

Wine

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on wine

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National treasures

Welcome to the new world of English and Welsh wines

Vineyards carpet the valley in neat rows, the sea just visible in the distance. I could be somewhere in southern Europe but as I trace the dotted green lines on my OS map, there are the very English-sounding names: Alfriston, Lullington, Litlington.

So no, not the Tuscan coast, but the South Downs, East Sussex, the heart of one of the most exciting wine regions in the world. Despite not planning to release a wine for another two years, the vineyard I'm gazing across, [Rathfinny](#), is already an important part of what has been happening across southern England from Kent to Cornwall.

However, for all the improvements in still wine, few would look beyond fizz as England's claim to vinous greatness. There's a real sense of an English style emerging - keener, racier, steelier - in standout producers such as Wiston Estate, Nyetimber, Gusbourne, Camel Valley, Coates & Seely, Ridgeview, Hambledon, Hattingley Valley, Exton Park and [Bride Valley](#). Regional differences will surely follow. At this rate, English villages such as Hambledon, West Chiltington and maybe even Alfriston will soon be as familiar to wine lovers as Champagne's Chouilly or Burgundy's Chassagne-Montrachet.