

# York wines winning national awards

From page 7.

made from fruit grown on the Passafiume farm, located beside the winery. Bill Redelmeier invites everyone to the long-established Southbrook Winery on Major Mackenzie Drive west of Richmond Hill.

Mr. Redelmeier wants a warmer world.

"People in the grape business are all in favour of global warming, providing moisture goes with it," he said.

The family-owned and operated winery, on a 285-acre farm, produces 7,000 cases of grape wine and 7,000 case of fruit wine each year.

Southbrook's product is fit for royalty. When Queen Elizabeth and Prince Philip dined at the Royal York Hotel in 1997, Southbrook's Chardonnay was served.

York Region wine makers have stepped onto the world stage. Besides Southbrook, Willow Springs Farms and Applewood have each won national competitions.

Southbrook scored a major coup recently when the flagship Canadian framboise dessert wine won the second prize out of 2,000 entries in a noted London, England competition.

While Southbrook Farms has been in operation for 65 years, the winery has only been open for 10. Still, it is the oldest in York Region.

The Ontario wine industry is a serious enterprise: half of Canada's 180 wineries are in Ontario. Last year, 41 million litres of the province's wine accounted for \$338 million in sales.

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The rarest and most treasured of Ontario's products are the luscious, intensely flavoured icewines.

Ontario is the only wine-producing region with a winter cold enough to guarantee an abundance of icewine.

"As well, no other region in the world produces icewines with such consistency and quality," said Ms Rector.

Ontario is usually blessed with a cold winter that ensures icewines can be made consistently. Lately, the weather gods have not been kind.

"We only had a couple of (cold) pockets. That's where you do your picking.

The picking is usually done between Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve and it's done at night," Mrs. Locilento explained.

Each autumn, select vineyards are left unharvested so that the grapes will freeze naturally. The colder the grapes, the sweeter the juice.

When the temperature dips below zero, the water in the grapes freezes leaving a small amount of pure juice with high concentrations of sugar-acidity.

While the past two years were not banner years for Ontario icewines, the province continues to be recognized as processing the world's finest icewines, winning top awards at competitions, stressed Ms Rector.

Icewine is made at 45 wineries in Ontario. Its popularity is climbing at an amazing rate: In 1983, there were 8,000 cases produced in Ontario. In 2000, the figure jumped to 82,000 cases.

The grape yield for icewine will, indeed, be down this year. "We might be down by two thirds," said Mr. Redelmeier.



STAFF PHOTO/ROB ALARY

Mario Testa, owner of Willowsprings Winery in rural Whitchurch-Stouffville, says warm weather followed by cold snaps is bad for grapes.

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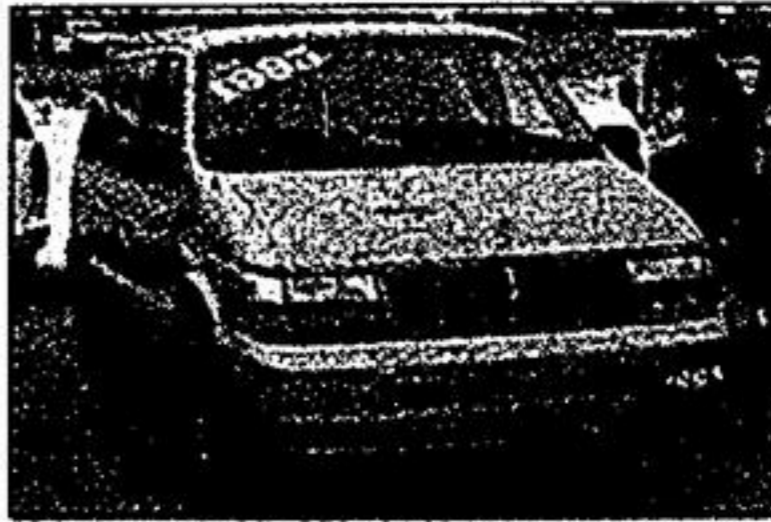


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