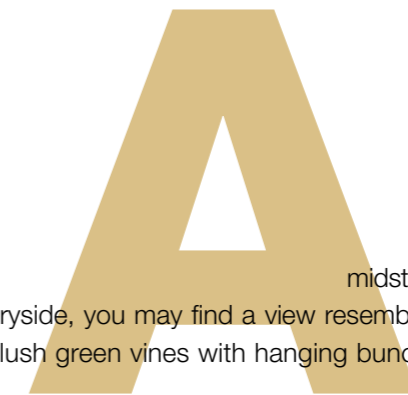


# British Bubbles

EMERGING AS ANOTHER ALTERNATIVE TO PROSECCO AND CHAMPAGNE, ENGLISH SPARKLING WINE IS BECOMING THE NEW EFFERVESCENT DRINK OF CHOICE AMONGST WINE CONNOISSEURS AND AFICIONADOS.

BY REBECA PICCARDO



**A**midst magnificent rolling hills in the English countryside, you may find a view resembling rural northern Italy: rows upon rows of lush green vines with hanging bunches of deep-coloured, plump grapes.

The country is undergoing a viticultural renaissance, and the grape-growing and winemaking industries are booming, with 135-per cent growth in the acreage of planted grapevines over the past decade. It turns out, the ever-warmer climate in [southern England](#) and its chalk soil — the same as that of France's Champagne region — are ideal for producing sparkling wines. And critics have begun to give English winemakers due credit as their fizzy vintages surpass the other premium bubbles at international blind tastings and competitions.

Now there are about 500 commercial vineyards in England and Wales, with more than 2,000 hectares (5,000 acres) under vine, and over 130 wineries producing award-winning sparkling white, rosé and red wines. This roundup, perfect for day-trips from resorts within Interval's network, identifies several tours that offer a glimpse into the world of winemaking — from vine to bottle — as well as opportunities for tasting and purchasing.



James Achard/Getty Images

### CAMEL VALLEY

Cornwall's largest vineyard, with about 33 hectares (82 acres) of south-facing slopes, has remained a family venture since former Royal Air Force pilot Bob Lindo and his wife, Annie, planted their first 8,000 vines in 1989. Their son, Sam, has taken over as head winemaker and, in 2014, he became the first English vintner to be shortlisted for International Sparkling Winemaker of the Year — the world's top award amongst makers of sparkling wines.

Spend an afternoon visiting the property, sipping a glass of bubbly on the estate's stone terrace and walking through the vineyards on a guided tour. Enjoy a tasting session, beginning with the most famous of their award-winning wines, Cornwall Brut.

**Grand Tour & Tasting:** Adults only, £15 per person, including a wine tasting. **Guided Tour:** £8.50 for adults, including a glass of wine; £3.50 for anyone under 18. For more information, visit [camelvalley.com](http://camelvalley.com) or call 01208 77959.

### CHAPEL DOWN WINERY

In the middle of the Kent countryside, Chapel Down Winery's vineyards include a restaurant and a shop that sells local produce and wine. Go on a behind-the-scenes tour of the vineyards and learn about the intricacies of the traditional method of sparkling-wine production — the same process used to make Champagne, in which the second fermentation (how the drink gets its bubbles) takes place in the bottle.



CHAPEL DOWN WINERY

All tours conclude with a tasting of their award-winning wines — such as their Rosé Brut, which won the Silver Award at two international competitions just last year. Visitors are also welcome to explore the grounds for free.

**Guided Tours:** Adults, £15; senior citizens and students, £13.50; children 12 to 17, £3; children under 12, free. For more information, email [retail@chapeldown.com](mailto:retail@chapeldown.com) or call 01580 766111.

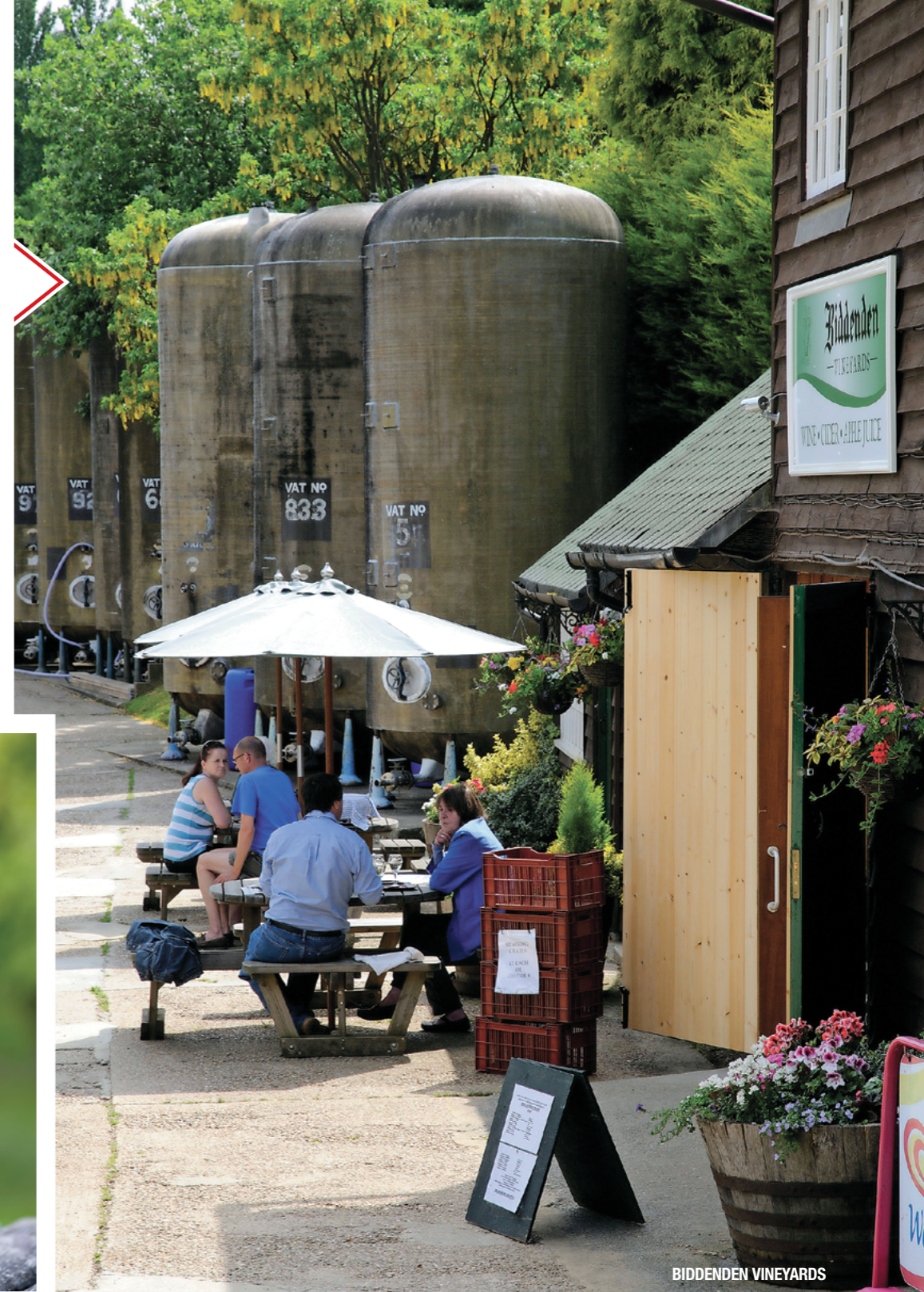
### BIDDENDEN VINEYARDS

Originally home to an apple orchard, Biddenden Vineyards was established in the late 1960s, when the Barnes family began diversifying their Kent farm and turned to viticulture as apple prices began to decline. The estate has been passed down for generations, and the vineyard now grows 11 different grape varieties to produce an array of award-winning white, rosé, red and sparkling wines.

Take a stroll around the property at your leisure. The vineyard is open to the public throughout the year with free admission and tastings. The estate also hosts weekly charity tours to benefit a local organisation, and offers private guided tours.

**Charity Tours:** £1 per person; held on Saturday year-round and Wednesday from June to September. **Private Guided Tours:** Prices vary depending on the size of the party. For more information, email [info@biddendenvineyards.co.uk](mailto:info@biddendenvineyards.co.uk) or call 01580 291726.

“The estate has been passed down for generations, and the vineyard now grows 11 different grape varieties to produce an array of award-winning white, rosé, red and sparkling wines”.



BIDDENDEN VINEYARDS



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### DENBIES WINE ESTATE

About an hour outside of London, in the town of Dorking, in Surrey, lies the single largest vineyard in the UK. Denbies' vineyard was planted in 1986, and now covers more than 107 hectares (265 acres) within the almost 254-hectare (627 acres) property.

Learn about the winemaking process and the history of the estate during one of their many tours and tastings. Options include a train tour of the vineyard, a grape-picking excursion, a cheese-and-winemaking experience and, of course, a sparkling wine tasting.

**Outdoor Vineyard Train Tour:** Adults, £7 per person; groups of 10 or more people, £4.50; children 2 to 17, £3. **Sparkling Wine Tasting Experience:** Adults, £14.95 per person; groups of 10 or more people, £12.50; children 2 to 17, £3. For more information, visit [denbies.co.uk](http://denbies.co.uk).

### RIDGEVIEW WINE ESTATE

Founded in 1994, this family vineyard planted at the foot of the South Downs National Park in Sussex is solely dedicated to producing the highest quality sparkling wines. Ridgeview has garnered more than 150 trophies and medals for the bubbly they produce from Sussex's chalky soils, using traditional Champagne grape varieties: chardonnay, pinot noir and pinot meunier.

Vineyard tours and tastings are offered throughout the year, as well as other special tours that include food pairings and the opportunity to meet with the artisans behind the delicious wines.

**General Tours:** Adults only, £15 per person. Private tours may be scheduled with a £30 deposit, depending on staff availability. For more information, visit [ridgeview.co.uk/pages/tours/opening-times/9001](http://ridgeview.co.uk/pages/tours/opening-times/9001). ■