

VINS DE PROVENCE

the Taste of Style

A beautiful, healthy and early harvest

Harvest-time

A week earlier than usual

The vines are roughly a week ahead of schedule compared to the average year. The harvest started on 16th August in the most developed areas and is expected to continue until the end of September in zones where the grapes have ripened later.

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"The harvest has never started so early", says Alain Baccino, President of the Conseil Interprofessionnel des Vins de Provence. "A few years ago, we used to start the harvest at the end of August. The gradual change in climate, coupled with this year's growing conditions, has led to the early maturing of the grapes. To guarantee the quality of our Rosé wine during this very hot period, we are harvesting during the night."

Promising first juices but quantities are difficult to predict

Early indications from the analysis of this year's first yields suggest that the harvest is very promising. The grapes are fully ripe and have a good acidity. The grapes vary in size across the different areas and parcels of land.

"There is a great balance between fruitiness and freshness and we are expecting a great quality harvest in 2017", continues Alain Baccino. "However, the yield is much more difficult to predict at this stage, even if the first juices extracted lead us to believe that it will be lower."

A look back at a year in the vineyard

A dry and mild winter

Aside from a few short and sharp cold snaps, the winter was generally mild and dry across the Provence vineyards. Rainfall in March and April meant that the water tables were adequately refilled to ensure the continued growth of the vines.

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A turbulent spring

At the end of April, a frost struck the centre of the Var in particular, affecting vines where bud break had occurred early. Then, from the end of May, the weather became significantly warmer and dryer than usual, allowing the vines to develop further.

The flowering – a crucial time

Flowering and fruit-set happened quickly with good bunches of grapes that reflected the different conditions affecting each terroir – heat and rain, sometimes accompanied by hail and frost, thankfully with no great implications on quality.

A gentle slope to summer

An intense mistral this year played its role in keeping the vineyards healthy. At the end of summer, despite the obvious lack of water in certain very dry areas, the grapes displayed a perfectly balanced ripeness and had reached optimum quality at the time of harvesting.

A few feature ideas

Insular harvests – the island of Porquerolles has three vineyards. In one of these vineyards, the grapes are harvested by hand. The twenty or so pickers are lodged on site and are fully immersed in the unique harvest experience.

Nocturnal harvests – From the moment the harvest begins, an understanding of the temperatures is fundamental to the creation of Provence Rosés wines. To prevent the risk of oxidation and to preserve aromas, the harvest takes place when the weather is cooler, either very early in the morning, or at night.

Education at the heart of the harvest – During the harvest, several Provence winemakers dedicate a portion of time sharing their know-how with future generations. They host educational tours that include a few hours of hand-picking, an introduction to wine-making, cellar visits and tastings of grape juices.

A FIRST! Whilst the harvest will of course be one of the key themes, the CIVP will be launching an educational scheme aimed at primary schools in the Var and Bouches-du-Rhône focusing on the environment and the terroir.

Pickers stories – Young, not so young, locals, foreigners, a fleeting yet unique community gathers in the Provence vineyards during the harvest... Traditions intermingle and friendships are made. For example, a team of grape pickers from a little Spanish village harvests the grapes from the same Provence domaine every year, while another vineyard calls on the same members of an Italian family each year: they stay at the domaine for the duration of the harvest. At Puget sur Argens (Var), one domaine acts as a rehabilitation centre and in a few days' time, its winemakers, who are all handicapped adults, will start the harvest.

About Provence Wines

Known in France as the Conseil Interprofessionnel des Vins de Provence, Provence Wines, is an organisation representing more than 600 wine producers and 40 négociants (merchants) from the three main appellations of Provence: Côtes de Provence, Coteaux d'Aix-en-Provence, Coteaux Varois en Provence: Its mission is to promote the wines of the region's primary appellations. The organization's members together produce 96% of Provence's Appellation d'Origine Protégée (AOP) wines. More information can be found at www.vinsdeprovence.com and on social media @WinesofProvence.

