

ONTARIO

BY RICK VANSICKLE

As we close the door on the first decade of the new millennium, there is much to look forward to from the vineyards of Ontario. With the 2007 red wines, the finest ever in Ontario, still being released, and the surprisingly exquisite 2008 white wines flooding store shelves, consumers will have lots to choose from in 2010. Looking back on the 2009

vintage, Mother Nature delivered another ghastly summer for much of Ontario, with cooler temperatures and high precipitation. But the season was long, with harvest for some red varieties extended by two weeks. Wine lovers are advised to stock up on 2007 reds, the aromatic 2008 whites and watch as the first white wines from 2009 arrive on shelves.

VINTAGE	RATING (Max 7★)	NOTES	STATUS
2009	★★★★★1/2	(Tentative) In many ways, 2009 was similar to 2008 in all appellations. A cool, wet summer put the harvest behind anywhere from 10 to 14 days for most red varieties. But a long, warm fall saved the vintage from total disaster. Aromatic whites will be the stars of the vintage, along with the pinot noirs that are already showing promise in the barrel. Bordeaux varieties had trouble ripening, especially cabernet sauvignon. The icewine crop was cut to a third of what it was in 2008.	Whites: Drink now or cellar 5 yrs or less. Reds: Drink now or cellar 5 yrs or less.
2008	★★★★★1/2	It was a wet growing season in Ontario, especially in Niagara and Prince Edward County, and grape ripening in all appellations was a challenge. The quality of this vintage depended entirely on vineyard management. Whites and cool climate reds (pinot noir and gamay) fared better than other varieties. The '08 rieslings and other white varieties are superb, but consumers should be selective with the reds.	Whites: Drink now or cellar 5 yrs or less. Reds: Drink now or cellar 5 yrs or less.
2007	★★★★★★	This is as good as it gets in all appellations. The 2007 vintage is the best in Ontario's history. It was warm, dry and ideal for extended hang time on the vines. The 2007 whites show beautiful concentration of flavour, but it is the reds, the ripest ever from Ontario, that are extraordinary from variety to variety. Never has Ontario produced such rich, ripe and complex Bordeaux-style reds.	Whites: Drink now or cellar 5 yrs or less. Reds: Drink now or cellar 10 yrs or more.
2006	★★★★★1/2	Not as wet as 2008, but still humid and slightly cooler than normal. The mood was upbeat in Ontario as vines recovered from the terrible winter kill of 2005. There was plenty of sunshine in August, but a wet September meant wineries had to employ good vineyard selection. It was a decent year for chardonnay, riesling, merlot, gamay, cabernet franc and pinot noir, and a great year for icewines.	Whites: Drink now or cellar 5 yrs or less. Reds: Drink now or cellar 5 yrs or less.
2005	★★★★★	This was a disastrous year. An extremely cold winter killed any hope for a healthy vintage, with more than half of the vintage wiped out. Many producers didn't have enough wine to sell and suffered hefty financial losses. Both Lake Erie North Shore and Pelee Island fared better than Niagara. The irony of the vintage was that, even with a tiny crop, what was grown ended up being pretty good.	Whites: Drink now or cellar 5 yrs or less. Reds: Drink now or cellar 5 yrs or less.
2004	★★★★★1/2	The 2004 vintage was a major relief for producers following the bad winter of 2003. Conditions improved immensely and vines recovered from the previous winter kill. The hot fall resulted in mature, ripe grapes — especially in the white varieties. Some of the stars of the vintage include riesling, chardonnay, pinot noir, cabernet franc and gamay. Tender varieties didn't fare nearly as well.	Whites: Drink now or cellar 5 yrs or less. Reds: Drink now.
2003	★★★★★1/2	This vintage had it all — a horrible winter resulting in another short crop (a reduction of 45 percent of all vinifera vines), the reappearance of the Asian lady beetle (which causes a nasty taint in wines) and, despite all of that, the emergence of some mighty fine whites. The rating for this vintage is really split between red and white wines — a 4.5 for red wines and a 6.0 for whites.	Whites: Drink now. Reds: Drink now.
2002	★★★★★★1/2	A lot of winemakers rank this vintage up there with 2007 and 1998. This vintage was highlighted by severe drought conditions in all Ontario appellations for most of the summer. The resulting grapes ripened beautifully, with small, concentrated grapes and high sugar levels. It was a great year across the broad spectrum of varieties, including some highly concentrated icewines.	Whites: Drink now. Reds: Cellar 5 yrs or less.
2001	★★★★★1/2	This vintage saw a mixed bag of weather across Ontario, with drought at the beginning of the season followed by significant rainfall during the harvest. The wines, especially the reds, proved to be unusually concentrated and complex. The best wines of the vintage still show well.	Whites: Drink now. Reds: Cellar 5 yrs or more.

VINTAGE	RATING (Max 7★)	NOTES	STATUS
2000	★★★★★★	An extended and sunny fall helped save the 2000 vintage, the third good crop in three years for Niagara. The whites did better than most red varieties, with chardonnay and riesling at the top of the class. For reds, the cabernets and pinot noir fared well. The icewines from this vintage are fabulous.	Whites: Drink now. Reds: Cellar 5 yrs or more.
1999	★★★★★★	The vintage got off to an early start, despite the lack of spring rain. There were concerns about the size of the crop, with above-normal temperatures and below-normal rainfall, but late-July rains helped increase the size of the crop without hurting quality. The big star of the vintage was the riesling icewines.	Whites: Drink now. Reds: Cellar 5 yrs or less.
1998	★★★★★★1/2	The best examples from this benchmark vintage are still showing beautifully. Even the whites — the big oak-treated chardonnays, in particular — are still youthful and flavour-packed. This is considered by many winemakers, grape growers and wine writers to be the vintage of the century and the most significant vintage in Ontario's history. Recently opened bottles from this vintage are superb.	Whites: Drink now. Reds: Cellar 5 yrs or less.
1995	★★★★★★1/2	Before the wonderful 1998 vintage came along, this was the benchmark for Ontario wines. A mild winter was followed by a cool spring and delayed flowering. A warm, but wet July put vines even further behind. Then everything came together with bright sun and warm days from August to October. It wasn't a huge crop, but what was there was fantastic.	Whites: Drink now. Reds: Drink now.

ATLANTIC CANADA

BY CRAIG PINHEY

The 2009 vintage wasn't great in Nova Scotia, with poor weather and less volume than is typical (30 percent less, according to winemaker Hans Christian Jost of Jost Vineyards). The cold season was severe, resulting in a lot of winter kill. Spring was wet and the first part of summer was ridiculously wet and cool, but, luckily, the late summer was hot and early fall was nice, warm and dry. October was cold. Even though it was a poor year, the brix levels on

the grapes were generally higher than average. This was likely due to the increasing experience of growers, a case of nurture versus nature. Knowledge plays a greater role in a young region; techniques such as crop thinning and leaf pulling are now being employed on a regular basis. One good quality measurement of a Nova Scotia vintage is if Jost makes a Reserve Maréchal Foch, a wine it has been making for more than 10 years — sadly, there is no Reserve expected in 2009.

VINTAGE	RATING (Max 7★)	NOTES	STATUS
2009	★★★1/2	(Tentative) A pretty tough vintage, with a cold, wet spring and June summer, saved only by low yields and a hot August.	Whites: Drink now with food. Reds: Not yet released.
2008	★★★★	A fairly weak vintage, with poor weather, but the grapes were quite ripe. No Jost Reserve Maréchal Foch.	Whites: Drink now with food. Reds: Drink now with food.
2007	★★★★★★1/2	Best vintage in recent memory. Warm, dry summer and fall, with steady ripening. Great sugar levels. Jost Reserve Maréchal Foch is to be released in 2010 and should be cellar-worthy (hold at least 4 or 5 years). WA	Whites: Drink now, drink now with food. Reds: Drink now with food or cellar 5 yrs or less.