



EVERYTHING IN THE GARDEN'S LOVELY

Wine expert *Jane Cuthbertson* explores the delights of home-grown produce

Sitting in the garden with friends on a warm and sunny Sunday afternoon and enjoying a glass of chilled, crisp white wine - life doesn't get much better. But how many of you would assume that the chosen tippable would be from our own fair land? I'd like to bet not many!

Gone are the days when English wines left you wanting a wine with character and flavour instead of the thin and acidic examples we were used to. The combination of warmer summers and vastly improved expertise enables English winemakers to produce something of infinitely better quality and value.

English Wine Week, an annual celebration of English wines, is to be held 23 to 31 May. At Barrica, we will be offering a selection of English wines to taste throughout the promotion. On Saturday,

30 May between 12 and 4pm, Tim Chance of Strawberry Hill Vineyard in Newent will be on hand to show his wines so please feel free to drop in and have a chat with him.

This year, we have been promised a great summer by the weather pundits so why not make the most of the wines with barbecues and al fresco dining? English whites and roses in particular lend themselves to grilled fish and seafood dishes.

Biddenden is the oldest family vineyard in Kent and their sparkling white is exceptional value for money at £16.50. Bottle fermented in the traditional method, this sparkling wine is fresh and sophisticated, with very well balanced acidity and serves as a great reminder of the excellent quality of which English sparkling wines are capable.

Ortega is an English white grape

which accounts for 50% of planting at Biddenden due to its popularity. Gribble Bridge Ortega (£8.00) from the same estate is reminiscent of Sauvignon Blanc with floral notes and a dry, crisp finish.

Strawberry Hill Vineyard is perhaps one of the most interesting vineyards I have come across. Tim Chance's passion for wines has led him to extend his plantings of English grapes to include trials of Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Pinot Noir, Chardonnay and Sauvignon Blanc in a massive greenhouse to achieve optimum ripening with significant success. Still in their infancy, Tim has managed to capture the character of the grapes in his Cotswold Classic (£8.00). His Rose (£6.50) is made from 100 per cent Pinot Noir and has delicate, mouth-watering raspberry flavours and a moderate alcohol level of 11 per cent abv.

If barbecues in your garden

call for something a little more thirst quenching, try a range of ciders from Lyne Down in Ledbury near Hereford. Made with organic practices, Mark Catlin produces a variety of styles from the sparkling dry, full bodied Roaring Meg (£2.25, 500ml), to a varietal sweeter Kingston Black (£4.50 75cl) and a Perry (£4.50, 75cl) which knocks the socks off most mass produced offerings.

Mark will be at Barrica Wines on Saturday, 6 June to share his passion for his ciders with you. Let's just hope the weatherman was right! ■

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