great start to the growing season.

Summer got an early start in June with above average warm temperatures across all of Ontario and significant heat to end the month. High levels of precipitation were experienced in Lake Erie North Shore into July, with some severe thunderstorm activity, while weather was more typical and drier for Niagara Peninsula and Prince Edward County.

As the summer progressed and July turned to August, the weather was dry and hot conditions prevailed. Despite scattered rain and severe thunderstorms at the end of the month, severe heat and drought were the major story by the second half of August.

Preparing for harvest in September, most were reporting good colour on red varieties, and lower acids due to the August heat. After a highly variable growing season, winemakers



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monitored grape health and ripeness closely to plan for optimum harvest windows for each variety.

### **HARVEST**

Unstable weather continued in the fall, presenting some challenging harvest conditions. Rain and humidity at inopportune times required a strategic and nimble approach to getting grapes in at their peak in all three regions. It was a stop and start story in most regions, with bursts of precipitation slowing the harvest and introducing disease pressures to be managed.

### **ICEWINE**

Pre-registrations for grapes set aside for 2021 vintage Icewine total 1,952 tonnes, almost double the registered tonnes from last year's record low, but still down significantly from previous years.

### **WINE OUTLOOK**

Early reports indicate 2021 will be an excellent year for early white varieties that were harvested before the rains, notably aromatic whites Sauvignon Blanc and Riesling, and white varieties harvested for Sparking programs. Despite the weather challenges, most wineries reported good phenolic ripeness on skins and lower acid across many varieties, thanks to careful viticultural practices. Anticipate continued high quality red blends from varieties such as Cabernet Franc, Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot.