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Tedeschi says its 2026 Valpolicella harvest delivered lower yields with strong quality

August rain and cooler nights helped the grapes reach strong phenolic ripeness after a Sept. 7 harvest start earlier than average

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Tedeschi, a family-run winery in Valpolicella, said in October that its 2026 harvest ended with lower grape yields but strong signs of quality, after a growing season marked by summer heat, August rain and cooler nighttime temperatures.

The producer said harvesting began on Sept. 7, earlier than the average for its vineyards but not by an unusual margin. Riccardo Tedeschi, the winery's enologist, said the season did not follow a simple pattern in which hot weather steadily pushed grapes toward an earlier harvest. Instead, he said, periods of intense heat sometimes slowed the pace of ripening and changed expectations that had formed earlier in the summer.

What proved more important, according to the winery, were rain events in August followed by cooler nights. Tedeschi said that combination helped the fruit reach strong phenolic ripeness, a term winemakers use for the maturity of compounds such as anthocyanins and tannins that shape the color, texture and aging capacity of red wines. He said the effect was reinforced by the position of the estate's vineyards on higher hillsides, where temperatures can moderate more quickly after warm days.

"I don't like to make predictions when the harvest is still ongoing," Riccardo Tedeschi said in a statement released after the picking was completed. "I prefer to wait until the work has been done, look at the results, and only then sum things up."

He said the final picture was a vintage with "reduced quantity but above all optimal phenolic ripening of the grapes." He added that the wines now in the cellar appear likely to show strong structure and, in some respects, resemble the 2022 vintage, which the winery associates with age-worthy red wines.

Tedeschi did not provide a numerical estimate for how much production fell in 2026, and it did not identify specific plots or varieties that saw the largest decline. Valpolicella producers work mainly with Corvina, Corvinone and Rondinella, grapes used in styles ranging from fresh red wines to Amarone, which requires a post-harvest drying period. The winery said that process is now under way for part of the crop, meaning a fuller picture of the vintage will emerge only after vinification and, for some wines, extended aging.

The winery's early assessment also pointed to a distinct aromatic profile. It said the grapes and young wines are showing cherry and black cherry more clearly than currant, along with floral notes of violet and a noticeable but restrained spice character. Those observations remain preliminary because young wines can change significantly during fermentation, aging and blending, but they offer an initial view of how growers

and winemakers are reading the season.

Tedeschi placed the 2026 harvest in a broader pattern that many Italian wine producers have been describing in recent years: warmer growing seasons, less clearly defined transitions between spring, summer and fall, and weather events that can quickly alter vineyard development. In that setting, the winery said, close observation of individual parcels has become increasingly important. Different exposures, elevations and soil conditions can produce different responses to heat and rainfall, even within the same appellation.

That parcel-by-parcel approach is especially relevant in Valpolicella, where hillside vineyards can vary sharply over short distances. Tedeschi said the 2026 season showed how site differences can affect the pace of ripening and the balance between sugar development and phenolic maturity. In practical terms, that means harvest timing may depend less on a single calendar moment for an entire estate and more on repeated checks of separate blocks as conditions evolve.

The winery is led by siblings Antonietta, Sabrina and Riccardo Tedeschi, along with Enrico, Antonietta’s son, who represents the next generation in the business. In its harvest statement, the family said the season underscored the value of altitude, local knowledge and flexibility in a climate that is becoming harder to predict from one year to the next.

For now, the work has shifted from the vineyard to the cellar. Grapes selected for drying are being monitored, and lots intended for other wines are moving through the first stages of winemaking as the estate measures how the fruit from Sept. 7 onward performs in fermentation and early aging.