



# CALIFORNIA VINTNERS REPORT HIGH QUALITY FOR 2022 HARVEST

---

Vintners across the state are expecting a high-quality vintage for 2022 following a season filled with curveballs. For many California wine regions, this was a tale of two harvests, as a Labor Day heat wave divided the season into earlier and later picks. As harvest wraps up across the state, vintners predict that 2022 will produce memorable wines of great concentration and complexity.

In the North Coast, the growing season began with ideal weather conditions through early summer, until an extended heat event beginning in late August accelerated the harvest and reduced yields for some varieties. In winegrowing regions such as Lodi and the Sierra Foothills, mild weather conditions prevailed into early spring, followed by frost that dramatically reduced crop sizes.



Harvest timing was mixed this year, with some appellations, including Napa Valley, starting up to a month earlier than average and others, such as Paso Robles, experiencing an extended harvest. In the North Coast, growers harvested some red varieties as early as mid-August. The Labor Day heat wave caused multiple varieties to reach maturity simultaneously in some regions, which kept vineyard and cellar crews busy through a compressed harvest. Despite the year's twists and turns, consumers can expect to enjoy excellent wines from the 2022 vintage.

California produces about 80% of the nation's wine, making it the world's fourth-largest wine producing region. More than 80% of California wine is made in a Certified Sustainable California Winery and over half of the state's roughly 615,000 vineyard acres are certified to one of California's sustainability programs (Certified California Sustainable Winegrowing, Fish Friendly Farming, LODI RULES, Napa Green and SIP Certified).



## WINEMAKER AND WINERY OWNER COMMENTS ON CALIFORNIA'S GROWING SEASON AND HARVEST

"The early part of the growing season was near ideal, with abundant early season rains and excellent spring and summer weather," said Renée Ary, vice president of winemaking at Duckhorn Vineyards in St. Helena, Napa Valley.

The Labor Day heat event brought record-high temperatures to the region, followed by mid-September rains, which challenged winemakers to practice meticulous grape selection.

"I think our 2022 wines will have a bit more concentration than the previous vintage, especially from the warmer, up-valley AVAs," said Ary. "Our Cabernet Franc and Petit Verdot are some of the best ever and the Chardonnays are bright, balanced and focused. Given the range of ripeness, blending will be important for the 2022 vintage as we balance our early and later picks."

At **Silver Oak** and **Twomey Cellars** in the Napa Valley, harvest proceeded at a fast and furious pace. Following a mild summer, the heat wave kicked harvest into high gear, contributing to overall yield reductions of 15% to 20%. Harvest continued at a leisurely rate after temperatures cooled.

"I think it's going to be a pretty intense vintage — concentrated and powerful," said Nate Weis, vice president of winegrowing. "Quality-wise, all of the varieties did great." He was particularly impressed by Pinot Noir from the Russian River, Anderson Valley and Santa Lucia Highlands, as well as Merlot and Cabernet Franc. "The quality," he said, "is off the charts."

Robin Baggett, vintner and managing partner at **Alpha Omega** in St. Helena and **Tolosa** in San Luis Obispo, Central Coast, noted a wide range of harvest starting dates. "At Alpha Omega, harvest was a full four weeks earlier than last year's in some vineyards," he said.

Severe heat around Labor Day required vineyard teams to pick rapidly and strategically, he noted. "The fruit from our early picks is dark, complex in aroma and firm in texture, while fruit that remained on the vines during the heat event is riper with softer tannins and great flavor concentration," said Baggett. "The overall quality in our Cabernet Sauvignon is very high with strong structure and terroir-driven characteristics. Petit Verdot and Malbec also performed extremely well."

After a dry winter, Tolosa's harvest saw two distinct phases: before the heat wave and after. Single-vineyard fruit came in at a steady pace until Labor Day, followed by a compressed harvest during the triple-digit heat. Lower yields — down around 30% — affected ripening speed, pushing everything to mature at once.

"Everything brought in before the heat wave is promising," noted Baggett, "but you need to cherry pick among the lots brought in post-heat wave to isolate the best ones."

**Benziger Family Winery** in Glen Ellen, Sonoma County, wrapped up harvest just before mid-October, which marks the winery's earliest finish since 2004. "This is one for the record books," said Lisa Amaroli, Benziger's director of winemaking. "A heat wave followed by rain had a whiplash effect, pushing up sugars and then reversing them after the rain."

The growing season was consistent and mild, resulting in healthy canopies. Signs pointed to an early harvest until Labor Day, when temperatures reached 110 degrees Fahrenheit at the winery's Sonoma Coast property. This pushed some blocks into high sugars and quickened the harvest pace. September rain brought a sigh of relief, refreshing the vines and allowing remaining grapes to hang a bit longer.

"All white varieties we have seen from across Sonoma County came in in great shape and are very flavorful with just the right acid balance," Amaroli said. "It was a good year for some Pinot Noir and Cabernet Sauvignon vineyards — albeit with lower yields — while Malbec and Cabernet Franc came in abundant, balanced and fruity."

**Jackson Family Wines** in Santa Rosa, Sonoma County, which has vineyards in several North Coast and Central Coast regions, began harvesting a couple weeks earlier than normal in many areas. Winemaster Randy Ullom summed up the vintage as "very memorable and wild."

"In certain instances, the heat wave accelerated things and in others it actually slowed them down," he said, noting that vines shut down during extreme heat in order to protect themselves, thus delaying the ripening process. "It depended on the appellation, the vineyard aspect and the watering capacity."

Despite heavy rain in September, botrytis was not an issue due to the health of the vines before the rainfall occurred.

Ullom said he is happy with the overall quality of 2022 fruit. "Pinot Noir from the Anderson Valley and Russian River look especially good," he said, along with Monterey County Chardonnay and Pinot Noir. Sauvignon Blanc





produced a larger yield than expected and continued ripening into October in Lake County due to the heavier crop. “That’s another first,” he said. “We’ll remember this for the rest of our lives.”

Vintners in the Lodi and Clarksburg regions encountered challenges this year, including a significant April frost event that dramatically reduced yields.

“We thought it all but wiped out some of our north Delta and Clarksburg Sauvignon Blanc, Chardonnay and Pinot Grigio, but it turned out that we did all right,” said Aaron Lange, vice president of vineyard operations at **LangeTwins Family Winery and Vineyards** in Acampo. The winery brought in about 25% of the normal yield for those varieties.

Variable spring weather with unseasonably warm temperatures followed by cool, windy conditions contributed to shot berries and shatter in Zinfandel and other sensitive varieties, yet yield sizes came in around average.

The Labor Day heat wave impacted both scheduling and capacity, while the frost delayed ripening in the whites. “At most major wineries,” Lange said, “there was a major capacity crunch from a cooperage and fermentation tank perspective.”

Healthy vineyards did fairly well during the heat event, he added, and followed a normal development trajectory. White varieties looked good, Lange said, since vineyard crews picked most fruit prior to the heat wave. Larger canopies helped protect the reds from heat and sunburn.

Likewise, Monterey County faced some tough conditions in 2022 due to early-season temperature fluctuations and heat spells during veraison and in early September. Though the heat wave reduced yields, particularly for Chardonnay and Merlot, the September event was well-predicted, allowing winegrowers to take preemptive irrigation measures. Harvest got off to a quick and early start, about 10 days earlier than average, with multiple varieties ripening simultaneously.

“On the bright side,” said Heidi Scheid, executive vice president at Scheid Vineyards in Soledad, “we’ve found that the smaller cluster and reduced berry sizes have resulted in a significant level of complexity and intensity. We are seeing very good quality — and in some cases truly exceptional quality — for the 2022 vintage.”

In Paso Robles in the Central Coast, harvest kicked off early, requiring vintners to utilize their collective knowledge to manage quality, tank space and periodic restarts.

“Despite the challenges,” said Stasi Seay, director of vineyards at **Hope Family Wines** in Paso Robles, “we remain optimistic and anticipate that vintage 2022 will produce fine wines on par with some of Paso Robles’ most memorable.”

The growing season began smoothly, with minimal frost incidents and temperate weather during bloom and set, Seay said. June crop estimates were slightly below average due to the ongoing drought, and summer was typical with no extreme heat until Labor Day weekend. Extended high temperatures caused vines to shut down, slowing the last of veraison. Unseasonal rains followed, along with warm





autumn weather that helped with hang time and fruit maturity.

This was an unusually long harvest in the region, starting in early August and continuing through October's end. "We are optimistic that this vintage will stand out," said Seay, "given our hard work both in the field and in the winery."

**Miller Family Wine Company** in Santa Maria, Santa Barbara County, began harvesting on Aug. 8, a week earlier than expected. The season began with excellent growing conditions that continued into summer, followed by abnormally hot weather that accelerated ripening. Though yields were below normal, fruit quality remained high.

"The vineyard has responded well despite another dry winter," said vineyard manager Greg O'Quest. "The minimal amount of rain was not enough to supply the vines with

much-needed water, so supplemental irrigation began sooner than expected."

Following a uniform bud break during the first week of March and a mild frost season, late spring brought unusually windy and cool conditions for fruit set. Summer boasted ideal weather with only a few days breaking the 100-degree mark. Typical high temperatures occurred in July and pest pressure was minimal. "The 2022 vintage was blessed with normal summer temperatures that allowed a full canopy to develop before the heat hit in August," O'Quest said.

Late-season reds fared best in terms of yields, he added, and Cabernet Sauvignon has been a stand-out variety thanks to its hardiness and ability to deal with high temperatures. Smaller clusters this year resulted in deep, dark color and higher quality.



# Regional Harvest Reports

## AMADOR COUNTY

**Total winegrape acreage: 3,569**

**Most-planted grape varieties:  
Zinfandel and Barbera**

Amador County vintners expect to see some special wines coming from the 2022 vintage in spite of weather challenges. Following a dry winter, rainfall returned in March and April, and bud break occurred a bit earlier than normal. Severe frost hit the region in April and May, with the first event impacting low-lying vineyards in Shenandoah Valley and wiping out growth. Higher-elevation areas and blocks with later-budding varieties such as Mourvèdre and Aglianico fared fairly well, while Zinfandel saw particularly low yields. In late summer, a September heat wave lasting nearly two weeks tested the vines and their resources. Varieties and vineyards withstood the heat differently; some vines shut down while others experienced dehydration and stalled sugar development. Harvest began in mid-August, a week to 10 days earlier than average, and finished early. Overall yields were about 45% of normal. Vintners reported very good fruit quality with near-perfect chemistry. Smaller crops resulted in high flavor and color concentration, along with good acidity retention.

## CALAVERAS COUNTY

**Total winegrape acreage: 721**

**Most-planted grape varieties:  
Cabernet Sauvignon, Sauvignon Blanc and Zinfandel**

Calaveras County winegrowers brought in a good quality crop this year under challenging conditions. April frost caused significant damage across the region, with yields down an average of 60% and up to 100% for some vineyards. Due to ongoing drought conditions, winegrowers began irrigating their vineyards in May. Harvest began around the normal time for Chardonnay, and for Cabernet Sauvignon, some growers began picking about 10 days later than in 2021. An extended heat wave began in early August and continued into early September, bringing triple-digit temperatures that caused Cabernet Sauvignon vines to shut down. The smaller crop size resulted in an early end to harvest.

## EL DORADO COUNTY

**Total winegrape acreage: 2,226**

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

El Dorado County vintners saw near-perfect analytical numbers in the vineyards this year, along with highly promising fruit quality.

Average summer temperatures followed severe frost events in April and May. Harvest began 10-14 days earlier than average and concluded with yields down up to 70% due to spring freezes.

## LAKE COUNTY

**Total winegrape acreage: 10,935**

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

Lake County vintners reported good fruit quality for 2022 and predicted that wines will show fruitier character than the previous year. The growing season got off to a cool, damp start. A spring frost event caused some damage to several vineyard blocks, many of which hadn't previously needed frost protection systems. Overall, the 2022 growing season was cooler than the last few years, with temperatures more on par with what might be considered "normal." Harvest kicked off later than the previous few years and moved rapidly for three weeks both prior to and during the Labor Day heat spell. The region fared pretty well during the high temperatures due to its high elevation, which tends to moderate heat levels. A few days of mid-September rain then slowed the pace of harvest, with rainfall totals

ranging from one inch to two-and-a-half inches. While vine ripening slowed, fruit flavors were already developed and quality was spot-on even at the lower-than-normal Brix levels. Lake County's two major varieties, Cabernet Sauvignon and Sauvignon Blanc, fared very well. Overall crop size was around the same as 2021, though varieties such as Syrah and Malbec produced significantly lower yields.

## LIVERMORE VALLEY

**Total winegrape acreage: 4,000**

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

This year's harvest in Livermore Valley produced small berries with bold fruit flavors. Bud break occurred earlier than normal due to low rainfall and higher winter temperatures. A cool spring elongated the bloom period, followed by a warm summer that led to slightly early starts for veraison and harvest. A 10-day heat spike in September slowed down sugar accumulation in some varieties and caused vine shutdown that impacted sugar loading on later-ripening varieties such as Cabernet Sauvignon. Harvest began about five days earlier than average. Drought conditions resulted in a reduced crop size of about 30% due to smaller cluster and berry sizes. Vintners are reporting fruit-forward character in the grapes, with high color in reds, great acidity in the whites and fantastic flavors for Chardonnay.

## LODI

**Total winegrape acreage: 100,000**

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

Vintners are confident that great wines will come from the 2022 vintage despite a challenging year characterized by widespread spring frosts and a brutal heat wave in early September. In April, the greater Lodi region experienced the worst frost event growers had seen since 2008; in some cases, the damage was so extensive that vintners chose not to harvest their vineyards. The record-breaking heat wave in early September posed additional challenges and many vineyards felt the impact. Harvest timing was fairly normal, beginning in early August. Yields were average to slightly below average due to dehydration caused by the heat wave. Winegrowers reported incredible quality in early-pick whites and expect to make some excellent wines with proper execution in the cellar.

## MENDOCINO COUNTY

**Total winegrape acreage: 17,117**

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

Mendocino County vintners reported good quality for the 2022 harvest, particularly for fruit picked before the Labor Day heat wave. Bud break and flowering occurred at the normal time, and a cool spring with milder-than-normal temperatures boosted growers' expectations for high quality and abundant tonnage. An extended heat wave and limited

water resources for irrigation created challenges during harvest, along with two to three inches of rain that pushed back ripening for some varieties. Harvest began around the normal time, bringing in a larger yield than the region's vintners have seen since the 2019 vintage. Fruit came in with ripe flavors and lower Brix levels than normal.

## MONTEREY COUNTY

**Total winegrape acreage: 42,765**

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

Monterey County winegrowers reported very good quality for the 2022 vintage, along with yield reductions averaging 25%. Early winter rains brought some relief from the ongoing drought and helped to leach the soils, and temperatures remained mild throughout the growing season. The region was fortunate to escape the spring frosts that growers experienced in some other areas. All progressed as normal until the September heat wave hit, compressing the harvest to a matter of days. Picking began about two weeks earlier than normal, on Aug. 9, and was projected to finish for most sub-regions by mid-October. Depending on vineyard location, Pinot Noir saw impacts due to the excessive heat — including reduced crop sizes ranging from 25% to 40% less than average — yet vintners reported very good quality for the variety. Overall, acids and sugars came together with refined phenolic development.



## NAPA VALLEY

**Total winegrape acreage: 45,460**

**Most-planted grape varieties:**

**Cabernet Sauvignon, Chardonnay and Merlot**

The 2022 growing season brought excellent quality for Napa Valley. After years of drought, the region saw more than 20 inches of rain in October and December 2021. Dry conditions followed from January until March. Spring brought mild and cool temperatures, and bud break began in March. The Labor Day weekend heat wave sent temperatures into triple digits for nearly a week; on a couple of days, the heat registered as high as 110 to 118 degrees Fahrenheit. Fortunately, those hot days were met with relatively cool nights dropping into the upper 50s, which allowed the vines to recharge. The heat accelerated grape ripening throughout the valley, which led to earlier-than-average pick dates for many varieties, including some Cabernet Sauvignon. Vineyard blocks that had not achieved full maturity were left to hang, and growers used multiple techniques to aid the vines in riding out the heat. The white wine harvest began in early August, followed almost immediately by red wine varieties. Grapes left on the vine fared well, experiencing some dehydration that resulted in lower yields — as well as greater concentration and flavor intensity. Mid-September rain brought a welcome break in the harvest pace, allowing winemakers to catch their breath. Sun-filled days quickly returned, ensuring no lasting impact on the hanging grapes. White wines are showing perfect acidity and

freshness, along with remarkable flavors and textures. Red wines are structured, with deep red color, luxurious tannins and wonderful flavors.

## PASO ROBLES

**Total winegrape acreage: 40,000**

**Most-planted grape varieties:**

**Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and Syrah**

Heat waves in August and September turned a vintage with great growing conditions into a tale of two harvests. Following a dry winter, bud break occurred early, in the first week of March. Fortunately, a mild frost season prevented issues during flowering. Late spring brought abnormally windy and cool weather, creating fruit set challenges. Vintners reported great summer growing conditions through July with only a few days hitting the 100-degree mark. In mid-August, a week-long heat wave brought temperatures ranging from 100 to 108 degrees Fahrenheit. A second spike, beginning on August 31 and lasting 10 days, set temperatures soaring to 105 to 115 degrees Fahrenheit. A rain event followed, adding to pressure on crews and cellars. Harvest began three weeks earlier than past vintages and growers picked many red varieties in August, which is atypical for the region. Quality is uncertain for fruit brought in during the heat wave rush, though most vintners reported that grapes brought in after the heat spike showed great color and depth. Yields were down up to 30% around the region due to drought, which was exacerbated by the heat spell. Many growers reported that the cool

spring led to smaller clusters, impacting yields. However, the smaller clusters created deeper color and extraction that promise higher quality. The overall quality and character of the vintage will come down to the timing of picking and whether or not growers utilized shade cloths during the heat spell.

## SAN DIEGO COUNTY

**Total winegrape acreage: 671**

**Most-planted grape varieties:**

**Cabernet Sauvignon and Syrah**

Yields were down in the San Diego County region this year, yet overall fruit quality was excellent. The season began with a dry winter that required growers to begin irrigating early; those that did not do so experienced lightly pollinated cluster formation. Temperatures increased gradually over the season, allowing the vines to acclimate to the heat. Harvest began around the normal time and occurred at an accelerated rate. Crop sizes were down around 10% and some wineries chose not to harvest grapes due to a surplus from last year. There was a lot of variation among varieties in terms of ripening, delayed sugar accumulation and physiological ripeness, but overall, vintners reported very good quality fruit with distinct varietal character.

## SANTA BARBARA

**Total winegrape acreage: 15,294**

**Most-planted grape varieties: Pinot Noir, Chardonnay and Syrah**

The 2022 vintage was a challenging one for winegrowers in Santa Barbara County, yet it is expected to produce good wines from varieties



picked before the summer heat wave. Bud break began in early March, which led growers to anticipate a good, normal vintage. However, lack of rainfall pushed yields down by as much as 30% in some areas. A cool and windy spring also contributed to reduced yields. Record heat around Labor Day, which lasted more than a week, impacted canopies, resulting in lower sugars than would normally be expected after a heat wave. The largest storm in recent memory followed, bringing significant rainfall and increased mildew pressure, as well as pushing back harvest sugars. Fruit quality varied greatly from vineyard to vineyard. The timing of harvest ranged widely, with an early start for many in the Santa Maria Valley. The September rains pushed sugars back for later-ripening varieties such as Syrah, and therefore some vineyards saw later harvests at lower sugar levels than in previous years. Pinot Noir and Chardonnay fared better than some other varieties, and vintners reported good overall quality for early-picked grapes.

## SANTA CLARA VALLEY

**Total winegrape acreage: 1,527**

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

The growing season in Santa Clara Valley proceeded as normal, with the exception of a late freeze on May 9, which killed off many buds and caused significant crop losses. Following a cool spring and early summer, a late summer heat wave accelerated ripening. Harvest began in August, from two to three weeks

earlier than normal in some vineyards. Yields came in about one-third less than average, with white varieties particularly affected by the frost. Vintners reported high quality fruit with small clusters, small berry size and thick skins.

## SANTA CRUZ MOUNTAINS

**Total winegrape acreage: 1,300**

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

Santa Cruz Mountains vintners saw wide variation in quality and quantity this vintage. Vintners reported great quality for Cabernet Sauvignon and Syrah, with fruit showing rich and well-developed flavors. The growing season started out wet, with atmospheric river conditions soaking the region in late December and early January. The rest of the winter season was historically dry, triggering early bud break in some vineyards. Late frost in April wiped out the potential for certain harvests by causing damage to primary buds; Chardonnay was impacted the most. Spring and summer continued without extremes, leading to excellent flavor and phenolic development, along with thick skins. An unusual lack of fog in coastal areas during most of July and August further contributed to excellent flavor and phenolic development. In September, an unprecedented heat spike lasting 8-10 days led to sunburn and shrivel on fruit in some vineyards. Those with strong root systems fared well with minimal impact. Harvest began a week to two weeks early in many areas, depending on the site. Yield sizes varied by vineyard, with some seeing average-to-normal crop sizes

and others experiencing lighter yields. Chardonnay yields appeared to be lower in most areas, though fruit quality was excellent. For many vintners, fruit quality was sky-high; however, some experienced issues with high sugar and acidity levels. Own-rooted and dry-farmed Merlot fared exceptionally well, as did Pinot Noir that escaped heat damage.

## SONOMA COUNTY

**Total winegrape acreage: 58,672**

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

The 2022 growing season in Sonoma County started with weeks of sunny days that created an earlier bud break in February. Bouts of cooler temperatures occurred in late February and early April, and summer was relatively mild compared to past years. Harvest began July 29, a few weeks earlier than anticipated, and finished earlier than normal due to consistently warm fall days in late August and early September. By mid-October, 90% of the grapes had been picked. Despite some of the challenges, which included limited rainfall, some early season frost and a warm spring and early summer, winegrowers experienced no significant issues. Yields were lighter than average. Overall, the region saw a solid growing season and vintners were able to work through weather setbacks. Fruit quality thus far is stunning and the overall smaller berry and cluster sizes point to a stellar 2022 vintage. Vintners are reporting wonderful concentration and flavor in the wines.



## WINE INSTITUTE

425 Market Street  
San Francisco, CA 94107  
[www.wineinstitute.org](http://www.wineinstitute.org)

For more information, contact  
[communications@wineinstitute.org](mailto:communications@wineinstitute.org)

Photo credit, Page 1: Adam Decker  
Photo credit, Page 2: Benziger Family Winery  
Photo credit, Page 3: Justin Liddell, Destination Films  
Photo credit, Page 5: Justin Liddell, Destination Films