

The 2024 Harvest Kicks Off at Donnafugata

The grape harvest has begun at Contessa Entellina and will soon move on to Pantelleria, Vittoria, and finally Mount Etna.

The first grapes of the 2024 vintage have been harvested at Donnafugata, marking the start of the “100 Days of Harvest” period which begins in western Sicily at the Contessa Entellina and Pantelleria estates, moves on to Vittoria, and finishes on Mount Etna. This year’s growing season has seen little rainfall and periods of above-average seasonal temperatures. While overall production might be slightly lower, the grapes harvested are expected to be exceptionally healthy and of high quality.

At **Contessa Entellina**, the 2024 growing season has generally seen low rainfall and above-average temperatures. The favourable rains recorded in the first and second halves of May were beneficial. In June and July, thanks to the water reserves available in the estate’s reservoirs, supplementary irrigation was carried out in many of the estate’s vineyards, supporting the growth and development of the vines.



Special focus has been placed on agro-meteorological monitoring using a network of sensors to track crucial microclimatic data. By integrating artificial intelligence, this data is analysed in conjunction with 7-10 day weather forecasts. This integration offers valuable insights for making informed agronomic decisions, optimising resource use to ensure the best grape quality and health, all within an environmentally sustainable framework.

The climatic conditions have led to an early harvest, particularly for the early-ripening varieties, by about 10 days compared to the usual timing. In the high-altitude vineyards, **the harvest of Chardonnay and Pinot Nero grapes has just begun**, as they have reached the ideal level of ripeness and freshness for sparkling wine production.

In **Pantelleria**, where **Zibibbo** grapes are cultivated using the traditional “alberello” head-trained bush practice, which this year celebrates 10 years since its UNESCO recognition, the growing season has been characterised by low rainfall and sometimes higher average temperatures. Grape health and expected quality are very good; it is also estimated that production will be lower and that the harvest will begin before mid-August with the collection of grapes from the earliest ripening districts, destined for drying for the production of Ben Ryé; the harvest will continue according to the different ripening times of the grapes in the 16 districts where Donnafugata’s vineyards are located.

At the **Vittoria** estate, apart from the colder-than-average early winter months, seasonal temperatures have generally been higher, with limited rainfall recorded to date. This weather pattern has resulted in **Frappato** vines budding earlier, in early March, followed by **Nero d’Avola** a week later. Consequently, supplementary irrigation was brought forward, helping to maintain a good balance between vine growth and production. The estimated yield is slightly lower than the previous year, but the quality is expected to be excellent. The harvest is likely to begin earlier than the usual ripening times for grapes in this region.

At the Donnafugata Estate on the northern slopes of Mount **Etna**, between Randazzo and Castiglione di Sicilia, temperatures have been somewhat higher than average for the region. The winter was mild; spring progressed steadily with rainfall in line with seasonal norms. Overall, vine growth has been favourable, with consistent budburst due to well-timed and adequate rainfall in May and June. The higher temperatures recorded in June and



mid-July were managed well by the vineyards, thanks to the ample water reserves in the sandy, deep volcanic soils. The grapes are in excellent condition and are expected to reach veraison in early August. The harvest is likely to start around mid-September, as usual, with the picking of grapes for rosé wine. This will be followed by the harvest of **Carricante**, and then, in October, the harvesting of **Nerello Mascalese and Nerello Cappuccio** for red wines.

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