



ISTOCK

Markets

The grape cure

Producing and selling wine is a fine balance

For vintners in Niagara, turning perfectly frozen grapes off the vine into icewine is the easy part of the business. The real challenges are in protecting the fragile, and vital, local aquifer system of cleansing porous rock, and then later in selling the wines—from Chardonnay to icewine—in a market that has seen a surplus the last couple of years.

As grapes are comprised of 80 per cent water and the vines typically burrow into the soil 30 to 40 feet, the fruit yield picks up its flavours from water and soil sources. More than 15,000 acres of vineyards are protected from development by Ontario's Greenbelt Act, and preserving the vitaculture involves a balancing act between the environment and the wine market.

With about 56 million litres of Ontario wine expected this year—including 100,000 cases of icewine for spring—Brock University oenologist Debra Murdza Inglis stresses the need for more effective marketing: "For wines sold in Ontario, only 43 per cent are domestic. We'd like to see 100 per cent."

Inglis hopes the increased emphasis on "buying local" will achieve a balance.