



## **Ontario Wine Appellation Authority Stakeholder Consultation**

### **March/April 2024**

The Ontario Wine Appellation Authority Board of Directors is seeking feedback on additions to the list of authorized grape varieties for VQA wines. Please submit your comments in writing to Laurie Macdonald [laurie.macdonald@vqaontario.ca](mailto:laurie.macdonald@vqaontario.ca) by April 15, 2024.

OWAA adopted a new strategic plan in 2023 with a vision to continue to evolve Ontario's wine appellation system to be modern, dynamic and inclusive, reflecting consumer expectations and the future of wine production in Ontario.

A key part of implementing the strategy is a review of the policy used to evaluate grape varieties that are eligible for use in VQA wines. This policy was updated in November 2023. A list of grape varieties that are grown in Ontario and not listed in the varieties authorized for VQA production has been prepared for consideration. The new policy reflects feedback from member wineries about grape growing conditions, recently introduced varieties, sustainability, consumer acceptance and trends in other winemaking regions.

This is the second consultation in a broad, multi-stage review and discussion of potential changes and how they fit together within the appellation framework. The proposals in this document focus on a proactive approach to expanding the grape variety list rather than waiting for individual winery requests. We welcome your feedback and suggestions on all or any varieties that might be included in the VQA standards.

### **POLICY FOR ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION OF NEW GRAPE VARIETIES**

Authorized grape varieties for VQA wines are listed in VQA Regulation 406 and changes to the list require a formal amendment to the regulation.

Requests to add new grape varieties may be submitted to the OWAA Board of Directors by a member winery or other stakeholder.

The following information should be included in an application for addition to the list of approved varieties:

- a written request including documents confirming the species of the proposed variety(ies) and a registered name that does not include numerical references
- for varieties bred from inter-specific crossings between *vitis vinifera* and other grape species, additional information to confirm that the variety(ies):
  - are not prohibited for use in the commercial production of any wines in accordance with the Liquor Licence and Control Act or other applicable legislation in effect in the Province of Ontario or federally within Canada; and

- have not been previously removed from the list of approved varieties under Regulation 406; and
- do not typically produce wines with sensory characteristics associated with wines made from labrusca grapes; and
- do not have breeding lineage that suggests labrusca parentage exceeding 20%.

The evaluation process may include a technical evaluation of the grape variety and its suitability for producing quality wines, and will be subject to public consultation with wineries and other stakeholders. The approval of new grape varieties for use in VQA wines requires formal approval both by the OWAA Board of Directors and by the responsible Minister of the Ontario government.

## **PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO VQA REGULATION 406 – APPENDIX B - AUTHORIZED GRAPE VARIETIES**

### *1. Varieties of Vitis Vinifera*

#### **ADD:**

Alicante Bouschet  
 Barbera  
 Dolcetto  
 Moscato Giallo (gold muscat)  
 Muscat D'Alsace  
 Petite Arvine  
 Rousanne  
 Saperavi  
 Tocai Friulano

### *2. Varieties Produced by Inter-Specific Crossbreeding*

- i. Hybrid varieties that may to be used to produce provincially designated varietal wines (single-varietal, dual-varietal, triple-varietal, multi-varietal).*

#### **ADD:**

Bianca  
 Cabernet Foch  
 Cabernet Jura  
 Cabernet Volos  
 Crimson Pearl  
 Itasca  
 La Crescent  
 L'Acadie Blanc  
 Landot Noir  
 Le Commandant  
 Lucie Kuhlman  
 Merlot Kanthus  
 Muscat Osceolo

Petite Pearl  
Regent  
Red amurensis  
Rondo  
Sauvignon Rytos  
Soreli  
St Cliche  
St Pepin  
Traminette  
Veritage  
Verona  
White amurensis

*ii. Hybrid varieties that may be used with varietal wines (single-varietal, dual-varietal, triple-varietal, multi-varietal) to a maximum volume of 15%, 10% or 5%, as the case requires.*

**ADD:**

HG01

HG02

HG04

MN 1094

**BACKGROUND AND DISCUSSION**

The list of varieties currently eligible for use in VQA wines includes 82 *Vitis vinifera* grapes, 9 hybrid grapes that may be used in varietal wines and 15 hybrid grapes that can be blended up to 15% into a hybrid-based wine.

Historically, additions to the grape variety list have been initiated by specific requests from individual growers or wineries. Growth in the industry, including new and emerging regions, and sustainability objectives, have resulted in more interest in new hybrid varieties.

With a view to streamline the process to modernize the grape list and streamlining the process, OWAA has collected information on grape varieties planted in Ontario and assessed them against its policy for new varieties to create the list of potentially eligible grapes for discussion.

**Impact on appellation system:** The proposed changes would expand the list of authorized grape varieties by adding 9 *vitis vinifera* and 25 hybrid grapes. Existing rules that apply to wines containing hybrid grapes would remain, including labelling with the Ontario appellation only and requirement to declare the hybrid varietal content on the label. Consumer perceptions of VQA wines may be impacted, depending on current and historical views related to Ontario wines made from certain hybrid grapes.

**Impact on consumers:** This change would increase choice among VQA varietal wines while retaining transparency for consumers for hybrid grape content.

**Impact on wineries:** The change would expand access to the VQA system for wineries growing cold hardy and sustainable grape varieties and create opportunity for wineries to develop new products.