



Champagne 2026: an exceptional harvest with the potential for outstanding wines

Épernay, September 9, 2026 – Following a growing season and harvest of unprecedented earliness, Champagne is presenting a highly encouraging first assessment of the 2026 crop. Despite exceptional climatic conditions and moderate yields, the grapes show outstanding sanitary quality and very promising balance. All the elements are in place to produce wines of exceptional quality.

An unprecedented growing season and harvest

The 2026 growing season will be remembered as one of the most atypical in Champagne's history: severe spring frosts of historic intensity, an exceptionally early flowering period, and five heatwave episodes during the summer.

Ripening progressed at an exceptional pace. The traditional harvest ban was announced on August 12, while the first vineyards had already begun picking as early as August 6. From August 17 onwards, harvesting became widespread across the region, around 14 days earlier than in 2025. The 2026 harvest is the earliest ever recorded in Champagne.

Average agronomic yields are expected to reach a moderate level, mainly due to smaller bunch sizes resulting from drought conditions. Beyond volumes, however, the key takeaway from this year is the quality of the raw material: grapes reached maturity in exceptional sanitary condition.

According to Maxime Toubart, president of the Syndicat Général des Vignerons de la Champagne and co-president of the Comité Champagne : "The 2026 growing season will be remembered as an atypical year that profoundly challenged many of our assumptions. Growers had to adapt their vineyard practices throughout the season. Their responsiveness and capacity to adapt were decisive in overcoming the

challenges of this extraordinary harvest."

A collective success supported by a resilient vineyard

Despite intense heat and drought, the vineyard showed remarkable resilience. Vines remained green and fully functional throughout the season. Grapes naturally developed strong protection against extreme climatic conditions, avoiding the sunburn and scorching effects that had been feared.

Faced with accelerated ripening, the Champagne industry had to adjust its organisation almost in real time. Harvest schedules were revised, teams mobilised and grapes brought in rapidly, without ever compromising on quality. Comité Champagne used all available communication channels to keep Champagne stakeholders informed about developments and to encourage coordination across the sector.

The success of the harvest also reflects the social commitment of Champagne professionals. Each year, with the support of public authorities and local stakeholders, they coordinate the "Ensemble pour les vendanges en Champagne" programme, helping to anticipate and organise the reception of nearly 100,000 seasonal workers under the best possible conditions, particularly regarding health and safety. Specific measures were implemented to secure harvesting operations during periods of extreme heat. At the start of the harvest, when temperatures were at their highest, operators adapted working hours and strengthened prevention measures. From August 17 onward, more moderate temperatures prevailed.

According to David Chatillon, president of the Union des Maisons de Champagne and co-president of the Comité Champagne : "Thanks to the mobilisation of the entire Champagne industry, we successfully brought in this exceptionally early harvest under very good conditions, with remarkable quality. This achievement belongs to the Champagne collective, whose ability to adapt and respond quickly once again proved decisive. The fruit is beautiful, healthy and ripe. We have all the ingredients needed to produce Champagne, and indeed great Champagnes."

Now it is up to the cellar masters

The grape musts display characteristics rarely observed in Champagne. Despite high levels of ripeness, they retain what matters most: deeply Champagne-style balance.

On tasting, the musts reveal remarkable freshness, concentration, fruit intensity and finesse. The manual harvesting of whole bunches, combined with gentle pressing and meticulous fractioning, has preserved the integrity of the grapes and the acid potential of this particularly ripe vintage.

Cellar masters now have at their disposal raw material of outstanding quality and an exceptionally rich palette for blending, notably drawing on three consecutive harvests with very different profiles: 2024, a cool and wet year; 2025, a warm year; and 2026, a very hot year with unprecedented characteristics.

It is still too early to make a definitive assessment of the wines from the 2026 harvest. However, the crop already possesses all the attributes needed to produce great, and potentially very great, wines. In terms of balance, this raw material recalls some of the great historic vintages of the twentieth century, including 1921, 1947 and 1959.

ABOUT THE COMITÉ CHAMPAGNE

The Comité Champagne is the interprofessional organisation for the Champagne industry: the place where winegrowers and Champagne houses defend their common interests and contribute to the balance and influence of the entire industry and its appellation.

The Champagne interprofessional organisation was founded in 1941 and promotes cooperation between the two professional groups and represents more than 20,000 winegrowers and 350 Champagne houses.

For more information, visit www.champagne.fr

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