

Beaujolais harvesting to begin Friday, September 1st



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The Beaujolais vineyards have the green light! Harvesting began on August 28th for Chardonnays and will start tomorrow, Friday, September 1st, for Gamays, in the earliest-ripening areas of the 12 Beaujolais appellations, and intensify day by day. The harvest kick-off date is set each year using technical data from *Réseau Maturation* (the ripening network), but winegrowers can of course adapt the date based on the ripeness of each of their plots. For nearly a month, over 20,000 pickers will be hard at work in the vineyard rows, since the majority of harvesting is still done by hand in the Beaujolais. Once picked, pressed and vinified, the Gamay and Chardonnay grapes will yield Beaujolais, Beaujolais Villages and Beaujolais crus with a variety of profiles.

The 2023 Vintage: first half of the year marked by “normal” weather, in line with the last 30-year average

The first quarter was mild, with rainfall and sunshine levels more or less within the 30-year average. April was cool, rainy and not very sunny. The very first green shoots sprouted on April 7th, the average date for bud break since 1993. The weather in May was quite a mix and divided in two, with mild temperatures and rain until mid-May then dry in the second half. Under ideally warm and dry conditions, flowering occurred in early June. It lasted 8 days on average, ending around June 9th. After a warm month of June, with normal rainfall and very substantial sunshine, plant growth was normal. June temperatures were the highest on record, just behind those in June 2003 and June 2017. There was also a major surplus of sun exposure, with 69 hours of sunshine, i.e. 30% more than normal.

The summer was punctuated by a mixture of warm and somewhat cool spells. July was warm and relatively sunny. Hailstorms, that were locally violent, hit the vineyards on July 9th and 11th. Early August was dry but cool. The mid-veraison stage, when the grapes change colour, was reached around August 7th on average. During the first fortnight, average daily temperatures were below the 30-year average and overcast skies brought some rain and a hailstorm on Sunday, August 13th, striking the northern crests of the vineyards. However, the second half of August was sunny, giving the grapes a chance to ripen gradually.

Overall, as of today, the 2023 vintage is looking quite promising, despite the variable summer weather. The harvest is on course to produce a yield slightly higher than the last five-year average.

Daniel Bulliat, vice-president of Inter Beaujolais announced: *"The 2023 harvests are here. Following a sunny and scorching late August, our grapes have reached maximum ripeness with good levels of alcohol and concentration. The last 45 days are always when the excellence of a vintage is determined. We can expect a normal harvest in terms of quantity, despite the climate-related hazards (hail and wind) that some vineyards experienced. After two low-yield years, that's good news. Harvesting began on August 28th for Chardonnays and September 1st for Gamays. The year 2023, a year of winegrowers, will be remembered as one that required keeping an extra watchful eye on the health of the vines. Each winegrower now bears the responsibility of producing the very best for the 2023 vintage."*

[Interview] Philippe Bardet, president of Inter Beaujolais: *"From north to south, the Beaujolais has all it takes to ensure a great 2023 vintage... When I tasted the grapes that are now slowly but surely reaching the end of their ripening stage, I was pleasantly surprised by their distinctive fruitiness, crisp skins, pips with a hint of hazelnut and flesh that melts in your mouth. Great wines are made from ripe, healthy grapes... and that's what we've got! In our vineyards, a joyful effervescence is about to shift into high gear, bringing together grape-pickers from all over, to work alongside our winegrowers and wine estates determined to produce exceptional wines full of character to meet the ever-growing demand for our Beaujolais wines."*

*** Réseau Maturation (Ripening Network)**

The Réseau Maturation is conducting its 32nd season with the 2023 vintage. As soon as veraison reaches 25%, around 200 Beaujolais winegrowers weigh, smell, press and analyse their grapes twice a week in one of the thirty ripening centres. The bi-weekly samplings make it possible to monitor the grape ripening closely in order to begin harvesting at an optimal date, which is fundamental for wine quality. 186 plots of Gamay and 61 plots of Chardonnay make up the network. The results of the samplings are sent to the Rhône Chamber of Agriculture, which coordinates and runs the network. The data collected is compiled, analysed and then made available to the growers and the wine industry. It is a valuable monitoring and decision-making tool that operates in a unique way.

In addition to this network, 13 plots are monitored by SICAREX Beaujolais: analyses of malic and tartaric acids, potassium, ammoniacal nitrogen and anthocyanin potential are used to determine a colour index.

About Beaujolais wines

Located between Lyon to the south, Pays Mâconnais to the north and bordered by the Saône River to the east, the Beaujolais region spans the Rhône and Saône-et-Loire *départements*. The Beaujolais vineyards stretch out over 13,500 hectares of vines claimed in 12 Beaujolais appellations where over 2000 estates, 9 wine cooperatives and 200 operators involved in the wine trade thrive. The Beaujolais appellations stand out thanks to the expression of their wines whether Festive, Expressive or Exceptional. The 100%-red crus in the northern half: Brouilly, Chénas, Chiroubles, Côte de Brouilly, Fleurie, Juliéna, Morgon, Moulin-à-Vent, Régnié and Saint-Amour; as well as Beaujolais and Beaujolais Villages in the south, and surrounding the crus, are produced in all three colours and in vin nouveau.

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