



## 2024 Grape Harvest in Sicily: Healthy Grapes and Quality Wines

*Positive balance from the DOC and DOCG Consortia despite the average drop of 20% due to drought*

Drought and unstable weather, but also ingenuity and know-how. These are the characteristics of Sicily's 2024 grape harvest, a vintage characterised by numerous difficulties overcome by the experience and constant research of Sicilian winemakers who have been producing wine for three thousand years. And yet, even difficult vintages hold surprises and authentic treasures for enthusiasts.

The island's grape harvest, the longest in Italy with 100 days of harvest from West to East, required effective responses and agronomic techniques designed to deal with the water crisis. The vintage might not be remembered for quantity, but it will be remembered for the qualitative excellence and resilience of some vines, both native and non-native. The **diversity of the territories** is more transparent than ever: intense and aromatic whites or reds with a strong sensory profile, both types show capacity for ageing, especially where altitude and soil enhance acidity.

### Grape Harvest In Numbers

In terms of quantity, the average drop is estimated at 20% compared to the average. Having started about fifteen days early, in mid-July, in the areas of western Sicily, the grape harvest ended at the end of October on Etna. According to the Consortium for the Protection of Sicily DOC wines, the situation is heterogeneous. In the Northeast, the quantity of grapes harvested is average, while in the West the drop is greater. If the quantity leaves producers unsatisfied, the quality of the grapes is unquestionable, particularly for some of Sicily's iconic varieties such as Nero d'Avola, Grillo and Frappato.

## **Western Sicily**

Northwest of Palermo, the DOC Monreale has territories with an altitude that varies from 300 to 600 metres above sea level. The estimated drop is 15% compared to the average, but the grapes are perfectly healthy and of excellent quality. Perricone, Grillo, Catarratto and Syrah have shown great resistance and quality. In the far west, however, the Consortium for the protection of Marsala DOC wine closed with an average loss of 30%. However, even here, the quality is excellent because the base wines of Grillo, Catarratto and Insolia reached perfect ripeness and an optimal alcohol content of almost two degrees more.

Pantelleria, the island closest to Africa with 406 hectares of vineyards and 322 winemakers, recorded harvest that was one week early with a 40% drop in production compared to the average. Healthy, ripe grapes were harvested, characterised by good quality with peaks of excellence.

## **Southeastern Sicily**

The results were positive also for the DOCG Cerasuolo di Vittoria area. The 2024 grape harvest has been confirmed as a vintage of excellent quality, with a slight drop in production. Frappato and Nero d'Avola are two varieties that are particularly suited to areas characterised by low rainfall. Over the years, thanks to the efforts of the winegrowers, resilience in overcoming dry years has increased. Part of the success is also due to significant temperature variations between night and day and the favourable breezes the province enjoys.

## **Northeastern Sicily**

The quality is excellent in the territories on the northeastern side of Messina, the only province that boasts three DOCs between the mainland and the Aeolian Islands (Faro, Malvasia delle Lipari and Mamertino). The rains of August and September and the presence of greenery and woods in the Nebrodi area cushioned the drop in production – on average 30% – favouring recovery. The native grape varieties, including Nocera, Nerello Mascalese and Nerello Cappuccio, reacted well to the drought. The technicians predict refreshing reds with good complexity and structure, and fragrant whites. Projected into the Tyrrhenian Sea, the Aeolian archipelago confirms the general data of the decline in production, about 25%, but excellent quality. The whites, Malvasia in the lead, have a complex organoleptic profile that focuses on aroma, persistence and long ageing.

## **Etna**

Etna closes the Sicilian grape harvest, with no critical issues recorded. On the contrary. The Consortium for the Protection of Etna DOC has announced a +70% production compared to 2023, thus leaving behind the meager -42% of the 2023 grape harvest. Unlike the other provinces on the island, light and continuous rains have occurred since July, allowing the plants to re-establish their water balance. Considering also the longer periods of ageing that require caution, a very interesting 2024 vintage is expected.

The southern slope faced complex climatic conditions, offset by the combination of effective agronomic practices and late summer rains. On the eastern slope, the peculiar microclimate – cool and refreshed by rains – contributed to a balanced ripening. The phenolic and aromatic profile of the grapes was remarkably rich. In particular, Carricante showed good adaptability, contributing to the production of vibrant white wines. On the northern slope, favorable climate conditions allowed slow and uniform ripening, with a perfectly balanced production. The reds, in particular Nerello Mascalese, showed character, confirming Etna as a terroir linked to the variety of characteristics of the various *Contrade* (districts).

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