

Late harvest brings good flavor, El Dorado winemakers say

Harvest is wrapping up in most of El Dorado County's vineyards, while crush pads and cellars continue to buzz with activity as winery owners recall one of the latest – and shortest – harvests in 25 years.

Winemakers report that while crop yields are smaller than usual, the quality is excellent.

“We’re excited to see great intensity of color, flavor and aroma in wine being pressed throughout the county,” Beth Jones, owner of Lava Cap Winery and president of the 30-member El Dorado Winery Association, said in a statement. “This year’s vintage is showing well-developed flavors at lower sugar and higher acid levels than we’ve seen in recent years.”



A cellar assistant sorts grapes at Sierra Vista.

Photo/Sierra Vista Winery

While some El Dorado wineries have completed harvest, several are still picking grapes due to varied elevations and

exposures in their Sierra Foothill vineyards.

Lava Cap Winery was harvesting some varietals four weeks later than normal.

Strange weather started in spring and has continued until now. A cool growing season meant harvest began two to three weeks later than normal.

Heat spikes in late September and October caused many varieties to come in at once, shortening the harvest season for many.

“We used a lot of different farming techniques with this vintage, anticipating a late harvest. This growing season has yielded grapes with near-perfect flavor profiles, so we are very excited. Given the late harvest and lower nighttime temperatures, we’re controlling quality by equipping most of our tanks with heaters to better manage the fermentation and soak processes,” Stefan Tscheppe, head winemaker at Perry Creek Winery, said.