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## 5. The Harvest

*Each year winegrowers and winemakers face the problem of when to begin the grape harvest.*

*The growth of the grapes and their maturation depends upon a variety of factors: soil, genetic material, trellising systems, growing, production, and yield practices, phytosanitary treatments, and especially climate, among others. One of the primary factors related to the quality of the wine produced is the degree of maturity of the grapes at harvest. This means that once this point is reached, the grapes should be picked within just a few days. In consequence, winemakers and winegrowers work closely together to determine the precise moment for the harvest, as close as possible to the ideal state of ripeness of the grapes for each variety in each vineyard.*

*From the administrative perspective, it is necessary to organize the work of picking and transporting the grapes from the vineyard to the cellar. Once at the cellar, the reception and vinification operations must also be organized, which in some cases can last 8 weeks or more. Different types of wine require different climatic conditions to obtain a special product, and this situation is not predictable. It is not the same to harvest grapes for making an aromatic dry white wine for early drinking as it is to make a Late Harvest or a Cabernet Reserva that will be aged in the bottle for a long time before it is consumed. Furthermore, the health condition of the grapes and the reaction of each variety to possible rain must be considered. Some varieties such as Cabernet and the Muscats are resistant to bunch rot, and others such as Sauvignon, Semillón, Pinot Noir, Merlot, and Syrah are more sensitive.*

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*Another consideration is that when the yield is abundant, the harvest must begin prior to its ideal maturity in order to avoid finishing too late. In both cases, beginning the harvest early or finishing it late, part of the wine will not be made with perfectly ripened grapes. Setting the date to begin the harvest cannot be done empirically or by following guidelines imposed by tradition. It is true that it is very important to observe and taste the grapes for colour, softness, flavour, and aroma, but the progress of the maturation must be followed each year with precise measurements.*