



Back in 1996, a winemaker who lives on a 100-acre vineyard in Canada's Niagara Wine Region—North America's icewine Mecca—decided to try his hand at crafting ice wine vinegar.

"It started out as a hobby," said Rachel Thompson of Minus 8 products. "My husband made a barrel of vinegar from icewine. I asked him what he was going to do with it, and he said it was just something he made. I said we should be eating it."

They took the vinegar to Montreal, and the chefs bought it. Then they headed to New York City, and had the same success. Now the vinegar appears on the shelves of kitchens all over the world, including Hong Kong and Europe. The making of Minus 8 Vinegar begins when the winter temps dip below minus eight degrees Celsius. The grapes

are harvested, immediately pressed, and the juice made into wine. Artisanal and traditional methods transform the wine into vinegar, which then gets aged in French oak barrels in a solera system. And, like a good wine, Minus 8 Vinegar improves with age when kept upright in a cool place and out of direct sunlight.

The vinegar, which has a natural sweetness with ripe fruit and wine flavors, is revered for having more depth and complexity than its balsamic and Sherry-based cousins. Use it as a finishing step with sauces, foie gras, meats, seafood, vegetables, vinaigrettes, gastriques, and for deglazing. Bartenders use Minus 8 Vinegar in shrubs and as a foil to sweet fruit juices and liqueurs. It even has a following with 'vinegar sippers' who enjoy the digestive properties of sipping vinegar after a meal (vinegar raises whole-body insulin sensitivity*).

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