

Canada as a World Leader

A Canadian treasure, Icewine is a luscious wine with highly concentrated flavours made from grapes that have been left to freeze naturally on the vine. With ideal climate conditions for the reliable annual production of Icewine – warm summers to ripen the grapes and cold but not too cold winters – Ontario has produced Icewine every year since 1984 when it first produced Icewine commercially. Wine lovers everywhere soon began to discover this very special and delicious wine.

By the early 1990s Canada became internationally known for the consistent quality of its Icewine and had found a place on the global wine stage. Characterized by complex and intense flavours derived from concentrated sugar, acid and berry extracts, Canadian Icewine continues to win top accolades at international competitions across the globe.

Today, both Ontario and British Columbia are recognized as producing some of the world's finest Icewine.



"Ontario Icewine offers one of the most distinctive flavour profiles."



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"Ontario is a world's leading producer of Icewine and the most consistent. After all, we're blessed with a climate that allows our winemakers to produce this gift of winter every year. Whether they make it from Vidal, Riesling, Cabernet Franc or other varieties, Ontario Icewine offers one of the most distinctive flavour profiles that can grace the cellars of collectors and neophytes alike."

— Tony Aspler

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Canadian Icewine

Quick Facts

🍷 Most common grape varieties: Vidal Blanc, Riesling, and Cabernet Franc. Small lots include Gewürztraminer, Chardonnay and Cabernet Sauvignon.

🍷 Juice yields from Icewine grapes are much lower than with table wines. On average 10 Icewine grapes are required to produce 1 ml of Icewine, whereas only 1.5 grapes are needed to make 1 ml of table wine.

🍷 Icewine is produced in every Canadian wine producing region with Ontario producing over 90% of this delicious and quintessentially Canadian product. Average annual production in Ontario is 850,000 L.

🍷 Major markets for Canadian Icewine: Canada, Asia, U.S.A. and U.K.

How Icewine is Made

Icewine season starts when the grape vines are netted in the autumn to protect them from being devoured by birds. Grapes are then left on the vine until a sustained temperature of -8°C or lower is reached (typically between December and February). During the time between the end of the growing season and harvest, the grapes dehydrate and the juices are concentrated, creating the characteristic complexities of Icewine.

Grape growers and wineries carefully watch the weather, looking for an optimum stretch of temperatures between -10°C and -12°C. This range will produce very sweet juice in the range of 35 to 39 degrees Brix (a measurement of sugar). Typically, a period of at least six hours is needed to harvest and press the grapes – usually during the night. Many wineries harvest by hand but mechanized harvesting is also used.

Harvested grapes are pressed in small hydraulic presses. Because the grapes are frozen, most of the mass is water and is left behind as ice in the press. Only a small amount of concentrated juice is extracted. Juice yields for Icewine grapes are much lower than for table wines – only 15% of the expected yield for grapes harvested for table wines. Icewine juice is very sweet and can be difficult to ferment. High sugars can create a hostile environment for the yeast and fermentation stops early, leaving relatively low alcohol and high sugar levels in the finished wine.



Regulation

The Vintners Quality Alliance (VQA) is a regulated appellation, or wine of origin system, patterned on models that have existed in Europe's great wine regions for over 60 years.

Icewine production is regulated in Canada under the VQA Act and Regulations. Strict standards are monitored by VQA inspectors, from vineyard to the bottle. Rules cover grape varieties, harvest procedures, winemaking, and testing before the wine is released. No wine may use the term Icewine on its label unless it is certified by VQA.

Serving Tips

- 🍷 Chill Icewine in an ice bucket for 15 minutes or refrigerate for two hours before serving
- 🍷 Serve Icewine in a traditional white wine glass to fully enjoy the rich, full bouquet
- 🍷 Allow 1.5 ounces per person
- 🍷 Once opened, Icewine will keep for several weeks if sealed in the refrigerator

Character & Style

- 🍷 Depending on varietal, expect rich aromas and flavours of ripe tropical fruits, peach, honey, citrus, melon and strawberry
- 🍷 Sweet with a firm backbone of acidity, making them perfectly balanced
- 🍷 Can also be used as a “dosage” for sparkling wine or cocktails
- 🍷 Pairs well with desserts, but also matches easily with spicy and savoury foods
- 🍷 Perfect complement for rich, strongly flavoured foods such as foie gras, aged blue cheeses and dark chocolate

