

Easy pickings: Champagne harvest starts early

August 20 2018



Champagne grapes are all harvested by hand, requiring the labour of 120,000 mainly seasonal workers

Champagne's grape harvest kicked off on Monday, about two weeks earlier than usual, with the industry predicting a "very good" vintage of

the prized bubbly thanks to ideal weather conditions.

The first contingent of the region's army of around 120,000 seasonal workers—all Champagne grapes are picked by hand—got to work in several villages of the region's southern Cote des Bar area.

"The remarkable condition of the grapes and ideal weather [conditions](#) made starting the [harvest](#) early an easy decision," the Comite Champagne said in a statement.

The ideal weather conditions of the spring and summer promise an "excellent 2018 vintage", said the group, which sets its harvest calendar by sampling the grapes' maturity, [alcohol content](#) and acidity.

Some producers even jumped the gun, with Champagne Beaufort Reol—an organic vineyard—starting its harvest last Friday.

"There were already lots of good, ripe grapes on the ground" as the workers began picking, vintner Jacques Beaufort told AFP.

"If I'd waited another week, the harvest would have been ruined."

The schedule will see the region's 300 or so winegrowing villages gradually join the picking through the end of August and up to September 2.

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