



# Willsboro Wine Trail Completes 6<sup>th</sup> Growing Season

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Much has been written over the past several *Veraison to Harvest* issues regarding the 2010 season: the extraordinary earliness, the virtually unparalleled heat unit accumulation, and the early and contracted harvest window in most New York growing regions. Our situation in the Champlain echoed this chorus. It has been a warm year – advancing both the apple harvest and grape harvest.

**Seasonal variation in the Lake Champlain Region.** Wearing my other hat as a tree-fruit specialist, earlier this summer I computed the last pick day for McIntosh controlled atmosphere (CA) Storage in my region against 16 years of data. For the Champlain valley, 2010 would likely be 5 days earlier than the prior earliest year of 1998. For the Upper Hudson (north of Albany) 2010 was tracking with 1998, the prior earliest year for budburst. Both projections – coming before much of the summer heat - proved conservative.



Minnesota cold-hardy variety 'Marquette' at the Willsboro grape trial.

Photo by Kevin Lungerman

Separately, I ran through various pest and disease forecasting models and saw a data pattern I have previously suspected anecdotally. Using the NEWA Grape Berry Moth model to forecast emergence south and north, moth emergence was earlier north. I went back and looked at monthly temperature summaries for the season too and found the following (Table 1):

Table 1. Early Season Temperatures, Upper Hudson - Champlain 2010.

NEWA Stations	Monthly Summaries – Average Temps.				
	Mar	Apr	May	June	July
Clifton Park NEWA (Upper Hudson)	40.5	51.7	61.3	66.8	74.4 (thru 7/7)
Chazy Grower NEWA (North Champlain)	38.8	51.5	62.7	67.4	79.4 (thru 7/7)

Once you move beyond the bud break period, heat units appeared to accumulate more rapidly over the northern portions of the region than in the south. This has been my “sense” of things over the years: the

Champlain starts later but then it picks up the pace and equals or surpasses the more southerly portions in heat unit accumulation over the growing season.



*A dedicated group of volunteers from the Champlain region helps out with harvest at the Willsboro trial. Lake Champlain in the background*

Photo by Kevin Iungerman



*Volunteers weighing grapes at Willsboro. Vineyard manager Richard Lamoy at left.*

Photo by Kevin Iungerman

**Willsboro Trial in 2010.** At our Willsboro Wine Grape Trial, our summer was both warmer and wetter, but thanks to excellent air movement on the site - and timely fungicide applications - there was little that would have interested Wayne Wilcox. We had no issues with downy mildew infections or *botrytis* and other bunch rots. Generally, we were very pleased with our projected yields and fruit quality. Undoubtedly, consistency improved considerably by benefit of our warm season but pruning, canopy management, and vine maturity (6th growing season) helped make the most of it. Table 2 primarily shows harvest information for the Swenson and MN hybrids from among our 25 varieties at Willsboro, with harvest samples of most coming in at respectable Brix levels and many TA's at single digits.

**Table 2.** 2010 harvest data from cold-hardy grape trial, at Cornell's Baker Research Farm in Willsboro, NY.

Grape Variety	Projected Yield Tons/Acre	Brix	pH	Titratable Acidity	Berry Wt (g)
Edelweiss	7.5	21.0	3.39	9.1	1.44
ES 6-16-30	3.7	19.4	3.40	8.1	2.27
Frontenac	6.8	22.0	3.53	13.3	1.33
Frontenac Gris	8.3	23.0	3.18	15.4	1.27
GR7	9.8	20.2	3.53	5.5	1.61
LaCrescent	6.1	23.6	3.30	12.5	1.43
LaCrosse	7.0	18.4	3.23	7.2	1.82
Louise Swenson	8.9	17.2	3.27	5.2	2.68
Marquette	8.1	23.0	3.08	10.9	1.42
MN 1200	5.9	21.8	3.08	7.9	1.14
NY 76.844.24	7.0	22.0	3.28	7.5	1.78
Petite Amie	6.9	22.0	3.39	5.8	Na
Prairie Star	9.0	18.6	3.55	9.6	2.51
Sabrevois	6.0	18.6	3.51	9.9	2.21
St. Croix	5.5	19.2	3.27	7.1	1.79
St. Pepin	6.7	20.4	3.21	10.1	1.49

All vines were harvested by September 24 as compared to early- to mid-October in past years. Could we have kept them on longer? Perhaps, but some raisining was beginning and wasp mining too; the fruit was clean, chemistry was respectable. Successive weekend weather was superb. As all our harvesting is accomplished by a wonderfully eclectic collection of volunteers, it was time! We now look forward to the efforts of our 12 collaborating wine makers in a critical blind tasting evaluation and review next year.

*The Willsboro Grape project is also supported by the volunteer help, the fruit growers and the CCE County Associations of Clinton, Essex, Washington, Saratoga, and Albany Counties, and by the Northern New York Agricultural Development Fund.*

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