



Bordeaux Harvest Report

Update: October 18, 2005

2005 Proclaimed an Exceptional Year: 70 hours more sun and 50% less rain

As Bordeaux's harvest nears completion, the region's winegrowers are toasting an exceptional year. The weather was the story in Bordeaux this year. The region experienced 50 percent less rain and 70 hours more sun than an average year. Ideal conditions in the vineyards resulted in balanced grapes of remarkable quality. For reds, Left and Right Bank producers agree that the 2005 vintage will produce magnificent wines with hallmark Bordeaux qualities.

Included in this update are initial impressions of the varieties, details on the 2005 growing season, and official harvest dates for each appellation and variety. [Photos are available upon request.](#)

Outlook by variety

Sauvignon Blanc: 2005 has proved to be a noteworthy year for Sauvignon Blanc. Weather during the last two weeks of August played a key role in the development of this grape, leading to beautiful aromatics and balanced maturity, acidity, and freshness – perfect for dry white wines of great quality.

Semillon: Crisp September nights paired with heat during the day supported the development of botrytis, essential for the development of the signature sweet Bordeaux wines. *Noble rot* evolved under ideal conditions and produced berries with honeyed and candied citrus notes.

Merlot and Malbec: With smaller than average berry-size due to dry weather and other climate conditions, the Merlot and Malbec reached optimum brix levels. Color extraction is aided by highly concentrated anthocyanins (the organic compounds responsible for the rich, purple-red, color of the grapes and resulting wines). Based on initial tastings during fermentation, opinions are positive, and the potential is generally agreed to be remarkable.

Cabernet Franc and Cabernet Sauvignon: These later-developing varieties profited from dry conditions and achieved full physiological ripeness. They exhibit the rare balance between sugar, tannin, and flavor, ultimately expressing the typicity of Bordeaux. One can expect beautiful, round, significant wines with the classic hallmarks of Bordeaux.

The 2005 Growing Season

Flowering began at the end of May and was widespread by early June due to warm weather. Depending on the vineyard, the mid-flowering was observed between June 1 and 6. The vine's fruit developed 5 to 6 days earlier than in 2004. By June 30, on most properties, the grapes were beginning to touch and bunches were closing. Veraison (the process of color development in the grape) began by July 18. The first fruit was picked for dry whites and sparkling wines on Sept. 5.

With less rain during the growing season, the 2005 harvest will be modest. The total volume is expected to be in the neighborhood of 600 million liters (harvest 2004 was 660 million liters).

The first nine months of the year were marked by:

- 70 hours more sun than the thirty-year average.
- Temperatures above the thirty-year average (from 1 to 4.2 degrees, depending on the month, with the one exception being February when temperatures were 2.3 degrees below average.)
- Rainfall well below the thirty-year average (-305mm), to which the vines successfully adapted in most cases.

June:

- Sunshine: 269 hours (27 hours above the thirty-year average)
- Average temperature: 72°F (4.2 degrees above the thirty year average)
- Precipitation: 1.26 inches (0.94 inches below the thirty year average)

July

- Sunshine: 273 hours (Three hours less than the thirty-year average)
- Average temperature: 72°F (2 above the thirty-year average)
- Precipitation: 0.79 inches (1 inch below the thirty-year average)

August

- Sunshine: 283 hours (34 hours above the thirty-year average)
- Average Temperature: 71 degrees (1.3 degrees above the thirty-year average)
- Precipitation: 0.55 inches (1.6 inches below the thirty-year average)

September

- Sunshine: 198 hours (Nine hours below the thirty-year average)
- Average Temperature: 65°F (.7 degrees above the thirty year average)
- Precipitation: 2.2 inches (0.71 inches below the thirty year average)

2005 Harvest Kick Off

The official start of harvest for varieties and appellations were announced on the following dates. According to AOC guidelines, grapes may not be picked before the officially determined date. These dates are referred to in French as the "Bans des Vendanges" or the pronouncement of the harvest.

- Sept. 5: White AOC wines and all vines intended for sparkling Bordeaux wine (*Crémant de Bordeaux*).
- Sept. 7: AOC Bordeaux rose produced by maceration and direct pressing
- Sept. 14: Merlot and Malbec from AOC Pessac-Leognan, Graves, Saint-Emilion, Pomerol, Lalande-de-Pomerol
- Sept. 16: Merlot, Malbec, Cabernet Franc, Petit Verdot for all red AOC's
- Sept. 23: The first selections for sweet white wines from AOC Barsac and Sauternes
- Sept. 26: Other AOC vines for sweet white wines

- Sept. 28: Cabernet Sauvignon from AOC Pessac-Leognan, Graves, Haut-Medoc, Listrac Medoc, Moulis, Medoc, Margaux, Pauillac, Saint-Julien and Saint Estephe
- Oct. 3: General kick-off of Cabernet Sauvignon harvest and all AOC reds (other than those started on September 28)

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