



BITE
SIZED
GUIDES

KENT'S VINEYARDS & WINES

...THE CAPITAL OF ENGLISH WINE

producedinkent.co.uk



Produced in Kent

We want to inspire you to explore the amazing vineyards and wineries of Kent. This guide is a short introduction to the world of winemaking and Kent's award-winning wines.

Food and drink has shaped the landscape of our wonderful county, and we hope you enjoy exploring all it has to offer. To find out more and to make the most of the Garden of England, just visit producedinkent.co.uk Cheers!

At NFU Mutual Ashford, Tenterden & Whitfield agency, we're more than just an insurance provider – we're proud to support Kent's thriving wine industry. The vineyards across our beautiful county play a vital role in both our local economy and our agricultural heritage. We're honoured to work alongside the talented winemakers who are putting Kent on the map as a leader in wine production. From protecting their businesses to helping them plan for growth, our tailored insurance solutions are designed to help ensure the future of Kent's wine industry remains as strong as its vineyards.

For more information, call us on 01233 500 822.



NFU Mutual
ASHFORD, TENTERDEN & WHITFIELD

"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 and their British partners, 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!

Did you know there are over 120 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?

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.**



FASCINATING WINE FACTS YOU PROBABLY DIDN'T KNOW

1. Drinking to your health - literally!

The phrase "drinking to one's health" dates back to ancient Greece, where a host would take the first sip of wine to prove to guests that it wasn't poisoned.

2. Did England have vineyards before the Romans?

It's thought the Romans introduced vine-growing to Britain in 43 AD, but was English wine already being made? By the late 1st century, Roman laws restricted English wine imports to protect Italian producers - English wine was already making a name for itself.

3. Wine was ancient even in Roman times!

Archaeologists in Armenia have uncovered a winery dating back to around 4000 BC - complete with fermentation vats and grape presses!

4. Why grapes and not other fruits?

You can make wine from many fruits, but grapes are nature's perfect winemaking fruit. They have the ideal balance of water, sugar, tannins, and acids - just what yeast needs to turn juice into glorious wine.

5. England's sparkling secret

English sparkling wines are no longer a hidden gem! They've won many global awards - proving that the UK is a serious player on the world stage.

6. The world loves wine (and so do we!)

In 2023, global wine consumption was estimated at 221 million hectolitres, that's enough to fill 8,840 Olympic-sized swimming pools.

7. How many grapes per bottle?

A single bottle of wine requires about 2.8 pounds (1.27 kg) of grapes. To put that into perspective, one tonne of grapes produces roughly 720 bottles of sparkling wine.

8. Kent: England's wine powerhouse!

Kent, long known as the Garden of England, enjoys some of the country's sunniest conditions. Its chalky soils, warm climate, and proximity to the sea make it an ideal place for growing top-quality wine grapes.

9. Could America have been the United States of Vineyards?

When Vikings landed in North America, they called it "Vinland" because of its wild grapes. The native vines weren't great for wine, but were naturally disease resistant. Today, most modern grapevines are grafted onto American rootstocks.

10. A fear of wine? It's real!

Believe it or not, some people suffer from oenophobia - a genuine fear or hatred of wine.

A VINTAGE TALE:

The Rich and Fruitful History of English Wine

The origins of winemaking in England are shrouded in mystery, but one thing is certain - when the Romans invaded in 43 AD, they brought more than just their military might. Passionate about their wine, they planted vineyards across the land, with archaeological finds offering tantalising glimpses of their winemaking and consumption.

Some even believe they established a vineyard at Igham near Sevenoaks, laying the groundwork for England's long relationship with viticulture.

After the Romans departed, winemaking waned, only to be revived in the 8th century by monks producing sacramental wines in monastic vineyards. Then came the Normans in 1066, who brought not just conquest but a deep love of wine, spurring the expansion of English vineyards. The Domesday Book of 1086 recorded 42 vineyards across England, including three in Kent, a county destined to play a major role in English wine.

However, history was not always kind to winemakers. The dissolution of the monasteries under Henry VIII saw vineyard numbers dwindle, and English wine almost faded into obscurity. But resilience runs deep, and the post-war years saw a bold resurgence. Two Kent visionaries, Edward Hyams and George Ordish, helped reignite the industry, paving the way for Biddenden Vineyard's establishment in the 1960s - the county's oldest, still run by the same family today.

By 1986, Kentish vineyards were producing a quarter of all English wine, and the momentum has only grown. Fast forward to today, and we're in the midst of an English wine revolution. Quality, demand, and global recognition are soaring, proving that Kent - and the rest of England - is now firmly on the world wine map. The best part? This is just the beginning!

WORDS FROM THE WISE...

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

"Wine is sunlight held
together by water"

Galileo Galilei

"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

Before a grape becomes a glorious glass of wine, it embarks on a fascinating journey shaped by science, soil, climate, and no small amount of passion. At the heart of this transformation lies terroir: the unique fingerprint of a place that infuses every bottle with its own story.

Although the UK once sat on the fringes of the wine-growing map, that's changing. Average temperatures have risen by around 1°C since the late 20th century, nudging Britain, especially the South East, into prime wine territory. Kent, with its mild, sunny climate and long growing season, has become one of the UK's most exciting wine regions.

Unlike cooler regions where only hardy grape varieties could once survive, Kent's warmer summers now support premium wine grapes. And thanks to the east-to-west progression of vine ripening in the UK, Kentish vineyards often get a head start at harvest, crucial for beating autumn rains, disease, and rot.

Location is everything. South-facing slopes soak up the sun by day and cool gently at night, preserving natural acidity and flavour. But spring frosts remain a threat. That's why local winemakers closely monitor the weather and use everything from frost fans to water sprays to protect delicate buds.

Soil, too, plays a starring role. Grapevines thrive when they're challenged - not pampered - drawing character from the land. Kent offers an enviable mix: the free-draining chalk of the North Downs (geologically linked to Champagne), plus the rich, varied soils of the High Weald. Together, they provide ideal conditions for growing the classic trio of sparkling wine grapes: Chardonnay, Pinot Noir, and Pinot Meunier.

Our coastal position and elevation help moderate temperatures year-round. Sea breezes bring cool relief in summer and temper the winter chill, creating a stable environment where vines can flourish.

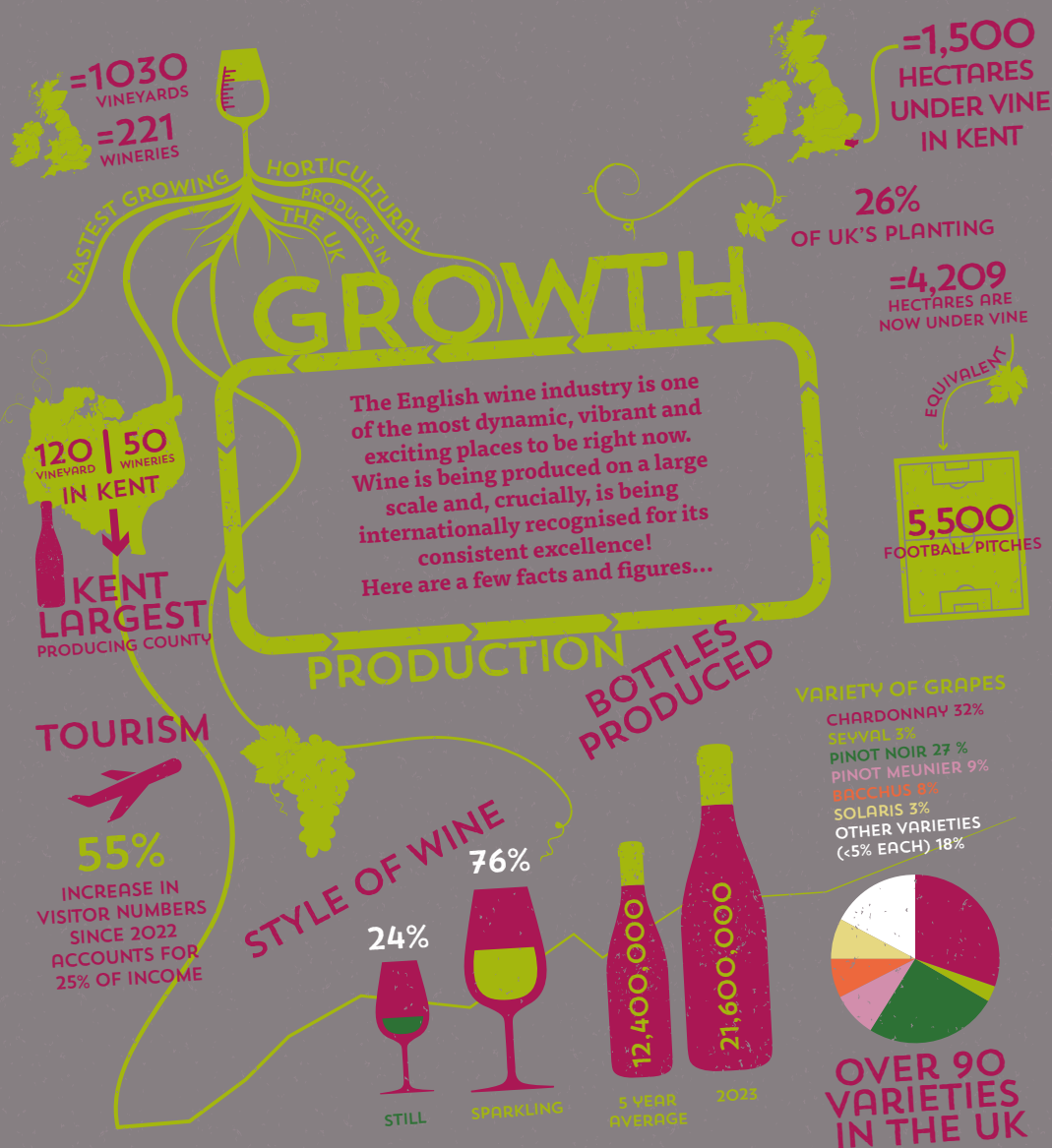


SO, WHAT IS TERROIR?

It's everything that shapes a wine: soil, sun, rainfall, slope, wind, microclimate, and the grower's hand. In Kent, terroir gives our wines their distinctive charm - rooted in place, and bursting with personality.

SO WHAT'S ALL THE FUSS ABOUT?

English wine production today



FROM VINE TO BOTTLE...

Viticulture the Kentish way

Even when nature gives you a helping hand, planting a vineyard is no easy feat. It's a serious commitment - financially and in time.

Grapevines typically take around three years before yielding a usable crop, and it can be five years or more before you produce your first commercial vintage. So, how do Kent's winemakers stack the odds in their favour?

It starts with precision viticulture (PV) - an approach that uses technology and data to fine-tune how vineyards are managed. Tools like drones, GPS mapping, and soil sensors help growers understand subtle differences in terrain, soil composition, pH levels, moisture, and microclimates across a single vineyard. With this knowledge, they can plant the right grape varieties in the right places, adjust irrigation, or tailor pruning and harvesting strategies to suit localised conditions.

These micro-variations matter. Grapes that ripen unevenly can throw off the balance of the wine. That's why winemakers use refractometers and other tools to monitor sugar levels (measured as °Brix), acidity, and flavour development - pinpointing the perfect moment to harvest.

Once in the winery, gentle pneumatic presses extract juice without crushing seeds or stems, which can release harsh, bitter compounds. Many presses also use nitrogen gas to minimise oxygen exposure, preserving fresh aromas. Fermentation takes place in thermo-regulated tanks or oak barrels, allowing precise temperature control, which is crucial for retaining the wine's purity and character.

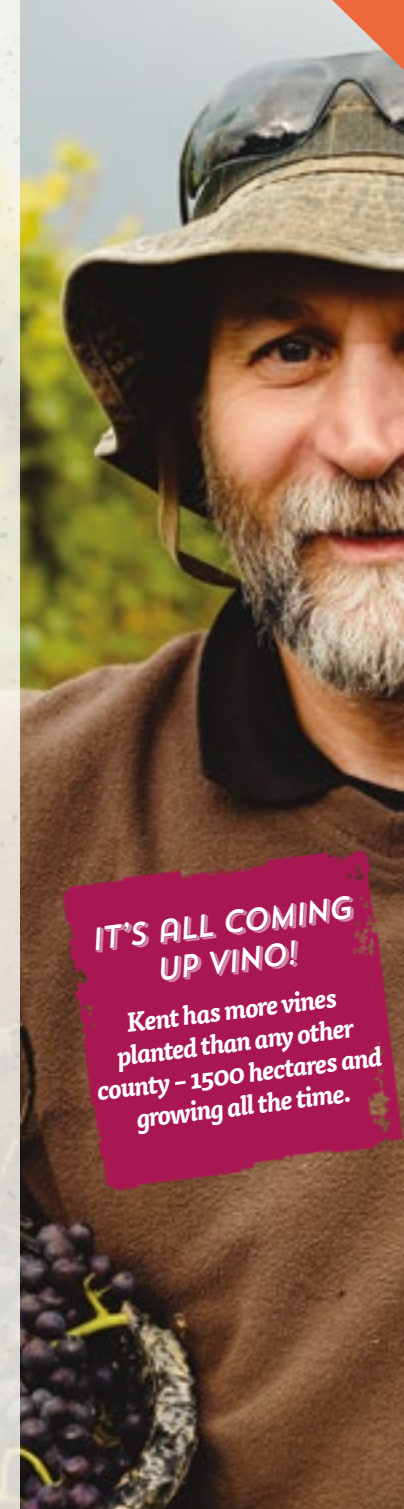
In the end, each wine tells the story of its place - the soil, the climate, the people. And the best way to experience that? Taste it for yourself - Kent's vineyards are waiting to welcome you.

Take a guided tour or enjoy a tutored tasting. Find details of Kent's wineries at producedinkent.co.uk



IT'S ALL COMING UP VINO!

Kent has more vines planted than any other county - 1500 hectares and growing all the time.



KENT'S VINEYARD SUPERSTARS

Know your grape varieties

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. Used in still and sparkling wines.

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.

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"). Grown for both sparkling and red wine. Happily blends with others but also works well as a single grape wine.

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.



Pinot Meunier

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

Tasting: 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 Riesling parentage and given the Roman name of the Greek wine god Dionysus, this variety was first planted in England in the 1970s. It makes generally fresh, zesty wines, although it 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.

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, and is perfect for cooler climes. Exclusively in white wine production, you'll see variations from off-dry to sweet.

Tasting: Expect a sweeter Riesling-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.



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

English Sparkling is made with the same grapes, soils and method as Champagne – and there's a strong case we got there first. In 1662, English scientist Christopher Merrett described adding sugar for a second fermentation, while local glassmakers created strong bottles to contain the fizz.



Kent's modern wine scene may be young, but it draws on global experience. With a cool climate perfect for sparkling, we're producing wines of real character.

KENTISH STILL WINES

Getting passionate over still perfection

While sparkling wine often takes the spotlight, the depth and breadth of Kent still wines has continued to grow. There are many vineyards specialising in producing only still wines and a much wider range of varieties have now been planted.

Kent's still wines are celebrated for their depth of flavour and the unique characteristics imparted by the region's terroir. Whether you're a fan of red, white, or rosé, there's a Kentish still wine to suit every palate.

 **Kent's sparkling wines, most of which are grown on the same chalk seam that stretches under the Channel to Champagne, have gained a reputation for delivering the same depth of flavour and freshness that one associates with Champagne, without the same price tag. But what is especially exciting is the emergence of still wines from farms previously renowned for their pears, cherries and apricots. Look out for fresh, fruity rosés and white wines with the aromatics of Bacchus and Ortega, or refined, silky Chardonnays.** 

Nick Lane
Head Winemaker, Defined Wine Ltd (previously winemaker in Champagne and New Zealand)

TASTE, BUY AND EXPLORE

It's easier than ever to drink Kent's wines

You can grab a bottle with your shopping, order a glass at a local pub, or go to a vineyard for the full experience. You'll discover local wines at independent retailers such as Macknade in Faversham that sells more than 70 local wines

A tasting experience is where the wonder truly starts though. Swirl a crisp white, toast with a sparkling rosé, or discover a bold English red. Many vineyards also provide local food pairings, seasonal events and art exhibitions – making each tour an event to remember.

Whether you're a wine enthusiast or simply looking for a unique day out, a vineyard tour provides an opportunity to discover Kent's diverse climate and soils, and the history behind each vintage. From boutique upstart producers to medal-winning estates, there are vineyards to suit everyone.

Drink responsibly and plan ahead: take the train (southeasternrailway.co.uk), have a designated driver, or stay overnight locally. Discover where to stay and where to eat at producedinkent.co.uk/discover/eat-stay.

Several vineyards are within walking and cycling distance from popular routes on explorekent.org, where you'll get to soak up even more of our fantastic countryside on the way.

THE WINE GARDEN OF ENGLAND

As a family of nine vineyards, we're collaborating to create a world-class wine trail and visitor experience here in Kent. Each of our estates is uniquely different, so we encourage you to come and discover the diversity that makes the Wine Garden of England so special. From small independent vineyards to established large-scale producers, the partnership comprises nine of the county's wineries, united by their passion for winemaking, high quality products and desire to share their stories.

Visit winegardenofengland.co.uk



RESPONSIBLE DRINKING AND (NOT) DRIVING

Please drink responsibly and plan your trip accordingly. Have a designated driver, take a train, or stay locally. You can plan your journey with SoutheasternRailway.co.uk and find amazing places to stay here: Producedinkent.co.uk/Discover/Eat-Stay



VINEYARDS AND WINERIES...



Balfour Winery - Staplehurst

Barnsole Vineyard - Staple

Biddenden Vineyards - Biddenden
biddendenvineyards.com

Brabourne Vineyard - Brabourne

Brenley Wine - Faversham

Cary Wine Estate - Chartham



Chapel Down - Tenterden
chapeldown.com



Chartham Vineyard - Chartham
charthamvineyard.co.uk

Cobham House - Cobham

Gusbourne Estate - Appledore

Ham Street Wines - Hamstreet

Hearten Oak Vineyard - Hawkhurst

Heppington Vineyard - Canterbury

Herbert Hall Winery - Marden

Meophams - Meopham

Mereworth Wines - Mereworth



Nine Oaks Vineyard - Hothfield
nine-oaks.co.uk



Oastwood - Tenterden
oastwoodwine.com



Ragstone Ridge - Boughton Monchelsea
davidcatt.co.uk/ragstone-ridge

Red Hill Estate - Watlington



Silverhand Estate - Luddesdown
silverhandestate.com



Simpsons Wine Estate - Barham
simpsonswine.com

Squerries Winery - Westerham

Tadpole Vineyard - Bishopsbourne



Warehorne Vineyard - Ashford
warehornevineyard.co.uk



Wayfarer Wines - Woodchurch
wayfarerwines.com

Westwell Wine Estates - Westwell



Wildshark Vineyard - Harrietsham
wildsharkvineyard.co.uk



Woodchurch Wine - Woodchurch
woodchurchwine.co.uk



Woolton Farm Vineyard - Bekesbourne
wooltonfarm.co.uk

Yotes Court Vineyard - West Peckham

LOVE LOCAL?

Produced in Kent champions the food, drink and craft businesses that make our county special. We support, connect and promote makers, growers and producers across Kent – helping them thrive and grow.

Join our mailing list for the latest on local gems, seasonal produce and ways to support your local economy.



Produced in Kent

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Photo credits

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Chapel Down

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oakcreative.net

ARE YOUR FINANCES ON TRACK?



Pop into our office and meet NFU Mutual Financial Adviser Lewis Greenwood. Lewis can offer holistic financial advice from both a personal and business perspective.

- Pensions
- Investments
- Protection
- Inheritance Tax Planning

If you think you could benefit from our financial planning services, call **01233 500 822** to arrange an appointment with Lewis at NFU Mutual Ashford, Tenterden and Whitfield Agency.

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Mutual 29/05/2025

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