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Alsace Vineyards Conclude Earliest Grape Harvest in Decades Amid Unusual Rain and Humidity

Growers report lower yields but promising wine quality as rapid harvest disrupts local tourism and sparks climate adaptation talks

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The grape harvest in Alsace ended unusually early this year, with most vineyards finishing by September 20, just a month after the official start on August 19. This rapid pace was driven by persistent humidity and rain, which forced winegrowers to bring in their grapes quickly to preserve quality. Gilles Ehrhart, president of the Association des viticulteurs d’Alsace (AVA), explained that the weather conditions left little choice but to accelerate the harvest. “Humidity made our pickers and growers work fast to bring in the grapes in the best possible condition,” he said.

For many in the region, this year’s harvest was one of the shortest on record. Francis Backert, a grower in Dorlisheim and president of the Syndicat des vignerons indépendants d’Alsace (Synvira), noted that he had never finished so early in his 64 years. “The Backert family is known for being among the last to finish, but this year we wrapped up ahead of schedule,” he said.

Typically, the harvest in Alsace lasts about five weeks. This year, most professionals completed their work in just four weeks. According to Ehrhart, out of fifteen professionals present at a recent AVA meeting, ten had already finished harvesting completely, while the remaining five had only a few small parcels left.

The early end to the harvest was not just due to speed but also necessity. Rainfall during the final week pushed even those who usually wait for optimal ripeness to pick sooner than planned. The risk of rot and disease increased with each wet day, making it too risky to leave grapes on the vine any longer.

Despite these challenges, growers are optimistic about the quality of this year’s vintage. While yields are lower than average—meaning there will be less wine produced—the grapes that were harvested are showing promising flavors and balance. Many winemakers believe that 2025 could be a memorable year for Alsace wines in terms of taste and character.

The quick harvest has also affected local tourism and seasonal workers. Many who travel to Alsace for grape picking found themselves with less work than expected. Some local businesses that rely on harvest season traffic reported a shorter period of activity.

Growers across Alsace are now turning their attention from the fields to their cellars, where fermentation is underway. They will be monitoring closely how this unusual season translates into finished wines over the coming months. The hope is that careful timing and quick action during harvest will result in high-quality bottles despite the smaller crop.

This year’s experience has also sparked conversations among growers about adapting further to changing weather patterns. With climate variability becoming more common, many are considering new strategies for vineyard management and harvest planning in future years.

As fermentation continues and winemakers begin tasting their young wines, all eyes are on how this fast-paced season will be remembered—not just for its speed, but for what ends up in the glass.