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JUNE Newsletter



www.festivalwines.co.uk

June 2007

The state of English wine...

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I was visiting pioneer English winemaker Will Davenport the other week; the new vintage of his wondrous Horsmonden Dry White had just been released. Will has 10 acres of vines producing a bottle fermented sparkling wine and the said Horsmonden dry. Demand is by far outstripping supply and this year 8 acres of new vines have been planted to capitalise on the new enthusiasm for English wine.

I'm sure it seems quite odd to most, not many moons ago English wine was made by eccentric enthusiasts for their likeminded peers and was not taken at all seriously. How easy it is to forget that up till half a millennia ago it was a big industry in this country. Now though, with the help of a little climate warming and some exceptional Sussex vineyards: a renaissance has begun, with locals such as Davenport, Ridgeview and Nye-timber all flying the banner high. More and more vineyards are popping up and apparently the French have their eyes on the billowy chalk bosoms that are our beloved Downs. It is this same chalk that is at the

very roots of champagne, and apparently a second Norman invasion is mounting with its eyes on the fertile 'chalky' lands of Sussex. Personally I haven't heard of any French movement yet, but when I do you'll be the first to know!

All the fuss so far has been about sparkling wine, which is rather unfair to all the still wines out there, the quality and quantity of which has also started to improve drastically as well, with crisp, aromatic whites and rosé taking the lead. Reds are struggling behind; the use of too many course hybrid grape varieties and daunting oak barrels has somewhat masked the potential for quality, if only someone would make elegant, fresh pinot noir in the Alsatian style, they'd be on to a real winner.

The scene then is bustling and the future looks bright as more and more vines are planted across the south. Quality will inevitably improve and with Plumpton College's new winery and education centre opening this summer things are

looking really rather exciting and mouth-watering...

'Where do I buy it?' you might ask! Go straight to the grower is the best route, giving you a unique trip out and first hand knowledge. Do ring ahead first to make sure they're accepting visitors, for a list of selected UK growers visit: www.englishwineproducers.com. Failing that there's the English wine centre in Alfriston or closer to home Middle Farm nr. Firlé. Festival Wines, Butlers and Quaff have good examples, not forgetting the brilliant Sussex and the City on Meetinghouse Lane.

I suppose I should recommend a bottle for all the Sunshine we ought not to expect this June. I can't help myself and revert to a personal favourite; it's the new, the fruity and the fabulous: Horsmonden Dry White 2006. This wine is summer in a glass, brimming with elderflower, lychee and gooseberry, crisp but round in the mouth, with great clarity and length.



Events Update

Wine and cheese evenings are now a regular feature, every 3rd Thursday of the month. The next instalment is June 21st. Our first **5 week wine course** begins on the 27th of June.

We will be exhibiting at the Incredible Veggie show in London on the 30th of June



Ben in the vines

Wine event not to miss....



June Specials

More wine recommendations for drinking in June:

- **Everyday Cracking red:**
[Chateau le Thil](#)
- **Top red, food wine:**
[Le Borre](#)
- **Fresh, summery white:**
[Begude Sauvignon](#)