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VINTAGE REPORT

Official Anderson Valley Vintage Report

The Best Year Yet

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With each new year there is a renewed sense of hope and excitement that this might be the best year yet. This feeling is what propels us as growers and vintners, for if the best is behind us, why would we continue on this path?




Mother nature always provides a song and dance for our growers and vintners, and this year her playlist was rather eclectic. Ranging from classical to heavy metal and a little bit of everything in-between, 2022 in Anderson Valley started with a very classical feel and ended with an unexpected twist. It's a good thing it wasn't our first concert, and that we know how to dance to a variety of tunes. The resulting performances from our growers and vintners ranges from good to great!

If conditions had been hot during this same period, we would have experienced an explosion of growth leading to a lot of shatter, also commonly referred to as peas and pumpkins. Evaluating cluster counts and bunch size, it became very clear that we were looking at a large crop. A blessing only if you can ripen it.

Highlights

- The winter of 2023 was one of the wettest in recent memory, the closest comparison would be 2006.
- Rain was in line with historical averages for Anderson Valley
- Favorable conditions during flowering allowed fruit set to be fairly full and even.
- With mild temperature through the summer the apprehension became if there would be enough heat to ripen the large crop.
- Patience is the key theme of this vintage.
- With Fall bringing warm sunny days between periods of moisture helped ripen some exceptionally tasty and balanced grapes.



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As we moved into summer, temperatures remained very mild pushing ripeness along at a very slow clip. Quandary starting to arise in the mind of the grower & vintner, will there be enough heat to provide the push needed to ripen such a large crop? Is this a disaster or greatness in the making? Voting for the latter, growers and vintners continued to patiently wait and manage their crop in accordance to its intended uses.

Sparkling farmers had the luxury of hanging a larger crop because the overall need to accumulate sugars is less than what is needed for still wine, only 18.5 to 19.5 brix. Whereas growers of still wine could gamble and let it hang or step in to reduce crop load and help speed up sugar development to achieve sugars from 22 to 26 Brix. Regardless, patience has turned out to be a key theme of the vintage. All growers want their fruit off the vine yesterday and our culture demands instant gratification, so patience is a virtue that has proven valuable in a vintage that seems to have taken its time.

With fall finally upon us, sparkling producers started picking their vineyards the first week in September. This feels late given what we have seen the past 5-6 years, but in reality, gets back to the historical normal. Slowly towards the end of the second week in September some still wine producers joined the party of harvest. Normally once harvest starts the pace ramps up quickly as we rush to get all the fruit off the vine. However, this year there was never really a point where ripeness threatened to run away. In fact, the issue was the opposite, patience needed to be exercised in order to find balance of sugars, acids, and flavors. Waiting was not easy as some areas of the valley saw .5" of rain at the tail end of September and another 1.5" through the first 3 weeks of October.

People began to fear winter had set in, but in-between the periods of moisture were warm sunny days that helped ripen some exceptionally tasty and balanced grapes. While each of our growers and vintners have a different tolerance to risk and level of patience, those who saw it through might possibly say this is the best vintage of our generation.

Ultimately, we invite you to come join us in the Anderson Valley today and in the years to come to taste and make your own judgements of the 2023 vintage. One thing is for certain, you won't be disappointed! Further more with a large crop we will have plenty to share.

"It was great to have the year where the vines were able to ripen slowly themselves. Winemakers were able to choose the time they wanted to pick and not be forced by a crew, the weather or fires."

NORMAN KOBLER

