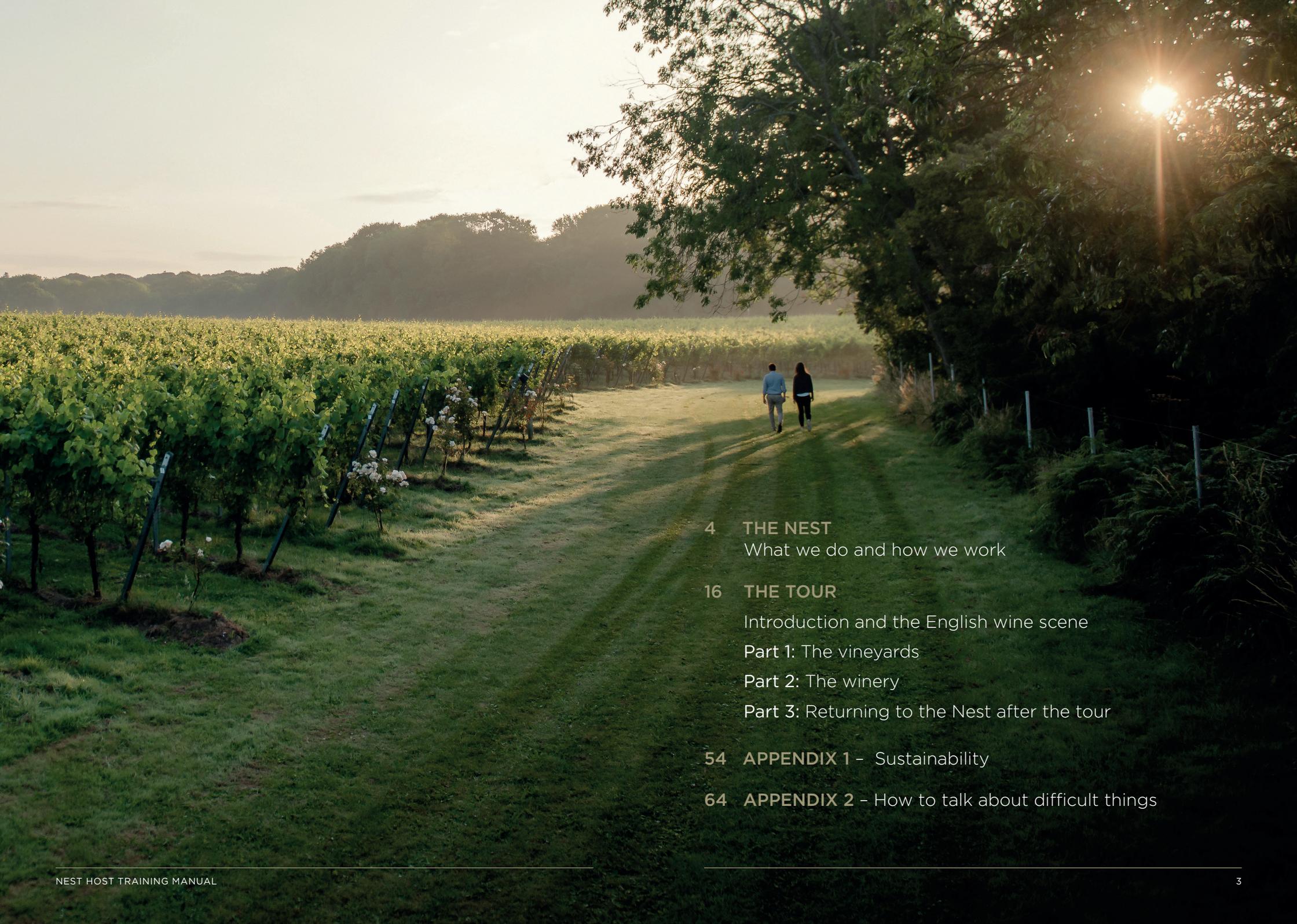




GUSBOURNE

NEST HOST TRAINING MANUAL



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# THE NEST - WHAT WE DO

## Our tours, tastings and events

Tours and tastings are generally for small groups of up to 20 people, held in one of our tasting rooms. We host corporate guests and we can hire out our spaces privately on request.

### ESTATE TOUR

£120 per person (£100 for members and Patrons), 11am to 3pm, held most days throughout the year. Our most popular experience. A tour of the estate, followed by an extended guided tasting of Gusbourne wines. The experience is rounded off with a delicious, seasonal three-course lunch, paired with more Gusbourne wines.

### ICONS EXPERIENCE

£175 per person (£150 for members and Patrons), 11am to 3pm, held once or twice a month. A chance to explore the finest, rarest and most luxurious wines in Gusbourne's cellar, this is an exclusive masterclass with a four-course lunch.

### PICNIC FOR TWO

£90 for two, between 12 and 2pm. Our picnics offer a relaxed way to enjoy the vineyards. Guests make themselves at home in our outdoor dining area and tuck into simple but delicious produce such as Kentish cheeses, charcuterie, homemade bread and - of course - a perfectly chilled bottle of Gusbourne Brut Reserve

### TASTINGS

#### Sparkling Tasting Flight

£30 per person

#### Still Wine Tasting Flight

£40 per person

#### Limited Edition Wines Tasting Flight

£60 per person

## EVENTS

- The Nest hosts a changing programme of events, managed by Matt Hope.
- Events are frequently attended by a high proportion of members, and they are an important selling point of membership. New masterclasses and events such as the Chef Series often sell out - and so one of the benefits of membership is the chance to access tickets before they are offered to the whole mailing list.
- They range from seasonal events like barbecues, to masterclasses and lunches with our winemaker.
- We host an increasing number of member-only tasting events each year, usually dedicated to one of our groups of members: Founders, Collectors or Explored members.
- To find out more about these events, join our mailing list at [Gusbourne.com/signup](https://Gusbourne.com/signup). That way, you'll receive the same mailings as our customers.

## OTHER SERVICES AT THE NEST

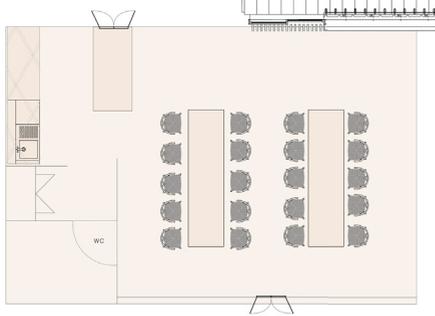
- Vineyard Tour add-on to any tasting flight above for £20 per person. This can be booked in advance or on the day.
- Wine by the glass and by the bottle at retail prices, with no hospitality markup.
- Wine can be sent to a customer's home address free of charge, if they do not want to take it home with them on the day.
- Encourage interested visitors to subscribe to our email updates for exclusive access to our limited-edition wines, as well as news about our latest releases and special events. They can do that on our website, at the till point, or by using our Wifi and checking the box to receive updates.
- Wifi at the Nest is complimentary - customers can log in and many of them sign up for our marketing mailing list at the same time.



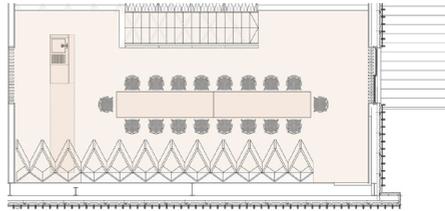
# THE NEST - HOW WE WORK

## Finding your way around The Nest

The Nest



The Hide



## WINE SERVICE AT THE NEST

1. We serve wines at 8-10 degrees. This is important, because this is when the aromas and flavours of our wines will be at their best.
2. At The Nest we use tulip-shaped glasses. Classic Champagne flutes look beautiful. But, for fine sparkling wines like ours, we prefer a wider glass that aerates the wine and delivers more flavours to your nose and onto your palate.
3. Open wines safely, directing the bottle away from customers. Remove the foil as neatly as possible and untwist the wire cage. Grip the cork and wire cage firmly, rotate the bottle and gently ease the cork out.

## ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- The Nest bookings and enquiries are generally managed and monitored by Lorraine through the nest@gusbourne.com email address and by phone in The Nest office. Lorraine will ask guests for dietary requirements and any special requests, and pass these on to The Nest kitchen team and management team as appropriate.
- The Nest managers organise the day's work - preparing the staff rota, ordering wine, checking stock and making any other special arrangements in advance. They then run a morning briefing at 10am each day with The Nest staff to talk through the tours, tastings and events that happen each day and allocate tasks.

- Tour hosts take responsibility for the room in which they are hosting. They check the layout of the room, the wines in the fridge, the number of wine glasses required and the marketing information needed. They are responsible for welcoming guests, hosting them throughout the visit, opening and checking each wine before serving to guests. They pour

wine, lead the tasting, and introduce each course as appropriate, taking responsibility for knowing which guests have dietary requirements and directing food to the correct guest. They talk about membership, how to buy wines and make sales, managing the closing of the tour or tasting and accompanying guests as they leave.





- Nest support staff are responsible for running food from the kitchen to the tasting room and taking plates and cutlery out and into the pot wash. They may also help pour wines during the visitor experience. They get involved in polishing glassware and cutlery, making up marketing collateral and laundering napkins. They replenish water glasses and water bottles, clean surfaces and help to lay tables in rooms to prepare for the next day's guests. They monitor and maintain high standards in customer toilets. They may also be trained on the tills to make sales.
- All customer-facing Nest staff have a uniform that is provided by the company. They also wear small circular pin badges with our goose logo on them.
- The Nest is closed to visitors on Tuesdays, when tours, tastings and food service are not available.
- Corporate visitors tend to be hosted on Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays. Where possible, Corporate visits are usually arranged through our dedicated corporate sales team. We have regular meetings with the corporate team to plan carefully for these visits.
- Trade visitors (from hotels, bars and restaurants) are often hosted on Mondays, and are usually accompanied by their Gusbourne Account Manager. Bekks Nightingale is our most local sales manager, responsible for our 'heartland' area of the southeast.
- We keep an up-to-date list of local recommendations for where to stay, taxi companies, etc, at reception.

# OUR VALUES

## WE'RE CONFIDENT AND CURIOUS

- We enter things with a positive spirit
- We are experts in our field
- But we know we don't have all the answers
- We look for ways to challenge ourselves, and the company, to do better. We're an inclusive business.
- We don't seek to blame people when things don't work out, so we're not scared to be creative

## WE'RE IN IT FOR THE LONG TERM

- We're committed to creating a sustainable future for our employees, for our customers and for our environment
- We each take accountability for our actions and our goal to be a profitable and efficient business.
- We're willing to put the work in to make things right, even if it takes a while
- We're not slow to respond to customers or lethargic in our approach
- We don't expect to change things overnight, we make incremental changes, always moving toward a better future

## WE VALUE DIFFERENCE

- We value our differences and respect our colleagues
- Varied experience will get us to our common goal
- We collaborate and share our experiences in a trusting and supportive environment
- We celebrate our successes together
- We're never disdainful of the contribution of others
- We don't gossip or play politics, we never talk badly behind another's back





## OUR VALUES

### WE ENJOY THE JOURNEY

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- We like to raise a glass to our successes and achievements
- We let people know when they've done well
- We value our leisure time, we want people to use the benefits we offer
- We care about mental health, wellbeing and work/life balance
- We work hard when we need to, but we don't want to get burned out

### WE GO THE EXTRA MILE

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- We are uncompromising in our attention to detail
- We always try our hardest
- We take pride in our work and we know it is valued by our colleagues and the company
- We have high standards, but we know how to set realistic goals, and we ask for help where it's needed

### WE'RE AUTHENTIC AND HONEST

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- We are straightforward and truthful
- We treat others how we want to be treated
- We admit mistakes and correct them
- We believe in the quality of our products and the way we work
- We're not offensive or disruptive. Where it's better not to comment, we don't.

## CONTACTS

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use and for membership-related queries

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monitored by both Anthony and Agi

# THE TOUR

This is an outline of our tour. We don't have a script for hosts to follow, but the facts about our history, winemaking and wines need to be conveyed correctly.

## INTRO

- Welcome to Gusbourne.
- Say who you are, how long you've worked at Gusbourne, perhaps how you got into wine?
- Introduction to the tour structure and timings – for example: “We'll spend just over an hour in the vineyard and winery where we'll learn about the viticulture and vinification of our wines, and then we'll head back to the tasting room for a wine tasting and lunch.”
- Check that customers have booked taxis/made departure arrangements.
- Safety briefing: fire alarm procedure and meeting point, use the lower car park only for smoking or vaping, stay together in the vineyard and winery, explain location of toilets.
- Ask “Do we have any members here today?”. Helps to introduce the idea of membership early on.
- Ask “Is there anyone in the group who has visited other vineyards (either in UK or abroad)?” Let them tell you about this. There may also be some in the wine trade or with any formal training – get a measure of the group and how to present to the group as a whole.
- Make a point of saying, “Please do feel free to ask any questions as we go along, we'd hate for you to leave having not had your questions answered.”
- Check that you can be heard.

## THE ENGLISH WINE SCENE

- In 2023, there were 1,030 vineyards and 221 wineries. This represents growth of 123% over the past 10 years. In Kent, East and West Sussex, we have almost 55% of all the vineyard land in the UK, so there is a real concentration here – a lot of that is driven by better weather in our little corner of the country, with less rainfall and more sunlight. Hampshire and Essex come in close behind and there is a lot of excitement about still wines coming from Essex.
- We have 4,000ha under vine in the UK, which might sound like a lot until you compare to Champagne, with 34,000ha under vine.
- Chardonnay is the most-planted grape variety in the UK, followed by Pinot Noir and Pinot Meunier, Bacchus and Seyval Blanc. But there are around 90 other varieties grown in various vineyards around – it's a changing picture. Some of these are what we call PIWIs (short for the German Pilzwiderstandsfähige – pronounced pils-veeder-stands-fay-he-guh), which are hybrid grapes bred to be fungal-resistant: these can decrease the cost of managing vines. Examples are Solaris, Divico and Cabernet Noir. Whilst they have lots of positives, like high yields and early picking dates, they aren't right for Gusbourne because they haven't (yet) got the quality potential to reflect that sense of place and time (terroir) that we get with the classic Champagne varieties.

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**In Kent, East and West Sussex, we have almost 55% of all the vineyard land in the UK**

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- 76% of wines produced in the UK are sparkling wine; over 90% of sparkling is made using the traditional method.
- 23% of production is still wines, with 66% of that being white, 20% rosé and 13% red.
- 8.8 million bottles of sparkling wine were sold in the UK in 2023; that's up 187% from 5 years ago. In contrast, Champagne produced just under 300 million bottles in 2023. So, although we are very proud of our growth, we are still a very small region when it comes to the world of sparkling wine.
- In the wine world, there is a division between very historic wine producing countries – called the 'old world', like France, Spain and Italy – and the 'new world', of more recently planted vineyards, like those in New Zealand, Chile and the USA.
- We are right at the heart of the newest of the 'new world' territories. English wine is so young; it's an industry filled with ambition, energy and talent. We're part of an elite community of English winemakers forging reputations at home and across the globe.



- It means we can draw on techniques, processes and information from the world's great winemaking traditions. But - excitingly - we don't have to play by established rules (we don't have much in the way of rules and regulations like the French AOC system. We're constantly learning, developing, refining and improving what we do, seeking out untapped potential and finding new ways to work).
- Gusbourne is a boutique size in terms of the number of bottles we produce each year. The amount we produce varies from year to year because we only make vintage wines. We are much smaller than Chapel Down and Nyetimber.

#### GUSBOURNE'S MOST RECENT HARVESTS

- 2023 - the biggest harvest the UK wine industry has ever had, us included! We controlled for quality by bud selection early on in the season, then green harvesting, and even selecting certain bunches for removal as we got closer to harvest. This is particularly important in our still wine parcels, where we are looking for concentration and flavour intensity. We're very excited about some of the still Chardonnay Guinevere from 2023, some of which will be released this year.
- 2024 - a much smaller crop than usual, due to very wet conditions. Rainfall compromises the treatments you can apply in the vineyard, leading to mildew damage in the leaves, less photosynthesis and difficulty ripening the grapes. We focused on bringing in a small crop of really beautifully ripe fruit, which the winemaking team are very excited about. Mary, our Head Winemaker, calls it, "small but mighty".



# PART 1: THE VINEYARD

## Top three messages to convey:

- We have two sites that are different in terms of soil, elevation and temperature. This gives us different weather and ripening conditions, and also gives us more choice of flavour and style when we make wines.
- We are all about quality. To control that, we grow our own grapes (and only top-quality varieties: Chardonnay, Pinot Noir and Pinot Meunier) – we don't buy fruit from other growers.
- Making a great bottle of wine starts in the vineyard and it's a real artisan craft – there are many tiny decisions and details involved, much of the work is done by hand, and it's all about incremental change and improvement every year.

## Overall – who are we?

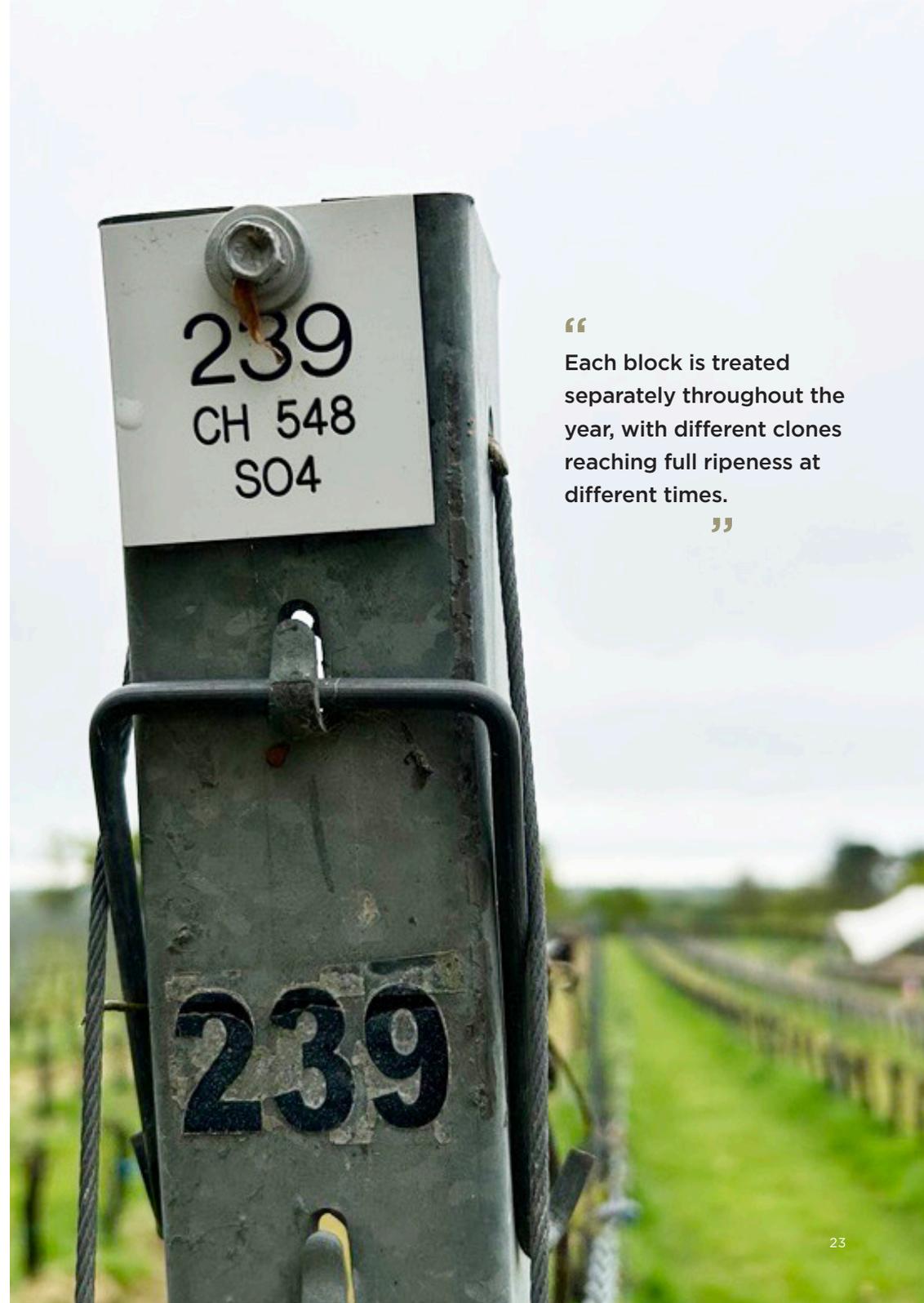
- We're focused on sparkling wine production, which accounts for roughly 95% of production. In warmer and riper years, we produce some exciting still wines from some of our best fruit.
- Each wine is produced from a single vintage, creating wines that are 'of a time' (a specific year) and 'of a place' (our unique vineyards). That's unusual – a lot of sparkling wines (especially Champagnes) are blends of multiple years. This is known as non-vintage or NV for short e.g. Veuve Clicquot yellow label.
- Our vineyards are based in Kent and West Sussex, with 60 hectares (150 acres) planted in Appledore, Kent and 30 hectares (75 acres) planted close to Goodwood Estate in West Sussex.



- Our vineyard manager, Jon Pollard, has been with us since the beginning and knows every inch of the vineyard like the back of his hand.
- After the purchase of the estate in 2003 and analysis of the land, we planted our first vineyard, Butness, in 2004, Cherry Garden and Pond in 2005 and Boot Hill in 2006/07.
- We then planted Commanders, Heartbreak and Mill Hill East in 2014, slowly expanding the vineyards to the southern reaches of the estate in 2015.
- The founder of Gusbourne is Andrew Weeber, originally an orthopaedic surgeon from Stellenbosch (South Africa), who purchased the estate in 2003.
- He moved over with his family and his daughter Pippa settled here in Appledore, in Gusbourne House. Andrew came to know the area well and jumped at the chance to buy land up the road from where his daughter was living.
- Led by his interest in the quality and ageability of vintage Champagne, Andrew had the vision to produce sparkling wines that would compete with the highest quality from around the world and brought his fastidious, scientific attention to detail to both the vineyard establishment and the creation of the first wines.

### Grape varieties

- We only grow three grape varieties: Chardonnay, Pinot Noir and Pinot Meunier. These are the same varieties that you find in Champagne. They are known for being able to produce wines of the very highest quality.
- Two other popular grapes grown in the UK are Bacchus and Seyval Blanc. There are other grape varieties that are engineered for marginal (i.e. cold!) growing climates like ours, as we're one of the most northerly regions where you can grow grapes. We don't grow those varieties though, because although you can make good wines from them, you can't make great wines. We have always been focused on creating the very finest wines, which compete on the global stage.
- Around half our vines are Burgundian clones. Burgundian clones will yield lower – producing fewer grapes per vine – resulting in fruit that is riper and more concentrated. Throughout our vineyards in Kent and West Sussex, we use 40 different clones, planted onto different rootstocks and within different blocks in the vineyard. Each block is treated separately throughout the year, with different clones reaching full ripeness at different times. This allows us to hand-pick each block separately and ultimately contributes to the large number of base wines we use in blending.
- What's a clone? In years gone by, grape farmers discovered that particular vines grew really well in particular positions, so they adapted themselves well to the position, climate, soil etc and acted a little differently to other vines. They would take cuttings from these well-adapted vines and propagate new plants from it. These have become known as clones. A clone of Chardonnay is still Chardonnay, it's just a type of Chardonnay that is adapted to certain conditions or shows certain characteristics, e.g. how tightly packed a grape bunch is.
- As well as a variety of clones, the vines are grafted onto different rootstock combinations. You can see the graft union at the base of the vines where the two have fused together. Different rootstocks such as SO4 and 3309 are selected depending on the different characteristics of the soil and are planted in blocks which change as you go around the estate. For instance, in Sussex, we use different rootstocks called 41b and Fercal, as they are more suited to the high pH chalk soils.



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Each block is treated separately throughout the year, with different clones reaching full ripeness at different times.  
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### Why are there some vines missing in Boot Hill?

- We have noticed a reduced yield and a decline in vigour of vines in Boot Hill, in the section closest to the Nest. This is affecting 1.5ha of Chardonnay specifically clones 95 and 548 on rootstock 161.49 in rows 169 to 225 (the row closest to the Nest is 241).
- We're going to take out the affected vines before the 2025 growing season gets underway, aiming to replant in 2026, keeping the same clones of Chardonnay, but planting on a different rootstock, SO4, which has proven to be more resilient than 161.49.
- We suspect the vines are suffering from trunk disease: a common vineyard issue found all over the world, caused by fungi. It results in reduction of vigour and yield, and eventually causes the vine to die.
- This is nothing to worry about, it's very commonplace and just part of managing a vineyard. It can take a long time to show symptoms, which is why we haven't acted until now.
- Some of the fungi that cause this issue are present in the environment all around us, it's just that in these particular vines, the balance has tipped in favour of the fungi and it's having an adverse affect.
- It's an example of us learning our land and our vines, and making improvements over time. It's taken us many years to get to know what works and what doesn't, and we'll benefit from more resilience when we replant.



### ROSES

- Traditionally, roses were planted at the end of the vine rows as an early warning system for pests and diseases within the vineyard. Roses can attract pests such as aphids and also contract fungal diseases such as mildew. These days, we know that the strain of mildew that roses are susceptible to is not the same as the vines themselves - but if the conditions are favourable for mildew on roses, then they may well be favourable for downy mildew on vines too. Modern methods of monitoring the soils and the health of the vine make planting roses nowadays redundant.
- Another reason is that when vineyards were tended by horses and oxen, the thorns on the roses would prevent the animal from turning too soon and trampling the last vine in the row.
- For us, the roses are a nod to those traditions. They are also visually beautiful when in bloom and are colour-coded, depending on which variety is planted on the row: white roses (Chardonnay), red roses (Pinot Noir) and peach roses (Pinot Meunier).

## KENT

- We are in a historic area. One of the clues to this fascinating past is the Saxon Shore Way footpath, which runs through our vineyards. This long-distance path starts at Gravesend in Kent and follows the route of the old coast as it would have been in Roman times. It cuts its way right through our estate and on as far as Hastings.
- Appledore was a small port for many years, until a series of violent storms from 1250 led to a dramatic shift in the Kentish coastline, with some harbours such as New Romney (one of the Cinque Ports) silting up and becoming landlocked. The River Rother subsequently changed course, entering the sea at Rye and the importance of Appledore's port diminished.
- The marshes were drained in the 15th and 16th century, using a network of channels, ditches and sea defences – the sea is now eight miles away at Camber and Rye, just beyond the wind turbines.
- Our corner of Kent is one of the driest parts of England, with lots of sun and very little rainfall (compared to the rest of the UK – it's all relative!). Our weather is influenced by our proximity to the sea and the topography of the surrounding land.
- Our proximity to the sea gives us protection from frost, as well as moderating temperatures. The coastal influence also brings with it south westerly winds, which blow through our vines from the marsh and help to keep the vineyards well aerated – reducing the risk of fungal disease.
- Here in Kent, our vineyards are low in elevation – the highest point is only 40m above sea level, falling to around 2m above sea level in our Lower Mill Hill vineyard. This is important, because temperatures get cooler as you get higher up, so we hold on to slightly warmer temperatures by being close to sea level.
- Clay soils are nutrient rich, and the very fine particles means it retains water well. It also retains heat, which is beneficial in the marginal British climate and helps to explain the levels of ripeness we see in our vineyards in Kent.
- On the other hand, clay is also water retentive and as a heavier soil requires more labour to work. We've worked hard to increase drainage in the vineyards to mitigate much of this risk.
- In Kent, our wines tend to be fuller-bodied than in Sussex, with richer, riper flavours.



## BOOT HILL

- At the top of the slope the soil is dense, rich clay, prone to compaction. The surface appears wet and sticky in the winter and dry as a bone in the dry heat of mid-summer.
- It holds great advantages for ripening the fruit and – perhaps going against the rule book a little when we think of the best soils for growing grapes – that hard clay and its compaction aids us by controlling vigour in the vines, resulting in lower yields but increased ripeness.
- As the slope rolls downhill the soil becomes more friable (crumbly), with loam, sand and silt. This gives the vines better availability of nutrients, more moisture and less wind exposure, resulting in more vigour and higher yields.
- The gentle slopes of Boot Hill allow the vines to take advantage of better drainage, less frost risk and increased exposure to the sun. This, in addition to the rich clay topsoil, makes Boot Hill one of our ripest sites, despite its higher elevation.
- Base wines from Boot Hill often show a richness, weight and muscularity we don't see in other wines – and often a lovely mineral character too.
- We make single vineyard sparkling from Boot Hill. We also make some Boot Hill still wines from both Chardonnay and Pinot Noir too.

## SUSSEX

- In Sussex, the elevation of our vineyards is higher, ranging from 40-100m above sea level
- Soils are mainly flint and chalk, with a lighter texture and colour than our Kent soils. This alkaline soil is cooler, it doesn't retain heat from the sun in the same way as our Kent soils.
- Typically, the wines are citrusy and fresh, elegant, with structure, drive and energy

## WHY TWO SITES?

- Similarities – warm summers, relatively little rainfall, maritime climate.
- Differences – elevation, soil and temperature.
- Having two sites mitigates the impact of localised weather, such as hail and frost. For instance, if we have a frost in Sussex, chances are it won't affect our whole crop because our Kent site experiences different weather.
- Our grapes also ripen differently across the two sites because of the difference in altitude and average temperature. Harvest often starts in Sussex roughly five to seven days after it starts in Kent.
- Those differences also lead to variation in the types of flavours which develop, and the character of the final wines. This gives us options when it comes to blending wines from Kent and Sussex and results in more depth and complexity of flavour in our wines.

## SINGLE-VINEYARD WINES

- Most of our wines are blends, crafted from fruit that comes from across the different vineyards. But in some vintages, we create wines made from grapes within a single vineyard, both sparkling and still.
- Our single-vineyard wines highlight how special our vineyards are and how unique they all are too. It is not necessarily about finding the best vineyard sites, but about showcasing the most interesting parcels of a particular vintage.
- Our attention to detail during our base wine grading and blending process enables us to identify particularly interesting, intriguing, special wines to highlight a particular part of our vineyards and the vines within them.
- Our single vineyard Blanc de Blancs 2018 from Boot Hill Vineyard, released in late 2024, was a big award winner. It won gold at: Decanter World Wine Awards, Wine GB and International Wine Spirits Competition 2024.

### IN MORE DEPTH:

- [Time Well Spent article Exploring Boot Hill vineyard with Laura Rhys](#)
- [Time Well Spent article On the ground in Commanders vineyard with Laura Rhys](#)
- [Time Well Spent article about our Two Terroirs](#)
- [Time Well Spent article Our 2018 Single Vineyard Wines](#)
- [Gusbourne's vineyards – Kent and Sussex \(Film\)](#)
- [Maps](#)

## KEY TIMES OF YEAR

### Winter pruning

- During winter, pruning helps promote balanced and controlled growth and sets the vine up for future growing seasons. This takes four months, and is done by hand. Each vine will see three passes and we have 240,000 vines on the estate.
- Pass 1 - Spur selection, cane pruning and pulling out. This is the most important cut as it will determine the location of the buds which will form shoots for the production of fruit in the harvest the following year.
- Pass 2 - Trimming up and cutting to height. We trim off any lateral growth from the chosen cane, and cut it to height, depending on how many buds we are planning for.
- Pass 3 - Tying down the selected cane for the coming growing season. Trellising is single guyot. In certain vineyards where there's the potential for frost, we keep a second, spare cane (sometimes called the kicker cane) as a replacement in case of damage. This is removed once the risk of frost has passed.

### Frost

- Frost isn't an issue during the vines' winter dormancy. It becomes an issue if we have frosty conditions after budburst, or just before harvest.
- We use large-diameter frost fans located at the lowest parts of our vineyards through key times of the year such as budding, flowering and harvest. Cold air flows down the hill, pooling at the bottom and so the fans automatically start up when the surrounding temperature hits 2 degrees. This sucks in cold air and spits it out higher up, creating a vacuum for more cold air to drop. This keeps the air moving and stops the cold air from pooling, causing any damage to the vines.
- On cold nights, our vineyard managers have 'frost alarms' set on their phones, and they have to come in to check the fans have switched on correctly and that nothing further needs doing.
- 2017 has been our worst year for frost so far - we had a mild winter, resulting in early budburst in late March (budburst doesn't usually happen until mid-April) and then a very cold snap in mid to late April. Many producers lost 60-80% of their crop, but due to our proximity to the coast and the measures we put in place, we only lost 3-5% that year.

#### IN MORE DEPTH: PRUNING

[Click here](#)

## Harvest

- Harvest time sees around 170 seasonal staff at work across our Sussex and Kent sites. Increasingly, we recruit within our local areas rather than bringing in agency workers from other countries. We have people from all walks of life, all ages, and with all sorts of different levels of experience. Now, many of our workers return year on year to take part in the Gusbourne harvest. Examples include:

- Bernie and Reg from Appledore who've been harvesting with us since 2013. They're now in their 80s, but still going strong.
- Dan is now a Team Leader on our vineyard team in Sussex. He used to be a Chef, and tried out vineyard work one harvest when he was looking for a career change. He's now an integral, and hugely enthusiastic, part of our permanent vineyard team.
- Jeff in our Sussex team used to work for a bank, but got the bug for vineyards one year when he joined our harvest team. He's now part of the seasonal team who come back at other times of year, joining us for pruning and much of the hand-work that needs to happen during the growing season.

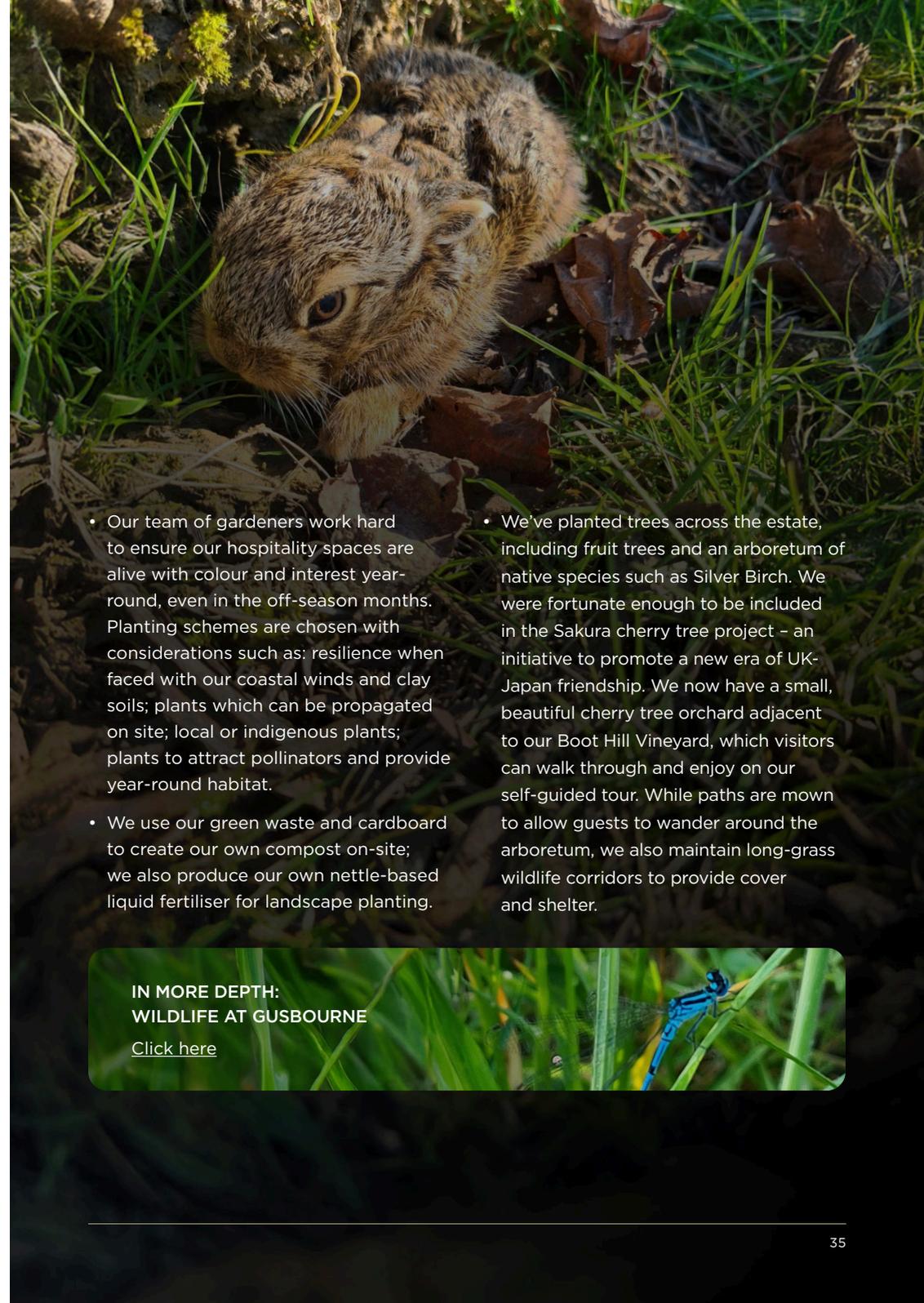
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**We have people from all walks of life, all ages, and with all sorts of different levels of experience.**  
”

- Everything is harvested by hand.
- The winery team spend weeks in advance of harvest analysing the grapes across all the different vineyards, varieties and blocks in each site. They check the acidity and sugar levels in the grapes, to assess how close they are to being perfectly ripe.
- The winery team have to work in shifts to be able to receive and press all the grapes as freshly as possible to ensure the best quality juice, throughout the day, and some of the night too.
- It's a very exciting time, and we run specific Harvest Estate Tours so that visitors can come and experience it for themselves. They might get to see the hand-harvest in action, taste some juice straight from the press or see the grapes going into the presses.



### Wildlife in the vineyard

- Vineyards are usually a monoculture (a single crop). This means it's extra important for us to encourage and nurture biodiversity wherever possible across the rest of the estate. In Kent, we have significant acreage of historic woodlands (such as that next to Butness vineyard), which we carefully manage and support. We encourage biodiversity in the vineyard headlands, hedgrows and in uncultivated spaces.
- In Butness Wood, we have an array of flora and fauna, including wild boar. Where damaged trees have had to be removed from Butness, we've used the timber to create log-pile habitat for species such as slowworms, adders and stoats.
- In Sussex, the headlands and cover crops are now only mowed two to three times a year. Allowing the plants under the vines to flower means our insect population has started to boom, with very high numbers of dragonflies, lace wings, spiders and ladybirds and all manner of soil life. In the past two years, we've seen huge numbers of butterflies in the vineyard, from Gate Keepers to Red Admirals.
- We have bird boxes and bat boxes around the estate; and in 2025 we participated in the Big Farmland Bird Count, which will act as a baseline for us to see if we can increase diverse bird populations in future. Key bird species spotted on the estate include:
  - Blackbirds
  - Linnets
  - Goldfinches
  - Green woodpeckers
  - Marsh tits
  - Tree sparrows
  - Buzzards
  - Redwings
- Birds can be an issue in the vineyard when the grapes are ripening. Starlings can be a problem, especially with darker grapes like Pinot Noir because they can see them against the green of the canopy. We fly helium balloons above the vines to act as a deterrent, moving them around so that the birds don't get used to them, and we also have bird scarers – a sound like gunshot.



- Our team of gardeners work hard to ensure our hospitality spaces are alive with colour and interest year-round, even in the off-season months. Planting schemes are chosen with considerations such as: resilience when faced with our coastal winds and clay soils; plants which can be propagated on site; local or indigenous plants; plants to attract pollinators and provide year-round habitat.
- We've planted trees across the estate, including fruit trees and an arboretum of native species such as Silver Birch. We were fortunate enough to be included in the Sakura cherry tree project – an initiative to promote a new era of UK-Japan friendship. We now have a small, beautiful cherry tree orchard adjacent to our Boot Hill Vineyard, which visitors can walk through and enjoy on our self-guided tour. While paths are mown to allow guests to wander around the arboretum, we also maintain long-grass wildlife corridors to provide cover and shelter.
- We use our green waste and cardboard to create our own compost on-site; we also produce our own nettle-based liquid fertiliser for landscape planting.

### IN MORE DEPTH: WILDLIFE AT GUSBOURNE

[Click here](#)

## PART 2: THE WINERY AND WINEMAKING PROCESS

### HARVEST AND GRAPE RECEPTION

- All of our grapes are hand-picked and the selection of the fruit is done in the vineyard. This ensures the quality of the fruit coming into the winery and limits its time from picking to press, for maximum freshness.
- We have more than 40 different clones of Chardonnay, Pinot Noir and Pinot Meunier which we grow in our Kent and Sussex vineyards. We have a combination of Burgundian and sparkling clones, to give us a greater diversity of fruit character. This results in more complexity, with Burgundian clones often giving us intensity and generosity, whilst sparkling clones bring us structure and acid drive.
- Once the grapes reach optimum ripeness, we hand harvest parcel by parcel. These individual parcels can then be vinified separately.
- Our sparkling wines are made in the traditional method
- We pick by hand into small buckets that are then tipped into 250kg picking bins. These bigger bins can then be weighed and loaded quickly into the press very quickly, to ensure freshness and efficiency.

### PRESSING

- We currently have three pneumatic presses comprising two 4.5-tonne presses and one 8-tonne press. Picking crates are emptied through the hopper at the top of the press and the whole bunched grapes are channelled into the cylindrical drum which runs the length of the press. This is lined by an inflatable bag which expands and presses the grapes. Three central drainage channels allow the juice to flow free of the drum, keeping the skins and stems separate.
- Pressing the grapes gently in whole bunches allows us to continually assess the quality of the juice and separate the cuvée (most pure expression, highest sugar, highest acid) and the taille fractions (harder pressings, but blended back later add texture and weight). Careful juice extraction is a key step in preserving the elegant and precise fruit flavours from the various vineyard blocks and ensures the lees ageing that comes later on has good bones to sit on.
- After the pressing cycles, the skins and stems that are left inside the drum are removed and we are currently experimenting with using them to make a compost for the soil.
- After separating the pressing fractions, they go into separate temperature-controlled tanks for cold-settling (~12 hours). The lower temperature helps the heavy juice lees (grape fragment) settle at the bottom of the tank so we can rack the clear juice into separate stainless-steel tanks or French oak barrels for fermentation. We often add back some of these settled out juice lees back as they can help deliver a healthy fermentation.

## TANKS AND BARRELS

- We use both tank and barrel as this helps us create different styles of base wines. Wines fermented in stainless steel are more linear and fruit driven, thanks to the inert nature of stainless steel. Using oak barrels brings wood influence and allows micro-oxygenation leading to more textured base wines with toasty, spicy aromas.
- We use some of the finest French coopers (barrel makers), mainly from Burgundy and Champagne. French oak has stood the test of time when it comes to the production of wine. Its flavour characteristics, grain structure and reliability make for some of the most sought-after barrels in the world.
- We purchase new barrels which will have a greater influence on the wine, but through the years, the barrel will become neutral and impart less overt oaky aromas. At this point, the barrel is used primarily as a textural component and so we have the ability to blend different aged barrels to create balance and harmony between the oak and the wine.
- We have some barriques (228l), puncheons (500l) and some foudres (4,000l). We are moving towards 500l foudres because we love the more integrated oak flavours and texture from them. All of these give you different variations of oak flavours, and allow different textures to develop in the wines, at different rates. All this adds to that complexity of components we want to use when it comes to blending.
- We also have our own barrel made from English oak, which came from woodland on our site, called Butness Wood. We sent it back to France to be cured and made into an oak barrel, and it currently has some Chardonnay in it from our Butness vineyard. This could be used as part of the blend for our single vineyard wines to be released in coming years.
- The structure of the English oak is different from French oak so we don't yet know how it is affecting the flavour of the wine being aged inside it, but it makes for an interesting, and very Kentish, addition to our blending process.

## PRIMARY FERMENTATION

- We add yeast to the juice and maintain the temperature in the tank at 18-20°C - you don't want it too cool, otherwise it's too aromatic, too warm and you lose the nuance of the fruit.
- Primary fermentation takes around 7-10 days, during which the yeast consumes sugars in the juice, producing alcohol and carbon dioxide as a natural byproduct. Carbon dioxide is released from the tank, leaving you with a still base wine with ideally 10.5-11% abv. You gain another 1-1.5% of alcohol through the secondary fermentation.
- We add lactic acid bacteria to our cuvée base wines at this stage too, which initiates a process known as malolactic conversion. Harsher malic acids, similar to those found in cooking apples, are converted into softer lactic acids which are found in dairy. Malolactic conversion is an important part of our style and process as it helps give a softer and more rounded palate. It can even introduce subtle flavours of cream and butter.



## BLENDING

- Up until this point, we have kept each vineyard, block and pressing fraction separate. This can lead to around 200+ different base wines, giving us lots of flavour, structure and textural components for blending. Keeping everything separate prior to blending is the key – to give you precision.
- Our resident technical wine team will taste all the base wines:
  - Head Winemaker, Mary
  - Assistant Winemaker, Joe
  - Master Sommelier and Head of Wine, Laura
  - Head of Wine Operations, AJ
- They will be building a profile of each block (or bit of vineyard) over several years. Over time you'll get a sense of what the characteristics are, and how these change in different vintages. We often taste in flights, such as all Sussex chardonnay in a flight, or all Kent Pinot Noir, which helps us understand nuances and differences between them.
- The components are analysed, and graded out of 10 and from this, the winemaking team can piece together the final blend for each wine for that year. This allows for precision, subtlety and will take around 6-8 weeks of tasting and blending trials to get the balance right. The aim is to create a blend that will be greater than the sum of its parts. The blending process is key to creating multi-faceted, complex vintage wines with elegance and structure that will develop for years to come.
- As well as creating the best expression of the vintage, we want to show the personality of the individual wines, and the producer. We want people to taste it and know it is a Gusbourne wine.
- For instance, in our Blanc de Blancs (the wine we feel best expresses our vineyard characteristics), we look for tanks of Chardonnay that express that minerality, salty/saline character and great length.

IN MORE DEPTH:  
GRADING AND BLENDING

[Click here](#)





#### BOTTLING AND AGEING

- We bottle the blended base wines, along with a small amount of yeast and sugar – a process called tirage. The yeast begin a second fermentation, creating a little more alcohol and CO<sub>2</sub>. Because the bottles are sealed with a crown cap, the gas can't escape (unlike the first fermentation, where gas escapes through airlocks on tank lids and barrels). Instead, the gas dissolves into the wine, creating those magical bubbles.
- Bottles are stored on their sides in crates and kept in the dark at a constant temperature of 15°C. This ensures a slow fermentation over 50 days or so. Ageing happens at our secondary production site near Maidstone.
- Once the yeast has consumed all sugar within the wine, the yeast cells die and form a sediment in the bottle known as lees. Over time, the yeast breaks down – a process called autolysis. This gives our wines their distinctive 'autolytic' character of bread, pastry and also contributes to the rich and creamy mouthfeel. The longer the contact with lees, the more of these flavours and textures will develop. The lees are also protective, which is why our wines have so much vibrancy.
- The wine is left on its side for around 36 months (three years) depending on the style, with some exclusive wines seeing extended lees ageing of five, six or even seven years (known as late disgorged).
- We age our wines for as long as it takes – there is no set formula. We release them only when they've developed Gusbourne's characteristic complexity.

## RIDDLING, DISGORGING AND CORKING

- We taste each of our wines during the ageing process to see how it's developing. When we feel a wine is ready, we start the process of extracting the lees from the bottle. This is done in two stages - firstly riddling, then disgorging.
- We transfer the bottles to a mechanical gyropalette which slowly (over five days) turns the bottles until completely inverted and on 'point', collecting the lees in the neck.
- We then immerse the neck of the bottle in liquid at -24-26 degrees, for about 10 minutes, which freezes the lees solid. We then return the bottle to the upright position; a mechanical arm releases the crown-cap and the frozen lees collected in the neck of the bottle is expelled by six bars of pressure which has built up inside the bottle through secondary fermentation.
- Each bottle is then topped up with a mixture of wine and sugar (known as a dosage). The wines are bone dry after the second fermentation, so this is added to bring a balance between the acidity and sweetness. It also introduces more weight and breadth to the palate. Over time, the sugar goes through a caramelisation called the Maillard reaction which contributes those lovely, sweet nougat notes.
- We do a lot of work testing different dosage levels to try to find the appropriate balance for the wines. Our typical range is 6-9 g/l, but this depends on the fruit expression, time on lees and acidity. The decision is unique to each wine every vintage. Most of our wines are classified as Brut (0-12g/l). This is still towards the dry end of the scale in comparison to styles like Prosecco which are normally labelled 'Extra Dry' (12-17g/l) or 'Dry' (17-32g/l).
- The bottles are then transferred to a corking and wiring machine before each bottle is inverted a couple of times to allow the dosage to fully integrate into the wine rather than settling to the bottom of the bottle.
- They are labelled, inspected and polished by hand, ready to be packed and sent out.
- All this happens at our secondary production site near Maidstone.





## PART 3: RETURNING TO THE NEST AFTER THE TOUR

This is the opportunity to showcase Gusbourne wines, and adapt to the knowledge and ability of the group. Points to mention:

1. Membership
2. Wines available to buy and take away
3. Available online with free shipping
4. Wine and food pairing
5. Wine awards
6. Gifts - wine or vouchers to visit or digital gift cards

### 1. MEMBERSHIP

- Being a member is the only way to get preferential pricing on our wines.
- Joining as a member is one of the best ways for customers to get priority access all of our wines, especially our older vintages. You can log in to your membership account and purchase an up to date selection of these exclusive wines.

- You also get first access to our events, such as the Chef Series, which are very popular with existing members and always sellouts. The past few years have seen events catered by the chefs behind The Hand and Flowers, Trinity and The Sportsman.
- Twice a year, members also get their own generous tasting events - for themselves and a plus one - held at the Nest, in London, and elsewhere in the country (Manchester, for example).
- There is a generous welcome gift that new members take away when they sign up at the Nest.

### • Key cues during a tour to talk about membership:

- When talking about events we have coming up, such as the Chef Series
- When discussing rare, limited edition or older vintages we are serving
- When talking about how to buy the wines, especially if you are asked about whether we do case discounts - it's the only way they can get preferential pricing
- When serving 51N, or when standing in front of a 51N display in the Nest
- If customers mention not wanting to carry wine home on public transport
- If customers talk about how much they like our wine glasses, wine stoppers and corkscrews. Members are the only people with the opportunity to purchase these.

### 2. WINES AVAILABLE TO BUY AND TAKE AWAY

- Where can you buy our wines? Here at the Nest, our cellar door, where you're also able to taste them and 'try before you buy'. We often have exclusive wines that are not available elsewhere, like our special Nest Selection, still wines and special editions.
- You get first access to our wines, including still wines and limited editions by joining our membership.
- Much of what we produce is sold in the UK through high-end restaurants, hotels and independent wine merchants.
- There is also an exciting surge in international recognition for English Wine. We export to 37 countries, with key markets include Norway, the USA and Japan.

### 3. WINES AVAILABLE ONLINE AND WITH FREE SHIPPING

- For visitors travelling by public transport, you can order wines here at the Nest and we will ship them to your home address free of charge.
- You can order wines at any time through our website at Gusbourne.com with free delivery on any size order.



#### 4. WINE AND FOOD PAIRING

##### Our food philosophy

- Our brilliant kitchen team work hard to source as much produce as possible locally, from Rye Bay seafood to Romney Marsh lamb. We work closely with nine local producers and suppliers of local produce to ensure we use the best-possible meat, fresh fish landed at Hastings, local vegetables, artisan bread and more. Our commitment is to source the majority of our produce from within 65 miles of Appledore.
- We change our menus monthly, in line with the seasons.
- Head Chef Anthony Coppard is passionate about food and wine matching, and works with Master Sommelier and Head of Wine, Communication and Style, Laura Rhys, to make sure that his menus will set off our wines to perfection.

##### His philosophy is:

- “Try not to get too tied up by wine and food matching rules,” says Coppard. “Stick with fresh, seasonal ingredients — whether that’s spring’s wild garlic and mushrooms, or autumn’s lovely squashes and root vegetables — and you can’t go wrong.”
- “I always avoid too much heat or spice when creating menus to match with our wines. But you don’t need to be scared of bold flavours. I often find that something pickled — a bit of sauerkraut for example — can work well with the acid profile of a cuvée like Blanc de Blancs.”
- “Another tip is that you can match the wine to a secondary ingredient — say, a citrus dressing — to bring out different flavours in the wine. Taste, experiment — and just get stuck in.”



“

**Stick with fresh, seasonal ingredients**

ANTHONY COPPARD, HEAD CHEF

”



## CLASSIC MATCHES WITH OUR CORE WINES

### Brut Reserve

- Seared scallops
- Roast chicken with lemon, garlic and herb butter

### Rosé

- Salmon sashimi
- Fruit-based patisserie

### Blanc de Blancs

- Freshly shucked oysters
- Fish and chips

### Blanc de Noirs

- Lobster
- Roast pumpkin ravioli

### Chardonnay Guinevere

- Turbot with beurre blanc
- Aged Comté cheese

### Pinot Noir

- Romney Marsh rack of lamb
- Wild mushroom risotto



## WINE AWARDS

We are one of England's most-awarded wine producers, if not the most awarded. The awards are significant as our wines are blind tasted by industry professionals, and compared with examples from around the world (apart from the WineGB awards which is for wines from Great Britain only).

Key awards are:

- The Champagne and Sparkling Wine World Championship (CSWWC)
- International Wine Challenge (IWC)
- International Wine and Spirit Competition (IWSC)
- The Teksom Awards (in the USA)
- Decanter World Wine Awards
- JancisRobinson.com reviews and point rating
- WineGB Awards

Our list of awards changes throughout the year as these competitions take place. You can find an up to date list on Jostle, or by contacting Nest management.

## GIFTS

You can buy gift vouchers online for all the tours and tastings above. You can also buy monetary gift vouchers which can be spent on either tours or wines.

# SUSTAINABILITY, ORGANICS, BIODYNAMICS AND REGENERATIVE AGRICULTURE

## SUSTAINABILITY

- Sustainability is at the core of our vineyard and winery management, and we are a founding member of the Sustainable Wines of Great Britain initiative, set up to encourage English and Welsh wineries to ensure their practices are as sustainable and environmentally friendly as possible. We were amongst the first vineyards in the UK to achieve the SWGB accreditation in 2020 and received the gold certification in 2024 for continuous improvement.

### WHAT'S SWGB?

It's a sustainable certification, designed and run by WineGB, our industry body. We are audited by an independent contractor every three years, and have to keep records and provide evidence of continuous improvement in managing both winery and vineyard.

### In the vineyard this means a particular focus on:

- Soil health: counting the number of earthworms, regularly measuring and looking to increase the amount of organic matter in our soil, working to improve soil texture, drainage and other features
- Biodiversity: planting cover crops so that vines are not a monoculture, increasing biodiversity in the soil, and harnessing a variety of fungal/plant relationships that may benefit the vines. Monitoring and improving diversity of plant and animal species
- Collecting evidence: we have sample bays in each vineyard for measuring disease pressure, vine health, and monitoring growth throughout the season

### In the winery this means:

- Monitoring and reducing energy, water use and waste
- Eco-sensitive packaging decisions, from bottling to disgorging and labelling

### For both areas it means

- Measuring our carbon footprint, per vine and per bottle of wine
- Controlling and recording waste with a view to reduce, reuse and recycle
- Continuous improvement and target setting

## What does sustainability in The Nest look like?

### 1. Locally sourced produce

- Our brilliant kitchen team work hard to source as much produce as possible locally. Our commitment is to source the majority of our produce from within 65 miles of Appledore.
- In The Nest, you'll find our toiletries are also locally produced. Our wool blankets – available for guest use – are made for us by Romney Marsh Wools.

### 2. Seasonal planting – we develop planting schemes that are resilient, can be propagated on site and that will attract pollinators and provide year-round habitat.

### 3. Minimising waste

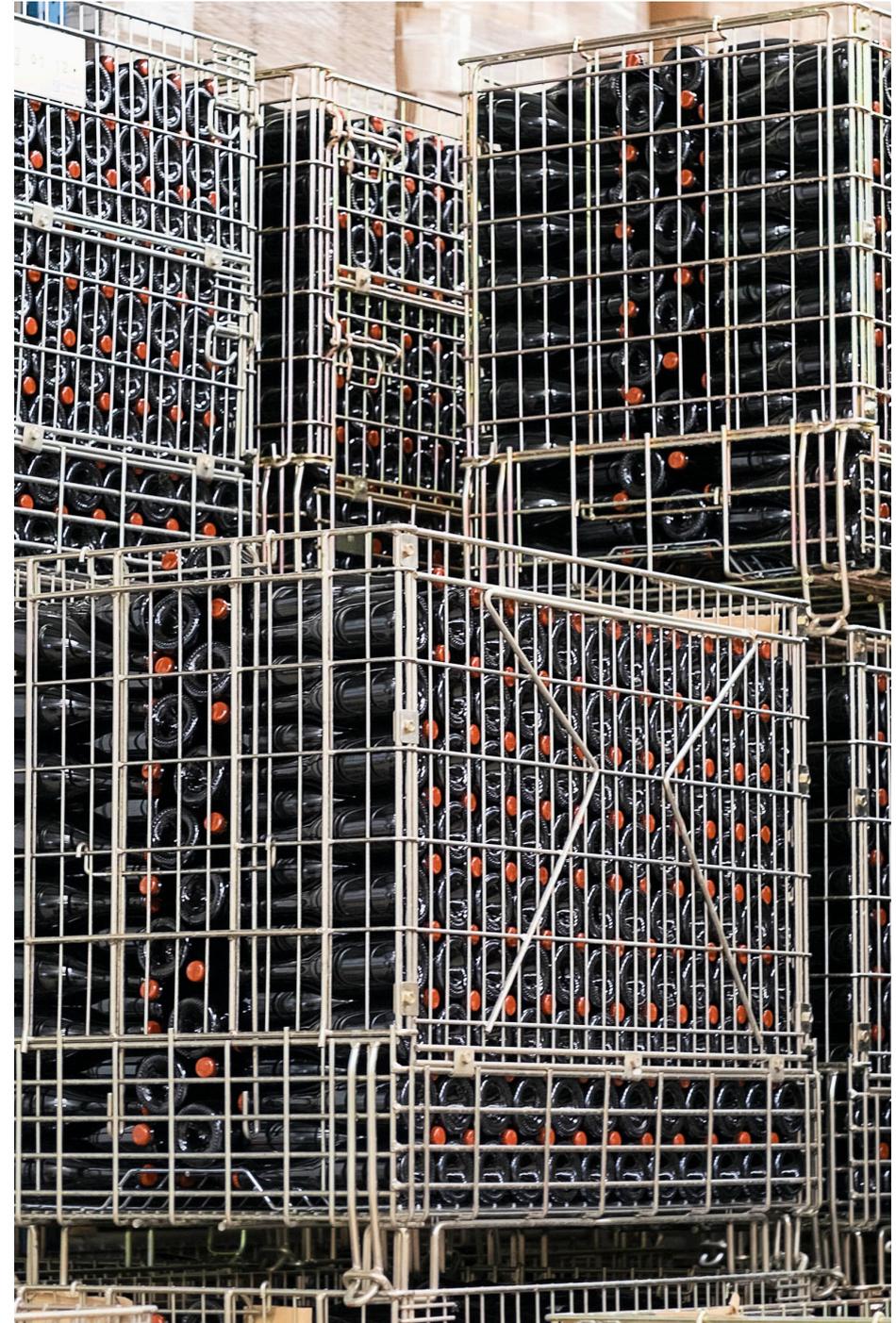
- We use green waste and cardboard to create our own compost on-site
- We produce our own nettle-based liquid fertiliser for the landscape planting
- Our kitchen team are very waste conscious, doing things like churning our left over cream into butter to extend shelf life (and make absolutely delicious butter!). The kitchen only produces food when it is pre-booked as part of tours, so we are very low-waste compared to a restaurant.

### 4. Recycling our glass bottles

- Our bottles come from a supplier that uses 73% recycled glass in its production.
- We are currently trialling lighter bottles for still wines – this would reduce emissions primarily in transporting wines
- We are trialling reusing bottles to see if this is viable. We haven't found a good solution for sparkling wines yet. It is more complicated because of the pressure in the bottle and the need for perfect integrity to stop a bottle exploding.

### 5. Tree planting and management

- We were part of the Sakura cherry tree project – an initiative to promote a new era of UK-apan friendship. We now have a small, beautiful cherry tree orchard adjacent to our Boot Hill Vineyard, which visitors can walk through and enjoy on our self-guided tour. While paths are mown to allow guests to wander around the arboretum, we also maintain long-grass wildlife corridors to provide cover and shelter.
- One part of ancient woodland we manage is called Butness Wood, which is home to an array of flora and fauna, including wild boar. Where damaged trees have had to be removed from Butness, we've used the timber to create log-pile habitat for species such as slowworms, adders and stoats.





#### WHAT'S ORGANIC WINE?

- Wine made from organically grown grapes, certified by a third party. In general, this means no artificial compounds such as fertilisers, fungicides, herbicides, and pesticides, and nothing that has been genetically modified. However, large amounts of copper and sulphur can be used to combat disease, and some critics point to high levels of copper toxicity in soils as a result.
- We are not a certified organic estate, but we do our best to work in harmony with nature and to act with sustainability in mind. We use natural fertilisers, monitor and improve soil health, do a huge amount of manual hand work, and try and prevent disease happening, to minimise treatments. We use herbicide sparingly, when conditions really demand it.
- Note that organic wine does allow a wide-variety of fining agents, so they still may be unsuitable for vegetarians and vegans. (It is a common misconception that organic also equals vegetarian- or vegan-friendly.)

## WHAT'S BIODYNAMIC WINE?

- Wine made from biodynamically certified vineyards. Depending on your perspective, biodynamics is an enhanced/extreme form of organic viticulture. It is still somewhat controversial because although some of the world's best wines are biodynamic (e.g. Domaine de la Romanée Conti) the science has not been reliably proven.
- All biodynamic vineyards practice organic viticulture, but biodynamics differs from organics in three ways.
  1. The vineyard should become a self-sustaining system.
  2. There are nine herb- and mineral-based biodynamic 'preparations' that are used to nourish the vines.
  3. Key tasks such as planting, pruning, tillage, picking, and bottling should be timed with rhythms of the moon, sun, stars and planets.
- Arguably the most famous aspect of biodynamics is the use of cow horns as containers for some of the biodynamic preparations. It is believed that animal organs help the medicinal properties to become fully effective throughout the farm. This often leads to the perception that biodynamics is 'unscientific', but many great winemakers and vineyard managers swear by it.

## WHAT'S REGENERATIVE FARMING?

- In both Kent and Sussex, our approach in the vineyards is low-impact, regenerative agriculture.
- Regenerative agriculture is all about rehabilitating and enhancing soil health, building soil organic matter to undo the negative consequences of conventional farming and climate change. We aim to leave our soil in a better state than we found it in.

### There are five key principles:

1. Don't disturb the soil. Soils support a complex network of microorganisms that deliver several ecosystem services, such as nutrient cycling and carbon storage. Disturbing this through tillage or ploughing sets the system back.
2. Keep the soil covered. Bare soil is more at risk of erosion due to extreme heat, frost, and rain. By growing a cover crop or adding organic residue, you can protect it.
3. Grow a diverse range of crops. Soils thrive on variety. By growing a mix of crops in the same system farmers can feed their soils - the balanced nutrients needed for them to flourish.
4. Keep living roots in the soil. Builds soil biodiversity, fertility and water quality.
5. Integrate animals. Through planned grazing, you can increase soil fertility and reduce the need for synthetic inputs (fertilisers).





#### KEY FEATURES OF OUR APPROACH

- **SHEEP:** Through winter, our Sussex and Kent vineyards host flocks of Romney and South Downs sheep. This livestock helps keep weeds in check, reducing the need for tractors in the vineyards and therefore reducing soil compaction. The sheep also fertilise the land, returning the nutrients they take to the soil.
- **SOIL STRUCTURE:** We've mapped the soil structure throughout our vineyards. We use this data, plus three-yearly soil analysis, to ensure we're supplying nutrients to the soil in the right locations and the correct quantity.

- **SOIL STABILITY:** Between 2016 and 2022, we experimented with tractor mounted cultivators (roll hacks) to reduce weed competition in the under-vine area. The benefit is less need for herbicide, but the cost is compacted soil and disrupted microbiome. This has led to loss of vigour in the vines. In 2023, we began a no-till way of working under the vines to ensure that the topsoil remains intact, allowing the humus to develop a stable structure. In turn, this will regulate the microbes working in the soil and help protect the moisture levels.

- **HERBICIDES:** The no-till approach means that we treat a small under-vine area with herbicide to prevent under-vine competition from weeds. This application is done as sparingly as possible and only in carefully monitored conditions. In time, we hope under vine cover crop planting will remove the need for herbicide.
- **FERTILISER:** We work with natural fertilisers in addition to the nutrients provided by the sheep over winter. These comprise composts, seaweed fertiliser and composted chicken manure which help improve soil health and biological diversity.

- **MANUAL WORK:** The majority of our vineyard work, from pruning to harvest, is done by hand which reduces the need for vehicles in the vineyard. Using people, not machines, promotes soil health and ensures we have eyes on our vines throughout the year, looking for any quality or health issues.
- **BIODIVERSITY:** Vineyards are usually a monoculture. This means it's extra important for us to encourage and nurture biodiversity wherever possible across the rest of the estate. In Kent, we have significant acreage of historic woodlands, which we carefully manage and support. We encourage biodiversity in the vineyard headlands and in uncultivated spaces, e.g. varied horticultural planting around our Boot Hill vines, bird boxes around the estate.



- **COVER CROPS:** These are the plants between the vine rows. Cover crops benefit our bees and insects (they provide a variety of pollen and nectar sources), as well as our soil. We aim to have a mixture of plant types, with varied root depth. This helps fix nitrogen in the soil and prevents soil compaction, as well as adding to diversity of roots. In turn, this leads to greater diversity of soil microorganisms.
- **LEAF-PLUCKING:** We remove leaves around bunches to increase airflow and sunlight. This result is a more open and ventilated bunch zone, which reduces the potential for fungal infection. It also helps the fruit ripen.
- **GREEN HARVESTS:** We green harvest to promote airflow and reduce botrytis, as well as lead to earlier ripening and less vine stress. This also means the vines have more time to recover through photosynthesis before shutting down for winter; healthier plants are better able to withstand diseases without as much intervention the following year.
- **POST-HARVEST FRUIT DROPPING:** In vintages where some fruit has been slow to ripen, we'll remove it at harvest rather than leave it on the vine. This helps conserve the vine's energy, allowing the post-harvest photosynthesis to focus on root and trunk repair and growth before winter shutdown.
- **BEE HIVES:** Healthy and happy pollinators are essential to maintaining our local flora and fauna. We host an apiary on the farm on behalf of The London Honey Company. The London Honey Company only house their bees on farmland where they're confident in a varied and safe diet for their bees.
- **RESEARCH AND INNOVATION:** We are one of the key members of the National Institute of Agricultural Botany (NIAB) viticulture R&D consortium based in East Malling. We believe we have an important role to play - contributing to research projects and knowledge sharing amongst the wine-producing community.

**IN MORE DEPTH:**

- The Regenerative Viticulture Foundation
- [www.gusbourne.com/articles/reading-list](http://www.gusbourne.com/articles/reading-list)
- [www.gusbourne.com/articles/digging-deeper-biodiversity-in-our-vineyards](http://www.gusbourne.com/articles/digging-deeper-biodiversity-in-our-vineyards)

# HOW TO TALK ABOUT DIFFICULT THINGS

**1. Why don't you do discounts, like a case discount for buying six, or for buying at the cellar door?**  
We think the quality of our wine speaks for itself, so we don't offer discounts. We do offer preferential pricing through our membership scheme, which is very generous. You will always receive wines that are more valuable than the headline price you pay for membership, plus a range of benefits like two complimentary tasting events a year, to which you can bring a friend.

**2. How many bottles do you produce a year?** It changes from vintage to vintage, so it's hard to say. We are a boutique producer, and still very small compared to Champagne – the whole English wine industry produces as much as a single Champagne house (e.g. Taittinger produces 6 million bottles per year).

**3. Talking about other wine producers e.g Chapel Down.** We are happy to talk about the English Wine industry and other vineyards and wineries – we definitely don't want to say anything negative about them because it makes us look defensive and petty. Let's stick to talking about what makes us unique – like owning all our own vineyards, and making vintage only wines of the highest quality. We can talk about partnerships, like the Wine Garden of England, a tourism collective which includes us, Chapel Down, Biddenden, Squerryes, Simpsons, Balfour, Domaine Evremond and Westwell. We run events together to show off the diversity of wines and styles, and that's a great thing for our area. Our most local vineyards are Biddenden and Chapel Down, both with very different business models. Chapel Down makes wines from £10 to £100 and they are very well-known in the industry. Biddenden is quite a small, family-run business that has been part of the farming community for generations. They also make apple juice and cider. It's nice that people often visit several wineries in a day and get a different picture of the industry.

**4. What about those wines you make for Waitrose?** We call these Exclusive Release. There are white and rosé versions of these sparkling wines that we make specifically for Waitrose. Key talking points to note when discussing these wines are:

- All of our wines are crafted with the same care and attention. Fruit is grown in the same vineyards and the wines are all made by our award-winning team.
- Our mature vineyard holdings provide us with the flexibility to select our blends from a wider selection of over 250 high-quality base wine components each vintage.
- By having so many separate and unique components, we are able to hand-pick blends to produce individual wines for our business customers.
- These wines are an alternative expression of our vineyards, produced to be an approachable, fruit-forward style for early-drinking enjoyment.



**5. Using pesticides and herbicides –** especially when there is a tractor spraying in a vineyard that customers can see. Sprayers can be used for a variety of things, including spreading natural fertilisers on to the leaves of the plants. We occasionally use herbicide and pesticides, but only when we really have to – in wet conditions when we can't manage disease pressure any other way.

**6. Are we organic or biodynamic?**

No, we aren't certified organic or biodynamic, but we do farm regeneratively – always looking to improve the health of our soils and vineyards. We think organic is very difficult to do in the UK. That's because it's very wet here, so there is disease pressure from mildew and mould. This is a very different picture elsewhere in the world, like Chile, where dry conditions make it much easier to be certified organic. We adopt a lot of the same principles, so we only use natural fertilisers and minimise our use of synthetic herbicides and pesticides.

**7. How are we trying to make our packaging sustainable?**

- Our cardboard boxes are made from 76% recycled paper. They are fully recyclable, with recyclable tape to close them. And we use our leftover cardboard at the Nest to make our own compost!
- Our gift boxes are made of 76% recycled cardboard and are fully recyclable
- We print our dispatch notes on wildflower seed paper, which can be planted at home
- All our printed materials are printed on FSC (Forest Stewardship Council) certified paper and are fully recyclable.
- The wine industry – and most especially the sparkling wine industry – faces a huge challenge when it comes to reducing the carbon footprint of glass bottles. Our bottles come from a supplier that uses 73% recycled glass in its production. We are currently trialling lighter bottles for still wines; we are trialling reusing bottles to see if this is viable. We haven't found a good solution for sparkling wines yet. It is more complicated because of the pressure in the bottle and the need for perfect integrity to stop a bottle exploding.





#### 8. Talking about our kitchen facilities.

There is no need to discuss these with guests. We know the facilities aren't perfect, but customers don't need to know about them in detail. It takes away from their experience of the beautiful food we serve - and is it beautiful! Talk about Anthony and Agi's commitment to sustainability and local, seasonal sourcing, and the fact that menus are changed every month and are matched with our wines. We aren't an 'a la carte' restaurant, there are set menus and we ask for dietaries in advance, so we really try and minimise wastage and can cater to specific dietary requirements.

#### 9. Are our wines vegan or vegetarian?

- While there are no animal products in a finished bottle of wine, there are often animal products used in the winemaking process during fining. These are usually either egg whites, casein (found in milk), gelatine or isinglass (made from fish).
- The process of fining is used to clarify a wine. Fining agents are used exclusively for processing and are not any kind of additive. Once the fining process has finished, any fining agents are removed, meaning none of the animal products remain in the finished wine.
- We don't fine our still wines, so all our still wines are vegan and vegetarian.
- We used to use gelatin to fine our sparkling wines because it was a much higher quality product and the vegetarian/vegan options weren't as good. After extensive trials over the last few years with better vegetarian/vegan alternatives, we are now happy with the results, so we no longer use animal derived fining agents. All sparkling wines will be vegan from the 2023 vintage.





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