



## 2018 Vintage Overview

2018 was another warm vintage for Washington that was marked by ideal weather during the harvest season.

The Columbia Valley cycled through cool and warm months at the start of the growing season. April was cool, delaying bud break slightly. Then May was one of the warmest on record, advancing bloom. This was followed by a cooler-than-average June.

Bloom was notably fast and even, contributing to a larger crop size that required extensive thinning. In some cases, particularly Merlot in some locations, berry size and cluster size were larger than normal.

July and August temperatures were quite warm, so much so that heading into veraison, 2018 was shaping up to be among the warmest vintages on record – and it still was based on Growing Degree Days. However, temperatures cooled considerably in September, creating ideal conditions for ripening.

“It was the best September that I’ve ever seen in terms of growing grapes,” one winemaker said. October temperatures were average across the Columbia Valley, with moderate days and cool nights.

The result of it all was a long, drawn out harvest season that started for sparkling wines in mid-August due to the warmth of the season but then ended in early November for some growers at larger sites.

Warm days during harvest continued sugar accumulation while cooler nights preserved acidity. As a result, Brix levels were slightly above average in 2018, while acid levels were higher than anticipated for a warm vintage.

Growers and winemakers are excited about the prospects for 2018, with many noting in particular the strength of the Rhône varieties. “Big color, big flavors,” said one. “I think it’s going to be a heck of a vintage.”



<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Overview</b>	<b>Detail</b>
<b>Vintage hallmark</b>	--	--
<b>Growing season summary</b>	Warm growing season marked by ideal weather at harvest	A series of alternating cool and warm months started the growing season, followed by warm summer months and ideal weather at harvest.
<b>Bud break</b>	Slightly late	Slightly behind historical averages due to a cool April
<b>Bloom</b>	Slightly early	Slightly ahead of historical averages due to a warm May
<b>Veraison</b>	Ahead of historical averages	Warm summer temperatures advanced veraison
<b>Harvest</b>	Early start and late finish	Started early due to warm summer temperatures but then stretched out into November in some locations
<b>Berry size/Cluster size</b>	Normal to slightly larger	Cluster and berry sizes were larger in some varieties and in some locations
<b>Yields</b>	Above average	Yields were up due to a strong set and larger berry size and cluster sizes in some varieties
<b>Brix</b>	Slightly above average	Warm days during harvest contributed to continued sugar accumulation
<b>Acids</b>	Slightly above average	Cooler temperatures in September contributed to higher acidity considering the warmth of the vintage
<b>Disease, Pest, and Environmental pressures</b>	Minimal	Little pest and disease pressure experienced