

Make mine a FULL ENGLISH

With English Wine Week on the horizon, there's no better excuse to explore the many fabulous homegrown still and sparkling wines, says Elizabeth Marett



The range of English wines available to wine lovers today is stunning – complex sparkling wines, beautifully crafted still wines, elegant blush rosés and even sumptuous dessert wines. While it is true that our great British weather can't ripen the varieties needed for full-bodied reds, there are some top quality Pinot Noirs too.

The sticking point can be the price. High labour, land and production costs together with unreliable yields, mean bottles can be on the expensive side. But with carbon footprint and sustainability a key focus, it's worth being selective.

And where better to showcase the fruits of England's winemaking labours than our very own rolling Surrey Hills?

The best approach is to visit the vineyards and taste their wines. The following picks are carefully chosen to include vineyards within easy reach and wines that are available from outlets close by.

So grab your glass (Dartington, please!), your straw hat and step out into the summer sunshine with these delicious drops.

Albury Estate Sparkling Rosé 2022

If you're looking for an elegant, fruity and effortlessly drinkable pink fizz, then this recent release from Albury's organic vineyard is just the ticket. Made in the traditional method from a blend of Pinot Noir, Chardonnay and the early-ripening Pinot Précoce, this sparkler is summer sunshine in a glass. ■ £37.95, alburyvineyard.com, The Vineyard (Dorking), Guildford Wine Company and Kingfisher Farm Shop (Abinger Hammer).



Nutbourne Nutty Vintage Brut 2018

A beautifully balanced and rich blend of Chardonnay, Pinot Noir and Pinot Blanc, this is the best of English bubbly, with pear and brioche on the palate. Produced by the talented Gladwin family near Pulborough under the supervision of renowned winemaker Emma Rice, it's no wonder this won gold at the 2022 Wine GB Awards. An absolute bargain. ■ £28, nutbournevineyards.com



Stopham Estate Barrel Fermented Pinot Blanc 2022

I've always been impressed by Sussex-based Stopham's range of still whites, and this wine is no different. Made from the finest juice from whole-bunch pressings, before ageing on the lees in oak barrels, the resulting wine is complex and full-bodied, with ripe melon and lime flavours. Utterly delicious with sushi. ■ £24.95, stophamvineyard.co.uk, Hawkins Bros (Milford)



High Clendon Shakespearean Cuvée 2019

If you plan to go big on your fizz, High Clendon's gorgeous blend of Pinot Noir, Pinot Meunier and Chardonnay is an excellent local pick. Four years' ageing on the lees with a further couple of years in bottle lends this wine depth and creaminess, enhancing the citrus and stone fruit flavours. The bottle is rather pretty too. ■ £43, highclendon.co.uk



Denbies Orange Solaris 2022

What on earth is orange wine? Simply put, it's white wine, made like red. Here, Solaris grapes are fermented with their skins, releasing the flavours and tannins within. Rich, with apricot and almond notes on the nose, the palate follows with a dry nuttiness reminiscent of a white Rioja and a pleasing pineapple finish. It's a unique flavour so trying it is a must! ■ £24.50, denbies.co.uk



The Bolney Estate Pinot Noir

This was the first English red I tried when I entered the English wine industry and it's still firmly at the top of my list. Made from grapes grown on Bolney's West-Sussex estate, the result is a silky-smooth delight, bursting with red cherry, plum and a hint of smoke. Fabulous with charcuterie and barbecued veg. ■ £22.99 in-store at Majestic (Dorking/Reigate), or £30, bolneywineestate.com

Greyfriars Sauvignon Blanc 2023

Sauvignon Blanc isn't always easy to grow and ripen in the English climate, but the folk at Greyfriars have nailed it. Dry, fresh and aromatic, this wine is freshly cut-grass, lemon and lime and gooseberry tart. Everything a Sauvignon should be, at a competitive price. ■ £17, greyfriarsvineyard.co.uk or £18, Hawkins Bros (Milford)

Chilworth Manor Rose 2023

Nestled in the Surrey Hills, Chilworth Manor's vineyard produces this fresh, juicy rosé, packed with vibrant red berries and a hint of rhubarb. A crisp aperitif wine, made in the style of a Provence rose, this is exactly what summer evenings are made for. ■ £20, chilworthmanorvineyard.com, Corkage (Guildford), Hawkins Bros (Milford, tasting available)

Elizabeth Marett is a WSET Diploma-qualified wine specialist. She runs Wine Experience which offers monthly Wine Club tastings in Dorking, bespoke wine parties for small groups and corporate wine events in the Surrey Hills.

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