



BOOKERS VINEYARD

Sussex

You no longer need to visit mainland Europe to experience the pleasure of visiting a small family estate making quality wines. Expect a personal touch and fine examples of red, white and sparkling English wines.



The Bolney Wine Estate formed a part of the Butting Hill One Hundred and was how this land was registered in the Domesday book. Fast forward to 1972 and Bookers had its beginning as a wine entity but progressed from only 3 acres of vineyard to just 7 acres twenty years later. All was to change from the nineties and in the last decade in particular. In common with other up and coming English wine enterprises the growth which was needed to sustain a commercial viability has coincided with more than a decade of higher temperatures and improved wine growing conditions.

Viticulture

The centrepiece of the estate is an impressive uniformly sloping 15.5 acre (6.3ha) south-facing vineyard. Planting, started in 2000 was completed over 3 years and includes Chardonnay and Pinot Noir grapes for the sparkling wines. In addition to the estate plantings of 33 acres (not all of it yet in production), Sam and her vineyard manager work closely with 2 contract growers. This includes restricting yields



Stainless steel tanks enable Bookers to respond to the vagaries of the English growing season.

VINEYARD FACTS

- Bolney wine estate comprises 23 acres (over 9ha) with another 10 acres (4ha) added in 2008.
- The premium vineyard site of 15.5 acres on greensand sandstone soils forms the centrepiece for quality.
- Grapes supplies are supplemented by that received from contract growers.
- The percentage of red varieties is unusually high for an English vineyard.

and improved canopy management in order to maximise fruit quality. For whites there are plantings of Pinot Gris, a little Müller-Thurgau and Schönburger while as well as the Pinot Noir there are significant plantings of Dornfelder and Rondo for reds, and even a few rows of Merlot. With the potential to add further complexity to the sparkling wines, some Pinot Meunier will also be added to the mix. For the future, the glasshouse built directly outside the winery's reception will provide a facility to propagate the best vines from the estate's own vineyards.

Wine production

Bookers recently built winery (2005) with has the capacity for 150,000 bottle production per year. There is gleaming stainless steel aplenty of variable capacity – giving added flexibility to cope with different sized harvests. 100,000 bottles are anticipated for 2012 and this is comparable to many small family estates be it in France, Italy or elsewhere in Europe.


BIOGRAPHY **Sam Lintner**

Sam Lintner is the linchpin of Bolney wine estate and the success of Bookers wines. The daughter of Janet and Rodney Pratt, Sam trained at Plumpton College in the mid-nineties and caught the winemaking bug. Her parents had actually bought the estate in 1972 – starting with just 3 acres (1.2ha) – with a view to retirement. For Rodney



Pratt who had worked in the city of London doing a short course at Plumpton must have come as a breath of fresh air. But it was Sam who made it possible to dispense with contract winemaking as she then set about transforming the family estate from a hobbyist activity to one of southern England's most respected wineries.

Bookers are unusual in the amount of vineyard dedicated to red wine production, now moving towards 50 per cent. The new winery includes 3 dedicated red wine fermenters. The reds subsequently go into barriques. For the Dornfelder and Rondo grapes which are combined in Dark Harvest this means a spell of 6-12 months in used oak. The grapes for the Pinot Noir red get a shorter spell in barrique. Other wines made by Bookers include the increasingly assured Blanc de Blanc sparkler which gets 2 1/2 years on the lees, an aromatic Pinot Gris while the very small quantities of Merlot (Blackbird) are sold only at the winery.

Whether the style of the wines reflect something of Sam's personality is for others to debate but the grace and purity of these wines are a hallmark. They are not overmade or too ambitious, rather ample and attractive expressions of increasingly high quality fruit. It is not overstating the case to suggest that these are wines that other smaller or newer enterprises could do well to aspire to.

The personal touch,

hand in hand with spades of integrity and sincerity, not to mention some finely crafted wines to taste and buy, make this a must visit. Amazingly it's not that much further from London than driving to catch a plane from Gatwick.



Barriques of both French and American oak, play a part in the ageing of Bookers reds.

HOW TO FIND US

From London use the M25 and M23 continuing on the A23 until the A272. A short distance west of the Bolney flyover ignore the turning to Bolney village but take a right turn into Foxhole Lane, soon after passing the service station on the left.

The nearest train station is Haywards Heath, 15 mins by taxi.

Opening times

Telephone to arrange a tour or tasting.
Winery shop: Mon to Fri
9am-5pm

Tel: 01444 881894
Email: info@bookersvineyard.co.uk
Web: www.bookersvineyard.co.uk

The Wines

2007 Autumn Leaves


A straight Bacchus and another example of how well this variety does in England. The enticing green pepper and Sauvignon-like gooseberry fruit also has subtle hints of passionfruit that are not unusual with this grape. There's plenty of acidity but no danger either of it tiring prematurely.

2004 Bart's Bubbly Brut Rosé


Making a fine pink fizz isn't always taken seriously. Slightly off-dry this is soft and creamy with a fine crushed wild strawberry, brambly fruit complexity which suggests an English purity without any of the defects of weaker, underripe examples.

2005 Dark Harvest


A blend of Dornfelder and Rondo, this is the mainstay of Bookers red wine production. Soft, juicy and round with plummy, berryish fruit there is not the structure or breadth of a red from more noble varieties but drink it for its delightful balance and purity.

2006 Pinot Noir


Aromatically this is not unlike a skin-contacted Gamay red suggestive of strawberry and raspberry fruit. Round and supple in the mouth, it avoids any harshness and is reminiscent of a good Bourgogne Hautes-Côtes or Yonne red with a cool red fruits intensity.