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News release
For immediate release

QUALITY AND RESILIENCE CHARACTERISE THE 2024 SOUTH AFRICA WINE HARVEST

The 2024 harvest season in South Africa has been a journey marked by careful planning and adaptability of wine producers in the face of diverse climatic adversities and various disruptions.

The 2024 harvest season was a true test of the South African wine industry's resilience. Despite facing diverse and demanding climatic events, from frost and heavy winter rainfall to floods and wind, the industry's adaptability and nimbleness transformed this harvest into one of the most remarkable in recent memory. With optimal ripening tempo, small berries and moderate, dry conditions during harvest, the stage is set for wines of unparalleled excellence to supply the domestic and more than 120 global markets.

"Excellent winter conditions in most wine-grape growing regions raised high expectations for the harvest," says Dr Etienne Terblanche, Vinpro Consultation Services Manager. "However, the most significant impact of the spring conditions was the prolonged wet soils, which directly affected root systems and access to necessary plant reserves. The summer trend was markedly warmer and drier than the previous year, adding another layer of complexity to the harvest. One of the standout aspects of this season was the exceptional sanitary condition of the grapes – a rarity in rainy harvest seasons and a testament to the industry's resilience and adaptability."

The 2024 grape harvest yielded 1 099 051 tonnes from 87 848 hectares, a 7% decrease from 2023, according to the latest harvest estimate by industry body SAWIS. This, combined with strong market demand, has led to the industry's wine stock levels reaching equilibrium – a significant achievement compared to some of our competitors, who are still grappling with a wine surplus and having to resort to drastic measures such as uprooting vineyards. While the lower volumes imply considerable cost pressure to wine producers, it also serves the sector's commitment to ensuring value growth across markets.

The 2024 wine harvest – including juice and concentrate for non-alcoholic purposes, wine for brandy, and wine for distilling – is estimated to amount to 857.1 million litres, at a recovery of 780 litres per tonne of grapes.

Early cultivars yielded significantly lighter crop sizes than expected across most regions. The later red cultivars generally produced improved yields. Winemakers are excited about the wine quality overall, especially full-bodied red wines with exceptional colour and tannin extraction levels. On the white cultivar spectrum, oenophiles can look forward to fresh wines with ample texture and mouthfeel.

"The 2023/2024 season may have presented its share of obstacles, but it has also showcased the resilience and determination of the South African wine industry," says South Africa Wine CEO Rico Basson. "This industry stands resilient, with our wine stock now in equilibrium. Despite fluctuations in harvest yields and vineyard surface areas, we are primed and prepared to supply the world with exceptional quality and distinctive wines."

South Africa is the world's seventh largest wine producer, producing approximately 4% of the world's wine. The wine industry contributes more than R56.5 billion to the country's GDP and employs 270 364 people across the value chain, of which 85 962 work on farms and cellars.

"The outstanding quality of the wines from the 2024 harvest underscores South Africa's unwavering commitment to spotlighting its world-class offerings," says Siobhan Thompson, Wines of South Africa CEO. "This achievement not only strengthens our foothold in the global market but also enhances our continuous efforts to seize a larger value share of export markets."

"The South African wine industry is undergoing a strategic repositioning, shifting our focus to value growth. Through reinvestment for growth and collaborative strategies, we are forging a path to strengthen our industry and propel us towards a future of quality, innovation, and sustainability," says Basson.

Overview of the production areas

Breedekloof

Grape analyses of all cultivars were within optimal ranges. For the white cultivars, it was a qualitative harvest. Colour development in red wines is exceptional and improved overall compared to cooler vintages.

Cape South Coast

Grapes harvested in 2024 appeared very healthy due to low rainfall during harvesting. Juice recoveries were lower than usual, but the excellent quality counterbalance is significant.

Cape Town

White wines boast good flavour intensity, and red wines hold promise with good colour development. The favourable winter, sufficient and timely rainfall, and dry summer conditions culminated in an excellent season for producers and winemakers.

Klein Karoo

The 2024 season will be remembered for exceptionally high rainfall alongside excellent wine quality. This highlights that the timing of rainfall during the season is essential – in this case, heavy rain at the right time positively affected grape quality and yields. The wine quality of both white and red cultivars appears excellent at this early stage, and red wines seem promising with intense colour extractions.

Northern Cape

This vintage's wines display a riper, tropical profile compared to the previous season. Wine quality was better than expected, especially for the red cultivars, and fuller-style wines seem to be the trend this year.

Olifants River

The 2024 season will be remembered as the flood year due to exceptional impact and damage from flooding. A consequence was high downy mildew pressure but also innovative thinking, with producers using drones for the first time for more effective disease control. Despite the significant losses from the floods, yields aligned with the previous season's figures. Winemakers are enthusiastic about wines of outstanding quality.

Paarl

The 2024 season will be remembered for its highly wet and cold winter and spring, during which flooding occurred and infrastructure was damaged. With the arrival of summer, the weather changed to very dry and windy conditions, which affected crop size. January was hot, which brought the harvest forward. Due to these weather conditions, the region experienced much variation between farms, cultivars, and yields.

Robertson

Unusual climate challenges characterised the 2024 season. High humidity in the first half of the growing season brought significant challenges. Weather conditions adversely affected early cultivars' yields, leading to low production. Despite the limitation on tonnage, the grapes were healthy, and the wine quality is excellent.

Stellenbosch

The 2024 season will be remembered for significant rainfall at the start of the season but little to no rainfall from the end of September to mid-February. Coupled with warm summer temperatures, these conditions accelerated the ripening of early cultivars, which led to lighter yields for early cultivars and, in some instances, less available irrigation water. The dry conditions, however, produced grapes of excellent quality. Superb wines are anticipated for the 2024 vintage.

Swartland

The 2024 season will be remembered for a lighter yield than initially expected. Favourable winter conditions set the stage for a larger crop. However, wet conditions in spring during budding and very dry, windy and hotter summer weather affected the final crop size. The quality of the grapes, however, was excellent and outstanding red wines are expected.

Worcester

Winemakers agree that most grapes were pressed at optimal ripeness with optimal sugar levels and will produce full-bodied wines. White cultivars were well buffered against the heat wave at the beginning of February due to sufficient irrigation water availability. Colour development across the spectrum of red cultivars has improved. Over the past few years, many marginal red cultivar blocks have been uprooted and new vines planted. The positive effect on the Worcester region's red wine output is now becoming evident.

Read the full 2024 Harvest Report here:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1IDE6Rk8pMJALraIzTPcYduZ4qsOwAAtx/view?usp=sharing>

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ISSUED BY: South Africa Wine

MEDIA ENQUIRIES: Wanda Augustyn
Communication and Brand Manager
Tel: 021 276 0458
E-mail: wanda@sawine.co.za