2019 Vintage Overview

The 2019 growing season was unique in Washington in a number of respects. Late winter weather left snow in the vineyard in February into March, uncommon for the state, delaying pruning and other vineyard work. This also contributed to greater soil moisture, increased canopy growth, and slightly delayed bud break and bloom.

Summer temperatures were cooler and considerably more even than in recent years, with a notable lack of heat spikes. Overall, temperatures across the 2019 growing season were slightly above 20-year averages but were nowhere near as warm as the years that preceded it.

Harvest began for sparkling wines in late August and for white and early red varieties in early September, close to historical averages. Unusual for Washington in recent years, phenolic maturity came earlier than sugar ripeness, and many winemakers waited for Brix to accumulate and acids to drop. Cooler than average September temperatures delayed picking for many.

A minor frost event at the end of September was followed by a series of larger, statewide frosts and freezes in early to mid-October. By this point, growers at warmer sites, winemakers who pick at lower overall maturity, and those who pick at lower yields per acre had already picked most or all of their grapes. For others, especially for sites carrying higher tonnages, there was a large amount of fruit still on the vine. Although growers worked feverishly to bring it in, some fruit was left unpicked due to concerns about frost damage. As a result, tonnage was down from recent years.

Despite these challenges, growers and winemakers alike were excited about the quality of fruit they picked 2019. Cooler temperatures contributed to lower overall sugar accumulation and higher acidities, which many welcomed. A number have said it looks to be one of the best Merlot vintages in recent memory. Syrah also looks to be an early star.

"I think the intensity of the wines that are going to be produced from 2019 are going to blow us away," one grower said.