



Photo: Simon Peel



Photo: Simon Peel

LAST OF THE SUMMER WINE

THE PRODUCTION OF sparkling wines is one of the major growth areas for UK Wineries. Vineyards such as Nyetimber and Ridge View Wine Estate, both in West Sussex, have been planted solely with Champagne varieties for the production of classic bottle-fermented sparkling wines.

More than half of the 3,000 acres planted by the end of 2010 will be for sparkling wine varieties and last year yielded an impressive three million bottles of English wine. The award-winning sparkling wine producer Nyetimber, in West Sussex, is now the largest UK vineyard, with 350 acres of vines that in time will turn out a million bottles of sparkling wine each year.

Nyetimber produces what is undoubtedly the best sparkling wine in the country. The French were harder to convince

until 1997 when in a blind tasting Nyetimber's 1992 Blanc de Blancs caused a debate as to which area of France it came from. Nyetimber wines have since won rave-reviews and International medals and have also won the admiration of members of the Royal Family and various Heads of State.

Nyetimber Manor is mentioned in the Domesday Book and was once home to Anne of Cleves, fourth wife of Henry VIII. Nearly 1,000 years later it is producing one of the finest sparkling wines in the world.

It was purchased by Stuart and Sandy Moss in 1986, who were convinced that the gently undulating south-facing slopes with well-drained, Greensand soils would be ideal for production of high quality grapes for making sparkling wines. They planted





2008 WICKHAM VINEYARDS VINTAGE SELECTION DRY WHITE, HAMPSHIRE, ENGLAND

HK\$158

Made mainly from Faber, it has undergone a cool fermentation which captures the delicate flavours of this variety. There are hints of lychees and tropical fruit and the palate has a powerful, clean, dry finish. Perfect with poultry and fish dishes.

Winemaker William Maitland Biddulph's skilfully retained the wine's stone-fruit purity, its sense of place and refreshing transparency: the perfect tonic amid dog eared days, along with some Solent Whiting.

(David Berry Green, BBR Buyer)

2009 CAMEL VALLEY ROSÉ

£12.95 (available via the UK on www.bbr.com)

The Lindos (father Bob and his son Sam) have combined 66% Pinot Noir with 33% Dornfelder in this elegant and fruity rosé. The wine is dry yet has a pleasing ripeness and plenty of lively red fruit flavours. One can not better Bob's description of this as 'a real hammock wine' ...roll on summer!

(Simon Field MW, BBR Buyer)

2001 NYETIMBER CLASSIC CUVÉE, ENGLAND

HK\$395

The wine has exuberant youthful aromas, with hints of honey, lemon zest and shortbread all evidenced; on the palate there is the characteristic Nyetimber autolytic weight allied to notes of quince and grapefruit and even flavours which are heading towards the more exotic end of the fruit spectrum. A clean quite complex finish completes the picture in a more than satisfying fashion.

(Simon Field MW, BBR Buyer)

The sparkling and the white are both available at Berry Bros & Rudd Lee Gardens Store (Shop 307/308, 3rd Floor, The Lee Gardens, 33 Hysan Avenue, Causeway Bay, Hong Kong tel: (852) 2907 2112 web: www.bbr.com.hk whilst the rosé is available via the UK on www.bbr.com





Photo: Simon Peel



JASPER MORRIS M.W.

Jasper Morris M.W. developed a reputation as a leading authority on Burgundy while running his own importing business, Morris & Verdin Ltd from 1981 to 2003, at which point he sold the company to Berry Bros & Rudd.

Though a frequent visitor to the principal pinot growing countries of the world, Jasper now mainly divides his time between the UK and Burgundy, looking after the Burgundian interests of Berry's, as well as researching a forthcoming major book on the vineyards of Burgundy. *Inside Burgundy* is due to be published in October 2010.

Jasper has been a Master of Wine since 1985, was responsible for all the Burgundian entries in the *Oxford Companion to Wine* and contributes frequently to *The World of Fine Wine Magazine*, among other publications.

“English wine is finally showing that it should no longer be regarded as a cottage industry but as an industry which can produce world-class wines.”

Tim Atkin, chairman of the International Wine Challenge, the world's biggest blind-tasting competition.

20 hectares of Chardonnay, Pinot Noir and Pinot Meunier and produced their first wine, a Blanc de Blancs, in 1992. In 1993 they made their first release of Classic Cuvée which is a Champagne-style Chardonnay/Pinot blend.

The best wine-growing regions in England are in Kent and Sussex, whose chalky soil is almost identical to Champagne and French Champagne producers, such as Louis Roederer, have been looking at the South Downs with interest.

Britsoverseas spoke with Jasper Morris, Master of Wine, at Berry Bros & Rudd, Britain's oldest Wine & Spirits Merchant, to find out more.

What have been the main problems associated with English wines?

Not so much problems - more just a question of a fledgling industry which was not yet established on a commercial scale - and people were still experimenting with which grapes to plant where and what styles of wine might work.

Why are English wines becoming more popular?

Because now they are more readily available and have had the time to become established. Also global warming has made ripening easier to achieve.

Are these mostly sparkling wines?

The sparkling wines have been the first to hit the headlines, and we understand that various champagne houses are investing in small trial vineyard sites in Hampshire and Sussex.

Can any English wines really be regarded as world class?

The nearest contender is Nyetimber for its sparkling wines - they sell very well in the UK at prices around £25 to £30 which is more than many champagnes.

Climate-change permitting, could England ever realistically rival France as wine producer?

England (and Wales) will never achieve anything on the same scale as France because of the density of population and the scarcity of land. It is unlikely that we will discover any sensational sites which can rival the greatest vineyards of e.g. Burgundy, Bordeaux and Champagne - but not quite impossible!

What are the main barriers to development of English wines?

No long term tradition, scarcity of suitable real estate, cost of the land, climate still marginal, high production costs: we will see more wines and find more examples of wines which can hold their head up internationally, but it will remain a minority form of agriculture.