

VINTAGE REPORT 2008

Conditions

The 2008 vintage growing season was quite variable from one appellation to another. March was cool and wet in all appellations, with record snowfalls recorded in the Lake Erie North Shore and Prince Edward County appellations. This was immediately contrasted with a warmer than normal April and drier conditions in Lake Erie North Shore. May was again cooler in all regions but was notable for the lack of severe spring weather such as thunderstorms. Summer finally arrived in June with warm weather, including some severe weather that produced high winds and hail. Vines fared well through June, getting a good start on the growing season and avoiding the hail damage that affected



some of the early season tender fruits such as plums.

Summer months in the Niagara Peninsula and Prince Edward County saw normal temperatures and much higher precipitation than normal. In the western Ontario appellations of Lake Erie North Shore and Pelee Island, the situation was quite different with drier conditions, including a record low rainfall for August.

By mid-August, ripening looked to be 7-14 days delayed from what is considered normal in Niagara Peninsula and Prince Edward County and just a few days behind in Lake Erie North Shore and Pelee Island.

Temperatures were also warmer than normal for much of June through October in all wine appellations, with record-breaking high temperatures recorded in September and October. The summer saw a number of severe weather events, including thunderstorms, high winds, and hail but no significant damage was inflicted on the wine grape crop. Several powerful tornadoes also occurred in southern Ontario but fortunately not in wine country.

Harvest

September brought improved conditions with welcome warm temperatures and sunny dry weather. Harvest began late in September – and stretched into mid-November. The fall was generally dry, offering good harvest conditions, with just a few notable rainfalls associated with the remnants of tropical storms and hurricanes from the south.

The combination of good fall weather and careful thinning of fruit to manage ripening resulted in most grapes reaching ripeness in the October harvest window. After a summer marked by intermittent worry about delayed maturity, sugar levels in most grapes turned out to be in the normal range.

In addition to the regular season harvest, an additional estimated crop of 6000 tonnes was netted and left on the vine for Late Harvest Wines and Icewines. For the 2008 vintage, an abundance of different grape varieties were registered with VQA for late harvest, including Vidal, Riesling, Cabernet Franc, Cabernet Sauvignon,

Gewurztraminer, Chardonnay and 13 other varieties.

Icewine season has just begun with the first harvest taking place on Dec 7, 2008. A very

short burst of – 8 temperatures occurred earlier in some areas on November 22 but no Icewine grapes were harvested at that time. It was a notable

distinction to the 2008 vintage that the theoretical potential to begin Icewine harvest came while the regular season harvest was still underway.

Wine Expectations

2008 saw some challenges and required careful attention to vineyard management to ensure good quality at harvest. Fortunately, the main summer influence of 2008 – the summer rain – was manageable with leaf and fruit removal to reduce vine foliage and promote fruit

ripening and followed by a stretch of excellent fall weather. By harvest, most of the crop was in good shape.

The overall expectation for 2008 is for good potential for white wines, particularly Riesling and Chardonnay and aromatic whites.

Traditionally cool climate reds, such as Pinot Noir and Gamay Noir should also show well. Lake Erie North Shore and Pelee Island strengths will include full bodied wines, such as Cabernet varieties and Chardonnay, which benefited from the dry August in those appellations.