

# Top prize is awarded to the royal wineness

AN English sparkling wine served at last month's Royal Wedding has won a top prize at the world's wine "Oscars".

Prince William and Kate Middleton, now the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge, chose the Rose Brut from Chapel Down vineyard in Tenterden, Kent, to support British winegrowers.

And now the fizz costing £24.99 a bottle has won a gold medal at this year's International Wine Challenge.

Frazer Thompson, chief executive at Chapel Down,

By **Dana Gloger**  
Consumer Affairs Editor

said yesterday: "We are very proud. It makes all the hard work worthwhile. Demand has never been higher and this accolade reinforces the quality of the wine that the team is producing."

The boost from the Royal Wedding had sparked "a keen interest in Chapel Down", he added.

The vineyard won the sparkling rose category for its Rose Brut, beating many

other foreign bubbly with much bigger reputations and price tags. The contest is judged by 400 leading wine tasters.

Andrew Parley, Chapel Down's head winemaker, described the Rose Brut as a "classic pinot noir offering ripe berry and rhubarb flavours, and a nose of strawberry and raspberry with a splash of creaminess". Chapel Down is the UK's largest producer of English wines, with 500,000 bottles each year.



UK wine beat foreign rivals

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■ ENGLISH wines, including one served at the royal wedding, have beaten the best that the rest of the world has to offer. Chapel Down Rosé and Denbies Chalk Ridge Rosé 2010 won gold medals in the International Wine Challenge – a competition widely regarded as the Oscars of the industry.

Chapel Down, produced at Tenterden, in Kent, was served to guests at the wedding of Prince William and Kate Middleton last month.

The £24.99 wine was recognised in the sparkling rosé category, beating other fizzy wines from around the globe.

Denbies Chalk Ridge Rosé 2010 was the only still rosé out of 367 different bottles submitted from 21 countries to win a gold medal, making it the best in the world.

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# British vineyard turns pink into gold

By Harry Wallop

AN ENGLISH rosé wine, made from grapes grown near Dorking, Surrey, has beaten rivals from around the world to become the only pink wine to win a gold medal at the International Wine Challenge.

Denbies Chalk Ridge Rose 2010 was the only still rosé out of 367 different bottles submitted from 21 countries to win a gold medal at the IWC, widely regarded as the most important of the many international wine competitions.

The vintage, which has only just been bottled, is further evidence that despite the relatively small number of bottles it produces – just over 4 million in 2010 – the English wine industry is being taken increasingly seriously by its international rivals.

“We are just ecstatic,” said Jeannette Simpson, business development manager at Denbies, a family-owned and run estate. “It is a really great achievement, and proves that English wine really does match up to that produced by other more famous wine-growing countries.”

Established in 1986, Denbies Wine, with 265 acres of vines, is Britain’s biggest wine estate.

The dry wine, which sells for £11.99 a bottle, is described as having a nose of “strawberries, freshly-cut pears and cracked pepper and thyme”. It is made from the rondo grape, originally from Germany, which is an early ripener. This meant it benefited from last year’s warm, early summer and was not hit by the wet, cool late summer, which

affected many other wine growers in England.

The only other English winemaker to win a gold medal was Chapel Down, which provided a wine for the royal wedding last month. Their sparkling Rosé Vintage Reserve Brut won gold, ensuring that Britain equalled its 2010 tally – but still came some way behind France, which topped the gold medal table with 98.



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hopeFULLY i've some middle-aged women reading this column, since i've got some great news for them.

even i am growing weary of the constant stream of yarns telling us wine is good for you.

i think we can now rest easy, with a smug grin as we sip our (moderate) amount of vino knowing full we'll we're going to live forever thanks to its life-saving qualities.

But this latest study about wine's health enhancing powers is aimed specifically at middle-aged women. So here goes.

a study of 14,000 female nurses found those who drank one to two drinks a night, but no more, had a 30% better chance of overall good health in their 70s than those who avoided alcohol altogether. Drinking moderate amounts of alcohol on a nightly basis was shown to be healthier than indulging once or twice a week. the researchers from the harvard School of public health in Boston said their work showed "regular, moderate consumption of alcohol" in their fifties could boost overall health among women who survive into their seventies.

if i might be so bold as to offer an opinion, it would be that the women drinking a couple of glasses a night are less stressed.

anyway speaking of things that aren't very surprising, crossgar wine shop Nicholson's has won yet another award.

the top-class merchant, and their jnwine.com website, clinched the regional Wine Merchant of the Year award at the **international Wine challenge** in London.

the iWc lot are far from Mickey Mouse and the judging panel includes tv wine buff oz clarke.

and Jim has done a wee list of wines to keep those middle-aged women healthy for less than you might think. here goes: Long Beach Chenin Blanc 2010, South africa £6.99. JN said: "an appealing wine from South africa, full-bodied wine with powerful flavours of pineapple, granadilla, melon and green apple."

Coquille d'Oc Blanc 2010, Domaine Sainte Rose, left, france £8.88. JN added: "an eclectic blend of Sauvignon, chardonnay, viognier and Muscat this wine is has lovely peachy flavours to the fore with a lick of acidity at the end." Vina Bujanda Crianza 2008, Familia Martinez Bujanda, rioja £8.99. JN said: "a delightful and affordable wine, black fruit aromas with a touch of spice."

Merlot 2009, Domaine Grapillon d'Or, france £8.95. JN added: "this blend of Merlot and caladoc is a lively, fruity wine for everyday drinking at great value for money."

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Britain

## Heard it through the grapevine

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English wine

English wine's surprising success

The sparkling—and surprising—success of England's wine industry

IT WAS an English cuvée for a very English day. “Nervy”, with “an austere, honeyed character”, was how one winemaker described the bubbly on offer on a wet afternoon at Denbies, a vineyard in Surrey that is also Britain’s largest. Nervy and austere, too, is the connoisseur’s traditional view of British-made wines. But after years of reputational blight, the industry is starting to see the buds of progress.

Denbies’ sparkling wine tastes biscuity and refreshing; it will soon be the only English bubbly in stock in the classiest house-label range at Sainsbury’s, a big supermarket. Denbies’ rosé was awarded a gold medal at this year’s **International Wine Challenge**, and other English and Welsh vintages, particularly some of the fizzy wines produced by Nyetimber and Ridgeview in Sussex, are trumping more venerable competitors on the world stage. British consumers are keen. In 2010, when overall wine-drinking dropped by 1.7%, Britons downed 17.6% more domestic sparkling wine than they had the year before, and 71.2% more of the home-grown still stuff.

Admittedly, this growth is sprouting from a tiny base. Domestic crops accounted for around 0.3% of the 1.8 billion bottles that British drinkers polished off last year; the 4m bottles made from grapes that were grown and produced at home would slake the country’s thirst for less than a day. France, by contrast, corked and capped no less than 5 trillion bottles of local serum in the same period. Even so, on the much-derided British side of the business, any improvement is encouraging.

Why now? “It’s partly climate, partly education and partly ambition,” says Matthew Hudson, head of the wine-business course at Plumpton College in East Sussex. Climate change is improving once-uncongenial British conditions; harvests are earlier and sun-hungry French varieties are replacing hardier Germanic vines. Richard Selley, a professor in the earth-science and engineering department of Imperial College, London and author of a book on vineyards, predicts that the wintry slopes of Scotland could be home to a “Côte d’Ecosse” by 2080 (see map).

The weak pound has made foreign drops pricier and given a boost to local wines, says Julia Trustram Eve of the English Wine Producers’ association. Cannier viticulture and higher professional standards are also bearing fruit. Britain’s winemakers are overcoming the impediment of small harvests—which make technical experimentation commercially risky—by sharing expertise and focusing on top-shelf vintages for the discerning buyer. Sparkling wines, which command high margins, are a good bet. The acidic grapes that produce them grow well, too: in geological antiquity the chalk hills of southern England were attached to the Champagne region of northern France.

Not everything is rosy. Cheap booze known as “British wine,” made at home from imported grape juice, threatens the reputation of its flashier cousins. Even glitzy winemakers sometimes supplement local grapes. There are whispers that the industry has invested too heavily in sparkling wines and may struggle to find a market for all of its output in the future. And climate change is not entirely good news: the likelihood of more extreme swings in weather will not make for easy harvests.

Still, the short-term future looks bright for Britain. Gone are the days when, as in 2005, the Italian prime minister, Silvio Berlusconi, could boast of sending 24 bottles of Italian red to a Swedish counterpart who was apparently “aghast” at the Welsh and English wines served up at an EU summit. Now, as Mediterranean grape-growers move north to escape the unseasonable heat, they may need to look to newly-temperate Britain for inspiration.

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= *Rosé* =

## Sweet smell of success

"A ROSE is a rose is a rose is a rose," Gertrude Stein famously said. But clearly she was omitting the acute accent on the e. For all rosé is not the same – not when it comes to the International Wine Challenge, at any rate. And we are not just talking about knowing your Tavel from your Mateus here. Those wine buffs will tell you that the best rosé comes not from Anjou or Provence, but from Dorking.

A rosé by any other name would not taste as smooth long or creamy in its finish as the wine made from the Rondo grapes, first planted on the Surrey hillsides in 2005, which have just produced Denbies Chalk Ridge Rosé 2010.

This wine has beaten 360 other rosés to the Gold Medal prize in the world's top wine competition. Meanwhile the gold for the best sparkling rosé went to a vintage fizz from a vineyard near Tenterden in Kent called Chapel Down. That wine was served at the recent Royal Wedding, although Palace protocol apparently prevents the wine-makers from publicising the fact.

So while American vinifiers call their pink wines "blush", English propriety, it seems, requires even greater modesty. Or perhaps it's because only 7,000 bottles have been produced and the royals wanted to keep it all for themselves. Anyway, the secret is out now, for those with £11.99 to spare for a bottle.

# Made in Surrey: the home-grown rosé that's beating the world

By Terry Kirby

Rosé, a wine created out of sun-blasted vineyards in the south of France, Spain or Italy, best drunk ice cold on a warm Mediterranean night. It is not a wine normally associated with Dorking, Surrey, in the London commuter belt, where a stiff gin and tonic is normally the drink of choice.

Now a wine with a smooth, long, creamy finish from grapes grown on the Surrey hillsides can lay claim to being the best rosé in the world. Denbies Chalk Ridge Rosé 2010 has beaten more than 360 challengers from 21 countries to claim the still rosé gold medal prize in the International Wine Challenge – the world's biggest and most influential wine competition.

Denbies, success counters the recent trend for English producers to concentrate on sparkling wines, which have scooped numerous awards around the world. Another IWC Gold award went to

Chapel Down, based in Kent, whose wines were served at the royal wedding, for its sparkling rosé Vintage Reserve Brut.

Although Denbies also produces sparkling wines, it has refined its production of still whites and rosés to challenge the belief that most English

still wines are of only average quality. A Denbies white was recently chosen by Tesco for its "Finest" range.

The Chalk Ridge Rosé, refreshing and full of English summer fruits, is made from Rondo grapes, first planted in 2005 and believed well suited to the English climate because of their early ripening

been produced, and sell for £11.99. The Chapel Down Sparkling Rosé is priced at £25, and made from pinot noir grapes, one of the three traditional champagne varieties.



Denbies vineyard in Dorking, where the Rondo grape at the heart of its gold-medal Chalk Ridge Rosé, inset, was planted in 2005

**{i}** Only 7,000 bottles of the Chalk Ridge Rosé have

# Château Dorking: how a vineyard in Surrey made the world's best rosé

By Terry Kirby

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But now a wine with a smooth long creamy finish from grapes grown on the Surrey hillsides can lay claim to being arguably the best rosé in the world.

Denbies Chalk Ridge Rosé 2010 has beaten more than 360 challengers from 21 countries to claim the still rosé gold medal prize in the International Wine Challenge, the world's biggest and most influential wine competition.

The success of the Denbies wine counters the recent trend for English wine producers to concentrate on sparkling wines, which have scooped numerous awards around the world. Another IWC Gold award went to Chapel Down, based in Kent, whose wines were served at the Royal wedding, for its sparkling rosé Vintage Reserve Brut.

Although Denbies also produce sparkling wines, they have also refined their production of still whites and rosés to challenge the belief most English still wines are of only average quality. A Denbies white was recently chosen by Tesco for its "Finest" range.

The Chalk Ridge Rosé, refreshing and full of English summer fruits, is made from Rondo grapes, first planted in 2005 and believed well suited to the English climate because of their early ripening.

Christopher White, general manager of Denbies said the grapes had originally been grown for blending, but their quality convinced the vineyard to craft a wine

entirely from the one crop. Only 7,000 bottles have been produced, which sell for £11.99.

Mr White added: "We have noticed a demand for premium still wines and this award reinforces the fact that English wine producers can and will continue to produce internationally recognised wine."

The sparkling rosé award for Chapel Down continues a winning streak for English sparkling wines using traditional champagne grapes and production techniques. Last autumn, Ridgeview wines in Sussex won the Decanter award for the best sparkling wine in the world. The Chapel Down Sparkling Rosé, priced at £25, is made from pinot noir grapes, one of the three traditional champagne varieties. Guy Tresnan, the sales and marketing manager said: "We are naturally very pleased with an award which shows that we can produce wines that England can be proud of."

Although their wines were widely reported as being served at the royal wedding, Chapel Down are prevented by convention from publicising the fact.



The Denbies vineyard in Surrey, whose Chalk Ridge rosé is a world-beater



## IT WAS A GOOD WEEK FOR...

**English wine** Denbies Chalk Ridge Rosé 2010, made from grapes grown near Dorking, Surrey, won gold at the International Wine Challenge, trumping French and American rivals. Chapel Down, a sparkling rosé from the Tenterden vineyard, which was served at the royal wedding last month, was also awarded a gold medal.

**Eliza Doolittle** The 23-year-old singer-songwriter (right) played Britain's first ever "Facebook concert", playing in an actually empty Ronnie Scott's club to a virtual audience on the social network estimated to be several thousand strong.



## AND A BAD ONE FOR...

**Arnold Schwarzenegger** The Governor of California cancelled all his work engagements to deal with the collapse of his marriage (he parted from his wife Maria two weeks ago) and the fallout from the revelation that he had secretly fathered a child with his housekeeper, Mildred Baena, 14 years ago.

**The boss** Most of us think we would run a business better than those who are actually in charge. According to a new study, only 18 per cent of British workers believe that their manager is "more capable" than they are themselves.