

### WHITE WINE QUALITY

Very good to excellent. Wines show fresh flavours and vibrant acidity.

### RED WINE QUALITY

Good to excellent. Varying quality due to trying growing season. Experience and forethought generally produced very good wines throughout the province with rich colour and concentrated flavours.

### ICEWINE QUALITY

Excellent.

A mild, non-eventful winter provided a nice break in the action for the BC wine industry, but ultimately, it proved to be the calm before the storm. Following two trying vintages, in 2010 grapegrowers and winemakers once again pulled together and found a winning combination to create exceptional wines from a less than exceptional season.

### COLD / WET SPRING PRIMES FOR A CHALLENGING SEASON

At the 2010 Winemakers & Viticulturalists' Forum when describing spring conditions, the overwhelming use of such "technical" terms as "wet," "nasty" and "cold" did not go unnoticed. "Looking at the notes from the end of May, (I) couldn't have written a worse start," remarked Graham O'Rourke from Mission Hill Family Estate Winery.

With most vineyards across the province seeing bud break occurring 2 to 3 weeks late, viticulturalists were forced to make early adjustments ranging from extra spraying to creative pruning and canopy management.

### COOLER-THAN-AVERAGE SUMMER

Spring continued into a cooler-than-usual summer in the Okanagan with very few of their 40°C (104°F) days. Similar to the summer of 2008, the cooler but consistent temperatures allowed for the vines to play catch up.

Manfred Freese of Sun Ridge Vineyards on the east bench in Osoyoos noted degree days much like 2008 but with more rain. The presence of more water throughout the summer produced increased botrytis levels, which was a concern in many areas and was even noted on vines such as Syrah. Wetter summers tend to also increase cell division, leading to larger, less concentrated grapes. Not so this season says Rod King of King Family Farms "not as much cell division because of cool, damp spring."



## HARVEST: LATE START, LATER FINISH

Despite a wetter-than-normal summer and more rain in September, Joe Slykerman from Rollingdale noted berry size remained small contributing to concentrated flavour in the juice with a high skin to pulp ratio. Even with the challenges of the year, Glenn Fawcett of Black Hills Winery noted that the grapes had the “best phenolic ripeness I’ve ever seen.”

Thinning of the canopy and bunches took place in most vineyards to ensure higher quality in the remaining crop but we did see the overall crops down 11% across the province. It was a stressful time for many vineyard managers and winemakers as hard decisions had to be made about cropping levels in order to achieve optimal ripeness and because of the abundance of botrytis.

A late start to the harvest had the first grapes being picked the week of September 15, two weeks behind harvest last year. The rest of BC wineries started picking around September 24, with Vista D’oro Winery in Langley having their last bins of Syrah come in on November 5th making 2010 one of the latest harvests on record.

## ICEWINE: BRIGHT HARVEST IN THE LIGHT OF DAY

The first grapes for the 2010 Icewine were brought in early on November 22 at a chilly -11°C (12°F) by Tinhorn Creek Vineyards in Oliver who harvested 1 acre of Kerner just a few weeks after some wineries completed the regular season harvest. As the second earliest Icewine harvest on record (the current record being November 5, 2003), it was a very relaxed, stress-free Christmas holiday for the Icewine community. With typical concerns of temperatures rising too high, during this cold harvest, Sandra Oldfield, winemaker for Tinhorn Creek, remembers “it hadn’t warmed up enough in the winery to dump the press. Early is good.”

The temperatures dropped overnight on November 23 to an icy -16°C (3.2°F) when Summerhill Pyramid Organic Winery was picking. Later that morning, harvest was completed at Tantalus Vineyards, Mission Hill Family Estate Winery, Quails’ Gate Estate Winery, Van Westen Vineyards and Nk’Mip Cellars to name a few. The 2010 Icewine harvest was completed by November 25th, bringing in approximately 520 tons.

## OVERALL

Despite the erratic season, the 2010 vintage looks to be one of great quality, especially for the whites! Although quantities might be slightly down for some table wines, keep an eye out for some outstanding sparkling wines. Pinot Gris, Riesling, Sauvignon Blanc and a myriad of Rosé wines are showing very well, and look forward to bright, lighter styles of Pinot Noir.

Vintners across the province showed their skill, poise and ability this season. Thanks to a late, dry, warm spell in October, we were able to achieve good to excellent fruit quality across the board. Challenging times matched with perseverance and passion has once again produced tremendous results and continues to push BC wines to the forefront of the industry both nationally and abroad. Rod King, of King Family Farms, noted that the challenging weather of 2010 should teach something to all grapegrowers, “the lesson is to have faith, the vines will pull through.”