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Champagne Producers Hail 2025 Harvest as Best in Decades Despite Low Yields

Exceptional grape quality and early picking mark a standout vintage, with winemakers optimistic about the region’s future releases

Tuesday, September 16, 2025



The 2025 Champagne harvest has concluded, and producers across the region are calling it the best in three decades. Despite a smaller crop, the quality of the grapes is being described as exceptional by winemakers and industry experts. The harvest began

at record speed, with picking starting on August 20 in several villages—earlier than any previous year. This early start was prompted by a combination of steady July rains and an early August heatwave, which accelerated grape ripening.

The Comité Champagne (CIVC), which oversees the region's production, had anticipated a later start but released official picking dates on the same day that harvesting began. By August 18, tests showed average potential alcohol levels at 9.2 percent across all grape varieties. Just a week later, this had risen to 10.1 percent. However, CIVC technical teams advised growers to wait for optimal phenolic ripeness—meaning not just sugar content but also flavor and tannin maturity—before picking. They recommended waiting until Meunier reached above 10 percent potential alcohol, Pinot Noir above 10.5 percent, and Chardonnay above 11.5 percent.

This advice led many growers to delay their harvests slightly, but once the grapes reached phenolic ripeness, picking had to proceed rapidly to avoid overripe fruit and overly alcoholic base wines. Jean-Baptiste Lécaillon, Chef de Cave at Champagne Roederer, described this year's harvest as the "Formula One" vintage due to its speed and intensity. Roederer increased its picking teams and pressed grapes around the clock to keep up with the fast pace.

Other producers took a slower approach. Vincent Cuillier of Champagne Vincent Cuillier focused on single-vineyard cuvées and harvested each plot at its optimal ripeness over two weeks—a similar timeframe to Roederer's much larger operation. Both approaches were shaped by weather conditions that allowed for patience but required quick action once ripeness was achieved.

Sébastien Dubuisson, Quality and Sustainability Director at CIVC, noted that sudden overnight downpours during harvest threatened fully ripened bunches with berry breakage, forcing prompt picking in some plots. Fortunately, cool conditions during harvest limited disease pressure from sour rot and gray rot. Dubuisson said the result is a vintage with an ideal sugar-acidity balance and elegant juice profiles.

Eric Rodez of Champagne Eric Rodez called 2025 "a rare truly great vintage," possibly the best he has seen in thirty years. Despite these high marks for quality, yields remain low for the second consecutive year. In 2024, severe frost, hail, and mildew in areas

like Côte des Bar reduced yields dramatically; this year’s average yield is estimated between 9,000 and 10,000 kilograms per hectare—just enough to meet the region’s commercial target.

Yield differences are significant across sub-regions. Côte des Bar and parts of Montagne de Reims are expected to meet or exceed targets, while Côte des Blancs and other eastern areas will likely fall short. The CIVC attributes lower yields to cold weather during flowering last spring, which caused uneven bunch development and fewer bunches per vine—a lingering effect from last year’s difficult season.

Chardonnay was especially affected by poor flowering conditions and dry weather before harvest, resulting in smaller bunches with less juice than usual. Pinot Noir rebounded after a tough 2024 season; growers reported both high quality and better-than-expected quantity for this variety. Michel Drappier of Champagne Drappier expressed surprise at the strong Pinot Noir crop after last year’s losses.

Meunier showed uneven ripening depending on location but delivered excellent results where growers waited for full maturity. Cedric Moussé of Champagne Moussé described his Meunier as “delicate, juicy and marked by great minerality.”

While volumes are down again this year, producers are optimistic about what they have brought in from the vineyards. The consensus among winemakers is that 2025 will be remembered as an outstanding vintage for Champagne—small in quantity but remarkable in quality.