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Old wine offers new opportunities

Pragya Kaushika, TNN, 14 April 2008, 12:33am IST

THE ancient Bacchus culture that saw its inception in countries like Rome and Greece, and flourished in countries like France and Germany has found a new home in Canada.

Canada is not only the leading producer of ice wine
- the production of which actually originated in Germany in the mid-19th century, but also home to a number of institutes offering education related to the production and management of wine.

Academic vineyards

The maximum quantity of ice wine in Canada is produced in Niagara Peninsula. It has two institutes that impart courses in the fields of oenology and viticulture - Brock University's The Cool Climate Oenology and Viticulture Institute (CCOVI) and Niagara College.

Oenology (BrE) or enology (AmE) is the science and study of all aspects of wine and winemaking from the grape harvest to bottle.

An expert in the field of oenology is known as an oenologist. Oenology is usually not considered to include the study of vine growing and grape harvesting.

This subfield of agricultural practice and science is called viticulture, which makes "viticulture & oenology" a common designation for training programmes and research centres which include both "outdoors" and "indoors" aspects of wine production.

Both the institutes have something niche about them. If Niagara College specialises in promoting wine produced in the college vineries, Brock is the only university of Canada to offer a BSc degree in oenology and viticulture.

Both the institutes have academic, research and commercial links in wine industry across the globe hence providing opportunities to their graduates to work in wineries and vineyards across North America and Australia.

"CCOVI has a wine cellar having a 42,000 bottle capacity, and out of this 23, 000 bottles are devoted to the Canadian Wine Library, which is a home for some of the best wines made in Canada and 19,000 for the Vinotheque, which houses wines made at CCOVI," said James Cooper, communication officer, Brock University, CCOVI.

For all tastes

The courses equip students to take career as winemakers, viticulturists, oenologists, vineyard crop consultants, winery operations managers, vineyard managers, wine chemists, wine microbiologists, wine sensory scientists and grape and wine biotechnologists.

The courses also impart knowledge on business aspects of wine management, marketing, consumer behaviour, import and export regulations, finance, accounting and taxation, winery retail systems and wine merchandising.

"Graduates have the option to move beyond the science of producing grape and wine into the business of selling wine. They get into winery management, wine marketing and communications, and grape and wine tourism," informed Cooper.

Kimberly Typer, retail wine co-coordinator, wine and viticulture environment, horticulture and agribusiness division, Niagara College, said, "Students develop professional communication skills and an ability to formulate business plans and budget. The course allows students to have a first hand experience in the entire cycle of wine production from the time of its harvest to the time it is served at the consumer's table."