

Spurrier's World

Decanter's globetrotting consultant editor gives us a round-up of recent tastings, his views on current issues in the wine world and top bottles to drink or keep

English sparkling wine

Wearing my two hats as wine writer and budding wine producer, I was happy to accept Liberty Wines' invitation to visit Hattingley Valley in Hampshire, its third English sparkling wine agency alongside Nyetimber and Coates & Seely. Established in 2008 by Simon Robinson with a planting of Chardonnay, Pinot Noir and Pinot Meunier to which he has added some Pinot Gris and Chenin Blanc. Hattingley Valley now manages more than 24 hectares of vines including those of other vineyard partners. A custom-built, eco-friendly and impressively modern winery was completed in 2010, which now offers bespoke contract winemaking under the well-trained eye of Plumpton College graduate Emma Rice, who has returned to the UK after stints in New Zealand and Napa Valley. Hattingley Valley's first release is the 2011 Classic Cuvée, a Chardonnay-dominant blend that is already showing vibrant fruit. In his introduction to the several dozen guests before lunch, Robinson said he was 'fizzing with excitement for the future of English sparkling wine'.

So it seems is everyone else, despite a season so rainy last year that even Nyetimber, England's largest producer, decided not to harvest. Hardly a month goes by without a new brand appearing on the market, and in early September, as reported on *Decanter.com* it was announced that Lord Ashcroft had taken over the highly regarded Gusburne Vineyard in Kent, retaining the name, to add to his own vineyards in West Sussex, planning rapid expansion to 83ha and a forecast production of 500,000 bottles. At the moment, consumption is running well ahead of supply and retail prices



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in the £25-£40 range rival those of the grandes marques Champagnes. English vineyards have increased from 992ha in 2007 to 1,503ha today, almost entirely for sparkling wine, with a prediction from Stephen Skelton MW, the DWWA Regional Chair for UK and a consultant to the English wine industry, that such expansion will continue, to surpass five million bottles by 2020. Even with UK consumption of sparkling wine running at 100 million bottles a year, one third of which are Champagne, might this risk over-supply?

David Gleave MW, managing director of Liberty Wines, who will be distributing my own Bride Valley fizz from early 2015, doesn't think so: 'Consumers tried English sparkling wines due to curiosity value, but they bought them repeatedly due to quality. Yields need to be lower here to get ripeness, which means a high cost of goods, so it makes sense to focus on quality and build a healthy industry that is a byword for reliability.'

My wife and I have now planted 42,000 vines - 55% Chardonnay, 25% Pinot Noir, 20% Pinot Meunier - on 10ha of our farm in southwest Dorset and are very fortunate to have Ian Edwards, UK Winemaker of the Year 2012, of nearby Fulleigh Estate handle the winemaking, so all we have to do is to produce healthy grapes. It is a risky, expensive undertaking in a cool climate, and rigorous quality is the only way to go, but having recently seen our first label designs from Lewis-Moberley, whose work for Bollinger, Laurent-Perrier, Moët et Chandon and Pol Roger is highly acclaimed, I, too, am starting to fizz a little.

Treasures from Tasmania

From one cool climate to another, Tasmania has been much in the news recently. After years of trying, Jean-Claude Rouzaud of Louis Roederer gave up on his vineyards on the Australian island, saying it was 'too cold'. (His son Frédéric Rouzaud declines to plant in

Steven recommends... (for full details of UK stockists, see p100)



Bele Casei, Colfondo, Asolo Prosecco, Veneto Italy NV

E21 (magnum, in bond)

Berry Bros & Rudd

Luca Ferraro makes the second fermentation of this prosecco in magnums with minimum sulphur and no disgorgement. It's cloudy but beautifully pure, charmingly fruity, dry and quite irresistible. Drink 2013-2014 Alcohol 11.5%



Quintodecimo, Via del Campo Falanghina, Campania, Italy 2011

£23.40 Justerini & Brooks

From a single vineyard at 350m on volcanic soils, fermented 30% in barrel with no malolactic, to preserve the freshness. Aromas of white peach and fresh pears, sappy length and lifted acidity. Lovely. Drink 2013-2015 Alc 13.5%



Mount Horrocks, Watervale Semillon, Clare Valley, South Australia 2011

£19.99 widely available via UK agent Liberty Wines

Stephanie Toole limits production to less than 50,000 bottles to target single-vineyard expression. An elegantly ripe wine with white fruits and great personality. Drink 2013-2017 Alc 13%

