

Ep 84: Wines of Canada, the Ontario wine region and Icewine with Worlds best drinks journalist Natalie Maclean



Janina Doyle 00:00:07 Welcome to Eat Sleep Wine Repeat, a podcast for all you wine lovers, who, if you're like me, just can not get enough of the good stuff. I'm Janina Doyle, your host, Brand Ambassador, Wine Educator, and Sommelier. So, stick with me as we dive deeper into this ever evolving, wonderful world of wine and wherever you are listening to this, cheers to you!

Hello to my wonderful wine lovers. So we are back to part two with Natalie Maclean. Now the Financial times of London said: "Natalie Maclean is a new force in the wine writing world, a feisty north American answer to Hugh Johnson and Jancis Robinson. She can write beautifully about wine." Well, it is true, but she can also speak beautifully about wine. And there is nothing better than getting somebody to talk about a place, very close to their heart. And so you should hear and feel the passion today as we talk about wines of Canada, where Natalie is from. The majority of the wine comes out of Ontario. And so there's a big focus on this region alongside Ice wine, liquid gold. But we will touch on the other regions except for BC, British Columbia, as that was the focus on Episode 70 with Canadian Master of Wine Siobhan Turner. So do go back to that one to complete your full Canadian wine overview if you haven't heard that one yet. Now, before we go to wine education time, let me take you to my winery of the week.

Janina Doyle 00:01:45 So of course we are in Canada and I've chosen Stratus vineyards. Now Stratus vineyards are in the largest of the three sub regions in Ontario, the Niagara peninsula. So within this, there are two regional appellations and then 10 sub appellations. Stratus is within the regional appellation Niagara-on-the-lake so look for that on bottles. Now their winery is an LEED facility. So that stands for Leadership in energy and environmental design. And it was the first winery to get this full certification back in 2005. The winery has this gravity fed system. And most importantly, it's a hundred percent pump free. Now there's not many wineries that can claim this. So they are all about low energy with a special insulated roof that offers geothermal heating and cooling. They've even paved their car park with a special stone that reduces light reflected heat. Uh, they are all about sustainability and the environment. And of course that is true of their wines too. So no chemicals used in the vineyards and they work with native plants and indigenous cover crops to encourage biodiversity. All their grapes are hand thinned during the year as they practice low yield viticulture, then they're hand harvested. And of course then hand sorted before heading into the winery. They are so focused on having the ripest and most mature grapes that they sometimes leave the red grapes on the vine until December. So talking red grapes, I have one of my favorite varieties, the Cabernet Franc. Now this is the parent of both

Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot and this is the 2017 vintage. You can get it from Vinvm for £28.85 if you're in the UK. So right time for me to give this a whirl.

Janina Doyle 00:03:54 Oh, okay. So as expected with Cabernet Franc, it has a beautiful perfume. I get lots of red currents and like this fresh tobacco leaves and then a little bit of damson and black plum, but it is mainly the red fruits. Now as with Cabernet Franc, again, it has a kind of slight leafiness and a little bit of smoke. I think they've put this, uh, certain amount of time in oak. You can smell that. And there's a real cracked black pepper character, but beautiful, beautiful fruits. Now, all of those notes and aromas, they come through on the palate, that makes my life easy. However, it's very old-worldy style. And when I say that, I mean, it's not too fruity. It's got a good concentration of fruit, but it's quite earthy and it's quite savory. So, on the pallet it's certainly with this finish, getting lots of graphite, uh, wood spoke tobacco, cigar box, these kind of notes, but there's also certainly a lot more cassis coming through alongside that red fruit presence. It's a, it's a really, really bright wine. Mm. The tannins, they're grainy, but they're pretty medium minus, they're, they're, they're quite light, but the acidity is very, very high. Really. I guess I said a really bright acidity. It's got this Bordeaux edge, but it's not as heavy, but at the same time, it's chunkier than a Loire valley Cabernet Franc. It kind of really sits in between the two. It's a beautiful, beautiful wine. This would work with roasted red meat, smoked red meats, or you could even pair it with something like a lamb tagine, because it has all those kind of herbs and spices and it will really merge well with the aromatics of this wine. So if you haven't already jumped onto the Cabernet Franc train, now is the time to buy your ticket. And whilst you're waiting in the queue to get that ticket, let's have a listen to the chat with Natalie now.

Janina Doyle 00:06:19 Now you are Canadian. It was obvious that we would need to talk about Canadian wine. You're not allowed to talk about British Columbia because that already got spoken about in episode 70 so that is off the market, but we are going to talk about some of the other regions and the, one of the main regions of Canada has not been spoken about. So we are all good. Now in England specifically, generally we can only find, I think, wines from Ontario, which is the, the largest region, but how does that compare to Quebec and Nova Scotia in terms of volumes and well, everything I'll leave this, I'll hand it over to you now.

Natalie Maclean 00:07:01 All right. So a few quick stats, there are 185 VQA wineries, meaning Vintner Quality Alliance, which is like our DOC or our AOC. It's our appellation of guaranteed, these grapes come from this place and our made according to certain rules. So 185 wineries, uh, have that designation. 1700 acres of vineyards in Ontario. And just to put that in perspective, Ontario, um, I mean, it depends on if you're talking about vineyard acreage, number of wineries, dollar amount sold, but it, it accounts for almost 90% of wine produced in Canada. I'd say BC is like, let's say almost, cause my math is not gonna add up in a minute, but uh, BC is maybe almost 10% and then you've got 1 or 2% in Quebec and Nova Scotia. They're they're much smaller. And um, yeah, and I think like England, Janina, the major wine regions are in the south of the country. It's where it's warm enough to, to make wine. Whereas Quebec and Nova Scotia are much cooler climate. So they're, they're making, um, wine mainly from hybrids or Germa varieties. We've got some wineries in like the Prairie provinces and Newfoundland, but they're making wine from fruit. That's not grapes.

Janina Doyle 00:08:17 Mm okay. A bit like when we spoke about Scotland, there, there is a definitely a parallel. So what is the climate like in Ontario? Because it's still really, really cold in the winter, isn't it.

Natalie Maclean 00:08:31 Yes, it is. I shiver when you ask, um, yeah, well we have, um, consistently cold weather here. It's why we're the largest producer of ice wine, which we'll get to in a moment, but we're very much a cool climate. And so, um, I mean it, and we can have wide, wide swings from winter to summer. Um, one of the sub regions of Ontario is called Prince Edward County. It's the most, um, northerly and you know, in the winter they have to hill the vines, um, before winter comes. So they push the soil up against the vines, because if they don't, if they don't provide that nice warm or that protective layer of soil, the vines will die from cold during the winter and they won't survive. So Niagara a little bit more south in the province is a bit warmer where they don't have to do that hilling. But I mean, you know, we are both on a Celsius metric here. This week, or last week we it's gone down to minus 40 degrees Celsius. So, uh, it's just bitter. It can be bitterly cold and it's consistently cold and we're, we're crazy, but we, we still live here and love it for other reasons.

Janina Doyle 00:09:43 Well, should we talk about ice wine because that is actually Canada's specialty. Now I know still wine is growing, sparkling we might be able to touch on, but let's do ice wine because I don't know if this is still accurate, but I've seen statistics over the years that yes, ice wine, Eiswein, it came originally from Germany, but around 80, 90% of the world's icewine is coming from Canada now. I don't know if that's still true that statistic?

Natalie Maclean 00:10:14 Um, I would tend to believe it, um, because we're so consistently cold, so yeah. Let's make it a statistic that's been verified now. Um, but 10 out of 10 vintages, we will make icewine. Three to four out of 10 vintages Germany will make icewine. Um, so it's, it's that advantage of cold if you will. And, um, you know, a lot of exports to the UK uh, are ice wine and just a few stats there, um, if they're of interest. You know, we, Ontario exports about 800,000 Canadian dollars worth of exports to the UK. Um, and that represents 80% of what Canada exports wine wise to the UK. So most of that comes from Ontario. And, um, so it's icewine, it's ice Cuvée meaning a sparkling ice wine, but also in the market we have, uh, or Ontario has Chardonnay, Riesling, Cab Franc, Pinot noir, and so on. But, um, back to ice wine, it's kind of a magical process to, to make it, to harvest it because you can't just put grapes in an ice box. That is fake and it is now trademarked just like champagne is. Ice wine needs to be made naturally until the grapes freeze on the vines. And they must be picked at minus eight degrees Celsius or colder. So often that is on a December or January night at midnight, and there are stories where the temperature will plunge such that the grapes become literally marble pellets. And they've been known to break the presses. They're so hard. Yeah. And you only get like a drip out of each one.

Janina Doyle 00:11:53 No, it's funny cause I remember a story and I think it's from Inniskillin, which for anyone who wants to have a legendary producer, that would be it. And we can get, everyone in the UK. That's probably the main one that and um, Pelee Island. These are the two that you could definitely find in the UK. I think he was saying, just you're quite rightly said, it has to be minus eight or lower, but they made big mistakes. I think, you know, at the beginning stages of learning, which is what going back to only the 1980s were not going back that far. And they were picking at something like minus 18. And at that point it's too, too cold. And so as you said, like these marbles, that going into any kind of machine things are flinging off and it's really destructive. So their ideal picking temperature is like minus 10 to minus 12. But of course each winery will have difference of opinion, but minus 18, too too cool. So it's got to be really tough to get it right, the right temperature to pick.

Natalie Maclean 00:12:56 They call it extreme wine making. And because you don't want those little pellets to thaw either, as you pick them back to the winery, they've gotta stay frozen to stay

concentrated cause it's the concentration of the flavor, the dehydration that has happened naturally because of the hang time, all the way to December, January, um, that's where they get all, all of that luscious elixir. I, I like to say that ice wine, you know, it's, it's honeyed elixir, it's like peach preserves and, and apricot its it's, it would be the drink that they would serve you as you're waiting outside the pearly gates to get into heaven.

Janina Doyle 00:13:34 Do you know what I totally totally understand. Of course as well. It's always so golden, well mostly golden in the glass, unless of course we're talking about Cabernet Franc. Let's let's stick with the white grape varieties, which are, are more normal. But I always get this quite exotic. I, I dunno. I've always got lots of these really vibrant pineapples as a majority. It's just, really, Oh yeah. It's absolutely stunning.

Natalie Maclean 00:13:57 Tropical fruit. And it's wonderful because people don't realize cause they think of it as a dessert wine, but two things, it can be served at the front of the meal or during the meal. Substitute wherever you might try Sauternes, um, you know, like a Foie gras. I know that's probably not a exactly politically correct pairing, but wherever you might have, um, Sauternes, the sweet wine from Bordeaux, substitute an ice wine. But also ice wine only has about 10% alcohol. So unlike port and fortified dessert wines that have double, you are not gonna be asleep on the sofa at 7:00 PM right? So that big bonus. But there's so many food pairing. I mean, you know, Biscotti, Fruit flan, Fruit cobbler, spicy, Jalapeno chips.

Janina Doyle 00:14:40 Spicy foods. Yes, absolutely sweet and spicy. So Thai food and Mexican food and Indian.

Natalie Maclean 00:14:49 Sweet meets heat. It's a great combo.

Janina Doyle 00:14:50 Yeah, absolutely. So you can really play with it. But of course, just to point out to everybody, sweet wines are considered from 50 grams of residual sugar upwards. But typically I'd say if I'm right, we are talking like 250 grams of residual sugar per liter or something like that. It's in that vicinity with...

Natalie Maclean 00:15:08 It's pretty concentrated because you, again, the grapes have been allowed to dehydrate they've lost all of their or a lot of their moisture. Um, so they they're just so concentrated and they've had such a long hang time on the vine, well past the usual harvest for still or dry table wines. Um, so that's where they're getting this deep, deep, deep concentration of flavor, sugar and just, um, beautiful, glorious expanding flavors as they hit your palette.

Janina Doyle 00:15:39 But of course the sad news is it's typically not very cheap, is it? And I think that's because of the yields, it's like, you've talked about the fact, when they're pressing it, most of it's frozen and they're only getting out the tiniest bit of juice so that ice doesn't exist. You can't use it anymore. So from, if it was a normal grape where they could get a hundred percent of the juice out, they're getting what 10, 15% of the juice out.

Natalie Maclean 00:16:02 It's minuscule. And not only is the yield low, like, you know what you get from those little rock pellets, but also because the grapes have stayed on the vines two, three months longer than usual, they're really subject to predators like deer rabbits. Starlings are the number one predator of, they love their ice wines or the ice wine grapes, I should say. And um, there's been lots of creativity in trying to keep the starlings away. Like you'll, if you go around in the, uh, at harvest time,

you'll hear the bird boxes and it's screeching sounds of starlings, uh, in distress, uh, because they're trying to ward off these, these murmuration of, of just big thick clouds of starlings, circling overhead, trying to find a nice feast. And they've got net nets all around the vines trying to keep the starlings away. But my most favorite, um, technique was, uh, I went to a winery Featherstone, which is actually one of my favorite wineries to visit Niagara. And I can expand on that, but the, they had a, like a cannon that would blast off into the vineyards every so often. But these, these starlings had become so used to the canon, and they were perched along it in a little row on the cannon and the cannon would blast and it would, they would kind of flutter and come back down. Like they found it a nice warm roosting post. It was like, it was like almost like giving an index feather to the, the winemaker it's like, thanks but no thanks.

Janina Doyle 00:17:30 Oh, wow. Okay. Well I know, so I've heard that the birds can be a massive problem, but yeah. Is netting the, probably the most normal way that they try to keep the birds away from eating that glorious, winter feast?

Natalie Maclean 00:17:44 It is. And they, they can be quite beautiful at night. I've seen Starlight blue moon Starlight highlighting these white nets. Like they're almost like ball gowns draped over these vines, quite beautiful, but it's, it's quite costly and it's not a hundred percent effective. Um, interesting side bit I think. Starlings were never native to north America. Some idiot in the 1800s brought them over because he thought that in Central park, New York, they should have all the songbirds mentioned in Shakespeare's, um, Sonnets and so he brought the bloody starlings and now like most winemakers consider them rats with wings. They're so predatory.

Janina Doyle 00:18:25 That's so funny. Good story. I like that. That's absolutely brilliant. Now ice wine. I'm pretty sure the majority, like 90% is now growing in on Ontario, but there is a, there is a little, oh, I should say British Columbia as well, which I'm like, you're not allowed to talk about now. You are, you are. Um, but there's British Columbia probably as second. And then there is a little bit in Quebec and Nova Scotia right? Although I've heard they have a different law, I think in Quebec because it's just too cold. They can actually cut them in advance and then hang them. Is that correct?

Natalie Maclean 00:18:59 I'm not sure. Um, what their practices are. Um, because I focused mainly on Ontario and BC, but it's the, Quebec is the Eastern townships, which again is sort of the most Southern part you're gonna get in that province, um, to ripen. But they, Quebec also has some marvelous cider and cider ice wines. Based on like 50 varieties of apples that they grow there, which is really lovely. And then Nova Scotia is in the Annapolis valley. I'm originally from Nova Scotia. So it's just about an hour away from Halifax. You get the moderating influence of the Atlantic ocean. And then the Annapolis valley is this warm dip. And it's right next to the Bay of Fundy, which is the world's highest tides. They go up and down. And, but, but again, the moderating influence of the water just as you do in Niagara, you've got lake Ontario. So you've got these little pockets of viability for, for wine, um, based on of course geography and climate.

Janina Doyle 00:19:59 Yeah. Well, it'd be interesting to see how those two grow, I guess, because, as we realize more varieties and what you can do with them, it will grow. But let's come back to Ontario cause of course that's where everything is, and anyone around the world, if you're going to get hold of Canadian wine, you're most likely going to be able to get that from Ontario. So there's like three sub regions within Ontario isn't there. So what is the, what's the layout and again, what's probably the most popular. Popular? That's not the right comment.

Natalie Maclean 00:20:30 The largest. Yep. Gotcha.

Janina Doyle 00:20:31 The largest, popular, whatever, potatoes, potatoes.

Natalie Maclean 00:20:35 Uh, so we've got, I mentioned Prince Edward County where they have to hill the vines because it's so cold. It's beautiful though. All three regions are gorgeous and, and they do have wine routes and, and places to visit. Um, in addition to the wineries, because a lot of wineries have restaurants, um, attached to them and there's ballooning and bike riding and ins and country ways and all the rest of it. So lovely, lovely places to visit in all three regions. Prince Edward County is, um, you know, more north, uh, versus Niagara. It's smaller, it's newer, a newer region and it's pretty small. It's probably the smallest. It is the smallest of the three in terms of output.

Janina Doyle 00:21:14 It's the closest to Ottawa isn't it as well.

Natalie Maclean 00:21:16 It is, it is. Yeah. The capital, the coldest capital on earth. Colder on average than Moscow. Mm-hmm. Yeah.

Janina Doyle 00:21:23 Oh and that's where you live now, right?

Natalie Maclean 00:21:24 Yes. Crazy. Well, I, I don't no, but anyway, it's home now, and I have a good coat. So, um, but there are some wineries around Ottawa. Uh, they are very new and um, they do struggle a lot with the cold and so it's not hugely established, but they're definitely, they're making progress. But so then as you say, um, the closest drive time is Prince Edward County. So that's probably two and a half to maybe three hours drive. And then Niagara would take seven. No, yeah. Six hours drive. It's past, it's south of Toronto. Going south. Um, and then the furthest south is Lake Erie North Shore, where Pelee Island, where you, you mentioned Pelee Island winery is one of the largest producers in the province. Uh, Pelee island and Lake Erie North Shore, that whole region is the warmest in Canada. Um, but the largest is actually Niagara. And um, because it's got that lake effect and it's just it's a superb region. And it, if you think of those Russian nesting dolls, there are sub appellations within appellations. So there's like Niagara on the lake, Niagara bench, Niagara escarpment and then you can go down even further.

Janina Doyle 00:22:44 Yeah. There's 12 in total. Right? So they've got the two kind of main regions with in the Niagara peninsula, but then, within them, there's lots of little ones.

Natalie Maclean 00:22:54 Even more. Yeah, exactly.

Janina Doyle 00:22:56 Yes. But which goes to show though, I always say this, you know, when many people don't know of a region and then they find out there's all these sub regions, it's like, whoa, I, I haven't even got my head around the fact that there's even wine growing here, but it goes to show if there's sub regions that based on closeness to the lake. And then of course you've got the Niagara river to the east. So Niagara on the lake is gonna be slightly different. Isn't it? Cause it's closer to the Niagara river. It's gonna have more of that, um, influence. Everyone, water, generally moderates temperatures. If you're near a body of water that help, tends to, if that's what you need, it's gonna help. So of course the winters are gonna be slightly less cold. They're gonna hold onto some of that, you know, summer temperatures and they're gonna moderate it. But at the same time when things are quite warm, they're gonna cool things down. So yeah. So there you go, everyone, if you wanna get really wine geeky, you've got 12 sub regions in total to pay attention to.

Natalie Maclean 00:23:49 And you've got a it's it's like a water bottle effect. I've heard it described. So as you say, it's storing up heat during the summer, the lake is, and then so it's it's and the breezes are, are moderating or mitigating the heat of the summer. And it's storing up that heat. The water is, and then it lets it off in the winter. So the winters aren't so cold. So it's got this circular motion of the seasons where the, you know, it, it literally is moderating the temperatures in, in both all seasons.

Janina Doyle 00:24:19 Amazing. I I've seen pictures as well in the winter. And of course, anywhere that has the snow on vines is beautiful as well. Oh, and during the summer with the lakes, reflecting the sunshine, I can imagine actually this region in general, any time of the year must be stunning.

Natalie Maclean 00:24:37 It is, it is. I, um, you know, I tend to visit more in the summer or fall because those are gorgeous times to visit, but you know, anytime really and, and even Niagara itself, there's even more to do. There's this very quaint, um, sort of beautiful little old village. There's the Shaw festival, the Bernard Shaw festival. So it's great for literary types as well to combine our books and bottles, but yeah, there's all kinds. And then a lot of the producers that you can get, um, in the UK, you can visit here, you know, whether it's Andrew Peller or Cave Spring, you know, um, Domaine Queylus Henry of Pelham. These are all labels that do make it to the UK, but you can come visit them here while you're here.

Janina Doyle 00:25:22 Now you mentioned, who did you mention, a winery of yours, well not of yours, that you had a wonderful experience on. You wanted to talk about?

Natalie Maclean 00:25:30 Yes. So it's called Featherstone. And it's owned by a husband and wife, and it's an adorable, tiny winery on, um, the Niagara Escarpment and they, uh, so they don't like starlings either.

Janina Doyle 00:25:47 Does anyone apparently?

Natalie Maclean 00:25:48 No, they're just like non grata. Um, but Louise, the wife is a falconer, and she is trained a falconer to chase after the starlings. And, um, yeah, so it, it helps a lot. It's all very natural. Uh, but it's also how the, the Falcon eats. Um, but then they've also in every spring they bring in all these baby lambs and the lambs are they're, they're only tall enough to eat the nice grasses and they'll eat naturally that leaf canopy near the bottom of the vines. Uh, but they don't like the grapes cause they're not ripe and they're too high up for them. But these baby lambs are so adorable. They call them lamb mowers. Um, so cause they reduce their environmental 'hoof' print. I mean the puns go on. Um, but I went to visit all the lambs at the lamb farm where they get the lambs and uh, there was um, a woman there. Uh, I kid you not her last name, uh, was Shepherd, but anyway, but she, there was...

Janina Doyle 00:26:50 Totally destined to work there.

Natalie Maclean 00:26:54 I know. Right. But they had this big, um, male sheep, I guess a Ram. And uh, he had his hoofs up tall, he was being very alpha, alpha male. And uh, as we passed, we passed him. Uh, you know, I was asking, what is that sheep? And oh, I forget what she called him. But she said he's from Alberta. He thinks he's hot stuff, but he was there to mate with all the, the female sheep. So anyway.

Janina Doyle 00:27:21 Well quite clearly he was hot stuff.

Natalie Maclean 00:27:24 He was hot stuff, very literally. But um, so they, and then I asked, um, later when I got back to the winery, it's just so beautiful and the wines are gorgeous. Their Rieslings are just, I think the best, among the best in Ontario. I said, well, what happens with the lambs at the end of the season? She goes, well, we don't talk about that. But she, she was just laughing. It's the reason we don't name the lambs. Uh, it's the circle of life. Uh, they go to one of the best restaurants, um, in the, in the region and they have a, a snout to tail kind of food and wine pairing. Um, so the lambs, uh, some of them, not all of them, um, go to this grand feast in the fall, uh, lamb anyway, sheep dinner.

Janina Doyle 00:28:07 Well, as you said, circle of life.

Natalie Maclean 00:28:08 Circle of life. Yes. They were happy in their youth. They, they were happy.

Janina Doyle 00:28:12 Roaming, roaming as, as what Lamb mowers, as Lamb mowers. Brilliant. Okay. So people need to come, actually to this winery, the best time would be in the spring then. And they can see the little lambs.

Natalie Maclean 00:28:23 Oh yeah. All the lambs, and the Hawk, all the, all the animals, it's a working farm. I think that's why I loved it so much. It's like, you know, farms, people have this thing about wines, you know, it's fancied up farming. It's not even fancied up. It, it is a farm. These are working farms in most cases and it's not glamorous, but it's, it's, it's wonderful.

Janina Doyle 00:28:44 Beautiful. I need to come. I need to come. So yes. In terms of grape varieties, we've mentioned Riesling. Is Riesling, probably the number one white grape variety growing for still wine?

Natalie Maclean 00:28:59 Yes. I'd say Riesling and Chardonnay. Cool Climate Chardonnay has made a comeback around the world. Um, you know, uh, we are done with ABC, anything but Chardonnay, the over oaked fruit bombs. So I would say the two. Riesling probably does lead, but I think our, the Chardonnays we make here are crisp and steely, um, think more Chablis than, you know, Chardonnay down south. Yeah, exactly. But with our own signature. So, uh, yeah, I would definitely, I would point to those two whites being very much the signature of Ontario white wines.

Janina Doyle 00:29:31 And then red, would it be Cabernet Franc?

Natalie Maclean 00:29:34 Yes. Excellent. Uh, you know, excellent Cabernet Franc, but also Gamay, the grape of Southern Beaujolais. And Pinot noir, the grape of Northern Burgundy, um, because they're cool climate, you know, and they, they do well here. And so those grapes, if we put them all together, Pinot noir, Chardonnay, maybe occasionally Pinot Meunier, we also make great, great sparkling wines.

Janina Doyle 00:30:01 Right. And again, Ontario is, um, is leading for the sparkling wines or?

Natalie Maclean 00:30:08 Uh, Ontario in, in Canada would lead, um, sparkling wines. Um, now all the other regions make them. Quebec, uh, Ontario, Nova Scotia, BC, because of the cool climate. But, uh, yeah, it's just, they they're winning awards. And I mean, just breaking records in terms of how, how great they are and aging well, and, you know, on the lees, all kinds of different styles.

Janina Doyle 00:30:34 Beautiful. Beautiful. And I remember reading in lake Erie North Shore, which you mentioned is a little bit warmer. There is actually some Merlot and like Cabernet Sauvignon growing

there because it is that little bit warmer. So that separates that a little bit from lower down the Niagara Peninsula right?

Natalie Maclean 00:30:50 Yeah. They can produce warmer reds. Um, you know, if we have a warm vintage, it's great. But generally year in, year out, um, you'll get warmer reds. Like Colio Estate down there produces some really great reds and um, Pelee Island of course. A big producer. Yes.

Janina Doyle 00:31:07 But in terms of the ice wine, just coming back to that, of course, I see Riesling, Vidal, which is the hybrid, which just does really well. I don't, nobody's doing that as a still wine, are they? Because it just suits...

Natalie Maclean 00:31:22 It's suits, ice wine. Um, there are a few who do it still, but it's a small percentage. Some are making orange wine, like Southbrook estates makes a marvelous, uh, orange wine out of Vidal. Um, and Ann Sperling, rockstar wine maker. I mean, she's just led the charge for biodynamic and organic wine making in Canada. She also owns a wine in BC, Sperling vineyards. Has consulted with her husband in Nova Scotia, Blomidon vineyards. So she's really led the way and established the world's first orange wine, uh, appellation here in Ontario VQA. So, but yeah, but for Vidal it tends to be floral, um, a thin skinned grape. So it, it does wonderfully well as an ice wine. My personal preference though, is Riesling for the basis of ice wine, because it has that silver seam of acidity that balances the sweetness and enables ice wine to age longer, too.

Janina Doyle 00:32:18 Okay. And of course for anybody, you know, you don't, it, it is a wine that can age with the sugar, with the acidity. It's more about preference though, you know. Just like still wine. It will get darker in color. It will get more honeyed it will get a little bit maybe smokier or, but it'll just get richer in the, the, the more fresh aromatics will start to change. So if you like it fresh, you can drink it young, but you can lie it down and enjoy it much later on right?

Natalie Maclean 00:32:45 Precisely.

Janina Doyle 00:32:46 So it's, for ice wine Riesling, uh, Vidal and Cabernet Franc are the three that I see. Ahh I think Cabernet Sauvignon is being used as well in ice wine isn't it?

Natalie Maclean 00:32:57 It is, yep. So we do get those red ice wines and, um, Gewurztraminer as well is sometimes a basis. And people are, I mean, there's been experiments with Chardonnay as the bases and, and so on, but yeah, the, the big ones tend to be Riesling and Vidal and then to a lesser extent, the red based grapes.

Janina Doyle 00:33:14 And in terms of we've mentioned, Vidal is a hybrid. So for anyone it's just, it's a crossing of two different Vitis plants. So Vitis Vinifera is the plant that we, you know, we know our Chardonnays and our Cabernet Sauvignons, all the grapes, you know, but in America, Vitis Lambrusca in America and Canada has always been, that's been kind of the main, uh, Vitis plant. Is that, is, is that still planted in Canada? People making any wine from Vitis Lambrusca grapes?

Natalie Maclean 00:33:42 Ah, oh gosh. I'm not sure. I tend to focus on all the wineries that are, uh, the classic Vinifera grapes. Um, you know, one of our big hybrids though, is Baco Noir.

Janina Doyle 00:33:54 Ah, yes, people make, okay. I have, I have no idea what it tastes like. I, and what it is, but I've seen Baco Noir on many different bottles online. Not in front of me.

Natalie Maclean 00:34:04 Exactly. Yeah. Yeah. Henry of Pelham is the star maker of Baco Noir. There are a number of other producers who do it very well, but they've made a real name out of their Baco Noir. Like they really stand for it and Bako is a full bodied red, it's smooth. Um, I don't know how to describe it, like a little bit like a Syrah, a little bit like a Cabernet. Um, but it has these dark fleshy ripe, um, fruit Berry flavors. It's great with grilled meat. I mean, it's a, it's, it's a great wine, especially the way they make it.

Janina Doyle 00:34:38 And quite clearly it's a hardy grape variety that can handle frost and cold. So this is a hybrid, this is a hybrid, right?

Natalie Maclean 00:34:43 It is.

Janina Doyle 00:34:44 Okay. Baco Noir everybody. That's amazing. Okay. Right. So, I mean, what, what, what's the future, in your opinion for Canadian wines, wines of Ontario, what do you think?

Natalie Maclean 00:34:56 Bigger, better? I mean, it just, um, there's so many, probably like England, so many new wineries springing up every year. Um, and when I say bigger, I don't mean that, you know, bigger companies, but just more diversity, more, lots of little tiny boutique wineries, um, more experiences. When you go to the winery, like at, um, Andrew Peller, or Peller Estates, you can go down to the ice wine lounge where it's minus eight degrees. They give you a Parka and it's all ice and you taste ice wine. And then afterwards you can go up to their spendid restaurant and have a fine dinner. I mean, there's just lots of experiences when you visit these regions that are really fun.

Janina Doyle 00:35:39 That sounds amazing.

Natalie Maclean 00:35:40 Yeah. So lots of tourism I see in the future, more and more great restaurants, um, more and more boutique wineries experimenting and just even traditional wineries, knowing more and more what works. I mean, we've got a lot of experience down. We're still considered a relatively new region, but I mean, there's just decades and decades of experimenting with soils and climates and grapes that they're really perfecting the wines here that we do well.

Janina Doyle 00:36:07 Perfect. And if people come, is there, you said, obviously most of these wineries are open to visitors and they have their restaurants and have wonderful cellars and, uh, experiences. Are there a specific wine routes in place? Like if people came is there... yeah. Okay. Is there the Niagara Peninsula wine route or...?

Natalie Maclean 00:36:24 Exactly. And there's, um, an organization called Wine Country Ontario, which is kind of like the wine council for Ontario. They produce a really terrific map of all the wineries and you can get it online as well. Um, I'll send you the link for that, Janina for your show notes. But they, they have lots of resources on their website. I have all the wineries on my website as well. So that folks can find out, you know, where to go. And of course in, you know, if you're visiting there now or in the summer, you wanna plan out your visits because with social distancing, it may ease up completely. Um, the wineries are open for, for visitors, but, um, sometimes you do need to make an appointment just because of the social distancing aspect.

Janina Doyle 00:37:09 Okay. But they are open and they're waiting for us.

Natalie Maclean 00:37:12 And it's a more personal experience, I think in some ways. Um, although, you know, covid has been for very hard on wineries and restaurants. For the wineries, I think there's

been some good in that it's a much more personal experience. Often now you make an appointment like you would at a restaurant. You sit down and taste, it's leisurely. You're not fighting at a tasting bar with a throng of people. And sometimes even the wine maker will come over and talk to you or somebody will guide you through, you might be doing some food pairing. So it's a more personalized experience now.

Janina Doyle 00:37:43 Okay. You've inspired me to come. Amazing.

Natalie Maclean 00:37:47 Yes you have to come.

Janina Doyle 00:37:47 You're so passionate. Like, I think that you are my new inspiration, you know, oh, on TV, writing books, um, you, and of course your podcast. Um, so you're fantastic. Remind everybody again where they need to go on your website so they can find out about all your online courses and your books and everything that you're doing. Where do they need to go?

Natalie Maclean 00:38:10 Thank you so much. I appreciate the opportunity to talk to you, Janina and, and for the, the plugs. Um, so my website is nataliemclean.com. So it's N A T A I E M A C L E A N. I, um, also I wanted to mention that I am working on my third book. Um, I think I mentioned it briefly. It's a memoir, very different from the first two books, but I am looking for beta readers, whereas you might say beta readers? Um, so, so if any of your listeners, or if you, yourself, Janina are interested...

Janina Doyle 00:38:40 I think I might have to.

Natalie Maclean 00:38:42 I would love input on that. It's, um, it's more of a serious story about being a woman in the wine industry for the past 20 years. Um, but, uh, it, wine is all through it is still wine soaked for sure. So if, if anybody wants to reach me either through my website, nataliemclean.com, email me, natalie@nataliemclean.com. And the website is where you'll find my podcast Unreserved Wine Talk, the previous two books, my online food and wine pairing courses and all the, all the stuff, all the things.

Janina Doyle 00:39:12 Everything. So, yes, absolutely. And anyone, you can find all those details in my show notes. And you can contact me and I'll get you on the, the Beta list for reading this new book. And everybody listening to this, if you're listening to this, when this has just come out, you only have a few weeks or so to wait and I will be on Natalie's podcast.

Natalie Maclean 00:39:33 We had such a great chat. Oh my gosh. That was fun.

Janina Doyle 00:39:36 Well, we thought so.

Natalie Maclean 00:39:37 Yes, we did. We got carried away.

Janina Doyle 00:39:39 We enjoyed ourselves. We can't promise you anything. Yes, we did. Natalie. Thank you ever so much. It's been a pleasure. And um, quite clearly, let we should do this again sometime

Natalie Maclean 00:39:50 We really should. How's Monday?

Janina Doyle 00:39:53 Yeah. Perfect. I'm free. Anytime.

Natalie Maclean 00:39:56 Janina, I can't wait till you come over here. I'm going to, uh, you know, tell the folks at Wine Country Ontario, they need to, need to encourage you strongly to get over here.

Janina Doyle 00:40:05 I think that sounds like a plan. Thank you. Have a beautiful day and we'll speak on Monday and then on Tuesday.

Natalie Maclean 00:40:10 Exactly.

Janina Doyle 00:40:12 Take care.

Natalie Maclean 00:40:13 All right, bye for now.

Janina Doyle 00:40:19 Do you let me know where you are in the world and if you can get hold of Canadian wine. Now, after listening to that chat, I really hope there is some available to you. Now I'm often quoting authors and writers. So why not quote Natalie McLean herself to finish off this episode as she too has a few quotes to be found on the internet. One that she so eloquently said was:

“While wine may be only a drink, it is also one of the most complex sensory pleasures we enjoy. It is as cerebral as it is sensual. And it requires a lifetime to appreciate it.”

I don't know about you, but I am okay dedicating my life to the sport of wine appreciation. Now, perhaps you can see this episode as a prelude into March, which is women's history month and of course, international women's day, which is on the 8th of March. I'm sure you will agree from the female guests on my show that they have all been rather inspiring. And so for all my episodes, during the month of March, we're gonna be talking with strong and passionate women. So I hope you're gonna tune in and join me to celebrate women's achievements. And next week I am talking with the winemaker, Rebecca Wineburg from the incredibly prestigious winery Quintessa. We'll be talking vineyard practices, harvest rituals, biodynamics and so much more. There's a lot of content within. Thank you as always my faithful listeners, you are all gold and much appreciated. Now, if you are appreciating what you hear and learn, please, don't forget to share this podcast with a fellow wine lover. Make sure you are subscribed so you do not miss an episode. Like this episode. And if you can leave me a comment, especially on apple podcasts, you will be making this podcast far more discoverable. Right you lovely lot. That's it for this episode. So until next week, cheers to you.