vinetur

Nyetimber Starts Record-Early Grape Harvest After Britain’s Warmest Summer

The sparkling wine producer began picking on Sept. 14 in southeast England, five days ahead of its previous earliest harvest.

Tuesday, September 15, 2026



Nyetimber, one of England’s best-known sparkling wine producers, began harvesting grapes on Sept. 14 in parts of southeastern England, its earliest start on record after a summer of unusual heat accelerated ripening on some vines.

The company said a small number of grapes were ready to be picked at its vineyards, mainly because of this year’s hot weather. The start is five days earlier than Nyetimber’s previous earliest harvest date, Sept. 19, 2018. The producer has 11 vineyards across West Sussex, Hampshire and Kent and expects to increase harvesting from Sept. 21.

The early start comes as provisional figures from the Met Office show the United Kingdom had its warmest summer since national temperature records began in 1884. At Nyetimber’s vineyard in Amberley, West Sussex, about 80 pickers were on site Monday as the first phase of the harvest began.

Nyetimber said the larger harvest operation will begin next week, with around 500 pickers expected to take part. The company expects to collect as much as 170 tonnes of grapes a day on average during the main picking period. The harvest is due to continue until early October and could produce about 1.5 million bottles of sparkling wine.

Cherie Spriggs, the company’s head winemaker, said the 2026 season brought another unprecedented harvest for the estate. She said the year had also brought setbacks, including late spring frosts that affected almost 30% and a summer drought that reduced the size of some berries. Even so, she said the hot and sunny conditions had helped offset those pressures and created strong potential for high-quality wine.

Company officials said they believe 2026 could prove to be a vintage year for Nyetimber because of the recent weather pattern. Ben Kantsler, the company’s head viticulturist, was in the vineyards in Amberley as Chardonnay grapes were checked ahead of the first picks.

The early harvest is being closely watched beyond Nyetimber because it points to a wider shift in how English wine producers may have to plan for warmer growing seasons. For sparkling wine makers in particular, moving harvest dates can affect labor scheduling, fruit handling, winery capacity and decisions about the balance of sugar and acidity that shape the final style of the wine. In the drinks sector more broadly, a compressed or earlier harvest window can change production calendars and supply planning, especially for producers that depend on seasonal labor and tightly timed

processing.

England’s wine industry has expanded rapidly in recent years, with sparkling wine at the center of that growth, and producers have often benefited from conditions that can support grapes such as Chardonnay, Pinot Noir and Pinot Meunier. At the same time, hotter summers, drought and spring frost bring more volatility to the growing season. Nyetimber’s 2026 harvest reflects both sides of that trend: weather warm enough to speed maturity, but also conditions severe enough to threaten fruit volume and uniformity.

The company’s first pick on Sept. 14 was limited to parcels where grapes had already matured. A broader ramp-up from Sept. 21 is expected to determine how much of the crop can meet the quality levels needed for premium sparkling wine. With picking now underway in West Sussex and more crews set to arrive across the estate, the next few weeks will test whether the season’s heat translates into both strong quality and enough volume to meet production expectations.