



Taking the Pathway

Understanding
career direction in
winemaking





Food Processing Skills Canada

At Food Processing Skills Canada, our mission is to make certain that the Canadian food and beverage manufacturing sector is building an empowered and resilient workforce that is primed for growth.

We create industry-driven programs for Canada's 13,000+ food and beverage manufacturing establishments and the sector's 300,000+ people so that businesses and individuals can achieve their goals.

We are passionate about ensuring that Canadians, new immigrants, and temporary foreign workers have the training and confidence to successfully begin an exciting job or advance their career. We also want employers and educators to have the right resources so that they can nurture talent and create the perfect learning environment.

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About Taking the Pathway

Canada's Agri-Food sector is a significant contributor to our nation's economy and was recently identified as one of Canada's top growth industries over the next 10 years. Despite this, the sector continues to face a critical labour shortage that, if left unresolved, will impede the industry's growth, employment opportunities, and overall sustainability.

How to Use the Career Pathway

This document provides practical information about the career paths available for workers involved in the winemaking industry. In a time when attraction and recruitment of workers is important to keep up with demand, the career pathway can be helpful to educate potential workers about the opportunities and career options in winemaking. The career pathway is a helpful tool for employers to attract, recruit and retain productive and skilled workers.

The career pathway for Winemakers illustrates the progression from foundational to management positions. Definitions for these occupational levels can be found in **Appendix A**.

Would you Like to Make Wine?

Canada is home to over 500 wineries, with British Columbia and Ontario being the largest producers of wine with over 428 collective wineries. Retail sales of wine reached over 8 billion Canadian dollars in 2021.¹ Needless to say, wine is a very popular alcoholic beverage in Canada.

According to Wine Grower's Canada:

Grape wine is Canada's highest value-added agricultural product, as the winemaking process encompasses many steps, from the planting of vines, to the harvesting of grapes, to crushing, fermenting and aging, requiring care and diligence at every step.²



¹ <https://www.statista.com/topics/2996/wine-market-in-canada/#topicOverview>

² <https://www.winegrowerscanada.ca/canadian-wines/economic-impact/>

meet the winemaker

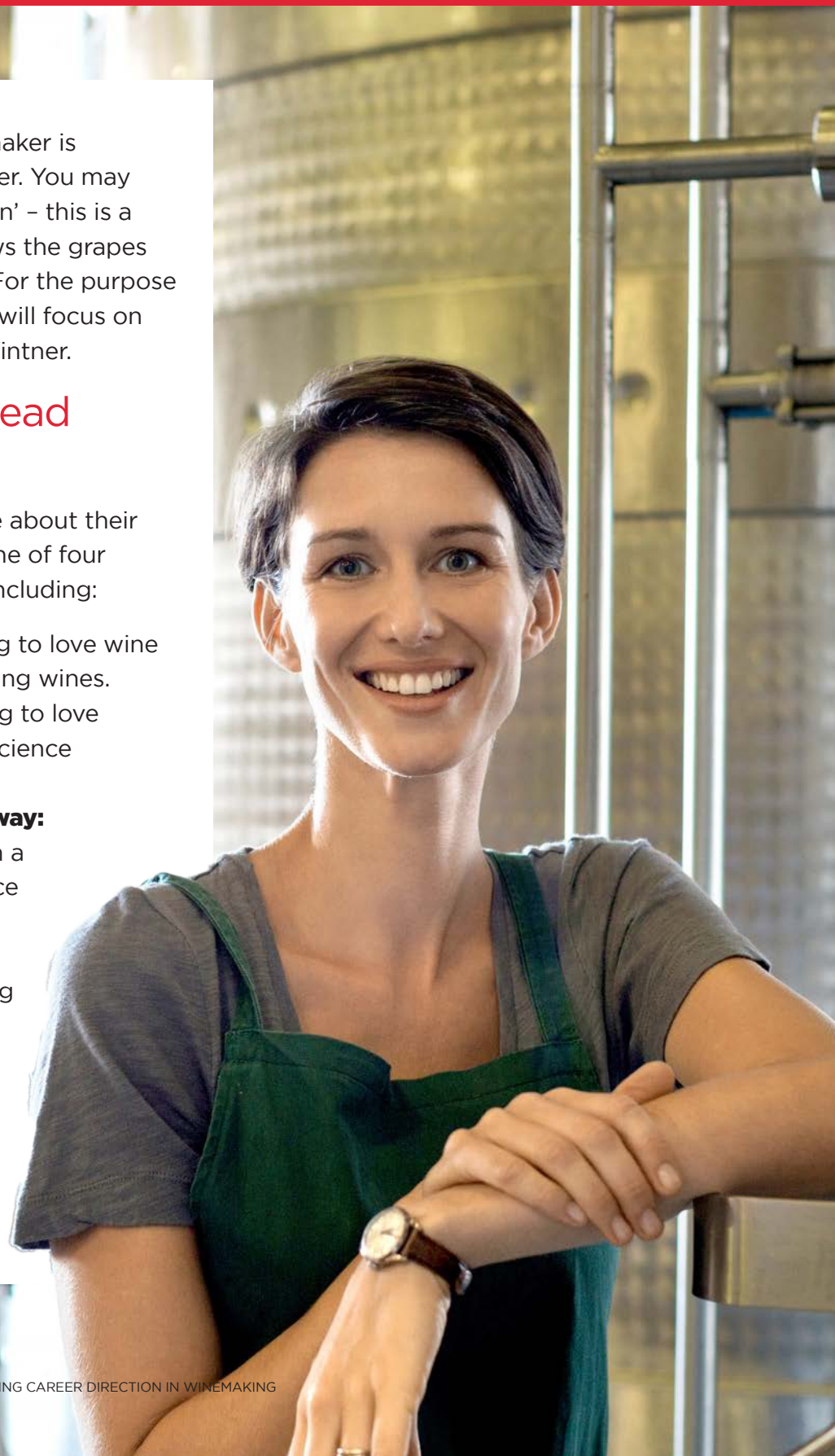
In Canada, the term Winemaker is interchangeable with Vintner. You may also hear the term 'Vigneron' – this is a person that cultivates/grows the grapes and also makes the wine.³ For the purpose of this Career Pathway, we will focus on the Winemaker - aka the Vintner.

The Paths that Lead to Winemaking

Winemakers are passionate about their craft and typically follow one of four pathways to winemaking, including:

- **Sensory Pathway:** Coming to love wine from aromas or from tasting wines.
- **Enology Pathway:** Coming to love wine while studying the science of winemaking.
- **Science/Agronomy Pathway:** Coming to love wine from a grounding either in science or agronomy, and
- **Family Pathway:** Coming to love wine while growing up in a winery family.⁴

What is your path to winemaking?



First Comes Love, then Comes Education

Winemaking is a blend of passion, science, and art. As Canadian wine production continues to grow, post-secondary education in winemaking is becoming more recognized and expected within the industry.

At the time of publication, the following post-secondary programs exist in Canada:



Niagara College Canada: Winery and Viticulture Technician

As a Winery and Viticulture Technician graduate, you are a key member of the winery management team with the expertise required to develop, plant, and maintain a commercial vineyard; manage daily operations; and sell and market wine.

Career opportunities: Laboratory or viticulture technician; vineyard manager; winery or cellar technician; winemaker

Learn more about the program at: <https://www.niagaracollege.ca/winebeerspirits/program/winery-viticulture-technician/>



Brock University – Cool Climate Oenology and Viticulture

Honours Bachelor of Science in Oenology and Viticulture: The aim of the program is to provide a comprehensive scientific education as well as practical skills in Oenology and Viticulture together with exposure to marketing, tourism, and wine appreciation.

Certificate in Grape and Wine Technology: Provides the opportunity for individuals with an existing science degree to gain the training necessary to enter the grape and wine industry or for those with industry experience to upgrade their knowledge.

Graduate Programs in Oenology and Viticulture: Master of Science and Doctor of Philosophy programs focusing on topics in Oenology and Viticulture are available through the Department of Biological Sciences and the Centre for Biotechnology.

Learn more about the programs at: <https://brocku.ca/ccovi/graduate-undergraduate-studies/#canada>

³ <https://vinepair.com/articles/vigneron-vs-vintner-difference/>

⁴ <https://grapecollective.com/articles/the-women-winemakers-of-the-okanagan-are-holding-their-ground>

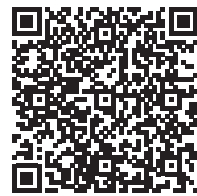
Okanagan College – Continuing Studies Viticulture and Wine Studies

Viticulture Certificate: Learn the skills and knowledge essential to farm a vineyard or seek employment in wine production.

Wine Sales Certificate: Learn about grape growing and winemaking, gain an understanding of legal regulations and standards within the wine industry, marketing and sales strategies, and knowledge of wine shop management and winery promotions.

Winery Assistant Certificate: Gain the skills and knowledge of the wine industry to work in an entry-level position.

Learn more about these programs at: <https://www.okanagan.bc.ca/food-wine-and-tourism/viticulture-and-wine-studies>



careers in the wine industry

Careers in the wine industry can be divided into 3 main categories: Commercial, Service and Production. A sampling of careers by each category include:*



COMMERCIAL

- Wine Buyer
- Sales Associate
- Brand Manager
- Brand Ambassador
- Events Manager
- Wine Consultant

SERVICE

- Bartender
- Sommelier

PRODUCTION

- Viticulturist
- Vineyard Manager
- Grape Harvester
- Winemaker/Vintner
- Cellar Technician
- Winery Worker
- Lab Technician

*For descriptions of these careers, visit: <https://www.wsetglobal.com/knowledge-centre/career-paths/>

Climbing the Vine – Career Pathway for Winemaker

Winemaker (or Vintner) is a Production career in the wine industry. A common career pathway for Winemakers can include:

Winery Worker / Labourer

Winery Worker/Labourer is an entry-level position that introduces individuals to the winemaking industry and the winery workplace. Workers/Labourers may be involved in material handling, cleaning, packaging, and other supportive activities related to the winemaking process. This position serves as an excellent education on what is involved in winemaking and can help an individual to decide if they would like to pursue winemaking as a career.

Skill Level: Foundational Skill (FS)

Educational Requirements: No prior experience or training in a winery; high school diploma or equivalent may be required/preferred; training is provided on-the-job.

Related NOC Code: **NOC 95106** – Labourers in food and beverage processing





Cellar Worker

Cellar Workers provide support to the winemaking team to produce the wine. They play a critical role in the day-to-day operations of the winery and perform a range of tasks involved in the winemaking process from processing fruit through to fermentation, including finishing and maturing wine.⁵ At its core, a cellar worker is there to assist and support the winemaker in the production of wine.

Skill Level: Semi Skill (SS)

Educational/Experience Requirements: Prior experience as a Winery Worker may be required. (i.e., 6 months)

Related NOC Code: **NOC 94140** – Process control and machine operators, food and beverage processing

Career Progression from a Winery Worker/Cellar Worker to specialized winemaking roles typically requires post-secondary education/training.

Assistant Winemaker/Vintner

Assistant Winemakers, under the supervision of the Winemaker, are responsible for overseeing the daily production operations of the winery, including harvesting, crushing and processing, and wine production. They also prepare work orders and oversee inventory. With their knowledge of viticulture and winemaking, they often participate in wine tastings and evaluations. They may also lead tours of the winery to visiting guests.

Skill Level: High Skill (H)

Educational/Experience Requirements: Post-secondary training in viticulture or winemaking is often required; minimum 4 years experience in a winery (in positions related to the winemaking process) is required if the individual has not completed formal education.

Related NOC Code: **NOC 94140** – Process control and machine operators, food and beverage processing

⁵ <https://www.wsetglobal.com/knowledge-centre/blog/2017/september/19/so-you-want-to-be-a-cellar-hand/>

Winemaker/Vintner

Winemakers are responsible for overseeing the winemaking process in its various stages including harvesting, crushing and pressing, fermentation, clarification, and aging and bottling. They often provide direction and supervision to Assistant Winemakers, who are less experienced in the winemaking process. They play a central and critical role in the wine business, combining the understanding of viticulture, winemaking, research and development and sales and marketing. The scope of the role of the Winemaker varies, depending on the size and type of the winery. For example, some Winemakers are very involved in the growing and harvesting of the grapes, while others focus on the production or chemistry of winemaking.

VIDEO: Day in the life of a BC

Wine Maker: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ku6rIJSB_EA&ab_channel=WinesofBritishColumbia

Skill Level: Supervisory Skill Level (S)

Educational/Experience Requirements:

Post-secondary training in viticulture or winemaking is typically required; minimum two years experience as an Assistant Winemaker often precedes the promotion to Winemaker at a winery.

Related NOC Code: **NOC 94140** – Process control and machine operators, food and beverage processing

⁶ <https://www.extension.iastate.edu/wine/about-enology/#:-:text=Enology%20is%20the%20science%20and,of%20the%20wine%20production%20process>

⁷ <https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/finding-a-job/what-is-enologist>

⁸ <https://www.domaineserene.com/assets/client/File/JobDescriptions/Cellar%20Master%20Job%20Description.pdf>

Oenologist

Oenology is the science and study of wine and winemaking and focuses on desirable characteristics of grapes.⁶ Winemakers study oenology, but trained individuals may choose to focus on oenology, specializing in the scientific process of creating new wines and improving the quality of wines produced at the winery.⁷ In some wineries, a Winemaker and Oenologist are the same role; in large establishments, there may be dedicated Oenologists on staff.

Skill Level: Supervisory Skill Level (S)

Educational/Experience Requirements:

Post-secondary training in winemaking, chemistry or food science is required; minimum 2 years experience as an Assistant Winemaker often precedes the promotion to Oenologist at a winery.

Related NOC Code: **NOC 94140** – Process control and machine operators, food and beverage processing

Cellar Master

The Cellar Master is responsible for overseeing the efficient management of staff and operations within the cellar to ensure quality wine production.⁸

Skill Level: Supervisory Skill Level (S)

Educational/Experience Requirements:

Post-secondary training in viticulture or winemaking may be required; prior experience (i.e., 2 years minimum) as a Cellar Worker is typically required if the individual does not have formal education.

Related NOC Code: **NOC 92012** – Supervisors, food and beverage processing

Master Winemaker (Vintner) / Winemaking Director

Master Winemakers (Winemaking Directors) manage and direct the winemaking process and are typically the most experienced winemaking professionals in the winery. They use this expertise to provide strategic direction for their businesses. They interact with all members of the winery team and are directly involved in all aspects of business operations to ensure quality products and services.

Skill Level: Management Skill Level (M)

Educational/Experience Requirements: Post-secondary training in winemaking, chemistry or food science is required; minimum 5-7 years experience as Vintner often precedes the promotion to Winemaking Director/Master Vintner at a winery. Additional training in management and business operations is a strong asset.

Related NOC Code: **NOC 90010** – Manufacturing managers



winemaker career pathway





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