

2013 VINTAGE REPORT

White Wine Quality: Good-Excellent

Red Wine Quality: Good-Excellent
Flavourful, ripe tannins, balanced acidity

Icewine: Excellent

The outstanding summer weather in 2013 led to the earliest start to the BC grape harvest on record, and early reports suggested another bumper crop.



EXCELLENT CONDITIONS RESULT IN QUALITY AND QUANTITY

Following several cool growing years, 2013 saw the trend break with weather on par with 2006 and 2009. Better conditions meant a bumper crop of 31,838 short tons of wine grapes were harvested in 2013, the biggest on record.

DJ Kearney's review of the 2013 vintage indicates that April really paved the way with good conditions for budbreak in the Okanagan Valley. While May seemed as though it might be cool, temperatures rebounded, with lower than average rainfall for the month (at 26 mm, which is 10 mm lower than the average), reported Kearney. June may have been rainy but earlier conditions set the stage for blooms as early as June 10, though most flowering took place in July.

"Growth took off then with rocket boosters, creating a flurry of shoot positioning, tucking, plucking, suckering and general uninterrupted canopy management for the next many weeks," Kearney reported. "All this was done in considerable heat too, allowing for an even budbreak, flowering and fertilization."

Ripening was rapid, about 10 days ahead of schedule. In the Okanagan, the first grapes for table wine (Sauvignon Blanc) were picked by Jackson-Triggs Okanagan Estate at their Bear Cub vineyard in Osoyoos on August 27, 11 days ahead of the cooler 2012 vintage.

"This is my 10th vintage here and it's great to see a return to more normal Okanagan-like weather, similar to 2008 and 2009, with a warm and consistent growing season," reported Jackson-Triggs white winemaker Derek Kontkanen.

September saw temperatures start to dip before they took a more substantial plunge in October. The end of the season was soggy and with it came wasps, hail, sour rot and other challenges.

From budbreak to harvest, everything was right on schedule on Vancouver Island. While September brought heavy rains (35 mm on September 14), it had dried out by October. According to Kearney's vintage review, yields were typically lower on Vancouver Island but quality was high. Glenterra Vineyards noted they were particularly excited about Pinot Blanc and Gewürztraminer.

Back on the mainland, summer's humidity created some extreme challenges for whites in the Fraser Valley, according to Vista D'oro, who began harvest of their Maréchal Foch October 12 at 22° Brix.

The Similkameen saw harvest get underway early with excellent conditions. George Hanson at Seven Stones Winery started his harvest on October 2, stating it was one of the best vintages. "I'm really happy with the quality and phenolic development of the grapes and we had really good quantity as well," he said.

Outside the Designated Viticultural Areas the stories were similar, with Harper's Trail Estate Winery in Kamloops reporting a jump in tonnage in 2013, and Lillooet's Fort Berens Estate Winery indicating reds were two weeks ahead of schedule with excellent flavour development.

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ICEWINE HARVEST AHEAD OF SCHEDULE

While temperatures started to cool off in October, they plunged even quicker in November, which marked the start of one of the earliest Icewine harvests on record.

Wineries began picking on November 20 with temperatures in the Okanagan Valley hovering consistently between -9°C (15.8°F) and -12°C (10.4°F).

Picking continued into the early morning hours of November 21. 25 wineries produced Icewine in 2013, with 960 tons harvested, yielding an estimated 288,000 litres of this "liquid gold".

High yields weren't the only thing getting wineries excited, Little Straw Vineyards Estate Winery was among the many wineries heralding the quality of the Icewine grapes in 2013. Troy Osborne with Constellation Brands Canada said the Icewine harvest was the icing on the cake for what had been a stellar year: "A hot dry summer combined with this earlier than normal Arctic outflow has given us Icewine grapes in outstanding condition."

