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Italy's 2024 Wine Harvest Balances Challenges and Promises

Climate Change Tests Producers, But Quality Remains High

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Vineyards in the Langhe region (Piedmont) and view of the village of Neive

The 2024 harvest in Italy has been marked by a blend of challenges and promising expectations in terms of quality. The country's main wine-producing regions experienced a year less severe than the previous two harvests, which had been marred

by extreme events, such as the severe peronospora infestation in 2023 and intense heat waves and drought in 2022. Nevertheless, yields in 2024 have often been lower than average, with significant variations across different regions.

In Piedmont, the winter began mildly, and spring was characterized by persistent rainfall lasting until late June. These weather conditions supported healthy vegetative growth, with summer temperatures that, although elevated, did not reach extreme peaks. This allowed vines to remain in good condition overall. Harvesting began later than usual, stretching from mid-September to October. The ripening of traditional varieties such as Nebbiolo and Barbera benefited from a cooler September, promoting the development of aromatic compounds and tannins.

In Veneto, the situation was more complex due to significant rainfall during the flowering period of Garganega, which severely affected yields. September's weather was less than ideal, complicating optimal grape development. However, wineries leveraged advanced technology to accelerate harvest operations at key moments, aiming to preserve as much quality as possible. Despite production losses, the main grape varieties are still expected to exhibit a certain degree of richness and depth in aroma.

In Tuscany, the year featured a cool spring followed by a warm summer that turned unseasonably cold toward the end of August and into September. These conditions influenced the ripening of local grape varieties. The southern areas of the Chianti Classico designation saw a slight increase in yields compared to 2023, though still below the decade's average. Varieties like Merlot ripened favorably, aided by cool temperatures that ensured even maturation, while Sangiovese showed more variable outcomes depending on vineyard location and vineyard management.

In Umbria, the Montefalco region recorded yields above recent averages. The hot and dry summer was balanced by a cooler, well-distributed rainy September, which supported vine health and balance. This allowed for even ripening, benefiting both white and red grape varieties.

In Marche, the Verdicchio dei Castelli di Jesi region experienced a growing season marked by alternating rain and sunshine in May and June, effectively preventing fungal diseases. Following a warm, dry summer, September rainfall and significant temperature differences between day and night enabled optimal ripening and aromatic development, generating positive expectations for the region's wines.

In Campania, weather conditions were relatively stable. High summer temperatures were followed by September rains that helped regulate grape ripening. This provided favorable harvest conditions. Although overall yields were somewhat below usual levels, late-season conditions allowed for good sugar concentration and phenolic development, benefiting varieties like Aglianico.

The overall outlook for Italy in 2024 indicates that despite difficulties and reduced production, the quality of the wines could be remarkable. Climate change has tested the skills and adaptability of producers, who have had to respond to shifting conditions to uphold vineyard quality. The final outcomes will depend heavily on vineyard management practices and the ability to tailor harvest strategies to weather-related challenges.