vinetur

2024 Vintage Brings Surprises to Central Loire

Weather challenges result in a striking vintage for white wines

Tuesday, November 26, 2024



Château de Saumur in the Loire Valley

The 2024 vintage has been one of the most challenging in recent memory for winemakers in the Central Loire Valley, a region celebrated for its white wines. While 2022 was hailed as one of the finest vintages of the past three decades, 2024 presented a more difficult scenario. Despite this, the quality of the wines, particularly the whites, has delivered surprising results.

Irregular weather patterns defined the growing season, with late frosts, hailstorms, and an unprecedented volume of rainfall nearly double the usual average. These conditions kept growers under constant pressure to safeguard vine health and fruit quality. François Dal, from the technical advisory body SICAVAC, described the year as "one of the greatest challenges of recent decades."

The season began with spring frosts that severely impacted several vineyard areas, followed by hailstorms that caused further damage. Persistent rainfall created ideal conditions for diseases like downy mildew, which affected both foliage and grape clusters, leaving a significant mark on production levels.

Unlike recent drought-stricken years, the conditions in 2024 required constant attention and swift decision-making. Menetou-Salon and Pouilly-Fumé were among the hardest-hit appellations, with severe mildew damage and historically low yields. Dal noted that while some areas suffered more than others, the overall situation was slightly better than during the disastrous 2021 vintage.

Cool temperatures and heavy rainfall delayed grape ripening, pushing the harvest into late September and extending well into October. This resulted in a staggered harvest, as differences in ripening across vineyard plots forced growers to carefully time the picking of each lot. This meticulous approach, while effective, led to a reduced overall yield, varying depending on farming practices and vineyard location.

Despite these difficulties, white wines emerged as the unexpected highlight of this tough vintage. Cooler conditions favored the development of balanced aromatic profiles, marked by freshness and good acidity. According to Dal, "the quality of the whites is a gratifying surprise in such a demanding year."

Although total production remains limited, this vintage offers consumers a chance to discover wines that reflect the resilience and adaptability of growers in the face of extreme conditions. For the Central Loire Valley, 2024 stands as a testament to the dedication of its winemakers and their commitment to excellence under adverse circumstances.