

## VERAISON

### 2023 Report

Veraison (pronounced veh-reh-zon) is a key stage in the grape-growing season: grapes start to ripen, and the vine starts to transport its stored energy from the roots into the grapes.

Now, the berries undergo several physiological changes. The most noticeable of these is the colour change, as the grapes go from being green to their mature colour. This is caused by the accumulation of pigments, such as anthocyanins, in the grape's skin.

Just before veraison, the grapes were hard and tart but soon we see sugars increasing while acids fall. With this taking place, we are reaching the end of a cycle and the start of another.

### Tipping Point of the Grapes' Annual Lifecycle

The berries begin the transition from the growing phase into the ripening one, altering their focus from energy creation to energy consumption, meaning, quality will be now far more important for the vines than quantity.

In addition to the change in colour, the grapes also change their composition during veraison. The sugars in the grapes start to accumulate while the acidity of the grapes decreases, which will affect the potential alcohol, flavour and balance of the resulting wine.

### Birds and Laboratory

While the change of colour is obvious, birds will also tell us from a distance what is going on inside the berries. Once the grapes start ripening, the fruit becomes attractive to birds, with blackbirds, magpies and starlings being the usual suspects.

Now that we are only weeks away from harvest, our winemakers monitor the progress of the grapes frequently by using a combination of sensory analysis



(tasting and smelling the grapes), and pH and sugar measurements. It is highly important to take samples from different areas of the vineyard and even from individual vines, in order to have a truly representative sample of each plot.

Veraison is the final stage of the vegetative growth cycle. During this stage, the vines invest all their energy into the qualitative development of the grapes. Sugar and pH increase, organic acids decrease, aromas and flavours build up, the grapes change colour and have a different mouthfeel, the seeds ripen and become brownish, and the grape's skin becomes slightly softer.

The old saying, "You can make bad wine with good grapes but never good wine with bad grapes" is still absolutely true for every responsible and authentic winemaker who refuses to use artificial ingredients in their wines.

Taking into consideration that the crucial part of winemaking takes place in the vineyards, the transition period between field and cellar work needs to be given a great deal of attention. "To pick or not to pick" is a complex question that winemakers must answer every single year to define the optimized date of harvest.

Only by doing this the right ripening status of the individual vineyards will be determined. Different sun exposure caused by a slightly different slope or canopy management can significantly influence the individual development of clusters or even the grapes within them. Having unripe grapes within a cluster is what a winemaker tries to avoid whenever possible.

The last weeks before the harvest require the highest attention in the monitoring process of the vineyard. Now it is the time to take samples, first every week, and later almost every day as fine-tuning is the key to an optimal harvest date.

