

FINANCIAL REVIEW

The ‘supremely delicious’ secret reason to visit the UK

England is now home to almost 200 wineries and 900 vineyards covering 3600 hectares. Who knew?

[Max Allen](#) *Drinks columnist*

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The magnificent Nyetimber estate is spread across the greensand and chalk soils of Sussex, Hampshire and Kent. Some of its sparkling wines are now available in Australia.

When you think about the world’s great wine tourism destinations, you probably think about the coastal beauty of Margaret River, or the bucolic villages of Burgundy, or the sun-drenched vineyards of Sicily. I’m betting that the South Downs of England is not the first region that springs to mind.

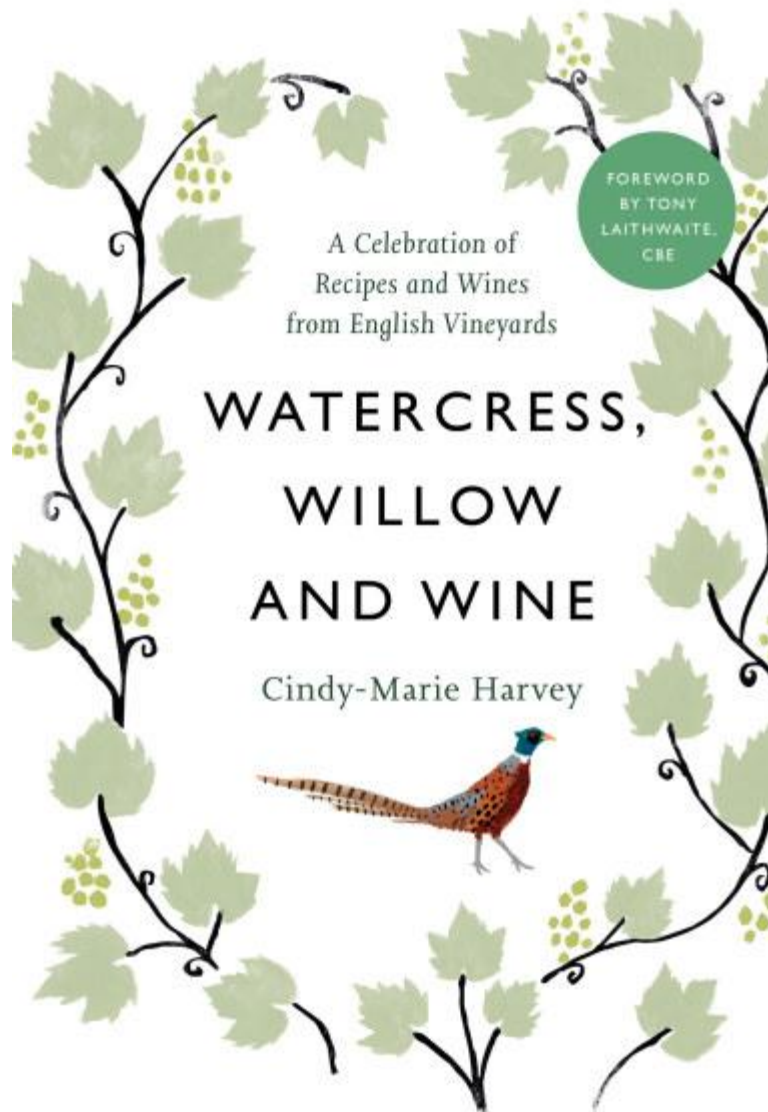


A scene as English as ... an English winery, would you believe? The beautiful Nyetimber vineyards are home to world-renowned sparkling wine. **Chris Gorman**

“Overhead a skylark sings in the blue sky. Green fields sweep down from a chalk ridge laced with white tracks ... These are England’s South Downs in summer, a place of villages, hiking trails and, increasingly, vineyards.”

I’ve written here before about the growing interest in English wines, especially sparkling wines such as the [fabulous fizz of Hattingley Valley](#), which features in the guide. But in the past few years, the pace of that growth has stepped up a couple of notches. According to the latest report from industry body WineGB, England is now home to almost 200 wineries and 900 vineyards covering 3600 hectares. That vineyard area has, the

report says, more than doubled in just eight years and more than quadrupled since 2000.



The cover of 'Watercress, Willow and Wine'.

It's no surprise, then, to see two new books published about this dynamic wine country (I never thought I'd write those words about England, but there we are).

Watercress, Willow and Wine is written and published by Cindy-Marie Harvey, an experienced wine tour operator based in Hampshire (or Wine Country, as we're now calling it) in the UK.

As the evocative title suggests, it's an enthusiastic celebration (rather than an in-depth analysis) of England's burgeoning culture of wine-and-food tourism. It features profiles of Harvey's favourite producers from Cornwall

to Kent, plus a handful of urban wineries that have set up in London and elsewhere.

There are hand-drawn maps and whimsical line drawings of the vineyards and wineries. And colourful illustrations of the dishes Harvey has chosen to match with featured wines from each producer – from nostalgic English classics like summer pudding and clotted cream (paired with Nutbourne Vineyard’s Sussex Reserve field blend white) to more adventurous cross-cultural mash-ups like mackerel tacos and gooseberry compote (with Ridgeview Blanc de Noirs).

There are lots of Italian-influenced recipes (Harvey spent many years living there) and even a nod to Australia: a scallop pie, inspired by a trip to Tasmania, paired with a Langham Estate Blanc de Blancs from Dorset.



South-west Devon, too, is featured in ‘Watercress, Willow and Wine’. Sandridge Barton winery, the maker of Sharpham wines, is located in Stoke Gabriel, a village bordering the River Dart. **Ed Dallimore**

If one of the purposes of a good wine book is to inspire you to put it down, get up off your bum and make plans to visit the vineyards and cellars, to taste the wines and talk to the winemakers, and to sit down and open more bottles paired with local dishes, then both books succeed admirably – albeit in very different ways.

Personally, I can’t wait to visit the South Downs again, to try some of the local artisan cheeses Harvey raves about in her book, and to try the exciting new wines that Moulton and Bell bring to life in theirs.

A taste of Britain



A sparkling wine tasting at Coates & Seely in Whitchurch, Hampshire from 'Watercress, Willow and Wine.'

If you can't make it to the UK, or if you just want to slip into the proper frame of mind before you do go, track down a bottle of fizz from Nyetimber, one of the country's pioneering sparkling wine producers, and still one of the best.

I have tasted both the Nyetimber Classic Cuvée and the Nyetimber Rosé, recently shipped by new importer Déjà Vu Wine Co, and they're both very good, but I marginally prefer the former.



Nyetimber's crisp Classic Cuvée, left, and Rosé are available Down Under.

Nyetimber Classic Cuvée [West Sussex and Hampshire]

Made from two-thirds black grapes – pinot noir and meunier – and one-third chardonnay, all grown in Nyetimber's two vineyards, first planted in the late 1980s. A blend of multiple vintages, this cuvée includes around a third reserve wines and spends three years on lees before disgorging. Not surprisingly, there's plenty of fruity complexity and intensity and a biscuity richness of flavour. But it's the thrilling, refreshing crispness of the wine – the essence of the site and the English climate – that sets it apart. A really delicious fizz. **\$100** Imported by dejavuwines.com.au

Need to know

- **Need to know***Watercress, Willows and Wine* is available direct from the publisher and costs £25 plus postage. Go to lovewinefood.com