



## 2016 Harvest Begins in Sonoma's Dry Creek Valley

By Eve Bushman

HEALDSBURG, Calif. -Winegrowers of Dry Creek Valley (WDCV) began their 2016 grape harvest this week, and shared their predictions for the season. Picking began on Saturday, August 13 for Amista Vineyards Sparkling Blanc de Blancs, ten days later than they began harvesting their fruit in 2015. Overall, quality predictions are extremely positive after a year of ideal weather. Yields are a bit lower than average, but larger than in 2015.



Amista Vineyards Winemaker Ashley Herzberg owner Mike Farrow toast on Saturday, August 13, 2016 over the first grapes harvested in Dry Creek Valley for the 2016 harvest season. This chardonnay is used to make the winery's Sparkling Blanc de Blancs

In some parts of the valley, white wine grapes for still wines are on the brink of ripeness. "We harvested a bit of chardonnay yesterday, and we will start harvesting some sauvignon blanc this week, which is about the same as 2015," said Duff Bevill, owner of Bevill Vineyard Management.

Clay Mauritsen, winemaker at Mauritsen Wines, said, " We are expecting our first fruit at the end of August or in early September. This is about average for us, but much later than last year."

Growers of Dry Creek Valley's renowned zinfandel grapes expressed tremendous optimism. Ned Neumiller, grower relations viticulture manager for Seghesio Family Vineyards, said "Quality at this point in the harvest looks exceptional across the valley. The vineyards look the best they've looked in several years this late in the season. When you step back and look at the overall quality of the foliage that's out there, it's impressive."

Neumiller continued, explaining, “Fruit set and veraison had us thinking we were heading for an earlier harvest than we’re seeing now. Good quality hang time will let that crop fully mature in its natural balance. The grapes are doing what they’re supposed to do.”

The harvest season is expected to continue into October, with most red Bordeaux grape varieties reaching ripeness after zinfandel, and late-ripening grapes like mourvedre grapes following after that. After a few years of serious drought conditions, Dry Creek Valley winegrowers were pleased to see some well-timed rainfall from this year’s El Niño conditions. Neumiller commented, “If there aren’t any unforeseen weather events that come up now, we’re on track for the quality to be just exceptional. The rain pattern this year was absolutely perfect.”

Ryan Petersen, vineyard manager at Petersen Land Management, attributes 2016’s slightly lower-than-average yield to weather conditions in spring of 2015. He said, “That spring was actually fairly wet. Even though we were below average in total rainfall last year, we got a lot of rain during that short period, which is when the grape vine is sensing is whether it has enough soil and nutrients and water to grow. This season, the vines didn’t want to stop growing. We irrigated much less this year because we needed the vine to shut down and focus on the fruit.”

“My grandfather farmed wine grapes, too, and he used to say, ‘If you have one good year in ten, you’re doing well.’ I’d say that we’ve been blessed to have six or seven good years out of the last ten,” said Petersen.

#### **About Winegrowers of Dry Creek Valley**

The Winegrowers of Dry Creek Valley® (WDCV) is an association of more than 60 wineries and 150 growers, of which more than 95 percent are small, family-owned operations. WDCV is dedicated to advancing the recognition, enhancement and preservation of Dry Creek Valley as a premium winegrowing region. Anchored by the charming town of Healdsburg, the Dry Creek Valley appellation was officially designated in 1983. Known as a premier zinfandel growing region, Dry Creek Valley is one of California’s oldest wine producing regions and is home to many heritage vineyards ranging in age from 50 to 120 years. To preserve this history and the valley’s pristine beauty, the Winegrowers of Dry Creek Valley supports sustainable viticulture and low-impact farming practices. [www.drycreekvalley.org](http://www.drycreekvalley.org)

Throughout Sonoma County, harvest photos are aggregated through use of the hashtag #SCHarvest at the website <http://www.sonomawinegrape.org/harvest>. All Dry Creek Valley harvest photos will also be tagged #drycreekvalley. Harvest in Dry Creek Valley can be followed on the Winegrowers of Dry Creek Valley’s social media channels, listed below.

<http://evewine101.com/2016/09/12/2016-harvest-begins-in-sonomas-dry-creek-valley/>