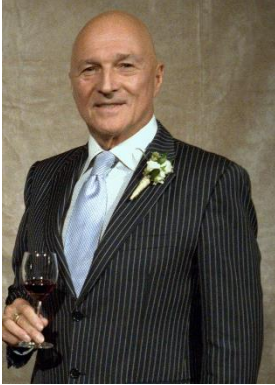


DONALD ZIRALDO



I was a nurseryman first and then I became a grower. And a big part of the reason that I became a grower of vinifera, I had grafted 30,000 grapevines and I couldn't sell them because they were told, the farmers were told that it's too cold to grow vinifera in Canada. Brights was doing some research here, Paul Bosc was doing some research. The Vineland research station had one row of Riesling that was dead. And they said, "See, it dies, whereas the Concord and the Catawba, they're lush and green." So, I had to buy a farm and plant those 30,000 vines. So yeah, I became a grower.

I took over the family farm in St. Catharines after I learned how to graft fruit trees. That was 1971, I had just graduated from university. I got into the nursery business because I thought this grafting stuff I found when I traveled to Italy, to my family's area in Friuli, there was a town there that did 60 million grafted grape vines.

And I could never figure out that they grew grapes there and in Germany and in Switzerland where they don't grow peaches or apricots, or cherries maybe because it's too cold. They had to have it all on very, very steep slopes. I thought, why can't we grow them here?

I can tell you that this is not fact because it's not scientifically proven, but if you look around, all the dead vines are either in low spots where it's poorly drained or because they are over cropping. They stress the vines out and if you over stress the vine, if you don't take care of it, Mother nature will whack you for it.

The combination is deadly. Because if you've got a low spot, you've got wet feet in the vine so they're not in their best condition. And then on top of that, when the inversion occurs, the cold air settles in the lowest spots. So right down here, if you get down to Lailey's, there's a swale in front of the winery. On the top, everything is green and in the swale 70% bud damage.

We've done what we did. Carl [Kaiser] and I made our mark and thanks to him being a genius. In making Icewine, he introduced something of enormous value and we just sort of followed it.

In the end, we were fortunate. We were in just the right place at just the right time. Carl made great wine, so once the grapes were in, I didn't have to deal with staying here. I was out all over the world selling our wines. Japan was where I spent most of my time, in Asia. And I knew that he was making great product. He was a bit of a difficult guy to deal with, but I didn't care. He was an artist and artists are like that. They are just temperamental.

And in 2020, that vintage in Canada is going to go down in history because mother nature blessed us with one of the greatest vintages we ever had. And every winemaker will tell you that was a great vintage because they just sat around and watched the wine make itself in the vineyard and in the winery.

Listen to full interview here: http://ggo75.am-live.ca/media/5bh1rdjo/gmt20220601-142822_recording-donald-ziraldo.3gp

