

WINE *into* WEALTH

Can't afford a vineyard of your own? Buy the finished product instead. Wine expert Elizabeth Marett on why home soil could offer strong yields

When I took a bottle of English fizz to a friend in La Rochelle 10 years ago, he couldn't hide his amusement. Thanks, but he'd stick to champagne.

Fast forward to the 2025 London Wine Fair, and the wine world is clamouring for a taste of Domaine Evremond Classic Cuvée: the inaugural sparkling wine from the mighty Taittinger's Kent vineyard, where planting began in 2017.

"Pierre-Emmanuel Taittinger and I chose the Chilham site because of the similarities to the Champagne terroir," explains Patrick McGrath, co-founder of Domaine Evremond. "We're delighted with the quality of the first release and excited about our long-term future."

Following champagne producer Louis Pommery's 40-hectare planting in Hampshire, and Spanish cava giant Henkell Freixenet's acquisition of Bolney Wine Estate in Sussex, it's clear that foreign investors can see the potential bubbling in England.

Sadly, not many of us have cash to splash on a vineyard. So, what about speculating on the finest English bottles instead?

Wine investment is a popular venture, with wine classified as a wasting asset and thus free from capital gains tax. Some investors buy *en primeur* – at the point of a wine's release – thereby speculating on its potential. Others purchase on the secondary market, once a wine has already matured and, critically, become scarce.

But what precisely makes a wine investment-worthy?

"The structure of a wine is very

important," says Claire Collini, Head of Wine Auction Sales UK at Sotheby's. "This is the balance of fruit, tannins, acidity, oak-ageing and alcohol that allows the wine to mature. Investors seek wines from well-established estates with excellent reputations, good track records and often limited stocks.

"Provenance is also critical for quality. Buyers need to be assured that their wine has been properly stored in temperature-controlled conditions."

Does English wine fit into this bracket? Most still whites and reds made here are stylistically suited to youthful drinking rather than ageing. But don't dismiss English still wines as prospective investments, given the sensational still wines made from varieties such as Chardonnay and Pinot Noir.

Without doubt the greatest investment potential is in English sparkling wine, mostly produced using the same traditional method – and the same grapes – as champagne.

Formerly joined in one landmass, the South of England and the Champagne region share similar 'terroir' (soil, topography and climate).

It stands to reason, therefore, that top English sparkling wines have the potential to develop nutty, biscuity complexity that

could increase their value over years. With most English vineyards' production small in global terms, the scarcity factor is also in play.

"Our Prestige Cuvée and Classic Cuvée evolve with time, gaining depth and complexity," says Lucy Letley of Albury Organic Vineyard, near Guildford. "It's early days, but provenance, sustainability and rising demand bode well for English sparkling as both fine wine and long-term investment."

Sibylla Tindale, co-owner of the High Clandon Vineyard, agrees.

"Our 2008 vintage, The Queen's Jubilee Cuvée, is still drinking beautifully, while our 2013, 2014 and 2015 vintages are developing sophisticated characteristics," she says. "These rare bottles would make for an interesting investment."

So why hold back on such award-winning English fizz? The answer is brand recognition. With the industry here so young, producers have yet to establish the reputations that give confidence in a wine's future excellence.

But the signs are good: producers such as Sugrue South Downs are making waves internationally, while Nyetimber – perhaps England's best-known brand – won the top trophy at the 2025 International Wine Challenge for its 2016 Blanc de Blancs Magnum. It is the first time ever that this award has left Champagne.

So stay tuned. Maybe one day we'll see auction bidding wars over the vinous treasures of Surrey, Sussex and Kent.

Elizabeth Marett runs Wine Experience for monthly tastings in Dorking, bespoke wine parties and corporate wine events in the Surrey Hills. Visit: wineexperiencesurrey.co.uk

TOP TIPS ON ENGLISH WINE INVESTMENT

- Experiment but be prudent. Only spend what you would be happy to forfeit if the wine were not to age as predicted.
- Research by chatting to those in the industry and online. *Wine-searcher.com* is a useful tool for accessing tasting notes and critics' scores on English wines.
- Visit award-winning vineyards and research harvest predictions. Being ready to buy a case or two from a lauded vintage will give you a higher chance of landing investment level wine.
- Consider buying shares in English vineyards, such as Kent's Chapel Down and Gusbourne. That way you invest in wine tourism, as well as in wine itself.

