



Deutsches Weininstitut
Platz des Weines 2
55294 Bodenheim • Germany
Frank R. Schulz, Director Communications
Ernst Büscher, Press Speaker
ph +49(0)6135 9323-151
EB@deutscheweine.de
www.deutscheweine.de

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Press Release

HARVEST REPORT 2020 DWI

The 2020 vintage in the German winegrowing regions

The 2020 vintage produced a very high quality nationwide. The German Wine Institute (DWI) presents below how the vintage developed in the 13 German growing regions.

Drought, turbo-charged autumn and supreme quality:

After a warm and sunny spring, the vines showed the first green shoots in April. Then just in time for the 'ice saints' in mid-May, it became frosty again, which resulted in severe frost damage and considerable yield losses particularly in Franken, Sachsen and Saale-Unstrut, as well as parts of Württemberg.

The vines flowered early at the end of May - eight to ten days before the average from the last 30 years. Consequently, the main grape harvest started early at the end of August in many winegrowing regions. The sustained period of good weather with midsummer temperatures meant that many grape varieties ripened at the same time, which put extra time pressure on the harvest. The winemakers often harvest early in the morning or in the middle of the night when it is cooler, in order to maintain the freshness typical of German wines.

The year 2020 will be remembered by most as a 'turbo-charged autumn', which in many cases ended in September.

"The red varieties in particular benefited from the warm weather. The potential for these wines from across all regions, that are already deep red with an intense berry aroma and a velvety texture, will get even better as they further ripen in the cellar" says the German Wine Institute (DWI). On November 30th, the vintage was crowned with a successful harvest of frozen grapes for ice wine in some regions.

Harvest quantities distributed differently

At around 8.6 million hectoliters, the harvest volume is slightly above that of the previous year and two percent below the ten-year average. However, the quantity is very unevenly distributed across the country. While the Franconian winemakers are recording a historically small harvest, which is 38 percent below the long-term average, the winemakers on the Hessische Bergstrasse were able to increase their yield by 31 percent. In the two largest German winegrowing regions, Rheinhessen and Pfalz, average to slightly above-average harvest volumes were reached with a minus of one percent and an increase of six percent, respectively. Baden and Württemberg each estimate a harvest deficit of ten percent.

Overview of vintage 2020 in the 13 individual winegrowing regions
You can find out more details of the vintage development in the 13 individual winegrowing regions here and in the download area:

Ahr

562 hectares

"The 2020 wine year can be described in a nutshell as follows: Small amount - very good quality," says Knut Schubert, district manager of the Rhineland-Nassau Winegrowers' Association. After a low yield in

2019, this year's expected volume of 39,000 hectoliters is again certainly on par with the long-term average - but from the winemaker's point of view it should have been a little more. The vineyards in the steep and terraced areas, typical of the narrow Ahr Valley, suffered particularly from the drought. In the Altenahr area, there was also late frost in May which further impacted the expected yield. Diseases, rot and pests barely occurred throughout the year. All harvesting is done exclusively by hand on the slopes of the Ahr, and only the water-stressed parts of the grape had to be removed. In order to meet the increased demand for white wine, the proportion of Blanc de Noir on the Ahr has been increasing for some time. Similarly, because rosé wines are also becoming increasingly popular, many areas were harvested earlier than usual. "The 2020 vintage on the Ahr will convince connoisseurs with excellent wine quality. Must weights of over 100 degrees Oechsle were not uncommon for the Pinot varieties," says Schubert. The color of the Frühburgunder and Spätburgunder (Pinot Noir) are also deep red.

Baden

15,836 hectares

Harvest was earlier than ever! The winemakers in the most south-westerly winegrowing region began to harvest their grapes in mid-August. This year, the people of Baden can look back on optimal weather conditions with many cool summer nights. This was an advantage especially for the typical grape varieties here, the Pinot varieties. "2020 was a comparatively easy year for the Baden winegrowers without problems of disease in the vineyard," says Baden's viticulture president Rainer Zeller. The winemakers were able to harvest extremely healthy grapes. The wines are characterized by a correspondingly fruity character, and the red wines by their intense color. Only the drought caused disadvantages. Due to the lack of

precipitation, the yields were slightly lower, which was particularly evident in the Pinot varieties. Overall, the estimated harvest volume of 1.1 million hectoliters is 11 percent below the previous year's value and 10 percent below the long-term average. The winegrowers have been observing the problem of water scarcity for several years, and the winegrowing association is also taking the issue seriously. "In the future we will have to think about irrigation," says Zeller. Hence watering systems are already being installed in many new sites.

Franken

6,137 hectares

The good grape quality is the greatest consolation for the Franconians in view of a historically small harvest yield. With an estimated 267,000 hectoliters, which is around 38 percent less than the long-term average, the vintners are recording the smallest harvest in 35 years. This is due to the fact that a double challenge was waiting along the Main River and Steigerwald this year: First, late frosts in May caused immense damage, especially on the loop of the Main River. This was followed by a prolonged period of drought in the entire growing region. As Beate Leopold from Weinbauring Franken reports, the moisture reserves in the soil were used up after the drought years of 2018 and 2019. "The soil is no longer saturated," she says. The winemakers are therefore arming themselves for the coming years. Wind machines should help against frosty nights in the future. And winemakers are installing irrigation systems in many places against the drought. It is well worth the effort and this can be seen by looking at the young Franconian wines: They are rich in fruit with an animating acidity. "2020 is a small vintage, but the Silvaner shows itself to be a climate winner and knows very well how to put the Franconian Triassic terroir in the limelight", says viticulture president Artur Steinmann.

Hessische Bergstraße

463 hectares

The smallest of all German growing areas is one of the lucky regions that was able to bring in a significantly larger harvest than usual this year. With an expected 38,000 hectoliters, the wine must harvest was around 31 percent higher than the ten-year average. The wine region thus recorded the strongest increase in volume of all wine-growing areas. The above-average harvest was brought in to the cellar very quickly. Lots of sunshine and temperatures often over 25 degrees, meant that the grapes ripened quickly and the sugar content catapulted upwards. In order to keep the must as fresh as possible, most of the harvesting teams moved out to the vineyards in the early hours of the morning or at night. The wine year in the Hessische Bergstrasse was also characterized by prolonged drought and hot temperatures. As a result, the overall acidity is slightly lower than usual. The grapes were consistently very healthy, which is also due to the weather: Little rainfall also means a low susceptibility to diseases.

Mittelrhein

468 hectares

The vegetation on the Middle Rhine took off as early as April: an exceptionally warm spring meant that the winemakers observed their vines developing many days earlier than usual. In the lead-up to the Ice Saints, however, this is always a risk and the night of May 5th to 6th in particular, caused insomnia for many of the vintners - the weather forecast announced frost and the buds of the vines had already burst. The majority of the winegrowers were fortunately spared and only Oberwesel experienced critical temperatures. After that, the grapes developed very differently - depending on where and how much it rained. "The development of grapes and vines was very different this year on the Middle Rhine and largely depended on the water supply,"

says Gerd Knebel from the Middle Rhine Winegrowing Association. The summer was mostly relaxed for the winemakers, without having to contend with heat waves or storms like in the previous year. "It was gratifying that the grapes could be harvested this year in a very satisfactory state of health," continued Knebel. An elaborate hand-picking selection was not as necessary this year, as it had been in the previous year. Overall, the harvest is likely to be 31,000 hectoliters, around 11 percent above the long-term average.

Mosel

8,744 hectares

When vintners from the Mosel speak of an "envious autumn", they describe the very different distribution of yields and quality within the growing region. The Mosel River meanders over 230 kilometers through the wine landscape and you will often find different conditions after each bend in the river. So, it can happen that a winemaker brings in the vintage of a lifetime, while their colleague a few villages away goes almost empty. They only had one thing in common this year: It was the third year in a row that was marked by prolonged drought. Therefore, whether a winery was amongst the winners or losers this autumn, mainly depended on the amount of rain they received. "There are clear local differences. However, most winemakers should be satisfied," says Stefanie Vornhecke, Vice President of the Viticulture Association. Especially after the exceptionally weak previous year in 2019, the harvest volume this year is an estimated 813,000 hectoliters, ten percent above the long-term average. One advantage of the dry season this year was that the Mosel winemakers had few problems with diseases in the vineyards. You could thus harvest perfectly healthy grapes with moderate acidity. The musts promise very typical Mosel wines with intense aromas and a fruity character. This particularly suits a wine style typical of the region, which is Kabinett,

and 2020 offered perfect conditions for it. Friends of this light-footed, fruity wine style can look forward to a particularly good vintage.

Nahe

4,239 hectares

The president of the Nahe Winegrowers' Association, Thomas Höfer, described the year 2020 as a "Triple A" vintage: both quantity and quality as well as the growing conditions were exceptionally good. Such a combination is rare. On the Nahe there was almost no late frost and little hail. The grapes had reached excellent must weights relatively early and were perfectly healthy and ripe. The Nahe vintners harvested an estimated 339,000 hectoliters, seven percent more than the long-term average. Most wineries started harvesting around a week earlier than usual, in the second week of September. And here, too, luck played its part: many vintners had brought in their harvest before a wet period began in September that would have endangered the health of the grapes. In the previous months, however, as in all growing regions, there was too little rainfall. Young vines in particular, whose roots are not yet so deeply anchored, were stressed by drought due to the lack of rain. "We need research into varieties of grapevines that can cope better with these conditions," says Höfer.

Pfalz

23,684 hectares

The luck of the Palatinate showed already in spring. The vegetation was able to develop at mild temperatures without frost damage. The first green shoots sprouted nine days earlier than in previous years. The above-average warmth ran like a red thread through the following months. All development stages in the vineyards started earlier and proceeded more quickly than usual. In July, however, a period of heat lasting several days caused sunburn damage to the grapes. The late

summer was also dry, so the winemakers could harvest in peace and in most cases without time pressure. The Pinots were the only exception: Speed was required here so that the must weights and thus the alcohol values did not become too high. The advantage of the drought in this growing area was that there were no diseases. With an estimated 2.3 million hectoliters, the winemakers brought in a harvest that was six percent above the average for the past ten years. Thanks to the healthy condition of the grapes, there was perfect quality to work with in the cellar: The 2020 wines from the Pfalz are already concentrated and well-structured, with ripe fruit and high color density, which is particularly beneficial for the red wines.

Rheingau

3,185 hectares

The Rheingau is also one of the few German winegrowing regions in which the winemakers were able to look forward to an above-average harvest this year. At an estimated 251,000 hectoliters, it was 20 percent above the long-term average. The vintage balance of the winegrowers on the right bank of the Rhine is that of a very special wine year, which already began with an early growing season. The Rheingau vintners were able to observe the second earliest flowering since the beginning of records - it was 16 days before the 30-year average. This brought all the growth development and vineyard work forward, resulting in a very early harvest. The Riesling harvest began in mid-September, which is rather unusual for the Rheingau. At the same time, the wineries were able to work under ideal weather conditions. Autumn passed calmly and relaxed, without time pressure due to rot. "We can be very satisfied with the healthy, aromatic grapes," said President Peter Seyffardt about the quality. The only drawback of the year, as in other growing regions, was the drought stress, especially in younger vines.

Rheinhessen

26,860 hectares

In Germany's largest wine-growing region, too, the lack of precipitation was one of the greatest challenges this year. The rain was distributed very differently across the region, but there was far too little everywhere - for the third year in a row. "The past few years have shown that the subject of irrigation will also gain in importance in the future in viticulture," says Bernd Kern, Managing Director of the Rheinhessen Viticulture Association. However, the weather also had its good sides, namely that the *Drosophila suzukii*, known as the cherry vinegar fly, which has been feared for several years, did not cause any problems in 2020. The estimated harvest of 2.45 million hectoliters was average and almost exactly matched that of the previous year.

"However, this result does not reflect the precipitation-dependent, sometimes significant fluctuations in yield," says Kern. In terms of quality, 2020 joins the solid predecessor vintages. Due to the healthy condition of the grapes, the young wines have a clear aroma and, despite the high temperatures in late summer, sufficient acidity levels. The weather was particularly favorable to the red wines, which could mature perfectly. Thus, they are already presenting themselves today with strong tannins and a deep red color.

Saale-Unstrut

798 hectares

In Saale Unstrut, they know exactly what Cool Climate means - with all its advantages and disadvantages. Compared to the other German winegrowing regions, it lies particularly far north and therefore often has to contend with cooler conditions. This year they showed their unsightly side. A frost in mid-May caused considerable damage. "There has been frost in corners where there has never been frost," says the President of the Viticulture Association, Hans Albrecht Zieger. The

consequences then became apparent in autumn: with an estimated 32,000 hectoliters, the winemakers harvested around 30 percent less than the average for the past ten years. This would mean that 2020 would undercut the already meagre 2019 vintage by 14 percent. But despite the disappointing quantity, the young wines from Saale-Unstrut promise a high quality. Thanks to the special climate at 51 degrees of latitude, the character of the Saale-Unstrut wines is incomparably racy, lively and straightforward.

Sachsen

493 hectares

In the middle of April, many places in Saxony looked very mysterious: candles and controlled small fires were burning in some vineyards during the night. The winemakers lit them to protect their vines from the frosty nights. Because the buds had already burst, they were defenseless against the cold temperatures. Other vintners tried to use small windmills in the vineyards to mix the ice-cold air on the ground with warmer layers above. Unfortunately, such measures only saved a small portion of grapes, and there was severe frost damage in many other parts of the region. In summer, local hailstorms hit the vineyards, which were also subjected to the drought that characterized 2020. It really wasn't an easy year for Sachsen's winemakers. The consequences finally became apparent in autumn: According to the last estimate, with a wine must harvest of only 21,000 hectoliters, the harvest was 19 percent below the previous year's amount and five percent below the long-term average. One consolation for most winemakers was the quality of the grapes: the young wines are already extremely balanced and harmonious. This makes the 2020 wines from Sachsen an even bigger rarity than it already is.

Württemberg

11,394 hectares

The Württemberg winegrowers were partially hit by late frosts in May this year. In some vineyards, all the shoots were frozen, thus damaging the vineyards from the start of the growing year. This was then reflected in the amount of harvest from the region, estimated at 894,000 hectoliters and thus around two percent below the already small harvest from 2019. Compared to the long-term average, this would correspond to a minus of around ten percent. On the positive side, the warm, dry weather was favorable to the red grape varieties prominent in the region. More than 70 percent of the wines grown in Württemberg are red and mature perfectly under dry and sunny conditions. "We can look forward to red wines with a long storage capacity," says Hermann Morast, managing director of the Württemberg Winegrowing Association. The white wines also reflect the great quality of the grapes, which were harvested in optimal health with high sugar values. The young wines are correspondingly highly aromatic and intensely fruity, which compensates for many worries and challenges. "We will remember 2020 as a year with very good quality," says Morast.