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Optimism Reigns in Piedmont's 2024 Harvest

Piedmont's Winemakers Navigate Weather Challenges, Eye Promising Harvest

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Neive village and Langhe vineyards (Piedmont)

The 2024 harvest season has officially begun in the renowned wine region of Piedmont, Italy, with optimism running high despite the increasingly unpredictable effects of climate change. This year, the region experienced unusual weather patterns, with

heavy rainfall in spring followed by high summer temperatures. Nonetheless, local producers remain hopeful about the potential quality of the harvest, crediting careful vineyard management and the stabilization of weather conditions throughout the growing season.

The early stages of the harvest are already underway in the rolling hills of Cuneo, where the first grapes to be picked include Pinot and Chardonnay, predominantly used for sparkling wines in the Bassa Langa area. For those grapes destined for the prestigious Alta Langa DOCG, however, the harvest will be delayed by a few days. During the latter half of September, Moscato, Arneis, and additional Chardonnay grapes will follow. Red varietals such as Dolcetto are set to be picked shortly after. Meanwhile, Barbera and Nebbiolo, two of Piedmont's flagship varieties, are expected to be harvested between late September and early October.

This year's weather has played a pivotal role in shaping the harvest. The spring rains helped offset the lingering effects of previous droughts but also introduced the risk of fungal diseases. This presented a significant challenge for winemakers, as these diseases can devastate crops if not properly managed. However, thanks to expert technical support and the experience of local growers, the situation has remained under control. Summer brought more stable temperatures, which facilitated optimal grape development, reinforcing confidence in the quality of this year's crop.

The sparkling wine sector in the Alta Langa territory, in particular, shows great promise. Despite early-season challenges, Pinot Noir, a key grape for these sparkling wines, appears to be in good condition. This suggests that while the harvest may be average in quantity, quality is expected to be exceptional. The same holds true for the Moscato grapes used in the famed Moscato d'Asti DOCG, which will be harvested in the early days of September. The distinctive temperature fluctuations between day and night in Piedmont this season have enhanced the aromatic development of the grapes, a critical factor in producing high-quality wines.

Among the red varietals, Nebbiolo, Dolcetto, and Barbera play a central role in the Piedmont harvest. Nebbiolo, the grape behind world-renowned wines like Barolo and Barbaresco, is particularly sensitive to climate variations, making it a more

unpredictable but rewarding variety. Fortunately, current forecasts indicate favorable conditions for Nebbiolo this year. The combination of well-timed rainfall, warm summer temperatures, and skilled viticultural practices suggests that 2024 could be an excellent vintage for Piedmont's red wines, with Nebbiolo potentially delivering wines of impressive structure and complexity.

Dolcetto and Barbera, while perhaps less internationally known than Nebbiolo, are also key to the region's winemaking heritage. Both varieties are integral to the region's identity, with Barbera in particular being one of the most widely planted red grapes in Italy. As the harvest season progresses, growers are optimistic that these varietals will contribute to another successful year for Piedmont's reds.

A Harvest of Contrasts

While Piedmont's 2024 harvest is progressing under relatively optimistic conditions, other wine-producing regions across Italy are experiencing varied fortunes. In Lombardy, the grape harvest in Franciacorta began in mid-August, with healthy grapes and an expected yield in line with the regional average. Meanwhile, in Oltrepò Pavese, excessive rain has resulted in an anticipated 30% reduction in harvest yields, although the quality of the grapes, particularly for white and sparkling wines, remains promising.

In Trentino, the harvesting of grapes for TrentoDoc, Italy's renowned mountain sparkling wine, is also underway. Producers like Ferrari Trento have begun working with their first batches of Chardonnay, with Pinot Noir set to follow later in September. While the region's mountainous terrain presents unique challenges, there is strong optimism for the overall quality of this year's sparkling wines.

In Veneto, the harvest of Glera, the grape used in Prosecco production, will kick off in early September. Current forecasts suggest that this year's Glera harvest will be of high quality, with volumes expected to match those of previous years. Favorable weather conditions, along with the grapes' healthy status, have producers hopeful that 2024 will be another strong year for Prosecco, Italy's most famous sparkling wine.

Despite the challenges posed by increasingly volatile weather patterns, the 2024 harvest in Piedmont—and indeed across much of Italy—is being met with cautious optimism. The ability of winemakers to adapt to these challenges through technical expertise and a deep understanding of their vineyards has been crucial to securing the quality of this year's crop.

In Piedmont, a region known for its timeless elegance and ability to produce world-class wines, the combination of favorable late-season weather and experienced vineyard management has laid the groundwork for a promising vintage. As Nebbiolo, Barbera, and other key varieties make their way to the cellar, expectations remain high that the 2024 wines will offer a rich reflection of the region's diverse terroirs and winemaking traditions.

Producers, consumers, and critics alike will be eagerly awaiting the release of these wines in the coming years, as they continue to showcase the resilience and innovation of Italy's viticultural community. Despite the increasingly complex environmental challenges, the outlook for the 2024 vintage in Piedmont and beyond is hopeful—a testament to the unwavering dedication of Italy's winemakers in preserving and enhancing their craft.