



# Vineyard Visit – Fun Facts

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Presenters & Hosts: Justin and Ed Heineman

## History, Measurement and Labels

- There were 17 wineries on South Bass Island at the turn of the century.
- In the 1800's, grapes were on the entire island. Most islanders have vines in their yards.
- Labels during Prohibition when grape juice was bottled, contained cautionary information (directions) on how the juice could turn to wine. (Households were allowed to make 200 gallons of wine during Prohibition.)
- A new wine bottle labels must be approved by the government. Labels must include warnings in specific locations on the label and must adhere to government regulations.
- A refractometer is used to measure the ripeness of the grape. Brix is the measurement for alcohol.

## Heineman's

- Heineman's grow five varieties of grapes: Catawba, Niagara, Ives, Delaware, and Concord.
- Grapes are mixed together in each of the vineyards. Some vines are experimental in the varietal row.
- Heineman's Ice Wine is made from grapes grown on North Bass Island (Isle St. George).
- Heineman's vineyards are old and the root system is deep. The oldest vines are from the 1920's and 1930's.
- Heineman's grows 20 acres of grapes. There are an additional 30 acres grown by other families on PIB.

## Grapes

- Concord grapes have buds in the spring. Less buds result in nicer grapes.
- The freeze last winter had a terrible effect on the vines.
- North Bass grapes are: Cabernet, Chardonnay, Niagara, Vidals, Riesling, and Gewurztraminer. Hundreds of acres of Catawba grapes were removed on North Bass Island.
- Niagara ripens and is picked first.
- The leaf indicates the type of grape, along with the berry size and number.

## Vines

- Wind dehydrates the vine and bees do not pollinate the vines.
- The Mitchell Road vineyards are in the lowest point of the island and can freeze easily.
- Layering is a way to start a new vine. A new vine takes three to five years to produce grapes of quality.
- Vines are tied to keep grapes off the ground and get more sun. New shoots are tied upright to promote growth. Willows and straw were used for tying years ago. New growth without grapes can be cut and removed.
- Pruning is done in winter and spring, while tying is done in the spring.

## Harvesting, Soil and Environment

- Harvesting occurs when the sugar percentage is right. The more sugar the better, except for Niagara. Sugar is sometimes added to achieve desired percentage. The higher the sugar content, the lower the acidity. During drought years, the grape is sweet.
- Soil type affects grapes, wine and taste. The limestone-based soil is good for growing vines.
- PIB vines do not have damage due to the spring thaw.
- Lake Erie provides an environment that promotes a longer growing season.

## Care

- Fertilization is done in the spring.
- Weed killer (herbicides) are sprayed low to avoid vine damage.
- Japanese Beetle Killer is applied three times a year.
- No watering is required as sunshine is the most important thing.
- Raccoons are trapped, while netting and clackers are used to fight deer, birds and raccoons.



