



- 2013 Vintage Overview -

“Higher sugars, great flavors, and low acidity are the descriptors for this year’s grapes,” said one vintner of 2013.

2013 was a warm growing season in Washington. For some, it was the warmest season on record in terms of Growing Degree Days. For others, it was just behind 2003, which is generally considered to be Washington’s warmest vintage. For most of the growing season, 2013 actually ran ahead of 2003 in terms of heat accumulation, with warm temperatures throughout spring and summer. However, cooler temperatures prevailed at the finish.

Though there were comparisons to be made to 2003 in terms of heat accumulation, 2013 did not see the significant heat spikes that 2003 did. Rather, the year was consistently warm, with notably warmer-than-average nighttime temperatures, especially in August. The heat accelerated many indicators of the growing season, including bud break, bloom, and veraison, generally putting them about four to ten days ahead of historical averages. Harvest, which began for some in the Columbia Valley as early as the end of August, was also ahead of historical averages.

When the first half of September saw record high temperatures, there were concerns that a compression of the harvest schedule might lead to management challenges at the winery and that sugar ripening might get too far ahead of flavor development. However, a significant mid-September drop in temperature slowed the pace of the harvest down dramatically. These cooler temperatures persisted for the remainder of the growing season, in some cases extending harvest into early November for late ripening varieties. Given the year’s heat accumulation, this would have seemed almost unimaginable even as late as mid-September.

There appeared to be no clear rules on how different areas and varieties were affected by the heat of the growing season and the late-season cool-down. Some growers and winemakers reported significantly higher brix levels at harvest, especially in early ripening varieties; others were near historical averages. Many reported markedly lower acidities—in some cases the lowest they had ever seen; others reported that acidities were lower but within a normal range. These differences appear to be due to site, variety, clone, farming practices, and picking decisions. Many growers and winemakers felt that the prolonged hang time afforded by the cooler temperatures at the end of the season greatly benefited the harvest, particularly for Cabernet Sauvignon.

“Look out for big, rich, concentrated wines down the line,” one winemaker said.

Indicator	Overview	Detail
Vintage hallmark	-	-
Growing season summary	A warm vintage—for many the second warmest on record—with a mid-September cool-down that extended the growing season into early November.	2013 was a warm growing season in Washington, with above-average temperatures throughout spring and summer and notably warmer-than-average nighttime temperatures. A dramatic mid-September drop in temperatures extended harvest into early November. Many growers and winemakers reported lower acidities, sometimes markedly so, and in some cases higher sugar levels.
Bud break	Early	About four to ten days ahead of historical averages.
Bloom	Early	About three to seven days ahead of historical averages with good set.
Veraison	Early	About four to ten days ahead of historical averages.
Harvest	Early start but extended finish	Started about seven to ten days ahead of historical averages but had an extended finish that stretched into November for some.
Berry size/cluster size	Varied	Average-to-smaller berry and cluster sizes in many locations due to the heat.
Yields	Varied	Average to above average.
Brix	Above average to high	Varied, but generally higher than average, in some cases markedly so.
Acids	Below average to very low	Varied, but generally low to very low.
Disease, pest, and environmental pressures	Minimal	Riesling in some areas experienced botrytis and bunch rot issues due to September rains and cooler temperatures. Isolated hailstorms damaged parts of some vineyards during the growing season.