



CALIFORNIA WINE 2019 HARVEST REPORT

COOL TEMPERATURES AND LONG GROWING SEASON
RESULT IN A HIGH-QUALITY CROP

SAN FRANCISCO – The 2019 winegrape harvest started one to two weeks later than usual in many California wine regions. February brought heavy rain to Temecula Valley and Sonoma County—particularly the Russian River Valley area—but because the vines were in their winter dormancy, it did not affect the 2019 crop. Spring continued to be wet with some rain during flowering, followed by cool temperatures that allowed the grapes to mature gradually.

Winegrapes across California ripened at lower sugars, thanks to the extended, cool growing season, and vintners

are praising the full flavors, fresh acidity and superb balance of the 2019 fruit.

Wildfires in October did not impact this year's harvest as the vast majority of the winegrapes were already brought in, and while there were a few individual losses, the rest of the state's 3,900 wineries are operating as usual.

The USDA's August Crop Report estimated the 2019 yield at 4.2 million tons, 2% less than the state crush total for 2018 and a bit higher than the historical average of 3.9 million tons. However, vintners in many California appellations are predicting light-to-normal size yields this year.

SUSTAINABLE PRACTICES REAP BENEFITS AT HARVEST – AND BEYOND

California produces about 80% of the nation's wine, and if it were a country, it would be the world's fourth-largest wine producer. Eighty-five percent of California wine is made in a Certified Sustainable California Winery and 30% of the state's 637,000 vineyard acres are certified sustainable by the California Sustainable Winegrowing Alliance. Along with preserving the land for future generations, many of the sustainable practices used by the state's vintners help make the harvest and growing season run more smoothly and increase wine quality.

For the last four years, Spottswode Winery in St. Helena, Napa Valley has used an optical fruit sorter to increase efficiency and quality at harvest time, while cutting back on water usage.

"The sorter allows us to bring in more fruit on any given day so we can minimize the negative effects of any untimely hot spells," said **Beth Novak Milliken**, president and CEO at Spottswode. "On our sorting line, the machine cleans far more easily than our old equipment which has allowed us to save a significant amount of water each day that we crush."

The winery also measures sap flow in order to determine the precise water needs of the vines and prevent overwatering.



Fog cools a Sonoma County vineyard, extending the growing season for more concentrated fruit flavors and color in the grapes. Robert Holmes photo.

Turley Wine Cellars conserves water in its Amador County, Paso Robles and Napa Valley vineyards by dry farming and limiting yields. The winery also employs sustainable practices such as compost, cover crops, biological sprays, and encouraging natural predators to deal with vineyard pests.

"When you're working with grapes with limited yields, they have better pH and acids at harvest, so you have a more stable end product," said **Tegan Passalacqua**, Turley's director of winemaking. "There's also less need for irrigation with smaller yields. If you're overwatering and getting bunch rot or mildew in the clusters, you're going to be dealing with less perfectly clean fruit at harvest time."

Jackson Family Wines, which farms vineyards across California, uses wind machines for frost protection and reuses winery process water for irrigation. Maintaining soil health helps the winery reduce inputs while enhancing quality.

"We're focused on techniques such as spreading compost, enhancing biodiversity, planting cover crops, and evaluating how vibrant, healthy soils can help us address persistent issues, such as vine disease, invasive weed



Nesting boxes attract owls that are natural predators of vineyard pests. Robert Holmes photo.

control or frequent fertilizer applications,” said **Katie Jackson**, SVP corporate social responsibility for Jackson Family Wines, headquartered in Santa Rosa. “Healthier vines require fewer inputs, have greater longevity and result in higher quality grapes that produce higher quality wines.”

For **Aaron P. Lange**, head of vineyard operations at LangeTwins Family Winery and Vineyards in Lodi, there is no single practice in the vineyard or winery that leads to better fruit at harvest.

“Being a sustainable grower is a constant pursuit of growing the highest quality winegrapes while trying to reduce the negative impacts of farming and increase the positive ones,” he said. “It’s a confluence of factors involving soil management, appropriate rootstock selection, some fancy monitoring tools, and good old-fashioned experienced eyes in the vineyard. I believe that skilled farmers, vintners and land stewards result in the best chances for an exceptional vintage.”

John Terlato of Terlato Vineyards, whose family owns Sanford Winery in the Sta. Rita Hills appellation of Santa Barbara County, also believes that it takes a culmination of sustainable practices throughout the season to produce better fruit at harvest time.

“Many small actions and steps add up to a critical mass that makes a genuine difference,” Terlato said. At Sanford those actions include water management and conservation, composting to improve soil health, integrated pest management, cover crops to prevent soil erosion, and installing raptor perches and owl boxes for rodent control.

The winery also dry farms its La Rinconada and Sanford & Benedict ranches, which significantly reduces water usage and helps produce higher-quality fruit. “Dry farming had a very positive impact this year on our winegrowing and the harvest and crush,” Terlato said. “We saw the vine canopies reacting well, even through heat spikes, and it gave us great fruit concentration.”



Paso Robles Wine Country Alliance photo.



REGIONAL HARVEST REPORTS

EL DORADO COUNTY

Total winegrape acreage: 2,176

Most-planted grape varieties:
Zinfandel, Cabernet Sauvignon, Syrah

The winter of 2018-19 was colder than in the previous few years, with more snow than usual. Cool temperatures continued into spring, delaying bud break by several days, and some bad weather during flowering led to loose clusters in several varieties. Summer was also cooler than normal, with the exception of a couple of short heat waves. Fall weather was unpredictable, with relatively mild temperatures that required diligence in the vineyards to prevent powdery mildew and botrytis. The harvest began a week to 10 days later than normal, and yields are expected to be 10%-20% below average. Fruit

quality is very high—especially for Cabernet Sauvignon—showing ripe flavors at lower sugar levels. Despite being challenged by poor weather at flowering, Zinfandel and Syrah are also looking good.

LAKE COUNTY

Total winegrape acreage: 9,681

Most-planted grape varieties:
Cabernet Sauvignon, Sauvignon Blanc

Many of the region's winegrowers experienced an earlier-than-normal harvest, which was unexpected given Lake County's wet spring and relatively cool early season temperatures. However, by midseason, more normal temperatures prevailed, making for consistent and in some cases early ripening. The region saw moderately warm, clear days throughout the summer. Harvest began in late August with Sauvignon Blanc, the region's signature variety, and winemakers praised the fruit's superb flavors, and sugar and pH levels ideal for producing crisp, aromatic wines. Growers are optimistic about the grape quality overall, with some suggesting that 2019 may be their best vintage yet.

LIVERMORE VALLEY

Total winegrape acreage: 2,914

Most-planted grape varieties:
Cabernet Sauvignon, Chardonnay and Merlot

The 2019 growing season was mild overall with few heat waves. March rains delayed bud break and the region experienced beautiful weather during flowering, leading to great fruit set. The mild weather provided winegrowers with a nice, long growing season and longer hang time, allowing the fruit to develop more concentrated flavors. Rain in late September took vintners by surprise, but it did not adversely affect the crop. Yields were much lighter than in 2018, but similar to the more typical yields of 2016 and 2017. Chardonnay experienced significant mildew pressure, but the region's major varieties fared well overall. Vintners are especially excited about the quality of the whites, which show bold flavors, fresh acidity and pretty aromatics. Reds are also looking good.

LODI

Total winegrape acreage: 110,000

Most-planted grape varieties:
Cabernet Sauvignon, Zinfandel and Chardonnay

A delayed bud break got the season off to a later start than in the past few years. Wet weather in May affected flowering in some varieties and led to a lighter crop. Ideal weather



*Map of
California
Winegrowing
Regions*



conditions persisted through most of the harvest, which began in mid-August, allowing the fruit to gradually accumulate sugar and enabling winegrowers to manage picking schedules for optimal quality. Yields were light to average. The region's major varieties fared well, and quality looks solid across the board. Longer hang times and more-gradual sugar accumulation resulted in good balance and fresh flavors in the fruit, and vintners are looking forward to a high-quality vintage for 2019.

MADERA COUNTY

Total winegrape acreage: 31,005

Most-planted grape varieties: French Colombard, Grenache and Chardonnay

A cool spring and an unusually cool summer led to late flowering in Madera County vineyards. Despite late summer heat that accelerated ripening, harvest began about two weeks later than normal. Winegrowers report good quality across all varieties, with pronounced flavors in the fruit.

MENDOCINO COUNTY

Total winegrape acreage: 17,512

Most-planted grape varieties: Chardonnay, Cabernet Sauvignon and Pinot Noir

Following a wet spring, bud break occurred later than normal. Bloom was delayed, with some rain and

high humidity occurring during that period. Optimal temperatures for powdery mildew led to high pressure, but growers kept on top of the situation. The weather remained fairly moderate through most of the season, canopies were healthy, and the fruit ripened at a fairly predictable rate. Harvest timing was average, and yields came in light to normal, with the exception of Zinfandel, which had a normal-to-large crop. Vintners reported good fruit quality for the vintage.

MONTEREY COUNTY

Total winegrape acreage: 46,117

Most-planted grape varieties: Chardonnay, Pinot Noir and Cabernet Sauvignon

Most of the growing season was long and cool, with temperatures heating up a bit around early October. Although the weather was a bit cooler than usual earlier in the season, there were no unusual temperature swings during bud break or flowering. Due to the humidity during harvest, timing was much tighter than in prior years, as growers raced to pick grapes before acidity levels dropped. After 2018's record-setting crop size, 2019 swung back to an average yield, similar to that of 2017. Winemakers are excited about the quality of the fruit, which consistently looks as good if not better than the exceptional 2018 vintage. This is true for varieties across the board, including Chardonnay and Pinot Noir. The fruit is showing high acidity and intense flavors.

NAPA VALLEY

Total winegrape acreage: 45,433

Most-planted grape varieties: Cabernet Sauvignon, Chardonnay and Merlot

Ample winter rains provided welcome soil saturation for the growing season and canopy development. Spring was a bit cooler and rainier than in the last couple of years, resulting in bud break and flowering being delayed a few weeks compared to 2018. May rains were great for Cabernet Sauvignon, and white wine varieties that flowered during that time saw minimal impact. Warm summer weather helped the growing season catch up from its delayed start, yet many vintners started their harvests a week or two behind the 10-year average. Warm days and cooler nights in late August and early September provided nearly ideal conditions for ripening, with the exception of a mid-August heat



Cabernet Sauvignon is now the leading winegrape planted in California. Erin Malone photo.



SAN DIEGO COUNTY

Total winegrape acreage: 641

**Most-planted grape varieties:
Cabernet Sauvignon and Syrah**

Winter temperatures were cooler than normal, but not harsh, which helped the vines to become dormant. Higher-than-normal rainfall helped flush out salts built up from irrigation water, but also required winegrowers to stay on top of powdery mildew issues. Harvest began two weeks later than typical, and yields were up about 30% over 2018. Vintners praised fruit quality across all varieties and harvested at their Brix goals without high pH.

SANTA BARBARA COUNTY

Total winegrape acreage: 15,563

**Most-planted grape varieties:
Chardonnay, Syrah and Sauvignon Blanc**

A cloudy, cool spring resulted in late bud break and flowering in the region. The delayed flowering took place after the usual springtime winds, which helped ensure a good set. Cool temperatures continued and vintners waited—and waited—for the grapes to ripen, until an August heat spike helped to bring timing back in line. Although there no longer appears to be a “typical” harvest time, picking began three weeks later than in 2017 and 2018, but back to the timing of previous years. Cluster weights are down, and yields are slightly smaller than in 2018. Vintners are reporting high quality overall, with flavorful fruit that could produce an epic 2019 vintage.

spike that lasted just a couple of days before significant cooling occurred. Winemakers are reporting average yields, good acidity and moderate Brix levels—all indicators of a well-balanced 2019 vintage. Cluster sizes and berry weights appear to be up, due in part to the uncharacteristically wet May, and vintners are reporting yields that are the same or slightly lower than those of 2018.

PASO ROBLES

Total winegrape acreage: 40,000+

**Most-planted grape varieties:
Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and Syrah**

The growing season began with the soil profile filled with water from solid winter and late spring rains. As in

many California regions, bud break started two weeks later than usual. Grapes ripened slowly and evenly due to cooler summer temperatures, and there were no prolonged heat spells. Harvest began two to three weeks later than in the last several years. Winegrowers are predicting an average or slightly larger crop compared to 2018 (with the exception of Grenache, which is showing a smaller yield) because of the generous spring rains. Overall, Bordeaux varieties have fresh acidity with great flavor potential. Syrah is looking excellent, with phenolic content at an all-time high. Many white varieties, including Grenache Blanc, Roussanne and Viognier, are showing excellent character. Cabernet Sauvignon and Bordeaux varieties have great acid numbers and are looking good.



SANTA CRUZ MOUNTAINS

Total winegrape acreage: 1,600

Most-planted grape varieties: Pinot Noir, Cabernet Sauvignon and Chardonnay

Vintage markers were late across the region, from bud break to bloom to veraison to harvest. Lots of cold rain delayed bud break by about a month, and nearly four inches of rain at the end of May affected set on coastal Chardonnay and Pinot Noir, and on lower-elevation Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot. Harvest kicked off one to two weeks later than normal for Chardonnay and Pinot Noir, while timing was on schedule for later-ripening varieties including Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Cabernet Franc and Petite Verdot. Yo-yo weather

during harvest with alternating hot and cold weather kept vintners on their toes. Yields are average to slightly below normal for most varieties, with Pinot Noir down about 20%. Quality is high for both Cabernet Sauvignon and Cabernet Franc. Quality looks very good for coastal Chardonnay, Merlot and Pinot Noir. Flavors are ahead of sugars this year, acidity is moderate, and color and tannins look excellent.

SONOMA COUNTY

Total winegrape acreage: 59,193

Most-planted grape varieties: Chardonnay, Pinot Noir and Cabernet Sauvignon

Following a record rainfall this past winter and a cool spring, the summer

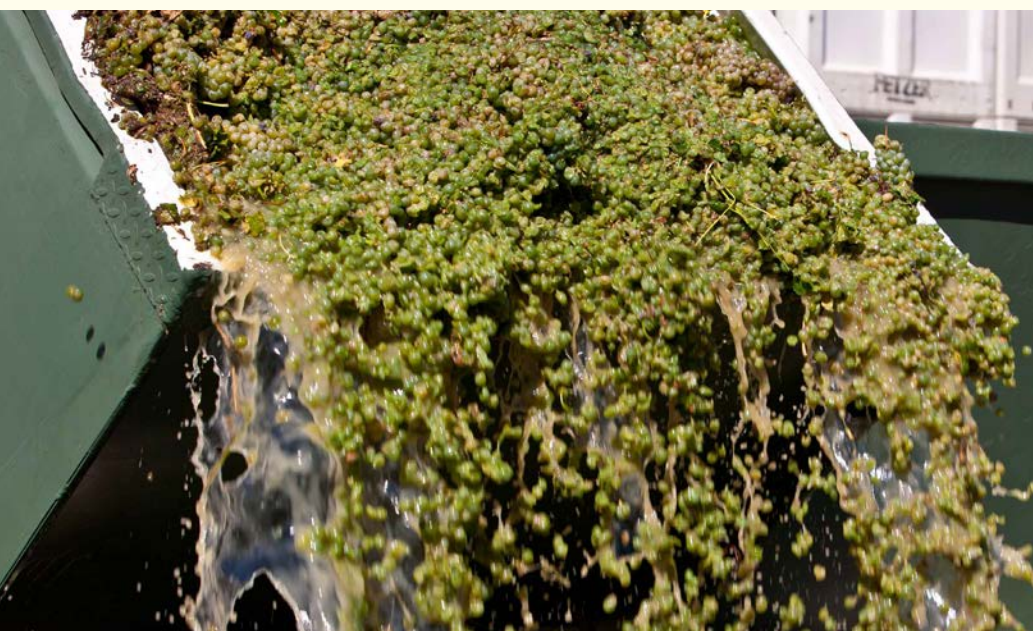
growing season was near perfect for Sonoma County winegrapes. Cooler-than-normal spring temperatures slowed down some of the fruit growth and held back the degree-day accumulation slightly, pushing back harvest in many areas compared to recent seasons. Harvest began in mid-August, despite predictions that it would begin a week to 10 days after last year's starting date. Reports from winegrowers throughout the county indicate that fruit quality ranges from "good" to "outstanding."

TEMECULA VALLEY

Total winegrape acreage: 1,178

Most-planted grape varieties: Sangiovese, Cabernet Sauvignon and Syrah

Heavy rains occurred in winter, including flooding in mid-February that closed a few wineries in the region. A relatively cool spring followed, along with an early and mild summer. Mildew pressure accompanied the season's moisture, but most vineyards fared well due to excellent vineyard management. The harvest began a few weeks later than in 2018, and crop sizes are up—in some cases, as much as 20%-40%. Quality looks good across all varieties—particularly Cabernet Sauvignon and other Bordeaux varieties—with fruit ripening evenly and showing great color and flavor early.



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