



CALIFORNIA 2025 HARVEST REPORT: A MILD SEASON BRINGS CONCENTRATED FLAVORS AND BRIGHT ACIDITY

A SLOW, STEADY GROWING SEASON SETS UP A STANDOUT 2025 VINTAGE

SACRAMENTO — The 2025 California winegrape harvest concluded in early November after a long, consistent growing season with no major heat events and few surprises. A cool spring and mild summer throughout the state allowed grapes to mature gradually. Mild temperatures continued into the harvest period, inspiring optimism about the vintage statewide.

California vintners expect the 2025 wines to show both concentration and balance, with reds possessing depth and structure, and whites displaying energy and precision.

“The 2025 wines will lean toward elegance rather than opulence,” said Melissa Paris, winemaker at Alpha Omega Winery in St. Helena. “This is a vintage that celebrates restraint and vineyard expression.”

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—MELISSA PARIS, WINEMAKER, ALPHA OMEGA WINERY IN ST. HELENA.

Harvest began up to two weeks later than average in some regions due to the cooler start to the season. Late-season rains required vineyard teams to remain agile and to employ meticulous sorting to ensure clean, botrytis-free fruit.

Vintners report that yield volumes are largely average to below average, depending on the region.

The USDA forecasts 2025 California winegrape production at 3 million tons, a 4% increase from 2024 but still 16% below the previous three-year average. The California Association of Winegrape Growers (CAWG) projects a slightly lower estimate at just under 2.5 million tons, compared to 2.88 million tons in 2024.

COOL WEATHER ENABLED SLOW MATURATION

Although the weather varies across California’s diverse wine regions, temperatures throughout the state were cooler than usual this year.

In Napa Valley, Paris said, “The season felt more classic in pace and tone. It was less dramatic, more deliberate and defined by the kind of slow ripening that winemakers dream of.”

In the Central Valley, the mild growing season inspired early optimism about the vintage.

“Quality was high right out of the gate, with incredible color and flavor development in the early varieties,” said Chris Smith, the director of winegrowing at Bogle Family Wine Collection in Clarksburg.

The start of harvest varied widely, depending on the region.

In the North Coast, at Ram’s Gate Winery in Sonoma County, picking began for Carneros fruit on Aug. 25, but grapes took much longer to ripen near the coast.

“Vineyards closer to the marine influence, along with later-ripening varieties such as Mourvèdre, Syrah and Cabernet Sauvignon, took their time,” said Joe Nielsen, director of winemaking. “They stretched well into October before reaching optimal ripeness.”

Further south, along the Central Coast and inland, regions experienced similar weather patterns. In Paso Robles, following a cool spring, vintners experienced the mildest July on record. Harvest began one week to 10 days later than average.

“If we had eight days that were over 100 degrees for this entire year, I’d be shocked,” said Stasi Seay, director of vineyards at Hope Family Wines in Paso Robles. “That’s not typical.”

Lower Brix levels at harvest contributed to excellent flavor development and strong color in the red varieties.



“WE ANTICIPATE THE 2025 VINTAGE TO BE ELEGANT AND FLAVORFUL.”

—AKIKO FREEMAN, WINEMAKER AND CO-FOUNDER,
FREEMAN WINERY IN SEBASTOPOL

LATE-SEASON RAINS REQUIRED FLEXIBILITY

Rain during harvest inevitably adds complexity, yet California growers and vintners adapted quickly to mitigate the effects of September and October showers.

Some wineries — including Freeman Winery in Sebastopol, with vineyards in the Russian River Valley and the West Sonoma Coast — opted to pick early and sort out any unripe fruit.

“Pinot Noir all came in in great shape, with low Brix and very good flavors,” said winemaker and co-founder Akiko Freeman. “Half of our Chardonnay came in after the significant rain, but our fantastic growers were able to drop all the problematic clusters before harvest and they sent us beautiful grapes.”

Other wineries, such as Ram’s Gate, opened up fruiting zones to promote better airflow and reduce the risk of mildew.

Paris noted that in Napa Valley, the rain added dimension and concentrated flavors for Cabernet Sauvignon, particularly in well-draining sites.

“In the end,” she said, “the rain tested timing and teamwork more than quality, reminding us that agility is as important as patience in a year like this.”

A FRESH AND LIVELY VINTAGE

The season’s cool conditions helped grapes achieve maturity at lower sugar levels in several regions. As a result, California vintners are expecting to produce wines with plenty of vibrancy and complexity.

“We anticipate the 2025 vintage to be elegant and flavorful,” Freeman added.

White wines are expected to show exceptional acidity, Nielsen added, especially for Chardonnay, Pinot Blanc and



Sauvignon Blanc. For reds, extended ripening created a sense of tension and energy on the palate, while later-picked varieties are showing deep color, impressive concentration and finesse.

Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon and Cabernet Franc grapes came in with deep color and fine texture, framed by elegant tannins. The region’s Sauvignon Blanc displayed brilliant citrus and stone fruit tones, while Chardonnay brought tension and minerality.

Central Coast winemakers are reporting energy in white varieties, and excellent color and flavor intensity in reds.

Because some vintners picked their Chardonnay at lower-than-normal sugar levels to avoid rain impacts, they expect to see brighter wines for the 2025 vintage.

“There will be some fresher-style wines,” said Steve Peck, the vice president of winemaking at J. Lohr Vineyards & Wines in San Jose, which farms estate vineyards in Monterey County and Arroyo Seco. “Instead of alcohol being closer to 14 and a half percent, we might be a little over 13 and a half, which really leans into the contemporary style as we view it.”

What’s most remarkable, he said, is the character of the Paso Robles reds. “Our vineyards where we grow our \$20 bottle of Cabernet taste like they could go into our \$50 bottle,” Peck noted. “We’ve just struck a really nice balance for that this year in Paso.”

REGIONAL HARVEST REPORTS

LODI

Total winegrape acreage: 82,000

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

Fastest-growing variety by plantings:
Sauvignon Blanc

HARVEST AT-A-GLANCE

Average temperatures: Cooler than normal

Rainfall: Average

Acres impacted by wildfires: None

Timing for start of harvest: Average

Start date of harvest: Week of Aug. 11

Yields: Average to below average

Vintners are reporting exceptional quality for the 2025 vintage, marked by fresh acidity and vibrant flavors.

The growing season progressed steadily, with little disease pressure and normal development from bud break through flowering. Thanks to moderate and cool temperatures, grapes matured gradually. Growers had to be extra patient this year, waiting for total acid and pH to come into the correct balance.

The mild weather helped retain acidity in early-season whites such as Pinot Grigio and Sauvignon Blanc. The slower ripening pace saw red grapes develop dark color, freshness and deep flavors — all at lower sugars. Zinfandel is showing excellent color and concentration for the 2025 vintage, although yields for older vines are somewhat lighter than normal.

NAPA VALLEY

Total winegrape acreage: 43,524

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

HARVEST AT-A-GLANCE

Average temperatures: Cooler than normal

Rainfall: Average

Acres impacted by wildfires: 5,001-8,000

Timing for start of harvest: Average

Start date of harvest: Aug. 11

Yields: Above average

The 2025 vintage delivered higher-than-expected yields with exceptional quality. Winemakers expect to see a return to the classics this year, with wines expressing elegance, balance and longevity.

Napa Valley’s growing season saw a notable shift from recent years with cooler overall conditions, spring and early summer rains, and the absence of major heat events.

The year began with winter rainfall that set the stage for healthy canopies and clusters. Grapes ripened evenly during early growth, and bud break occurred around March 10. June brought mild temperatures and veraison began in mid-July.

The moderate climate and steady pace of ripening enhanced site expression, highlighting regional nuances.

Though the Pickett Fire in the Calistoga Hills made headlines in

August, it was contained in a small area in the north. County officials estimate its impact at only 3% of the region’s agricultural land.

When late-season rains arrived in September and October, breezes in the southern end of the valley helped dry the grapes and clusters. To prevent mold, winegrowers opened up canopies and kept the clusters loose to allow air flow.

The fruit came in with exceptional depth of color, phenolic ripeness at lower Brix levels and a sense of depth without power.

PASO ROBLES

Total winegrape acreage: 40,000

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

Fastest-growing varieties by plantings: Other Rhône varieties

HARVEST AT-A-GLANCE

Average temperatures: Average

Rainfall: Below average

Acres impacted by wildfires: None

Timing for start of harvest: Later than normal

Start date of harvest: Late August

Yields: Average

The 2025 vintage delivered great quality for Paso Robles wineries. White grapes were fully mature and clean at harvest time, while the additional hang time for Cabernet Sauvignon boosted color, structure and flavor. Winemakers expect red wines to be complex and balanced, with Syrah showing especially well. Many are comparing 2025 to the 2023 vintage.

The growing season was characterized by mild weather and one of the coolest summers on record. Bud break was delayed by 10 days to two weeks and a mild spring contributed to the slow maturation. Bloom and set were near perfect, and it looked like the crop size would be average to slightly below average.

Mildew pressures remained high throughout the season, but vines were not under heat stress. Without heat stress, vines were able to uptake nutrients all season, ensuring a healthy vine at dormancy, after harvest.

Picking began about a week later than normal and brought average to above-average crop sizes ranging from 10% to 20% above average. The mild weather continued, allowing berries to size. Three rainfall events during harvest helped increase berry weights.

SAN DIEGO COUNTY

Total winegrape acreage: 641

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

Fastest-growing varieties by plantings: Albariño and Cabernet Franc

HARVEST AT-A-GLANCE

Average temperatures: Cooler than normal

Rainfall: Below average

Acres impacted by wildfires: None

Timing for start of harvest: Average

Start date of harvest: Aug. 8

Yields: Above average



Following a cool season, with mild weather during flowering and a good fruit set, San Diego vintners are expecting great quality for the 2025 wines. Tempranillo fared especially well, according to some growers.

SANTA BARBARA

Total winegrape acreage: 14,886

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

Fastest growing varieties by plantings: Sauvignon Blanc and alternative whites

HARVEST AT-A-GLANCE

Average temperatures: Cooler than normal

Rainfall: Below average

Acres impacted by wildfires: 3,000

Timing for start of harvest: Average

Start date of harvest: Aug. 20

Yields: Average

The 2025 vintage will be defined by lower alcohol levels and high natural acidity. Flavors and phenological ripeness were achieved at lower sugar levels than normal, with Pinot Noir showing particularly high quality at lower Brix.

Weather during the 2025 growing season was cooler than normal and

extremely dry. Fruit set was favorable and uniform. Dry conditions set the stage for the Gifford Fire in August, which burned more than 130,000 acres in the rugged Garcia Wilderness of the Los Padres National Forest, near Santa Maria. Lingering smoke impacted roughly 3,000 acres of vineyards in Santa Barbara County, as well as some vineyards in San Luis Obispo County.

Harvest began around the usual time, the third week of August, yet the majority of tons were picked later in the season due to cool summer and fall temperatures that delayed maturity. Rain events challenged late-season ripening and extended development into late October. Yields are expected to be larger than the light 2024 crop.

SANTA CLARA COUNTY

Total winegrape acreage: 1,471

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

HARVEST AT-A-GLANCE

Average temperatures: Average

Rainfall: Average

Wildfire impacts: None

Timing for start of harvest: Later than normal

Start date of harvest: Sept. 13

Yields: Average

The 2025 vintage is expected to produce cool-weather wines with blue-fruit character in the reds. The growing season brought low-to-mild temperatures that slightly delayed flowering and bud break. Harvest began a week or more later than normal due to the cool summer weather.

SONOMA COUNTY

Total winegrape acreage: 56,894
Most-planted grape varieties: Chardonnay, Pinot Noir and Cabernet Sauvignon

HARVEST AT-A-GLANCE

Average temperatures: Cooler than normal

Rainfall: Above average

Acres impacted by wildfires: None

Timing for start of harvest: Average

Start date of harvest: Aug. 12

Yields: Average

Sonoma County vintners are reporting exceptional fruit quality from the 2025 vintage and anticipate high-quality wines. After a winter marked by steady rainfall and mild temperatures and little to no “frost watch” evenings, the season unfolded with near-ideal conditions through mid-October. A warm, balanced summer provided consistent ripening, while occasional cool evenings helped maintain acidity and structure in the fruit.

Harvest began right on schedule in mid-August with grapes ready for sparkling wines. Growers noted even ripening across vineyard blocks and exceptional flavor development. Yields were healthy, with some vineyards and varieties reporting slightly larger crops than the prior year, thanks to the favorable spring set. The harvest pace picked up for the first full week in October as the forecast began calling for rain.

Across the county, growers and vintners worked steadily to get as much fruit off the vine before the rain and cooler temperatures set in.

Overall, the 2025 vintage was marked with the usual logistics, collaboration between growers and vintners and then a quick finish — all resulting in excellent fruit quality.

SUISUN VALLEY

Total winegrape acreage: 3,000
Most-planted varieties: Cabernet Sauvignon, Petite Sirah and Chardonnay

HARVEST AT-A-GLANCE

Average temperatures: Cooler than normal

Rainfall: Average

Acres impacted by wildfires: None

Timing for start of harvest: Average

Start date of harvest: Late August

Yields: Average

Vintners are reporting very good quality for the 2025 vintage despite some unexpected challenges with shrivel and low pH for some varieties at harvest time. Timing for the growing season ran a bit later than average but was otherwise normal and uneventful.

TEMECULA

Total winegrape acreage: 2,500
Most-planted varieties: Cabernet Sauvignon, Syrah and Petite Sirah
Fastest-growing varieties by plantings: Vermentino and Syrah

HARVEST AT-A-GLANCE

Average temperatures: Cooler than normal

Rainfall: Below average

Acres impacted by wildfires: None

Timing for start of harvest: Later than normal

Start date of harvest: Aug. 22

Yields: Below average

Vintners expect a high-quality vintage for early- and mid-ripening grape varieties, with great acidity and good varietal expression. The 2025 growing season brought variable conditions in terms of weather and timing for flowering and bud break. Harvest began one to two weeks later than typical due to cooler weather, with less fruit on the vines leading to smaller yields for this vintage.





WINE INSTITUTE

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ABOUT WINE INSTITUTE

Established in 1934, Wine Institute is the public policy advocacy group of more than 1,000 California wineries and affiliated businesses that initiates and advocates state, federal and international public policy to enhance the environment for the responsible production, consumption and enjoyment of wine.