

PREVIEW OF EWP TRADE TASTING

23rd April 2010

New faces and new releases

The last few years have presented some interesting challenges to The UK wine industry. “It’s been a case of demand exceeding supply,” comments Julia Trustram Eve of English Wine Producers, organisers of the forthcoming trade and press tasting on Friday 23rd April in London.

One key factor in the rise in consumer and trade interest are the regular competition wins for English wines both here and abroad, and the resulting publicity. Trophy wins in last year’s International Wine Challenge (Camel Valley Bacchus 2008), Decanter World Wine Awards (Hush Heath Balfour Brut 2005) and notable achievements in overseas competitions have also created significant positive media interest.

Happily, 2009 has produced what is likely to be one of the largest vintages on record, due in part to the number of the more recently planted vineyards coming in to full production. As many of these new vineyards will be releasing sparkling wines it will be a while yet before the first wines are on the market. However there will be some new faces and wines at the trade tasting this year, introducing some of the new generation traditional variety sparkling wines estates such as Gusbourne in Kent (see below).

The main part of the tasting is the EWP membership showcase of their wines, both displayed in style order on a central tasting area and on their own stands. EWP represents the commercial sector of the industry and comprises many of the ‘household names’ in English wines. In addition there will be a selection of wines on tasting from smaller regional vineyards, represented on regional vineyard association stands.

The St George’s Day tasting also launches English Wine Week, a celebration of English wines which takes place this year 29th May – 6th June. English Wine Week provides the trade with a great opportunity to fly the flag for English wines and to collaborate with vineyards to highlight these wines to customers. In turn it encourages vineyards to work more closely with the on and off trade, from locally to nationally. English Wine Week falls at an ideal time for English wines – it is the beginning of the summer which is seasonally appealing and carries all the anticipation of the summer months ahead. Further information on English Wine Week will be available at the tasting.

Below are some snippets of news from some of the producers that are exhibiting:

NEW FACE TO EWP: GUSBOURNE ESTATE

New EWP member this year and first time on the market is sparkling wine estate Gusbourne. Just outside Appledore in Kent, Gusbourne Estate currently only grows the classic Champagne varieties on Weald Clay, Tunbridge Wells sand and a very light sandy loam on a south-facing ancient coastal escarpment. The estate is owned by Andrew Weeber, whose passion for wine extends back to his South African (Stellenbosch University) roots, Gusbourne is run on a day-to-day basis by manager Jon Pollard.

The first vintage releases, to be presented at the EWP Trade Tasting will be from 2006, their two styles Brut (Pinot Noir, Pinot Meunier, Chardonnay) and Blanc (100% Chardonnay). Production has increased for subsequent vintages, and a groundbreaking new winery is planned for the near future.

RIDGEVIEW WINNERS

The Ridgeview range of 5 different sparkling wines styles and blends will be on show, including newly released 2007 vintages and the currently available 2006 vintage of some of the styles. This includes Ridgeview's Blanc de Blanc Grosvenor 2006 which was recently awarded Silver in Chardonnay du Monde 2010, a French-based competition which honours the best chardonnays of the world, selected from 880 wines entered from 37 countries. Additionally the current Wine of the Year in the UK's own English & Welsh Wine of the Year Competition – Ridgeview's Blanc de Noirs Knightsbridge 2006 - will be on tasting. Mike Roberts, the current holder of Winemaker of the Year in the same competition, will be at the Ridgeview stand.

NYETIMBER LAUNCHING 2005 VINTAGE CLASSIC CUVÉE

The Nyetimber team will be out in force, and launching their latest release – 2005 vintage Classic Cuvée. This signature style from Nyetimber succeeds the multi award-winning 2003 Classic Cuvée and is a blend of 62% Chardonnay, 19% Pinot Noir and 19% Pinot Meunier, with an alcohol level of 12.3% and residual sugar of 14.0.

NEW VINTAGE LAUNCH FOR HUSH HEATH

The third vintage for Hush Heath's rosé sparkling Balfour Brut – 2006 - has just been launched. It follows a prestigious run of award-winners, with their 2004 scooping a Gold medal in the International Wine Challenge in 2008 and last year's Decanter English Wine Trophy winner for their 2005 vintage. Plans at Hush Heath continue to develop, with a winery being built on site, and the introduction of a limited edition still wine.

HIGHER PROFILE FOR STANLAKE PARK

Stanlake Park Wine Estate, based just outside Twyford, Reading, is no stranger to EWP nor to the tasting. This year however they will have their own stand at the tasting, showing their range of sparkling and still wines, and launching their new sparkling wine branding. Winemaker Vince Gower will be on hand to take you through the range. Stanlake has become a popular tourist destination within the Thames Valley, having opened a wine showroom and shop, selling their full range of some 14 different wines plus liqueurs from fruit grown on the estate and other world wines to complement the selection.

NEW SPARKLING WINE AT CHAPEL DOWN WINES

Chapel Down Wines are introducing a new addition to their extensive and award-winning range of sparkling wines – a Pinot Noir-Chardonnay blend from the high quality 2006 vintage. In addition there will be some new 2009 vintages available to taste, including their signature Bacchus still wine and English Rose still rosé. Also to be found only at the Chapel Down table, a wonderful Chablis style Chardonnay also from the 2009 harvest which is due to be release in May this year.

LATEST VINTAGE RELEASES FOR CAMEL VALLEY

Following the success of their 2008 varietal Bacchus still wine, some of their follow on vintage from the successful 2009 harvest has already sold 'en primeur' prior to release - and will be in the line up of Bacchus wines on tasting. Camel Valley's Gold Medal winning Pinot Noir Brut 2007 will also be available to alongside their latest sparkling release, a 2008 Pinot Noir Rosé. Bob Lindo of Camel Valley will be at the tasting on the South West Vineyards Association Stand.

THREE CHOIRS CONTINUES ITS SUCCESS BOTH HERE AND ABROAD

One of the UK's longest standing producers, Three Choirs continues to offer a range of still and sparkling wines, including dry and medium dry white wines produced exclusively for the on trade – under the 'English House' label. There was a sense of national pride recently when a Three Choirs off dry white wine (a wine produced by them for The Wine Society) was voted top wine in a blind tasting of 10 wines in France. The tasting was organised by a new restaurant - "La Part des Anges" - soon to be opened in the centre of Arras for local imbibers. Of the 10 still white wines, 5 were French, 1 from England the remaining 4 from other countries.

DENBIES PRODUCES NEW WHITE WINE FOR WETHERSPOONS WINE FESTIVAL WORLD CUP PROMOTION

To celebrate the World Cup celebration in June, Wetherspoons have teamed up with Denbies Wine Estate to create a still white wine which embodies the unique characteristics of English wine. The wine is to be included in Wetherspoons June 'World Cup Wine Festival'. Denbies wine maker, Marcus Sharp has crafted an aromatic off dry wine with crisp clean flavours really focusing on the all round appeal of English wine. The wine will be available for the duration of the festival at all participating Wetherspoons pubs across the UK. Denbies will be previewing the Wetherspoons Festival wine at the forthcoming English Wine Producers Trade and Press tasting.

As part of the ongoing vineyard development at the estate, three hectares of Sauvignon Blanc have been planted. The Sauvignon Blanc planting is part of Denbies strategy to move to more premium dry white wine styles.

NEW NAME FOR BOOKERS VINEYARD

Bookers Vineyard in Sussex has been renamed The Bolney Wine Estate. "We have won several national and international awards for our wines and it made sense to add 'Estate' to our name to better reflect our newly expanded acreage and the premium wines we're producing." says Samantha Linter, Director and Chief Winemaker. "There is never a good time to change your company and brand name but we've been thinking about it for some time. So with our growth plans well under way and the multiple retailers getting more and more interested in us as a business we took the plunge. We're now the Bolney Wine Estate and very proud of our new name."

IN THE REGIONS

There are 6 regional vineyard associations that cover the UK and all will be representing some key producers from around the country, providing further insight in to the quality and variety that is coming out of the UK today – here are some examples:

Wessex (Hampshire, Dorset, Isle of Wight)

A new sparkling wine producer, Jenkyn Place, based near Alton, will be showing the first of their traditional varietal wines from their first, 2006, vintage. Furleigh Wine Estate from Dorset will also be launching some of their new 2009 vintage wines. Hampshire vineyard Wickham will be showing some of their range.

South East (Kent, Sussex, Surrey)

An impressive and award-winning line up of wines from Plumpton College (the only college in the UK with a dedicated wine studies centre), Carr Taylor Vineyards, Breaky Bottom Vineyard, the Mount Vineyard and Meopham Valley.

South West (Cornwall, Devon, Wiltshire, Wales)

Devon vineyard Sharpham will have 3 of their current still wines on show. Strawberry Hill Vineyard is one of the more unusual producers as all the grapes are grown under glass – this year they will be showing some red wines. A new Welsh vineyard, Ancre Hill, based near Monmouth, will be showing the first of their wines, a still white. Ancre Hill is also producing a sparkling wine from the traditional varieties, to be released in 2014, and in time Pinot Noir reds. Also showing for the first time is Yearlstone Vineyard in Devon, with their award-winning sparkling wine.

Mercia (Midlands and the North)

Welcombe Hills Vineyard (Warwickshire) will be showing two of their Pinot Noir red wines from their award-winning range.

The EWP Trade & Press tasting will take place on Friday 23rd April at Chelsea Football Club, London, 11.00am-5.30pm. Attendance by invitation only – for further information or an invitation please contact English Wine Producers on tel: 01536 772264 or email: info@englishwineproducers.com