

## 'The Heartland' of wine

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SUSAN SAMPSON/TORSTAR news service  
Jon Ogryzlo, dean of Food and Wine Sciences at Niagara College, shows off the Dean's List brand Chardonnay and icewine, two bottles made by students at the Niagara College Teaching Winery. He is holding Dean's List brand Chardonnay and icewine.

The vineyard is a classroom at Niagara College.

"We provide a living lab for our students," says Jon Ogryzlo, dean of food and wine sciences, as we stroll across the road to the 40-acre vineyard right on campus.

The college is grooming a new generation of food and wine producers, and Ogryzlo is proud to say it is the home of the only commercial teaching winery in Canada. Students are split into teams (Team Chardonnay, for instance) that make about 18 wines, from start to finish, crushing to bottling.

Visitors can buy these wines in a small shop. The best are distinguished by the Dean's List label, a real report card with marks and tasting notes. Prices range from \$10.95 to \$18.95 for regular bottles, \$27.95 to \$36.95 for Dean's List reserves.

Ice wines top the list at \$49.95 to \$54.95.

This is not just a shopping trip, though. It's all very civilized.

You can dine at the student chefs' restaurant. You can buy herbs and lettuces in the greenhouse next door. You can saunter around the grounds of the 114-acre campus, its groomed lawns and floral displays alive with the chirping of birds. A short walk brings you to the vineyard, and beyond that is a Niagara Escarpment forest.

The Niagara College Teaching Winery opened in 2002. Since then, student wines have received 70 awards, Ogryzlo says. But the winery has been a well-kept secret.

Not for much longer. In late October, the college expects to open an 8,525-square-foot Wine Visitor and Education Centre. Students will make wine downstairs. Upstairs, there will be a store, a tasting bar and an information centre, lit by big glass windows overlooking the vineyard.

It will be a boost to the college — and the Niagara region. "We're the heartland of Canada's wine industry," Ogryzlo says.

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