

The 2024 Harvest at Donnafugata

2024's growing season generally saw little rainfall, with periods of above-average seasonal temperatures. The great "100 Days of Harvest" period at Donnafugata began early at Contessa Entellina, continued through Pantelleria and Vittoria, and came to a close on Mount Etna in October.

At **Contessa Entellina**, in the heart of western Sicily, the growing season has generally seen low rainfall and above-average temperatures. The favourable rains recorded in May's first and second halves 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.



Weather conditions brought the harvest forward by around 10 days compared to the usual schedule. In the high hillside vineyards, Chardonnay and Pinot Nero grapes harvest for sparkling wine base began on **22 July**. Harvesting then followed the natural ripening times of each variety. Yields were lower, but the quality fully met the Estate's objectives.

It is worth noting that in August the vineyards benefited from some rainfall, which supported the completion of the growth and ripening cycle in the plots still to be harvested. The harvest came to an end in the first ten days of September, around 2 weeks earlier than last year.

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. The harvest began on 5 August, about ten days earlier than the local average. It started in the earliest-ripening districts, with these grapes set aside for drying to produce the Ben Ryé passito. The harvest continued in line with the varying ripening times of the grapes across the island's different districts and was completed on 28 August. Yields were noticeably below average, but the grapes were in very good health and of high quality.

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. These weather conditions led to an early budding for **Frappato** and **Nero d'Avola**, occurring in the first half of March. Supplemental irrigation was then carried out, helping to maintain a good balance between vine growth and fruit production.

The harvest began early, shortly after mid-August. The harvesting of the **Nero d'Avola** grapes finished on 26 August. The Frappato harvest began on 22 August, with the last plots reaching maturity and being picked on 10 September. Thanks to the excellent phenolic ripeness of these red grapes, the expected quality is perfectly in line with the company's targets. In terms of quantity, production was in line with the average of recent vintages at this Estate.

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. Grape ripening also benefited from rainfall recorded between August and September.

The harvest began in the first ten days of September, about a week early, with the picking of Nerello Mascalese grapes for rosé wine. **Carricante** harvest followed on 16 September. The harvest of **Nerello Mascalese** for red wines began in the last ten days of September and was completed on 5 October.

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