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Brock University – Communications & Public Affairs

*\*NOTE - Attached to this release is a photo that is free for media use. Caption: Charles Bénard, whose family runs a vineyard and winery in France, chose Brock University's Cool Climate Oenology and Viticulture Institute for his internship.*

## More of the world's grape and wine insiders are coming to Niagara

Charles Bénard is close to the wine industry, but far from home. His parents manage the [Champagne Bénard-Pitois](#) vineyard and winery in France, and Bénard himself is a second-year student at [AgroSup Dijon](#), the French national institute for food and agronomic sciences.

But for his internship he chose to come to Canada, specifically to Brock University's grape and wine research centre, the Cool Climate Oenology and Viticulture Institute (CCOVI).

Bénard feels a CCOVI internship will further his knowledge about the sector, and says being exposed to research at Brock will advance his career goal of working in the grape and wine industry.

"Brock and CCOVI works a lot on wines, and since I am from Champagne, I didn't see a lot of different methods [at home]," he said. "I saw that Canada makes a lot of wines with different grapes, so I said it would be great to observe this in another country with different methods than in Champagne."

The young French national is a sign of the times.

Google the name Denis Bunner, and the Deputy Cellar Manager from France's renowned Bollinger Champagne pops up in blogs, articles and conference notes from South Africa to Britain to Finland.

You can now add Canada to that list. Bunner visited the Brock campus this month for the Shaping Bubbles seminar, where 50 Canadian winemakers gathered to hear European industry leaders talk shop about Champagne, Prosecco and other production methods of sparkling wine.

The seminar was part of a year-round calendar of industry events held by CCOVI that attract global speakers and students who, in turn, grow its reputation as a hub for grape and wine education and research.

CCOVI draws experts from places like Australia, Germany and France to host workshops, contribute to discussions or participate in seminars. Even the annual CCOVI Lecture Series has a global audience, with more than 1,100 viewers from 43 different countries logging on in recent years to stream the lectures online. Similarly, events like CCOVI's 2014 Ontario Sparkling Wine Symposium drew international speakers and 120 attendees.

Last summer, CCOVI's rising profile also helped Canada's first-ever successful bid to host the International Cool Climate Wine Symposium. The event, which will be held at Brock in 2020, take place every four years and attracts hundreds of grape and wine researchers, trade professionals and media from wine regions around the world. At the Shaping Bubbles seminar, Bunner – who split keynote duties with Italian winemaker and industry consultant Marcello Galetti – welcomed the opportunity to share his decades-old practices with a Canadian audience, but says he also learned a few things from the industry here in Ontario.

“I have a culture of sharing knowledge and craftsmanship,” said Bunner, “and I think it's interesting to show people another way of doing things.

“(But) it was also very interesting to see how you prevent frost in your country and the different products you can have. You are in a good climate position to produce sparkling wines, you have this freshness and fineness – which are important for sparkling wines.”

Sparkling wine is hugely popular with consumers, and the Shaping Bubbles seminar examined how Canadian products are pushing their way into the spotlight. While famous names like Champagne and Prosecco still command a large share of retail shelf space, domestic brands are rivaling the Europeans. In Ontario, overall sales of Ontario VQA sparkling wines are up 13 per cent over last year, and Vintage VQA sparkling wine sales have increased by a remarkable 25 per cent.

In this era of new market opportunities, Thierry Lemaire, who owns the Canadian company Nuance Winery Supplies, who sponsored the Shaping Bubbles seminar to hear a presentation prepared by CCOVI senior oenologist Belinda Kemp, analysing the rise of Ontario sparkling wines.

Lemaire said CCOVI has a “major place in the wine industry in Ontario and in Canada,” which made Brock an ideal venue for hosting international speakers of this calibre.

“CCOVI is the natural place where people come with questions,” he said. “They are centered in the industry, and a lot is happening here. People recognize that, and they want to be a part of that.”

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For more information or for assistance arranging interviews:

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