

2019 Harvest Report by Winegrowing Regions

Germany's 2019 vintage will be remembered for its very high quality. "The young 2019 white wines are already showing intense aromas and good balance, with an attractive and refreshing acidity. The reds are currently resting in the cellars, but all indications suggest rich colors, a velvety mouthfeel and tremendous potential ahead," the Deutsche Weininstitut (DWI) is reporting.

As in the year prior, 2019 was marked by high temperatures and a widespread lack of rain that ranged into drought conditions in some winegrowing regions. Producers in almost all parts of Germany reported issues with sunburned grapes in July, leading to a loss of fruit. Otherwise there were few problems with vine disease or pests, allowing winegrowers to bring in very healthy and ripe grapes almost everywhere. Many producers were even able to seize the chance to harvest Beerenauslese and Trockenbeerenauslese fruits.

Some winegrowers are still hoping to produce a successful Eiswein harvest, with 42 hectares ready and awaiting the right weather conditions in Rheinland-Pfalz alone. Yet the risk associated with leaving berries for this nobly sweet specialty are constantly increasing, as climate change continues to reduce the chances that vineyards will reach the necessary temperatures of at least minus seven degrees Celsius.

2019 harvest volumes are estimated at 8.4 million hectoliters, four percent below the ten year average, although that figure varies from region to region. The following reports detail how the 2019 vintage progressed within each of Germany's 13 winegrowing regions.

Ahr: (563 ha)

2019 in the Ahr Valley, as in much of Germany, will be remembered as a vintage of extreme events. Above all else, producers were forced to account for sunburned grapes following the heat wave at the end of July. Canopy thinning, which normally grants the fruit better access to sunshine and air flow, backfired in 2019. The damaged berries dried on the vine and had to be manually removed prior to red wine production. This doubled the already intensive manual labor in a region known for steep hillside vineyards. "We've never observed the phenomenon in these dimensions before," noted Hubert Pauly, president of the winegrowers' association. Low water levels from the preceding dry winter went unreplenished, leading grapes in some areas to show stress. Individual vineyards suffered hail damage during the summer as well. The harvest yields of 33,000 hl were quite small, roughly 15% below the ten-year average. Yet thanks to a rapid fruit set and ripening following flowering, the end of August revealed healthy grapes with optimal acidity levels. The Spätburgunder showed average must weights of about 90 degrees Öchsle. The must quality is highly promising, lending itself to balanced wines with charming, dynamic fruit, grace and elegance

Baden: (15,828 ha)

While the quality of the 2019 vintage certainly left Baden's winegrowers smiling, quantities were another story. This reflected drought conditions and sunburned grapes, as well as several summer storms and hail strikes that caused significant crop loss in the Markgräflerland in particular. The harvest season began in mid-September and was completed by October 15. The trend, in Baden as elsewhere, was toward an earlier harvest to prevent overly high alcohol levels in the subsequent wines. The grapes themselves endured the

year quite well, although through August the vegetation period in Baden was among the ten warmest on record since 1901. Fortunately, the hottest part of summer didn't run on as long as in 2018. After uneven precipitation in the first half of the year, copious rainfall in early August eased water worries in the vineyards. The young wines are already showing good fruit alongside the classic markers of their varieties. Alcohol levels are in some cases significantly below those of 2018, while acidity values are moderate. This applies in particular to the white varieties of the Pinot family, which have proven pleasantly fresh and juicy. The current estimate calls for 1.2 million hectoliters, which despite some regional losses almost exactly matches the ten-year average.

Franken: (6,130 ha)

A certain nervousness could be felt as producers in Franken waited to see how the extremely dry weather conditions from a year prior would impact the vines this year. From the start, canopy management programs in the vineyards were engineered to conserve any existing water in the soils. After an early budbreak, late frosts in mid-May, sunburn, hail and drought stress caused major crop losses, despite irrigation efforts in summer. 345,000 hectoliters were ultimately harvested, 22 percent below the longstanding historical average and 37 percent below the year prior. As such, Franconian winegrowers suffered the greatest losses on whole for Germany's 2019 vintage. A relatively rapid harvest brought in very healthy and well ripened grapes and was largely completed by October 1, promising outstanding quality. The wines are showing good body with tremendous character. Franken's most traditional variety, Silvaner, has proven notably adept at handling the climatic changes and is expected to produce a lovely vintage of 2019 wines. The outlook is less rosy for sunburn-sensitive varieties like Bacchus, which suffered roughly 30 percent losses compared with the expected average.

Hessische Bergstraße: (467 ha)

Spring arrived early on the Hessische Bergstraße, with vines undergoing budbreak eight to ten days ahead of the expected norm. While cool and rainy weather conditions in May slightly delayed further vine development, they also delivered the urgently needed precipitation to replenish the water supplies. After a sunny summer that set new temperature records, a rainy period in autumn pushed back the harvest date, although the harvest itself proceeded rapidly. The cool nights helped the late-ripening Riesling grapes develop more pronounced aromatics, with harvest running into October. Yields across the entire region totaled 34,000 hl, representing a 14 percent increase compared with average yields from the past decade. However, individual varieties and producers also reported larger losses of up to 30 percent. Must weights for Müller-Thurgau lay around 80 degrees Öchsle, while the late-harvested varieties often tipped into the Spätlese realm. Light, aromatic and elegant are the buzzwords for the 2019 vintage of Bergstraße wines, positioning them as a likely favorite for many fans.

Mittelrhein: (470 ha)

In the Mittelrhein, the year's dryness could be clearly read in the low levels of the Rhine River itself. Aside from the drought, the weather was otherwise largely and fortuitously unproblematic. The winter was perhaps

somewhat overly warm, but a cool May slowed down the vegetation cycle for a period, after which growth sped up notably. June was the warmest month of the summer but brought little precipitation. The situation worsened in July, which offered a few cooler days but also scorching record temperatures. Significant rainfall would wait until August. Yet because the water tends to drain away quickly from the region's steep slopes, the young vines on those sites suffered in particular from the dryness. The grapes were harvested somewhat later than a year earlier. At 90 degrees Öchsle, they had reached optimal ripeness and health, with a lively fruit acidity. The 33,000 harvested hl put the Mittelrhein at 13 percent below the year prior, but still 17 percent above the ten-year average. Due to high must weights and good acidity values, the wines are proving full bodied with a refreshing acidity.

Mosel: (8,798 ha)

With yields totaling 695,000 hl, winegrowers on the Mosel are speaking of a small harvest and an "autumn of envy." This reflects a hard truth: while harvest yields as a whole fell only eight percent below the ten-year average, they varied strongly within the region itself. This can be traced back in particular to the weather conditions, which posed a series of challenges for winemakers: frost in spring, extreme dryness and scorching heat with a threat of sunburn and hail in summer and then rain in autumn. "A challenging vintage with much capricious weather," the Mosel Winegrowers' Association wrote in review. On the plus side, those grapes that did make it to the cellars were of very good quality. The hot summer ensured tremendous ripeness with must weights typically hitting 90 degrees Öchsle and ideal acidity values. By mid-October the harvest was largely complete. With rains arriving, many producers were forced to accelerate their work in the Riesling parcels, although technical innovations such as steep-site harvesters helped in this effort. Many Riesling vineyards also achieved a desired noble rot. With must weights of over 230 degrees Öchsle, connoisseurs can count on a fine selection of nobly sweet specialties. Winemakers are reporting that the young 2019 Mosel wines are showing tremendous potential, with a highly aromatic interplay between fruit and acidity.

Nahe: (4,237 ha)

As in all other winegrowing regions, drought and above-average temperatures were on the minds of winegrowers on the Nahe this year. Hail damage in August caused only scattered losses. The spring rains, particularly during the cool May, were highly welcome. A few nights of frost were observed in mid-May, fortunately causing no widespread damage. As elsewhere, the summer brought record temperatures. Bad Kreuznach, for example, measured the highest daily mean temperatures in its history, at over 29 degrees Celsius. Less welcome: the capricious and rainy weather at harvest time, which accelerated the harvest in October to help avoid the risk of rot. Even so, there was no massive time pressure. The grapes ripened slowly in the cool September weather, with must weights developing well without climbing overly high. The Riesling grapes were nearly all of Prädikat wine classification quality. Harvest volumes totaled 305,000 hl, only three percent below the ten-year average. Consumers can look forward to a thrilling, lively vintage of Nahe wines, somewhat lighter and fresher than the 2018s.

Pfalz: (23,554 ha)

Budbreak (April 18) and flowering (June 12) each corresponded perfectly with the longstanding averages, although July and August then brought a long, dry stretch to the vines in the Pfalz. Precipitation levels measured 50-60% below the expected average, resulting in smaller-than-usual berries that were more susceptible to sunburn in the extreme July temperatures reaching up to 38 degrees Celsius. Apart from a tornado that destroyed entire rows of vines in the northern Pfalz, the region was fortunately spared from other major storms. Harvest yields of 2.15 million hl were slightly below the ten-year average, although some producers reported much larger deviations. Harvest was finished by the end of September, just ahead of torrential rains. Winemakers were quite pleased with the quality of the harvested grapes. The first young wines have shown themselves to be fruity and nimble, with characteristic varietal aromas firmly in place. The white Pinot family grapes in particular fared well in this vintage. The red wines also seem set to win hearts and minds with ripe tannins and good coloration, which can be attributed in no small part to the smaller berries.

Rheingau: (3,211 ha)

Following the heat waves and dry spells of the previous year, as well as a winter with very little precipitation, the vines in the Rheingau started the calendar year with a considerable water deficit and a dry early spring to boot. The unusually cool May temperatures stalled development, while the exceptionally high temperatures in July sped up the pace once again. A record 41.3 degrees Celsius were measured in Hochheim am Main on July 25, and many vineyards lost fruit to sunburn. The affected berries were allowed to dry completely on the vine, causing no perceptible negative effects to the quality of the final harvested fruit. Due to the accelerated development, the Riesling harvest was well underway by September 23, considerably earlier than normal. It was a rapid harvest in favorable weather conditions as the grapes had already achieved optimal aromatics and phenolic ripeness. The 205,000 hl in yield volume lay 2% below the 10-year average mark, although individual producers reported even higher drops, especially for Riesling. In the Rheingau cellars, the maturing wines promise aromatic, balanced bottles with good acidity right up through the Beerenauslese and Trockenbeerenauslese fruit hand-selected at the end of harvest.

Rheinhessen: (26,758 ha)

In Germany's largest winegrowing region, 2019 formed yet another link in a chain of very warm vintages. Budbreak began one week earlier than average. While a very cool May set back development, the exceptionally warm July accelerated growth, and Rheinhessen like many other regions lost a considerable amount of fruit to sunburn. Thankfully, no further damage was reported from pests or disease. Precipitation levels varied, measuring higher in the Wonnegau than in the Alzey hills for example. Grape development reflected the local conditions. While the majority of the harvest took place over the course of 3 weeks, some vineyards reported bringing in grapes through early October. The ideal late summer weather ultimately provided healthy and ripe grapes, laying the foundation for good wine quality. With 2.4 million hl, yields shrunk by 3% from the ten-year average. 2019 Rheinhessen wines promise balance

and freshness with beautiful aromatics and acidity levels, thanks in part to the cool September nights. A vintage – confirmed by at least one enthusiastic winemaker – that is certain to be a source of joy.

Saale-Unstrut: (786 ha)

Saale-Unstrut is Germany's northernmost winegrowing region, with vines thriving on the 51st degree of latitude. The vintage was strongly affected by a second straight year of minimal precipitation. After the hottest June on record and little rain since January, August brought further significant signs of drought stress, especially on young vine stands and steep vineyards. Even when the rain finally did arrive in early September, the timing was not ideal. As a result, yields were low, especially for Silvaner and Müller-Thurgau, with only half of the expected volumes actually brought in. The overall results totaled 35,000 hectoliters, representing a harvest drop of 19 percent compared with the average observed between 2009 and 2018. The producers on the Saale and Unstrut were at least consoled with very good quality grapes. Must weights touched over 100 degrees Öchsle in some cases. Balanced yet intensely aromatic wines are expected, with moderate alcohol levels and a good acid structure. To counteract the drought, some producers are considering installing irrigation systems for their vineyards.

Sachsen: (501 ha)

The region's significant continental influence provided a slight advantage this year. A bit more precipitation fell this year than last, thankfully avoiding the drought conditions of 2018. Hail damage was minimal, focused primarily around Meissen and its environs. Harvest for the Federweißer launched by mid-August. "Lovely, aromatic fruit," one winemaker reported, with a nod to the region's predominantly dry autumn weather. The first rains arrived in the last week of September, requiring a very selective Riesling harvest even as it laid the foundation for the nobly sweet wines. Must weights for Riesling, Traminer and the Pinot family varieties measured well over 80 degrees Öchsle. The wines express a delightfully light and delicate character, matching consumer trends. According to estimates by the winegrowers' association, some of the wines will even top the strong benchmark set by 2018. With 27,000 hl, estimates predict a 6% increase over the year prior as well as an increase of 30% compared to the ten-year average.

Württemberg: (11,461 ha)

Württemberg's producers struggled during this vintage with capricious weather conditions, seeing everything from late frost and hail damage in spring to extreme heat in summer. With temperatures up to 40 degrees Celsius, some Trollinger and Riesling fruit was lost to sunburn. Otherwise, the grapes developed rapidly throughout the summer months. By early August, many of the vineyards were showing ripe fruit. Harvest kicked off in mid-September, and despite the wet conditions, ran through October 19. The result: ripe, aromatic grapes of good color and quite admirable must weights, some of which were close to those of 2018, but with even better acidity values.

"Consumers can look forward to fantastic quality from the 2019 vintage," promised the president of the Württemberg winegrowers' association. The results are particularly good for red varieties like Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot. Crunchy in the acidity, light and not too strong in the alcohol – these are the qualities one can expect from the Württemberger wines 2019. Moreover, they are likely to include some noble sweet specialties including ice wine. A "Beerenauslese" in Remstal even reached Öchsle levels of 168 degrees. The

2019 harvest yields were however one of the smallest in the last ten years. Total yields of 950,000 hl fell roughly 7% below the long-established average and 18% below 2018.