

PRESS RELEASE:

Harvest 2022: Extraordinary Grapes, Extraordinary Wines

In spite of the hot, dry summer, best grape qualities for harmonious white wines and powerful reds

Alto Adige's winegrowers harvested healthy, fully ripe and high-quality grapes this year. In spite of the persistent heat and lack of rainfall, there are great expectations for the 2022 vintage: round, harmonious, balanced white wines and strong, full-bodied reds.

In terms of weather, Südtirol - Alto Adige has quite a particular year behind it, one which started with a very warm spring. "The above-average temperatures in mid-April were in stark contrast to the very cool April of 2021," explains Hansjörg Hafner, division manager for viticulture at the Fruitgrowing and Winegrowing Consulting Center. "As a result, the varieties in mid and lower-altitude vineyards budded earlier than in the previous year."

Since it also remained warm in May, there was rapid flowering in all locations, according to Hafner. "In normal years, the flowering time in the high-altitude vineyards lags about three weeks behind the time in the lower vineyards," explains Barbara Raifer, viticulture expert at the Laimburg Research Center. "This year, everything was pushed together to one week."

Few Problems with Heat or Drought

Another notable feature was the heat and lack of precipitation during the summer. Apart from July 2015, this July was the second hottest month ever, with average temperatures more than three degrees Celsius above the long-term average. In addition to that, hardly any rain fell. "Fortunately, the drought hardly caused any damage because most of the vineyards are equipped with a drip irrigation system, which means that they can be supplied with enough moisture – with a comparatively low requirement for water," Hafner says.

However, the dryness and the heat have consistently demanded more work from the winegrowers. "We had to make sure that the grapes didn't get too much sun, above all else by means of targeted foliage work," explains Andreas Kofler, president of the Consorzio Alto Adige Wines. However, that extra effort paid off. "All that is necessary is to take a look at the quality of the grapes," Kofler says.

A significant contribution has been made by the consistent quality policy, which includes targeted monitoring and reduction of yields. "If a vine has fewer grapes to feed, it has less stress and is more resistant to environmental influences such as heat and drought," says winemaker Hans Terzer, winemaker at St. Michael-Eppan Winery and one of the pioneers in the orientation toward quality over quantity in Alto Adige. And Terzer goes on to add, "The vineyards are simply worked well."

Early Harvest, Healthy Grapes

Warm spring months and hot summer months have seen to it that the 2022 grape harvest in Alto Adige began ten to fourteen days earlier than in the previous year in all locations throughout the region. In terms of volumes, the 2022 vintage ought to be largely in line with the average of recent years. “There are heat and drought-related fluctuations in some vineyards, but those who were able to supply the vines with enough water over the summer will not have any losses to lament,” says Barbara Raifer from the Laimburg Research Center. This is also because disease-related damage was rare – with the exception of areas that were affected by grape wilt.

There was also luck with the weather both before and during the harvest. Although there were strong thunderstorms in August and September, they did not bring any hail in most of the winegrowing areas, and thus there were hardly any hail-related losses this year. And even during harvest, only a few rainy days were recorded, but they had no effects on the grape quality. “This year, it was possible to harvest consistently healthy grapes,” says Hansjörg Hafner from the Fruitgrowing and Winegrowing Consulting Center.

Stephan Filippi, winemaker of Cantina Bozen, is in agreement about the quality of the grapes this year. “The grapes are perfect, healthy, and very, very good,” he says. Hans Terzer from St. Michael-Eppan is also happy about the extraordinary quality of the harvest. “I now have forty-six harvests under my belt here in San Michele, but I have hardly ever seen such beautiful, healthy, and fully ripe grapes.”

Great Red Wines from Fully Ripe Grapes

As a result of the heat and lack of rainfall, the grapes of all varieties show an exceptionally good ripeness and a lower acidity. This combination will be reflected in a higher alcohol content of the wines, which will present themselves as somewhat fuller and broader. “The high degree of ripeness is a huge advantage especially for Lagrein, Cabernet, and Merlot,” Cantina Bozen’s Filippi says. At higher elevations, there is also much to look forward to with Pinot Noir. He is also expecting high quality wines from Schiava (Vernatsch). “Santa Maddalena is developing very well, with full flavor and great ripeness,” Filippi adds.

Hans Terzer from St. Michael-Eppan appraises the 2022 Alto Adige red wine vintage in a similar way. “The Pinot Noir should be very nice, with a strong color and equally strong aromas,” Terzer says. “And the same holds true for Lagrein.” On the whole, Terzer is expecting an excellent red wine vintage with dense, concentrated wines, while Filippi speaks of a fruity 2022 vintage with powerful, full-bodied wines. “Because the alcohol content will be a little higher, you might drink half a glass less, but all in all I can say that we are looking forward to this vintage.”

White Wines with Developed Fruit

“White grapes in Alto Adige in 2022 were healthy and of high quality, the sugar content is good and the low acidity is under control,” says Barbara Raifer from the Laimburg Research Center. Extreme care was taken to harvest before the point when the acidity had dropped too far.

Hans Terzer from St. Michael-Eppan is convinced that above all the Chardonnay, Pinot Blanc, and Pinot Grigio will stand out from an overall good white wine year. “I am expecting lovely, harmonious wines with a balanced interplay of acidity. White wines from 2022 will be rounder, more harmonious, and more balanced,” Terzer says.

“I anticipate white wines with developed fruit that are not too acidic: there are many who especially like those”, explains Raifer. Gewürztraminer may also benefit from this year's conditions, according to Raifer. “Their aromas achieve their full expression even with lower acidity,” she explains.

Wine Sector Cautiously Optimistic

With a great vintage lying before us, the Alto Adige wine sector is cautiously optimistic about the future, as Consortium President Andreas Kofler emphasizes. Above all else, the excellent grape quality has lifted the mood among the winegrowers. “Harvesting was a joy because the weather cooperated and the grapes were consistently high quality,” says Kofler.

Images from the 2022 harvest in Alto Adige may be found [here](#).

Please direct all questions from the media to:

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