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Rheinhessen Ends Its Grape Harvest Earlier Than Ever

A hot, dry summer reduced yields. Growers say the 2026 grapes are exceptionally good and highly aromatic.

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The grape harvest in Rheinhessen, one of Germany’s main wine regions, is ending with the start of autumn and earlier than ever, according to a report published Wednesday by public broadcaster SWR and carried by Tagesschau. After about four weeks of large-scale picking, only isolated parcels are still being harvested in the next few days.

The main harvest began at the end of August, when mechanical harvesters moved through the vineyards across the region in Rhineland-Palatinate. Growers are finishing unusually early this year, a development the report linked to the conditions of the 2026 growing season.

A spokesperson for the Farmers' and Winegrowers' Association of southern Rhineland-Palatinate said the hot, dry summer had a clear effect on volumes. Growers harvested fewer grapes, the spokesperson said, with yields varying depending on local rainfall and whether vines had been irrigated. Vineyards that received more rain or had access to irrigation produced more fruit than those that stayed drier.

Even with the smaller crop, growers see reasons for optimism. The association's spokesperson said grape quality is "exceptionally good." The prolonged heat meant there was almost no fungal pressure, reducing one of the main threats to vineyard health during the season.

The same weather pattern also appears to have held back pests. According to the report, insects such as the spotted wing drosophila, known in German as the Kirschessigfliege, were apparently barely able to multiply this year. Lower disease and pest pressure can reduce losses in the vineyard and leave more fruit in marketable condition at harvest.

Growers also reported that the grapes are highly aromatic, suggesting that the fruit's flavor profile has developed well despite the dry conditions. On that basis, the regional association believes the 2026 wine vintage could turn out to be very good, although the final judgment will depend on how wines develop after processing and aging.

That outlook matters beyond the vineyards themselves. A smaller harvest can tighten supply, while strong quality can support pricing and shape buying decisions by wineries, distributors, and export customers. If the favorable quality assessment holds, producers may adjust cellar planning, barrel purchases, and sales strategies around a vintage that could be more limited in volume but stronger in reputation.

The report from SWR said the harvest across Rheinhessen is now largely complete, with only a small amount of late fruit still to be picked in the coming days. For growers in the region, the season is closing with a mixed picture: fewer grapes after a hot and dry

summer, but fruit that appears healthy, aromatic, and promising for the wines to come.