



# CALIFORNIA 2024 WINEGRAPE HARVEST BEGINS EARLY AND DELIVERS HIGH QUALITY

PLENTIFUL WINTER RAINFALL AND WARM SUMMER TEMPERATURES SET THE STAGE FOR A MEMORABLE VINTAGE ACROSS THE STATE

**SACRAMENTO** — The 2024 California winegrape harvest got off to an early start in many regions following a rainy winter, a cool spring and a warm summer. While some appellations experienced late-season weather events that led to reduced yields, vintners across the state are reporting a high-quality vintage for 2024. Many winegrowers utilized innovative approaches to leverage opportunities and address challenges during this fast-paced growing season and harvest.

California produces about 80% of the nation's wine, making it the world's fourth-largest wine

producing region. More than 90% of the state's wine is made in a Certified California Sustainable winery and over 65% of the state's roughly 610,000 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). California's nearly 6,000 winegrape growers produce more than 100 varieties grown in 154 distinctive American Viticultural Areas throughout the state.

## WINEMAKER AND VINTNER COMMENTS ON CALIFORNIA'S GROWING SEASON AND HARVEST

John Kane, general manager of **Bonterra Organic Estates** in Ukiah, reported a wet winter in Mendocino County, followed by a cold spring. As the season progressed, summer heat accelerated growth and brought the vines up to speed. Picking began on Aug. 7 and finished in mid-October after a compressed harvest. “Typically, our harvest extends into November,” he said, “so finishing before Halloween marks a shift.”

Red grape clusters were smaller this year, resulting in highly concentrated color and a clean, fruit-forward profile. “The earlier harvest has also led to higher acid levels,” Kane said, “indicating strong aging potential for the 2024 vintage.”

In Napa Valley, vintners also experienced abundant winter rains.

“The weather conditions were ideal through bloom, which helped set a healthy crop,” said Renée Ary, vice president of winemaking at **Duckhorn Vineyards** in St. Helena. Temperatures were above average in June and July, she said, and harvest began Aug. 14. Weather conditions remained moderate through September, which allowed sugars and flavors to stay in balance. Early October heat triggered a quick finish to the harvest.

“I am seeing beautiful, deeply colored Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot backed with concentrated fruit, pillowy tannins and bright acids,” Ary said. “We had very little pyrazines this vintage, which was helpful when navigating the heat.”

Blake Wood, director of vineyard operations in Napa for **Constellation Brands**, said this year’s crop turned out to be slightly smaller than pre-season projections, with great quality for Sauvignon Blanc and Sémillon.

At **Spottswoode Estate Vineyard & Winery** in St. Helena, growing conditions seemed to alternate from cool to hot and from wet to dry, according to winemaker and vineyard manager Aron Weinkauff. Blocks that normally ripen earlier were picked late in 2024, he said, while blocks that normally reach maturity late in the season ripened early.

Overall, Weinkauff said he is happy with the results across varieties. “California tends to be blessed with good vintages, and this looks to be one of them,” he said. “The fruit

characteristics are great. I think we were able to achieve the ripeness we wanted and avoid the overripe characteristics that could have potentially left a big thumbprint on the vintage.” Tannins are firm and structured, he added, though they are less dominant than in some other vintages.

Heidi Bridenhagen, winemaker at **MacRostie Winery and Vineyards** in Healdsburg, said growing conditions for Pinot Noir and Chardonnay were excellent in Sonoma County, despite high heat in late August and early September. “Just as I started to get stressed about things like tank capacity and dehydration, the weather really cooled off,” she said. “So, we got an extra two weeks for



Pinot Noir and Chardonnay to recover on the vine, soak up some moisture, finish ripening and come in at an even and steady pace — with really amazing quality overall.” MacRostie completed harvest by Oct. 1, before a heat spike arrived later that month.

“I have been really impressed with the Chardonnay and Sauvignon Blanc quality,” Bridenhagen said. “They are aromatic and complex, and very expressive overall.”

In Monterey County, the growing season brought little to no shatter, average yields and no rot or mildew issues, according to Heidi Scheid, executive vice president at **Scheid Family Wines** in Soledad. A wet, cool spring led to favorable conditions for fruit set, followed by extended periods of mid- and late-season heat. “In whites, we’re seeing excellent varietal character, strong aromatics and balanced acidity,” Scheid said. Among the reds, she noted, “Pinot Noir is a standout,” with impressive complexity and acidity.

For **Hope Family Wines** in Paso Robles, the season began with ample winter rainfall that flushed root systems and fostered good cover crop growth. The entire growing season ran about two weeks behind the region’s typical progression, including delays in cluster development, berry maturity and harvest. Picking began in September, about two weeks later than normal.

Stasi Seay, director of vineyards at Hope Family Wines, pointed to several factors that contributed to reduced yields in 2024, starting with spring frosts that affected crop levels in low-lying areas of Paso Robles. High temperatures in August led to smaller berry sizes in many varieties, which lowered crop estimates. A heat spell in October kicked harvest into overdrive with reduced yields and high fruit quality.

“So far, this vintage looks to be fantastic, showing great color, structure and mature flavors,” said Seay. “This has been a vintage worth the wait.”

**DAOU Vineyards**, also in Paso Robles, experienced a rainy winter leading to vigorous and robust canopy development early in the season. Vice President of Enology and Viticulture José Alberto Santos noted that after a cool spring and a mild summer, July brought a two-week heatwave followed by another heat event after Labor Day, that accelerated ripening for early varieties and clones.

A cool period followed, prolonging time on the vine into late September and early October for the remainder of the fruit. “This was definitely a warmer vintage — in some respects similar to 2022 and 2018,” said founder and chief winemaker Daniel Daou. Quality for Cabernet Franc, he added, is exemplary.



# Regional Harvest Reports

## NORTH COAST NAPA VALLEY

**Total winegrape acreage: 45,460**

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

Vintners are reporting a classic vintage for Napa Valley. The early season rainfall filled the soil profile, which allowed for an even bud break and healthy vegetative growth. Winter precipitation tapered off in March, so soil was able to dry out during early spring at an ideal time. After a cool spring that laid the groundwork for excellent fruit quality, temperatures quickly increased during May and June, which led to a rapid bloom with excellent fruit set. Growing degree-days were higher in 2024 compared with 2023 as a result of a warmer summer. Some areas experienced more than 30 days of temperatures climbing into the triple digits. The Labor Day heat wave accelerated the last phase of ripening and condensed the harvest period for most parts of the valley. Most wineries finished picking around mid-October — two or three weeks earlier than last year. Yields varied across the region, with crop sizes generally average to slightly above average, yet roughly 15% to 20% smaller than in 2023. Winemakers are describing the 2024 wines as bold, aromatic, dynamic and structured, with intense color. Cabernet Sauvignon has an elegant and refined tannin profile; ripe and rich, but with great natural acidity. Overall, this was a textbook year for winemaking in Napa.

## SONOMA COUNTY

**Total winegrape acreage: 58,713**

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

Sonoma County vintners are reporting fantastic quality and character for the 2024 vintage. Wines are displaying deep colors and wonderful balanced extraction, along with layered aromatics. The growing season was marked by healthy winter rains that recharged aquifers and reservoirs. Good bud break and flowering led to full cluster set and produced an excellent crop. The season presented no notable anomalies — conditions were neither too dry nor too wet; not too cold or too warm. Around harvest time a couple warm spells occurred, but they did not harm the fruit due to innovative farming practices. Harvest began significantly earlier than in 2023, with most wineries completing picking two to four weeks ahead of the previous year. Yields are above average across the county. Vintners report that quality is wonderful throughout the region. White wines are bright and aromatic with good acidity, while red wines exhibit exceptional color, aromatic intensity and balance.

## MENDOCINO COUNTY

**Total winegrape acreage: 17,087**

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

Mendocino's 2024 vintage is defined by bold, fruit-forward wines with deep concentration. Growers adapted to the warmer growing season, preceded by early-season rain, by carefully

monitoring irrigation and picking early to retain acidity. Picking began two to three weeks earlier than in 2023 and warmer weather led to an accelerated harvest period. On average, yields are anticipated to be 5% to 10% below 2023 levels. The compressed growing season led to smaller berry sizes with thicker skins, resulting in great concentration and intensity — especially for Cabernet Sauvignon, Zinfandel and Syrah. Growers managed to capture both ripeness and balance, leading to structured reds with plush tannins and rich-yet-vibrant whites. Chardonnay and Sauvignon Blanc show good aromatic intensity and freshness; and slightly lower acidity in some cases may make them suited for fuller-bodied styles. While 2024's growing conditions required agility and quick decision making, the vintage is expected to yield high-quality wines across both red and white categories.

## DELTA & INLAND VALLEY

### LODI

**Total winegrape acreage: 100,000**

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

Lodi vintners are reporting excellent quality across the board for the 2024 vintage after an early, fast-paced harvest and a slightly reduced crop size. Timing for bud break was typical, even though July brought higher temperatures that impacted berry sizing, and ultimately, yields. Fortunately, healthy canopies moderated and played a big role in this vintage's success. The light crop combined with warmer weather in late August and early September saw sugars rise rapidly several weeks earlier than the previous year. Harvest finished a couple weeks earlier than in previous vintages. Vintners are calling 2024 an

exceptional Lodi vintage. White grapes came in fresh and lively with bright acidity, and reds presented intense color, perfumed aromatics and delicious fruit flavors.

### CENTRAL COAST PASO ROBLES

**Total winegrape acreage: 40,000**

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

Shaped by unpredictable weather and fluctuating yields, this year's Paso Robles harvest is a testament to the region's adaptability, innovation and resilience. This delicate balance has produced a fantastic Paso Robles vintage, showing great color, structure and mature flavors. The entire 2024 season ran about two weeks behind in vine growth progression across the Central Coast, but particularly in Paso Robles. Stages of vine and berry development were delayed, from cluster development to berry maturity to the start of harvest. A cooler spring and low early-morning temperatures in some low-lying areas slowed berry set, and July warmth slowed berry growth post-set. Harvest began in September, about two weeks later than normal for many vintners. With varying weather conditions and harvesting precision, Paso Robles' vintage will be of exceptional quality with smaller yields.

### SAN LUIS OBISPO

**Total winegrape acreage: 34,037**

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

Vintners anticipate outstanding quality from this year's crop, with

excellent pigment in Pinot Noir and optimal acidity levels. San Luis Obispo received plenty of rainfall in 2024, and cool temperatures lasted through June. Warm weather prevailed in July and August, and temperatures reached nearly 100 degrees Fahrenheit in early September, speeding up ripening for Pinot Noir. The region's total yield is down this year on average, but the quality of the fruit is extraordinary. Pinot Noir, Chardonnay and Sauvignon Blanc in particular are showing outstanding quality.

### SANTA BARBARA

**Total winegrape acreage: 15,005**

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

Santa Barbara County vintners will remember the 2024 vintage as warm, early and light. Quality looks strong, while yields are smaller than average. The season started with a healthy amount of rain, which was spread out across the first four months of the year and resulted in healthy canopies throughout the growing season. The rain helped initiate a healthy bud break, which occurred earlier than in 2023 by two to three weeks. Favorable weather during the bloom period helped foster a healthy fruit set, with only mild shatter for some Cabernet Sauvignon and Grenache. Lag phase stages progressed faster this year with positive summer conditions. Harvest began three weeks earlier than the previous year and finished early. In some varieties, such as Sauvignon Blanc and Pinot Noir, the crop size is down by 40% to 50%. This will be another high-quality vintage in Santa Barbara. Concentration of fruit character should be great across the board.

### SANTA CRUZ MOUNTAINS

**Total winegrape acreage: 1,600**

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

Vintners in the Santa Cruz mountains are declaring an excellent 2024 vintage. The growing season was steady and consistent, with light to no rainfall after May. Mild summer temperatures and late September heat allowed for a longer ripening period and harvest timing was typical. Yields are average to slightly above average. Across all of the region's microclimates, there is beautiful quality with acids that are part of the structural component of flavor at slightly higher levels while still at naturally lower sugar levels. All varieties fared exceptionally well this year and reports indicate this is the best quality fruit the region has seen in years.

### SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA TEMECULA

**Total winegrape acreage: 2,500**

**Most-planted varieties: Cabernet  
Sauvignon, Syrah and Petite Sirah**

Temecula Valley producers report a promising harvest overall in spite of a warm summer. A fairly cool and wet spring subdued bud break, which began in late March. Flowering occurred in late May and June. Picking began in early August — a week earlier than in 2023 — followed by a stop-and-go progression. Varying weather patterns in spring and summer made for challenging conditions but the vintage resulted in phenolically ripe, mature and developed fruit. Early Italian white varieties are rich in varietal character and acidity. Rhone varieties are a highlight of the vintage, and Cabernets, Malbec and Petite Verdot are showing especially great depth. Yields came in lower than anticipated in the region.



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