

WINES AND SPIRITS

## 5 key steps in the 2020 grape harvest for Hennessy Cognac

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*Demystifying the Cognac-making process. Image credit: Hennessy, photo copyright Christophe Mariot*

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By LUXURY DAILY NEWS SERVICE

The grape harvest is the most symbolic time of year for winegrowers, marking the culmination of months of tending the vines.

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Hennessy's 2020 harvest kicked off Sept. 7 and last three weeks. The grape harvest is a meticulously organized process whose objective is to guarantee the quality of the future eaux-de-vie, which will be used to blend the maison's Cognacs, the company said.

Here, per LVMH, is how it tackles this key period for its Hennessy Cognac house in five steps.

### Harvest

Every year, the Bureau National Interprofessionnel du Cognac (BNIC) monitors the ripening of the grapes for the entire Charente-region vineyard.

However, individual winegrowers fix the date of their harvest depending on their plots, their terroir and the maturity of their grapes.

The challenge is to seize the most opportune moment to produce the best wines, which will subsequently be capable of yielding the finest eaux-de-vie.

This decision is, of course, influenced by the year's meteorological conditions, with the effect of climate change on the ripening of the grapes resulting in earlier and earlier harvests.

In the Hennessy vineyard, the harvest has been mechanized for several decades.

Once the grapes have been picked, they are tipped into trailers and taken by tractor to the cellars. Why? To "roll the harvest" in other words, to transfer the grapes as quickly as possible to the presses.



*The Hennessy grape harvest in progress. Image credit: Hennessy, photo copyright Christophe Mariot*

### Pressing

Pneumatic presses gently extract the juice from the grapes. The juice is then pumped into the decantation vats.

### Decantation

This step eliminates any impurities and plant residues that could detract from the future quality of the wine. It lasts between 20 and 30 minutes, and must be adjusted according to the quality of the grapes.

### Fermentation

Once the grape juice called the "must" has been decanted, it is transferred into the winemaking vats made of stainless steel, concrete or fiber. At this point, selected yeasts and nutrients are added.

After a multiplication phase, they will transform the sugar in the grape juice into alcohol a process known as alcoholic fermentation.

At this stage, temperature regulation is crucial to ensure rapid, complete fermentation. The process lasts between five and seven days, depending on the desired degree of alcohol in the wine.

### Storage

The wines are then stored in vats until it is time for them to be distilled. Distillation takes place at the latest by March 31.

To retain the full aromatic potential of the wines, the process must take place as quickly as possible.

After harvest, the presses are emptied and cleaned.

The by-products of the grape harvest are analyzed and sent to specialized treatment centers.