

CRUASIA

UNCORKED FLAVOURS

a monthly newsletter on WINE!



The Grape Timeline: Crafting Wine Through Harvest



WELCOME to our newsletter for the start of Autumn!

As the golden hues of autumn begin to paint the vineyards, we find ourselves at the most crucial juncture of the winemaking calendar: the harvest season. This month, we delve into the intricate dance between nature and nurture that is grape harvesting, exploring how timing shapes the essence of the wines we cherish.



THE ART OF VINE HARVESTING

Grape harvesting is a critical phase in winemaking, with timing playing a crucial role in determining the quality and characteristics of the final wine. The decision of when to harvest is one of the most important choices a winemaker makes each year, as it directly influences the wine's flavour profile, alcohol content, acidity, and overall balance. Picking the perfect moment to harvest is an art form that combines science, experience, and a touch of intuition.

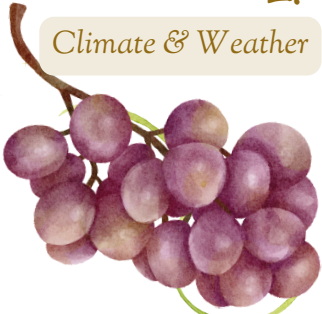
The optimal harvest time varies depending on mainly four factors:

1. *Grape Variety:*

Different grape varieties ripen at different rates and have unique ideal sugar-to-acid ratios. For example, Chardonnay typically ripens earlier than Cabernet Sauvignon. In many regions, Chardonnay might be harvested in late August or early September, while Cabernet Sauvignon often isn't picked until late September or even October.

2.

Climate & Weather



The region's climate and specific weather conditions of the growing season significantly impact ripening. For instance, in cooler Austrian regions like the Wachau Valley, Grüner Veltliner grapes might not be harvested until mid to late October to achieve desired ripeness and flavor development. Conversely, in warmer southern European countries like Spain, particularly in regions such as Jerez, Palomino grapes used for Sherry production might be ready for harvest as early as late August or early September. These differing harvest times, despite both being in Europe, highlight the significant impact of regional climate variations on grape ripening schedules.

3.

Wine Style



Brix is a scale used to measure the sugar content of grapes, with each degree Brix equaling about 1 gram of sugar per 100 grams of grape juice.

The intended style of wine influences the desired ripeness level. For sparkling wines, grapes are often harvested early to maintain high acidity and lower sugar levels. In the Champagne region of France, grapes are typically picked at 18-20° Brix. In contrast, for a full-bodied red wine like Amarone della Valpolicella from Italy's Veneto region, grapes are left to partially dry after harvest, concentrating sugars to levels often exceeding 30° Brix, resulting in wines with higher alcohol content and more intense flavors.

Terroir

4.



The unique environmental factors of a vineyard, including soil composition and microclimate, affect ripening patterns. In Burgundy, for instance, Premier Cru and Grand Cru vineyards on mid-slopes often ripen earlier than those on lower slopes due to better drainage and sun exposure. Similarly, in a single vineyard in Tuscany, Sangiovese grapes on well-drained, rocky soils might ripen faster than those in areas with more clay content.

Climate change

Climate change is significantly altering the landscape of viticulture across Europe, with profound effects on grape harvesting practices and timing. These changes are reshaping traditional wine-growing regions and challenging long-established harvest norms.



Early Harvests

One of the most noticeable impacts is the trend towards earlier harvests. In Champagne, France, the average harvest start date has moved forward by approximately two weeks over the past 30 years. In 1988, harvesting typically began around September 27th; by 2018, it was often starting around September 12th. This shift affects the balance of sugar and acidity in the grapes, potentially altering the classic Champagne style.

Changing Regional Suitability

Warming temperatures are making previously marginal areas more suitable for grape growing. In England, once considered too cool for quality wine production, vineyards are now thriving. Regions like Sussex and Kent are producing award-winning sparkling wines, with harvest dates moving from late October to early October or even late September in recent years.

Varietal Shifts

In Bordeaux, rising temperatures are affecting the ripening patterns of different grape varieties. Merlot, which traditionally ripened earlier than Cabernet Sauvignon, is now sometimes ripening too quickly, leading to overripe flavors and high alcohol levels. Some winemakers are considering increasing their plantings of later-ripening Cabernet Sauvignon or experimenting with heat-tolerant varieties like Touriga Nacional.

Altitude & Cooler Sites

Some Austrian winemakers are responding to warming trends by planting vineyards at higher altitudes. In the Wachau, where vineyards traditionally ranged from the Danube's banks to about 400 meters above sea level, new plantings are now being established at elevations up to 500 meters or higher. These cooler sites allow for later harvesting, helping to preserve the acidity and aromatic profiles that characterize Austrian wines.

Impact on Traditional Styles

The changing climate is challenging the production of some traditional Austrian wine styles. For instance, the production of Eiswein (ice wine) is becoming increasingly difficult and rare. Historically made from grapes naturally frozen on the vine, usually in December or January, the warmer winters are making it harder to achieve the necessary freezing conditions.

Wine Styles

As mentioned, the timing of grape harvesting plays a crucial role in determining the style and characteristics of the resulting wine. For sparkling wines like Champagne and Franciacorta, as well as crisp white wines such as Sauvignon Blanc from cooler regions, Pinot Grigio, and Vinho Verde, an earlier harvest is typically preferred. This approach preserves high acidity and lower sugar levels, resulting in wines with lower alcohol content, zesty flavours, and in some cases, subtle herbaceous notes. Riesling for drier styles is also often harvested earlier to maintain its signature acidity and produce lighter, crisper wines.

On the other hand, many red wines benefit from later harvesting. Cabernet Sauvignon and Syrah/Shiraz, for instance, are often left on the vine longer to achieve fuller ripeness, developing complex flavours and softer tannins. Zinfandel is another variety that's typically harvested late to produce its characteristic jammy, concentrated fruit flavours. For sweet wines, the harvest can be delayed even further. Late Harvest Riesling is picked well after normal harvest time to concentrate sugars for dessert wines. Amarone, while not technically late-harvested, uses ripe grapes that are then dried for months to intensify flavors and sugar content. Ice Wine production pushes the harvest to extreme limits, waiting until the grapes freeze on the vine, which can occur well into winter in some regions. These varied approaches to harvest timing demonstrate how winemakers can significantly influence the final product by carefully choosing when to pick their grapes.

AND FINALLY
IT'S HERE



WEINWURMS ASIA BLEND CUVÉE

RM136



Simple the perfect accompaniment to Asian dishes !

This cuvée from Gruner Veltiner & Pinot Blanc is perfectly harmonizing with Asian food. It has won Bronze at the Cathay Pacific Hong Kong International Wine & Spirit Competition. Only 36 winemaker were able to earn medals in Hong Kong.

Combining the Austrian Grüner Veltliner and Pinot Blanco, the result is a supreme mix with thirst-quenching character. Dry with lush fruit flavours and crisp acidity, the cuvée offers refreshing vibrancy that is the ideal counterpoint to spicy food. Try this wine that meets the full gamut of Asian cuisine's complex flavours!

TASTING NOTES: Citrus fresh, zests, firm fruit, delicately sweet, appetizing balance, nutty, dense with refreshing peppery notes, hearty acidity, chalky grip.

FOOD PAIRING: Nyonya Cuisine, Sushi, Sashimi, Dim Sum, Szechuan Cuisine, Tandoori chicken & mild Thai Curry, seafood salad, south-east Asian dishes with ginger or galangal and lemongrass, Vietnamese food.



Christoph's

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RM136



WEINWURMS GLÜCKSMOMENT ZWEIFELT 2021



Single Vineyard Ried Schilling. A happy coincidence that grand father Anton planted his first vineyard 70 years ago. 2 years later the Gruner Veltliner turned out to be a Zweigelt. And up to our days the prize for one year of careful vineyard management is a moment of happiness ...sip for sip.

GRAPE VARIETY: Zweigelt

TASTING NOTES: Intense ruby, fresh, cheeky fruit, herb-wrapped sour cherries, silky tannin, extremely pleasant to drink, even when chilled a pleasure.



RM136



WEINWURMS FRUCHTBÜNDEL BLAUER PORTUGIESER 2021

This wine bundles love of life with berry aromas, elegant acidity and round tannins – a wine for hot summer nights just as for wintertime pleasure in front of a chimney fire.

GRAPE VARIETY: Blauer Portugieser

TASTING NOTES: Dark fruity wild berries and meadow hay, a little forest ground, blackberries, fresh tannins, smoky notes, stimulating spice, full-bodied, elegant long finish. Try with veal fillet with pumpkin risotto, goose liver pate, snack plate with liver sausage.

UPCOMING at Christoph's

Christoph's Wine Fair
5:30pm Sept 7 (Sat), RM 128 per pax

Weisnfest Penang 2024
6-10pm Sept 28 (Sat) &
1-5pm Sept 29 (Sun), RM 198 per pax

in next issue

Rosé All Day: Versatile Wines for Everyone's Taste



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christoph_pg

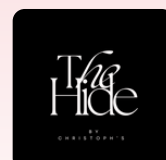


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EST. 2021