

P: (800) 306-3956  
E: INFO@ELDORADOWINES.ORG



PO BOX 1614  
PLACERVILLE, CA 95667  
[www.eldoradowines.org](http://www.eldoradowines.org)

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MEDIA CONTACT: Solterra Strategies  
Joel Peterson, [joel@solterrastrategies.com](mailto:joel@solterrastrategies.com)

## **El Dorado Wineries Boast Exceptional Harvest**

### **Lower yields, favorable weather lead to excellent quality**

Placerville, CA – Wineries and grape growers in the El Dorado wine region have wrapped up another successful harvest. Though the 2014 yields appear lower than the last three years, the recent harvest resulted in extremely high-quality grapes. Significant spring rains followed by consistent, slightly above average temperatures during the growing season marked one of the earliest harvests on record.

“The quality of this year was outstanding,” said Josh Bendick of Holly’s Hill Vineyards. “2014 was the shortest harvest we have ever had. Although we’ve started picking earlier in previous years, we were done earlier this year.”

Nestled in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada Mountains, between Sacramento and South Lake Tahoe, the El Dorado appellation is home to more than 70 wineries and nearly 2,000 vineyard acres perched at some of the highest elevations across California.

The ongoing statewide drought did cause expected concern across the region, but local growers acted proactively—with fantastic results. Well-timed spring rains, coupled with careful irrigation and discerning pruning practices, contributed to the harvest’s success.

Jonathan Lachs, co-owner and winemaker of Cedarville Vineyard explained, “With the prior two years of drought, plus the lack of rain in the beginning of the current year, we had insufficient water in our soil profile and feared we would need to irrigate much earlier than usual.” Forward thinking growers saw this coming and pruned aggressively, lowering bud counts in expectation of lower yields. Lachs continued, “Fortunately, March and April rains replenished the soil moisture, and enabled us to not have to tap into our water reserves. This enabled us to push out irrigating until July—and in some blocks, we did not need to irrigate at all.”

Regional fires during the harvest months also presented a challenge, though luckily, they were on the far edges of the AVA and winds pushed them away from vineyards and area wineries. “Thanks to the hard work and resolve of our local and regional firefighters, the El

Dorado wineries were able to avoid extensive damage and allowed to do what they do best: make outstanding wine,” said Terrie Prod’hon, co-owner of Mount Aukum Winery.

Dryer weather, consistent above-average temperatures, without any extreme heat spikes and lower crop load overall led to a more compressed growing season. “This was our earliest harvest in the 43 years we’ve been growing grapes—at least a week earlier than any prior harvest,” said Greg Boeger, founder of Boeger Winery. “It’s a little too early to determine the long-term characteristics of this vintage, but color, flavor, and intensity in the reds seem excellent at this initial stage.”

Winemaker Richard Stading, owner of Auriga Wine Cellars, concurred, “We are seeing very intense grapes, smaller clusters, lower tonnage, and very high quality.”

Adding additional excitement to this year’s harvest, the early maturation and even ripening led to many grape varieties reaching optimal ripening simultaneously, creating a condensed timeframe to bring in grapes. “Our harvest was the earliest and most compact to date,” said Christine Rorden of Cantiga Wineworks.

Winemakers spoke of challenges and noteworthy qualities of the 2014 harvest, but most were content to be done early and excited to see what the vintage will bring. “It is a bit too early for me to make a declaration of how the vintage will develop except to say that all the stars are aligned for an outstanding opportunity to make truly excellent wines,” said Frank Hildebrand, co-owner of Narrow Gate Vineyards.

### **About El Dorado Wines**

With over 150 years of history steeped in gold and agriculture, the El Dorado region is poised for its newfound resurgence in viticulture. Unique vineyard soils and a high elevation create a superior environment for a vast array of varietals. The region is gaining recognition for its ability to grow quality grapes that exhibit a sense of place. For more information about El Dorado, visit [www.eldoradowines.org](http://www.eldoradowines.org).

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