



Photo by Linda Horn

Alex Hunter, vineyard manager for Huff Estates, and his assistant Doug Gyde pose in the wineries crop of Frontenac Gris grapes. The grape is used to make a dessert wine called Zero De Gris. The process of making a dessert wine is the same as making an ice wine but cannot be classified as one because VQA's rules of what grapes can be used.

Ice wine a chilly delight

Prince Edward County wineries needed creative ways to overcome Mother Nature

By Linda Horn

Prince Edward County wineries use creative ways to overcome VQA Ice Wine rules and Mother Nature to produce quality dessert and late harvest wines.

The VQA is Ontario's wine regulatory agency which has very strict rules about what can be called Ice Wine, including the temperature the grapes must be picked and processed at, and what variety of that grape

can be used.

Because of the winter conditions in Prince Edward County, producing Ice Wine can be a challenge.

"If temperatures drop below -25, we are danger of damaging all of our crops. So for the majority of Prince Edward County grape growers, they take an extra step of burying the vines in the winter to protect them from the cold. This is not done in Niagara," said Lynn Sullivan Chairperson for the Prince Edward County Winegrowers Association.

Sandbanks Winery in Wellington usually buries their vines, but one year made an Ice Wine using VQA rules. According to winery employee John Squair, the extra weight of the frozen grapes "stressed" the vines, which resulted in a lower yield in

crops the next year.

Sandbanks decided to try another approach by picking the grapes before they were frozen.

"We use a Vidal grape which is an ice wine grape but it has not been frozen yet. It has been kissed by frost a couple times and the flavour is more intense," said Squair.

By doing this it is no longer considered an Ice Wine the winery calls it a late harvest wine.

Huff Estates in Bloomfield also puts their own spin on the sweet wine by using a grape that is not VQA Ice Wine grape. The winery calls it a dessert wine.

Alex Hunter vineyard manager, said, "It is the same process as Ice Wine but we use

a grape called Frontenac Gris."

But even with using a different grape the weather can still cause problems, especially with this year's milder weather.

"What we want is a nice quick freeze because the longer the grapes hang they can become slightly more oxidized and can affect the flavour but that is something the winemaker can tweak," said Hunter.

Sullivan said another option for Prince Edward County wineries is to buy Niagara ice wine juice. A winery then produces and bottles the wine here in Prince Edward County.

"While our focus is Pinot Noir, chardonnay, and sparkling wine, there are some wineries with excellent dessert and late harvest wines," said Sullivan.

Wiarton Willie makes his prediction: an early spring it is!

By Rhea Munroe

Here's a little bit of trivia for you. Why are groundhogs the poster animal for an early or late spring?

According to a 2010 article in the Huffington Post, the tradition of Groundhog Day can be traced back thousands of years when people in ancient Europe used badgers or sacred bears to help them figure out how long winter would last.

In 1887, the tradition came here to North America, mainly in the Pennsylvania area. With the transition it made overseas, the animal transformed into the groundhog. And by the time it came up to Canada in 1956 it was known as Groundhog Day.

Sue Meech, director of Sandy Pines Wildlife centre in Napanee, said, "Groundhogs generally hibernate from November until April when the weather gets warmer."

For Wiarton Willie, or any other famous groundhog, Feb. 2 marks the end of their hibernation, unless they see their shadow, of course.

Even though groundhogs are hibernators, they do have times when they wake during their five-month sleep, which is usually for procreation and food.

"They have to pack on the pounds for winter because of hibernation," said Meech.

By the time they are done hibernating, groundhogs emerge much thinner than they were before, but just as strong. They

have to eat a lot of food before hibernating so that they lose the fat while they hibernate and not their muscle mass.

Groundhogs are also well known as pests to farmers or gardeners who have to deal with them.

"They are vegetarians," said Meech, "They eat clover, dandelion, grass, and grains" which, along with their love of digging, is one of the reasons farmers and gardeners do their best to keep them away.

But Meech has a different standing on groundhogs than most people,

"I consider humans to be pests, there are too many of us," she said, referring to the idea that humans will settle on or steal land that may already be property to other animals.

It's widely known that groundhogs burrow for hibernation in the winter, but they also burrow during the warmer months as well.

"They burrow for a home to live in. For safety from foxes, coyotes, and birds of prey. They're on the menu so they need a hiding spot," said Meech. The burrows of groundhogs have plenty of entrances and exits to allow them a safe and sneaky escape from predators.

Now that you know a little bit about the animal, let's get back to Groundhog Day. In the last 20 years, Wiarton Willie has been estimated to be correct about 55% of the time.

This morning, Wiarton Willie predicted an early spring. Let's see if he's right this year.

Being a witch doesn't come easy

By Thomas Lee

When you first step into the Trenton home of Dominique Preston, it looks like a standard home. But upon closer inspection, you see a cabinet, and in that cabinet there sits crystals, candles and a small statue of a man and woman kissing. Across the room, there is a small broom with a sign that reads "Broom rides 5 cents."

This is the home of a witch.

Preston moved to Trenton from Texas over 10 years ago to meet her current husband, Edward, whom she met over the Internet.

As a child, Preston was in and out of a lot of different churches, studying a lot of different religions.

"One week we would be Christian, the next we would be Catholic and the next something else," said Preston.

Eventually Preston got tired of the ways some of the churches viewed women.

"I found that as a young girl, when men talked about God that men were created in his image and that women were just useless slaves and that we had no place in the world," said Preston.

Preston never dealt with the other churches well. She would ask questions about certain things. She would ask them about where the donations from the donation plate would go. And ask why God needed money.

"I was labeled the trouble-maker in young adult Bible school," she said

During high school, Preston met a young woman named Kathy. It was during that friendship that Preston was introduced to and started her life as a witch.

"I knew I was different and she helped me discover that difference. She was the one that introduced me to the path I now follow," she said.

However, being a witch does not come

easy. Over the years, Preston has endured a lot of hate and ignorance for her beliefs. Both friends and family have cut off relationships to both she and her husband over the past years.

"Later on down the road, a lot of Edward's close family cut ties with him because they were all Catholic and had found out my faith. They tried to bring me back over to God but I did not need saving and some to this day, think I brainwashed him into marriage," Preston said.

"It makes me sad on holidays because they condemned us," she said

The family has also cut off a lot of ties to Preston's father in-law who supports them and their choices but is also looked after by Preston full-time in their home.

"His dad supports our choices and us and for that he is punished with no holiday cards or visits from family."

When Preston works with people by giving them tarot card readings, and other services, she does not exactly charge them. Instead she only asks for a donation.

"There can be made massive amounts of cash doing what I do. Sure, I could charge \$25.95 to make healing salt bath mix with candles and a love spell to make someone fall in love against their will but that is wrong," said Preston.

"I get so much more back from what I do than just taking in money."

Preston also teaches witchcraft to people if they decide to learn it.

"I am currently teaching a lady here in Trenton about the craft. She's decided to take me on as a teacher," Preston said.

She also teaches a woman living in Alaska over video call on the Internet.

"This is what I do, I am a spiritual person trying to help others find out who they are and where they fit in."



Photo by Thomas Lee

Dominique Preston holds up a book with a drawn picture of a fairy and a photo of herself as a child. Both the pictures show what seem to be very similar faces. As a practicing witch Preston believes that she is part of the fairy clan.

Rebates yours for the taking

Post-secondary students could benefit from tuition reduction

By Manuela Garay-Giraldo

Over 300,000 post-secondary students across Ontario could benefit from the government's new 30 per cent tuition rebate, but only 70,500 have submitted an application or started filling out an application as of last Friday.

Students are eligible if they met the following criteria: they are a full-time student at a public college or university in Ontario; it has been less than four years since they left high school, they are in a program applied to directly from high school; their parents' gross income is \$160,000 or less; they are a Canadian citizen, a permanent resident or a protected person and they are an Ontario resident.

Students who are receiving OSAP are automatically submitted to receive the rebate, which can be up to \$365 for college students or \$800 for university students. As of Friday, Jan. 27, over 840 Loyalist College students had either submitted an application or had started filling out their application already, according to Tanya Blazina, spokesperson for the ministry of training, colleges and universities.

The government is funding the tuition grant by "redirecting funding from efficiencies as well as from an existing scholarship program and a few grant programs," said Blazina. "We found efficiencies and savings that will fully offset the costs of the new tuition grant." Many students on campus were surprised when they received their money.

"I was grocery shopping, and I checked my account and had \$300 dollars more," said Steph Benard, first-year community and justice services worker.

Others who have applied, but not yet received the rebate are already planning on how they will spend their money.

Tawni Rowe, first-year accounting student said, "I'll use my money to pay for my textbooks and it's good for gas money, too." While some are happily receiving a bit of extra money, some mature students are left feeling a little bitter.

Tangye Seymour, first-year accounting, who has been out of high school since 2005, said "the specifications to qualify are brutal. That four-year limit makes it really hard for mature students. We could use the extra cash, too. Especially once you consider that we have more bills to pay than kids who just left high school and live with their parents." Blazina said, "the government's commitment is to provide this grant to all eligible and qualifying students. If a student applies and qualifies, they will receive the grant."

To apply for the tuition rebate visit <http://www.tcu.gov.on.ca/eng/> and apply

Few students come to protest high tuition fees and student debt

By Topher Seguin

If three's company, then four's a crowd.

The national student day of Action started slowly at Loyalist College on Wednesday with no more than five people sitting in throughout the day.

Organized by the Canadian Federation of Students, the day was held on campuses across Canada to raise awareness of high tuition fees and to protest student debt.

According to the Federation's website, as a result of cuts to federal funding for post-secondary education over the last 25 years, provincial governments and individual post-secondary educational institutions have replaced lost funds by increasing fees. The share of university operating budgets funded by tuition fees more than doubled between 1985 and 2005, rising from 14 per cent to 30 per cent. Unprecedented levels of student debt have accompanied the rise in tuition fees.

"We want to prove that a free school is completely possible, and not only possible but the best way to go about education," said Tyson Leonard, first year journalism online print and broadcasting student at Loyalist, who participated in the protest.

In Toronto, thousands of students from multiple campuses converged at the University of Toronto, marched through downtown and rallied at Queen's Park. Loyalist currently doesn't have a large active student resistance against tuition increase.

Michael Oosting, a student at Athabasca University, was one of the few at the Loyalist event. "I live in Belleville and am a Belleville resident, so I want to get involved and help students here," he said.