



BITE
SIZED
GUIDES

KENT'S VINEYARDS & WINES

...THE CAPITAL OF ENGLISH WINE

kentfoodtrails.co.uk



Produced in Kent

We want to inspire you with the amazing food and drink of Kent. From products grown here for hundreds of years to 21st century innovations, food and drink has shaped the landscape of our wonderful county and we hope you enjoy exploring all it has to offer.

This series of publications will introduce you to a whole range of fabulous food and drink and kentfoodtrails.co.uk will guide you through what to do and where to eat and stay so you can make the most of the Garden of England. Enjoy!

Go to producedinkent.co.uk to find out more about the tasty work we do inspiring everyone to buy locally.

"Kent has the largest area of vineyards of any UK county, showing that it really is the 'Garden of England'. With a very long history of growing top quality fruit of all types, Kent has the sites and soils to grow excellent quality grapes and produce world-class wines. Kent is home to Chapel Down, the largest producer of wines from UK-grown grapes, as well as Domaine Evremond, the new English Sparkling Wine producer established by Taittinger, the first Champagne producer to set foot in the UK. Both go to show that Kent is the place for successful viticulture and winemaking."

Stephen Skelton MW (Master of Wine)
One of the UK's leading Viticultural Consultants
and Wine Writers





IN VINO VERITAS... IN WINE THERE IS TRUTH

Let's get straight to that truth – English, and specifically Kentish – wine really is something special! Embrace something quite exquisite made with the finest fruit in the Garden of England.

Do you know there are over 50 vineyards in Kent, with more cropping up all the time? Or that Kent's wines are true heavyweights at international wine competitions? Or that our English Sparkling Wines are mentioned in the same breath as Champagne when it comes to quality? And that's just the tip of the iceberg. Right now, the enthusiasm and interest in English wine is riding higher than ever and here in Kent we have the perfect blend of soils, climate and passionate, experienced winemakers who are on the crest of that wave. Even better, wine is a true experience here in Kent, thanks to a growing number of cellar doors, tours, tastings and grape-infused dining experiences.

**Intrigued? Excited? Or dare we say... thirsty?
Join us on an insider's guide to the spectacular
fruits of Kent's vines.**



THINGS YOU NEVER KNEW ABOUT WINE

1. Good health!

"Drinking to one's health" started in ancient Greece, where the host always drank the first cup of wine to show his guests he wasn't poisoning them!

2. Italian or English...

Which came first? It's generally thought the Romans brought the vine to Britain in 43AD. Or was it already here? Roman legislation limited English wine imports to protect the Italian market from the end of the 1st century.

3. Our love affair with wine goes back millennia!

By the time the Romans were drinking it, wine was already ancient. Archaeology in Armenia pegs the first organised wine production at a mere 4000BC.

4. Why grapes?

You can make wine from many fruits, yet grapes are the top choice thanks to just the right proportions of water, tannins, sugar and acids for yeast to multiply and sugar to turn into alcohol.

5. We've got the skills...

English sparkling wines have won countless trophies for Best International Sparkling Wine, Best Sparkling Rose and many more in global competitions, adding more every year.

6. We're all lusher at heart...

In 2016, 242 million hectolitres of wine were consumed worldwide (that's a fair bit). The UK is the sixth biggest wine consuming country with the average person quaffing 21.3 litres a year!

7. Numbers, numbers...

One tonne of grapes makes roughly 720 bottles of wine, which means you need about 2.8 pounds (1.27 kilos) of grapes for each and every bottle.

8. Kent for the win!

The UK is on the climatic boundary of where it's possible to ripen grapes, but Kent, long known as the Garden of England, lies in our sunniest corner and the combination of soils, climate and proximity to the sea makes for absolutely top growing conditions!

9. The U.S.A. could have been the U.S.V...

The Vikings knew North America as "Vinland" for it's bounty of wild grapes. Sadly they weren't up to much but the vines were particularly disease resistant, so much so that most modern crops are planted on American rootstocks.

10. You have to be kidding...

Oenophobia, otherwise known as a fear or hatred of wine - is a real thing. Really!

A PROPER VINTAGE

with a long and fruitful history

Debate rages as to when wine first graced these shores, however, it's thought the first real wine explosion came courtesy of those arch tipplers, the Romans, when they invaded in 43AD. That the Romans liked their wine isn't in doubt, consumption skyrocketed during the occupation, leaving plenty of archaeological finds! It's even believed they founded a vineyard at Ightam near Sevenoaks.

Sadly, the following centuries saw a decline in wine making but from the 8th century onwards, vineyards once again became more commonplace in England, usually attached to monasteries, producing their sacramental wine.

1066 brought the wine-loving Normans and their conquest saw a big expansion in viticulture. The Domesday Book of 1086 records 42 vineyards in England, including three in Kent. Once again though, fortunes were about to take a nose dive, especially during Henry VIII's dissolution of the monasteries.

That might have been it for English wine, and it nearly was until the post-war period when a resurgent interest spread across the country with two Kent men, Edward Hyams and George Ordish, right at the forefront. The 1960s saw the establishment of Biddenden Vineyard, the oldest in Kent (still managed by the same family) and throughout the subsequent decades, interest, professionalism and quality grew rapidly. By 1986, a quarter of the 411,000 litres of English wine produced was made from Kentish grapes on 124 acres of vines, and the numbers have been increasing ever since.

So that's the story, but the most exciting part is what's happening now! The English wine revolution continues apace and every year, demand, quality and enthusiasm reaches new heights. And not just here at home... the rest of the world is taking notice too!

WORDS FROM THE WISE...

There's nothing quite like wine to inspire eloquence...

"Wine is sunlight held together by water"

Galileo Gallilei

"The flavour of wine is like delicate poetry"

Louis Pasteur

"Quickly, bring me a beaker of wine, so that I may wet my mind and say something clever"

Aristophanes



TERROIR, TERROIR...

giving a Kentish character to the grape

A grape takes many steps before becoming a delicious sip of wine! A lot of science goes into understanding our climate and soils as well as plenty of hard work, passion and ingenuity, resulting in top notch wines that reflect our terroir.

The UK sits at the edge of viable wine-growing territory; however, with global warming bumping temperatures up by about a degree since the 20th century, wine-making in the UK is not only viable but desirable. As one of the sunniest and mildest corners of the British Isles, Kent now has a warmer growing season and with that the ability to plant top grape varieties rather than just cold weather specialists. Additionally, the grapevines mature in the UK from east to west, so the Kentish crop can be picked a few days or even weeks earlier than elsewhere, helping to avoid disease and rot.

Careful positioning of vineyards on favoured south-facing slopes ensures heat during the day and cooling at night. But even then, winemakers monitor spring nights feverishly, employing technical know-how to limit any frost damage to the vines in bud.

The soil matters too. Vines produce the best grapes when they live on the edge of survival, with just enough of all the essentials. Fortunately we have the perfect environment, from the free draining chalk soils of the North Downs (part of the same chalk ridge that stretches to Champagne!) to the High Weald's clay, sandstone and mild microclimates, to grow the time-honoured trio of grapes that go into the world's finest sparkling wines: Pinot Noir, Pinot Meunier and Chardonnay.

Proximity to the coast and being just the right height above sea level helps keep temperatures stable and promotes air movement, bringing cooling breezes in summer and warmer maritime air in winter. All in all we have a winning combination!

**... one of the world's
most dynamic wine
regions – Kent**
(Spectator, May 2017)





TERROIR?

Everything that goes into the making of wine – soil, temperature, humidity, sunlight, pollen, wind, farming practices (and love!). The terroir shapes and influences the particular character of the wine.

SO WHAT'S ALL THE FUSS ABOUT?

English wine production today

GROWTH

The English wine industry is one of the most dynamic, vibrant and exciting places to be right now. Wine is being produced on a large scale and, crucially, is being internationally recognised for its consistent excellence! Here are a few facts and figures...



BY 2020
=3,000
HECTARES PLANTED
WITH VINES
EQUIVALENT



ACRES PLANTED
WITH GRAPEVINES
GROWN BY
135%

CURRENTLY
PLANTING
ANOTHER
1 MILLION
VINES

=**502**
VINEYARDS

FASTEST GROWING
HORTICULTURAL
PRODUCT IN
THE UK

50
VINEYARDS
IN KENT

KENT
LARGEST
PRODUCING COUNTY

PRODUCTION

EXPORT

20
COUNTRIES

HOW MANY

STYLE OF WINE

10%



RED/ROSÉ

24%



STILL WHITE

66%



SPARKLING

**BOTTLES
PRODUCED**

5,000,000

NOW

10,000,000

2020

CHARDONNAY 23%
SAUVIGNON 6%
PINOT NOIR 22%
PINOT MEUNIER 5%
BACCHUS 8%
OTHER VARIETIES (<5% EACH) 36%



**VARIETY
OF GRAPE**

FROM VINE TO BOTTLE...

viticulture the Kentish way

Even with the environment on your side, establishing a vineyard is no snip. After all, it's a big investment - it may take five years to create your first vintage! Here is how Kent's winemakers ensure success...

Precision viticulture (PV) enables detailed mapping of the terrain to understand the minute differences in climate, soil composition, PH, water - in fact anything affecting the growing of the vines within each vineyard - so measures can be put in place or differing grapes planted to take advantage of even the smallest variations.

These variations can cause grapes to ripen differently (a mixture of ripeness almost certainly equals poor wine); therefore sophisticated refractometers are used to test grape sugar levels and determine when they are optimal for picking.

In the winery itself you'll find innovations such as pneumatic presses with nitrogen filled bags to crush the precious grapes gently without crushing pips and stalks, which would affect the flavour as well as thermo-regulated fermentation tanks and barrels.

Ultimately, each wine reflects the individual personality of its vineyard and the best way to discover what makes Kent wine so special is to visit, take a guided tour or have a tutored tasting. Find details of Kent's wineries at kentfoodtrails.co.uk.



**SOME THINGS
CAN'T BE
RUSHED...**

Did you know all grapes in Kent are harvested entirely by hand? This allows for the selection of only the finest grapes.

**IT'S ALL COMING
UP VINO!**

Kent has more vines planted than any other county - 447 hectares and growing all the time.



KENT'S VINEYARD SUPERSTARS

Know the top grapes from the Garden of England

It's now time to get up close and personal with the grapes and wines themselves. Stick with us and you'll be able to impress your friends and seek out the very best vintages in no time with our guide to the top grapes grown in the county!

Chardonnay

Grape: *Green skinned grape, originally from Burgundy. Grape itself is neutral and Chardonnay wine gets many of its flavours from its terroir or oaking process.*

Use: Well known as a white wine, but increasingly grown in the UK for sparkling, either alone or as a blend.

Tasting: Expect a pale golden white wine, buttery and creamy if oaked or clean, fresh and appley if unoaked. Sparkling chardonnay sees citrus or tropical fruit notes, often with a mineral or acidic edge on the palate.

Try: Alongside seafood, shellfish and roast poultry.

Pinot Noir

Grape: *Thin skinned, dark purple in colour, fairly small and found on pinecone shaped bunches (hence its name - the French words for "pine" and "black").*

Use: Grown for both sparkling and red wine. Happily blends with others but also works well as a single grape wine. Second most planted variety in the UK.

Tasting: Expect light, fresh, fruity reds with lots of cherry, violets and red berries on the nose and palate, often with some smoky or spicy notes. Solo Pinot Sparkling is dry, rich & creamy with hints of brioche.

Try: Match reds with Kentish game like pheasant or Romney Marsh Lamb, sparkling with seafood and poultry.





Pinot Meunier

Grape: *Black in colour, with a signature flour-like dusty white down on the underside of its leaves.*

Use: Grown exclusively for sparkling wine where it's blended to provide aromatics and fruitiness to the Chardonnay/Pinot Noir mix in both standard sparkling and Rosé sparkling blends.

Bacchus

Grape: *Of Reisling parentage and given the Roman name of the Greek wine god Dionysus, this variety was first planted in England in the 1970's.*

Use: Becoming the benchmark of English white wine production, makes generally fresh, zesty wines although can provide some powerful flavours if fully ripened.

Tasting: Expect Sauvignon Blanc freshness and acidity, cut grass or elderflower on the nose, gooseberry on the palate and a crisp flavoursome finish.

Try: With seafood, roast pork, Thai cuisine or a Kentish goats' cheese.

Ortega

Grape: *Created in 1948 in honour of the Spanish poet and philosopher José Ortega y Gasset, Ortega ripens early, is not sensitive to frost, so perfect for cooler climes.*

Use: Used exclusively in white wine production, although you'll see variations of Ortega from off-dry to sweet.

Tasting: Expect a sweeter Reisling-like wine, which can vary from sweeter notes of pear, apricot or honey to a more off-dry green-apple nose and a crisp, fruity palate.

Try: As an aperitif, or with lightly spiced dishes and seafood. The sweeter versions can even work as dessert wines.

Of course Kent's wine makers are a creative and inventive lot; look out for other less well known grapes and interesting blends. There will always be something new to sample and of course the wines vary from year to year!

GLOSSARY OF WINE TASTING TERMS

Palate: the feel and taste of the wine in the mouth.

Finish: the impression left in the mouth after swallowing.

Mousse: the character of the foam on a sparkling wine in the glass.



KENTISH SPARKLING

Getting effusive over effervescence

Kent's single grape wines are nothing short of fantastic, but THE crème de la crème of Kent's vineyards are its sparkling blends...

The “Champagne revelation”

So here's the big reveal, the bit that gets everyone excited... English Sparkling is produced from the same grapes, grown on the same type of soils, by the same method (Méthode Champenoise) as Champagne. Allow that to sink in for a moment...

While the Kent wine industry is younger than some, we have gathered experience from around the world and are constantly learning and innovating. In addition, our secret weapon of being one degree latitude further north means our grapes have a naturally high acidity and low sugar – perfect for premium quality sparkling with a wonderful character of its own!

Kent sparkling wines carry the hallmark of freshness and brightness which enliven the palate and a range of flavours associated with the countryside of Kent such as apples, pears and spring blossom. Kent's fine fizz shows the depth and qualities akin to premium Champagnes and is far kinder on the pocket too.

Clive Barlow MW (Master of Wine)
Press Wine Services at the Goods Shed, Canterbury

The other Champagne revelation

Looking at the history it's entirely possible the English invented sparkling wine way in advance of our French neighbours! That's a pretty bold statement, so let's review some facts to back it up...

The first mention of second fermentation – adding sugar to create a second round of fermentation, thereby creating the fizz – was made in 1662 by the English scientist Christopher Merrett. It was a seemingly well-known fashion for 17th century “wine coopers” to make their wines “brisk and sparkling” by the addition of sugar (a practice already well known to cider makers).

The modern wine bottle was first made in 1662, created by innovative glassmakers who discovered that coal furnaces made stronger glass. Known as “Verre Anglais”, it was the best and only option for bottling and containing the high pressures created in Champagne production.

Sparkling wine production is on the up, growing year on year with quality and variety higher than ever!

PINK IS THE NEW BLACK

Crank up the fun and enjoy a taste of summer, because not only does Kent do great sparkling, it does quite exquisite Rosé sparkling too! These wines are based on the same blends but with additional contact from the red grapes to give the pinkish hue and sweeter character.

Visit kentfoodtrails.co.uk for details of vineyards producing award winning Kentish sparkling wines.

KENT'S SPARKLERS

Kent's top sparkling is made from a blend of Pinot Noir for body, Chardonnay for structure and Pinot Meunier for aromatics and fruitiness. Generally either Chardonnay or Pinot Noir will be dominant (50% or more) but there's still plenty of room for experimentation.



RESPONSIBLE DRINKING AND (NOT) DRIVING

Do partake responsibly and plan your trip accordingly, have a designated driver or why not stay over locally? Go to kentfoodtrails.co.uk for local accommodation.

I HEARD IT THROUGH THE GRAPEVINE...

Taste, buy, and explore Kent's vineyards & wines

Convinced? Enthused? Ready for a tipples? The best news of all is that Kent's wines are easier to enjoy than ever! For the entry-level experience you can pick up a bottle with your shopping at a wide variety of well-known retailers, or order one at many great restaurants around the county. It'll be fantastic, but you'll be missing out on so much more...

Kent isn't known as the Capital of English Wine for nothing! With vineyards in every part of the county offering the opportunity to meet the people behind the wines, providing tours and tastings, sharing their experience, enthusiasm and passion, it's all about getting up close and personal. Many offer tastings at any time (some tasting rooms are open all year round) and you'll have the chance to buy direct at their cellar doors.

Need more? Then take it up another notch and sign up for a guided tour. It will still include the all-important tutored tasting but packages can also include lunch or afternoon tea, amply stuffed with local cheeses, charcuterie or even stone baked pizzas!

If all that leaves you yearning for the outdoors don't fret, Kent's vineyards are located in some of our finest landscapes and you'll find several vineyards have marked walking trails around their estates. Look out for vineyards offering the chance to stay over in a tent, B&B or self-catering cottage.

For the "Full Monty" look no further than Chapel Down's Wine Academy, offering the opportunity to build your sommelier skills and learn how to professionally taste and describe wines. You'll soon be the toast of the party!

Pop by kentfoodtrails.co.uk and plan your tasting trip, come for the day, stay the weekend or even longer to see and try the very finest fruits of Kent's vines!

Many vineyards are accessible from Kent's well known walking and cycling routes too.

If lacing up your boots on The Saxon Shore Way you can take in the Gusbourne Estate in Appledore, whereas a jaunt along the North Downs Way National Trail will bring you to Terlingham Vineyard near Folkestone. The Darent Valley Path cuts close to Mount Vineyard in Shoreham whilst the Elham Valley Way puts you within sipping distance of both the Elham Valley Vineyard at Breach and Simpson's Estate at Barham. Finally branch out east for the Great Stour Way and the tasting room at Chartham Vineyard.

Heading out on two wheels on National Cycle Route 18 will also get you to Chartham Vineyard and take you through the heart of Biddenden vineyard to boot! If that sounds too strenuous then consider taking a tour from the UK Electric Bike Centre (handily also located in Biddenden), to visit the vineyard of the same name, Hush Heath Estate and nearby Chapel Down.

Information on all these routes and more can be found at explorekent.org.



THE WINE GARDEN OF ENGLAND

A collective of Kentish wineries are collaborating to establish the county as The Wine Garden of England – a stunning rural escape where visitors are invited to relax and explore, taste delicious wines and learn the fascinating stories of these beautifully picturesque vineyards. From small independent vineyards to established large-scale producers, the partnership comprises seven of the county's finest wineries, united by their passion for winemaking, high quality products and desire to share their stories.

Visit winegardenofengland.com

Produced in Kent

This is one of a series of food trails promoting Kent's local produce and distinctive landscapes. Whilst every effort has been made to ensure that the content of this leaflet is accurate and up-to-date at the time of printing, no liability can be accepted for any errors, omissions or misrepresentation of fact contained herein.

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Photo credits

Produced in Kent
Chapel Down
Gusbourne Estate
Terlingham Vineyard

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The European Agricultural Fund
for Rural Development:
Europe investing in rural areas.



kentfoodtrails.co.uk