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## 7. Grape sampling technique

*This refers to sampling grapes that represent the average level of maturity. The evolution varies within a single bunch and within the bunches of a single vine; the degree of ripeness differs among the berries of the same bunch and among the bunches of the same vine. The best way to obtain a realistic idea of overall maturity is by randomly sampling 250 grapes from 250 vines from a homogenous parcel or sector. These 250 grapes should be weighed to follow the progress of the weight. They are then crushed and pressed hard to extract all the juice; the pips and skins are separated, and the clean juice is used to measure the sugar, acidity, and pH. The colour of the juice and pips is also observed. Of course the sampled grapes are also used to taste the juice and test its aroma.*

*Considerably rigor is required in all of these measurements and observations, and vineyard management and climatic conditions must also be considered. Results vary widely following irrigation, 2 or 3 days of high heat, a very windy day, or 2 or 3 cool or cloudy days. Irrigation and rain provoke an increase in total acidity and berry weight and a decrease in the percentage of sugar. This dilution phenomenon is overcome after 4 to 6 days, depending on the sun and the temperature. With the records of the measurements and knowing the grape maturity level needed for a given type of wine, the harvest date can be determined with a certain degree of precision.*

*White grapes must be picked and transported at low temperatures and red grapes at normal temperatures (64°-77° F). It should be born in mind that the riper the grapes, the more fragile the bunch, which means the grapes break more easily and more must is lost.*



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*Necessary considerations in the vineyard include the condition of the roads, bridges, and ditches, as well as parking places for the trucks or trailers and shade for the area where the grapes will be loaded. Transportation considerations include the use of one or more tractors or trailers, harvesting boxes, shears for cutting the bunches, plastic bins or boxes for transporting the grapes and a way to clean them between uses, and weighing the grapes. Keeping the harvesting boxes or bins clean is a bothersome, time-consuming, and expensive process that requires special implementation, but it is absolutely crucial that the boxes or bins be kept clean at all times.*

*A problem-free harvest implies careful planning prior to each step. Manual picking is not only a delicate operation, but an expensive one as well. Grape pickers earn a minimum of 50% more than a normal salary. Furthermore, the winery must provide their lunch or at least bread, and transportation is usually included as well. A suitable place for the workers to eat lunch and clean up must also be provided. Because grape harvest coincides with other fruit harvests (pears, apples, table grapes) and some crops such as corn, sugar beets, and others, there is a high demand for labor during this period, and it is therefore very important to organize the harvest well in advance.*

*All this circumstances, along with the problems that can arise due to rain or an extended harvest, plus the need to quickly pick as many grapes as possible at their peak, led to the use of mechanical harvesting more than 20 years ago.*