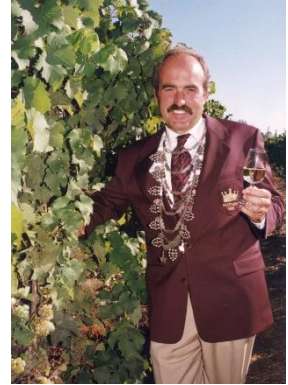


ALBRECHT SEEGER
Grape Grower, Niagara-on-the-Lake

I'm Albrecht Seeger, a grape grower from Niagara-on-the-Lake. I immigrated to Canada and arrived at Montréal-Mirabel March 27, 1978. That summer we were traveling around Ontario looking for a new home, a new farm. We ended up in talking to the owners of Inniskillin and they told us that what they really need is Europeans that can grow European type grapes. So, it became more and more obvious that we were going to end up here. Then in the fall of 1978, we bought our first property in Niagara-on-the-Lake that was partially planted to Gamay, Chardonnay, Riesling, and De Chaunac. We finished planting the entire farm with more, Riesling, Sauvignon Blanc, Marechal Foch, and Vidal.



When we first started growing grapes, we grew them for Inniskillin. They made wine only from European type grape varieties, like Riesling and Chardonnay and Pinot Noir. Back then that sector of the industry was very, very small. As a matter of fact, we were looked at like the red herrings, the few people that grew those very European grape varieties, like people trying to do the next thing, something that's next to impossible. And it did work. We had to learn a lot about growing those grapes in Ontario or in the Niagara peninsula.

I think the last 25 years we had a great success with Ontario Wines in the province of Ontario. What helped us to get recognized internationally was Icewine, which was a huge success story not only financially for us, but a huge success story for our industry.

And in fact, in the last 25, because we planted grape varieties, like Cabernet Franc, Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc, Pinot Gris, we were growing the best of France and the best of Europe. How do you top that? And as we learned how to grow them, the winemakers learned how to make excellent wines out of those varieties that were very typical for the Niagara peninsula.

The biggest challenge we have growing those grapes in Ontario is we have to get them through the winter. And what helps is, number one, you have to plant them in soil that is suitable for those grapes. You have to make sure your soils are well drained. And what helped us a lot was the introduction of wind machines, where we, in the wintertime when it gets cold, we can turn those things on and they mix up the air. They mix cold and warm air and they move the air, and that helps a lot for the grapes to survive.

We learned that we cannot over crop those great varieties. If you over crop them, they fight for water, for sunlight. So, we always try to balance the crop to make sure that our grapes go into the winter not stressed out.

Well, another thing is you have to make sure that you have a spray program where you make sure that the grape vines don't have any mildew or any fungal diseases that would make the chances of freezing in the winter bigger.

Listen to full interview here: http://ggo75.am-live.ca/media/00ndgt2h/gmt20220516-180113_recording-albrecht-seeger.3gp