

**Making appassimento accessible
VRIC teams up with Central Fabricating to create smaller
grape drying device**

June 13, 2017
By Luke Edwards



Darren Ward, manager of business planning and commercialization at Vineland Research and Innovation Centre, talks to industry officials about a new system that aims to make it easier for Ontario and Canadian winemakers to use the appassimento style of grape drying for their wines. - Luke Edwards/Metroland

LINCOLN — Niagara’s winemakers have a new tool at their disposal, thanks to the Vineland Research and Innovation Centre (VRIC) and Beamsville’s Central Fabricating.

The two organizations unveiled a new system for making appassimento-style wine, which refers to an old world style of grape drying long popular in Italy that some believe can go a long way to mitigating Canada’s shorter growing season.

Calling it a Version 2 of a bigger system located at VRIC, Darren Ward, manager of business planning and commercialization said the new system makes appassimento more accessible for wineries in Niagara and beyond.

“It’s tailored to the Ontario or Canadian wine industry,” he said. “Wineries are starting to embrace it (appassimento) a little more.”

The appassimento process partially dries grapes before they're crushed. This allows winemakers to develop new and different flavours and more complex aromas. It's popular in Italy and can be useful for local winemakers, given the shorter growing season in Canada, which can make it different for grapes to develop that complexity while still on the vine.

"So far the customers are very happy," said Big Head Wines' Andrzej Lipinski, who last year put about 100 tons of grapes through the appassimento process at his Niagara-on-the-Lake winery. Lipinski has used VRIC's on-site appassimento facilities to dry his grapes and said he's looking forward to seeing and tasting the finished product from the new system.

Central Fabricating and VRIC say benefits of the new system include a reduced footprint, a base model that can work for smaller wineries, and even airflow for all the grapes in the system through a patented vertical airflow technology.

"We don't have to handle the grapes as much," said Lipinski, which reduces issues of spoilage.

The appassimento project at VRIC has been going since 2010. Ward said they began working on the new version in 2015, with the pilot program taking place last year. With an idea of what they wanted, VRIC went to Central Fabricating to turn it into a reality.

"They took our concept and very quickly turned it into a commercial product," he said.

"We see a lot of room for Version 2 to evolve."

<https://www.niagarathisweek.com/news-story/7369623-making-appassimento-accessible/>