



Vintage **REPORT 2025**

After a year of weather plot twists, from fake spring to a stubborn summer heat wave, Ontario growers still brought in fruit with incredible flavour and balance. Early signs point to a vintage with the depth and energy we saw in 2022, 2023 and 2024, setting up 2025 to be another standout year for Ontario wine.

NIAGARA PENINSULA

January was cold and sunny across wine country in Ontario. 2025 got off to a cold start, but despite below freezing temperatures, there were many crisp, bright sunny days. Even in the warmest appellation, Lake Erie North Shore, the cold persisted, accompanied by high, fast-moving winds coming in off Lake Erie, which had significant ice formation in 2025. Back in Niagara, winter pruning was conducted under mostly sunny skies and many layers of warm clothing!

That cold weather continued in February. Within the first three weeks, our wine regions experienced some unusually cold days. February was also notable for the high level of snowfall, and freezing rain at the end of the second week. Both Niagara and the Greater Toronto Area received snow and freezing rain on February 13th. Significant snowfall was also a factor in the emerging region near the Ottawa Valley. By the final week, temperatures had started to rise, and Southern Ontario experienced a double-digit daytime high of 12.5C, recorded in Windsor, on February 25th.

March started off cool and sunny but by the second week, temperatures were again on the rise. St. Catharines recorded a daytime high of 22C on March 16th. Here in Ontario, we refer to this as “fake spring” – a day so nice, that we start to believe that



winter is over and spring has arrived. For grape growers, fake spring is the stuff of nightmares. One or two days is fine, but too many unseasonably warm days can encourage an early start to the season – putting the crop at risk for seasonally appropriate spring frost. Luckily for the grapes and growers, that unseasonably warm March weather was short-lived. The month ended with freezing temperatures, and powerful ice storms in Toronto, north of the city in Oro Medonte, and east all the way to Prince Edward County, where The County experienced significant freezing rain on March 28th.

Cool and seasonable temperatures continued into the beginning of April, but within two weeks, it was clear that spring had arrived, for real this time. The month was defined by warm sunny days and ended on a very high note – a daytime high of 28.3 C was recorded in Windsor and 27.2 C in Toronto. Remaining ice on the Great Lakes dissipated quickly, lending cool breezes to the surrounding areas.

May weather was a bit of a rollercoaster in wine country. The month started off cool, had many above average warm days, and even dipped down into freezing with -1 C recorded in Toronto on May 16th. Despite the ups and downs, the growing season was well on its way by the end of the month.

Environment and Climate Change Canada predicted a warmer than usual June – and they were correct. The end of June was characterized by very hot weather that continued into July. Many parts of Wine Country and the Greater Toronto Area experienced a long and dry heat wave, punctuated by localized thunderstorms including one on July 24 that hit the Niagara region with a heavy down pour, high winds and hail, and then came across Lake Ontario and brought the same energy to downtown Toronto.

The July summer heat wave continued through the first few weeks of August. Prolonged heat can cause significant stress for the vines and where irrigation is possible, some vineyards opted to use it to stave off drought-stress.

The summer heat wave finally broke in the final week of August, bringing some much-needed cooler weather to wine country. Within weeks, the vines that had shut down under heat stress were recuperating and sugars were accumulating in the grapes, while the grape skins and seeds were starting to show phenolic ripeness.

A relatively warm and dry September followed. Harvest began, with growers and wineries opting to pick for Sparkling wine first, then aromatic whites. Thanks to dry conditions, growers could pick on their schedule – for optimum ripeness or the profile they preferred. By the end of September and into October, rainy days were

more abundant than they had been all year. Good timing and precision-harvest techniques allowed grape growers and wineries to maximize the temperate weather they had left, minimize picking in the rain, and enabled them to bring in grapes with maximum flavour and ripeness.

By November, it was clear that fall had arrived and winter was its way. Snow came early across southern and southwestern Ontario with snow falling on Sunday November 9 and sticking around. Fortunately, by all accounts, regular harvest was complete or almost complete throughout the wine growing regions.

LAKE ERIE NORTH SHORE

In sunny Lake Erie North Shore, some wineries reported an early start to the season. May and June were cooler than average, and vines made little progress during those cooler times. However, July and August provided sunshine, heat units and growing conditions that were exceptional for red varieties like Cabernet, Merlot. The area welcomed very little rain – heat and drought were the main stories for LENS. By Labour Day weekend, some wineries reported being 7-10 days behind the 2024 season, but grape quality was exceptional. As summer ended the weather conditions remained relatively dry throughout September and October, allowing for long hang time and premium ripeness across both aromatic white varieties and red varieties. One grower reported Viognier, harvested on October 24th at 26.2 brix. Many red varieties were harvested well above minimum requirements, in the range of 23-25 brix. Harvest was completed by the end of October.

PRINCE EDWARD COUNTY

In Prince Edward County, wet and rainy conditions delayed the season. By spring, the weather seemed to cooperate, offering less rain and more sunshine. In June, the weather had changed completely, with the area receiving a lot of sunshine, heat and experiencing very dry conditions. The dry conditions persisted, causing some panic as the summer wore on. Vines were showing signs of drought and heat stress – minimal canopy growth, early signs of lignification of wood and chlorosis. A well-timed rain event in the late summer was welcomed by growers and provided a break from the drought. Vines recovered quickly and grapes continued to ripen, meeting or exceeding brix requirements. Grapes from the County showed a depth of flavour, well-balanced acid, and peak phenolic ripeness.



ICEWINE

Grapes registered for the production of Icewine from the 2025 vintage totalled 2853 tonnes from 11 varieties, a significant increase over the 2024 vintage in which just 1976 tonnes were registered.

WINE OUTLOOK

While yields across all three designated viticultural areas were slightly lower than expected across several varieties, quality is reportedly quite high. Both red and white wines from this vintage will show concentration of flavour while maintaining Ontario's hallmark acidity.

Wineries and growers in Lake Erie North Shore are particularly excited by the prospects for red wine from this season and in Prince Edward County, though the crop was smaller than expected, the quality is exceptional. Winemakers are predicting exceptional wines from the 2025 vintage, comparable to wines from the 2022, 2023 and 2024 vintages.