



The rise of English Sparkling Wine, what will be it's future?

Lendl Mijnhijmer
Abstract Thesis Unit 7
Award in Wines and Spirits
Weinakademie Österreich

TITLE

The rise of English Sparkling Wine, what will be it's future?

MOTIVATION OF THE TOPIC AND OBJECTIVE OF THE THESIS

Over the past ten years English Wine (EW) has progressed immensely in both its production and successes. The English Wine Industry (EWI) has grown exponentially. The market is still quite unknown but is significantly expanding vintage after vintage.

Bottle-fermented sparkling wines have become the strongest suit in the United Kingdom (UK). Classic varieties such as Pinot Noir, Chardonnay and Pinot Meunier are the flagships of the (EWI). Those varieties are the base ingredients for the workhorse of the EWI, it's bubbles, called English Sparkling Wine (ESW).

ESW are getting the attention in the press nowadays. Due to their exceptional quality, which can be compared the best examples from Champagne, the wines are getting more serious each vintage.

ESW has made a spearheaded advance into both the national as the international market. Almost three quarter of the wines produced in the UK are Sparkling Wines (SW). The wines are getting the attention in the press and due to their exceptional quality, which can be compared to the best examples from Champagne. ESW are getting more serious each vintage. In the past decade many wines have been recognized both nationally and internationally with many awards by important bodies in the wine industry World Wide.

As a Sommelier, I'm always keen to find new interesting wines to surprise my guests in the restaurant. In addition I see that guests are getting more knowledge about wines and want to try more and more things outside the box. The aim of this thesis is to investigate the future potential of ESW as a quality wine, based on current issues and the possibilities in the future.

METHODS AND STRUCTURE FOR THIS THESIS

In order to fulfil the objective of this thesis, both desk research and field research have been undertaken.

Chapter 2 gives a descriptive analysis on the introduction on ESW including the history, the current situation, the style, the locations and the facts on ESW have been described. In chapter 3 an outline of recent developments in the market of ESW is described.

Chapter 4 describes the strengths, the weaknesses, the opportunities and treats of ESW. Subsequently, to check and to fully conclude the findings of the SWOT-Analysis made in Chapter 4, Chapter 5 gives another SWOT-Analysis from a producer's kind of view.

Those findings are gained during a visit to the Ridgeview Estate in May 2017 as part of gaining some feeling for the EWI. Using both SWOT-analysis, conclusions are drawn in Chapter 6.

THE CONTENT SUMMARIZED

ESW is making a huge improvement in terms of quality, export and market share. What is causing the success of the expansion of ESW, how can we see the future of the product and market?

The EWI, specifically ESW is mainly based on the classic Champagne varietals such as Pinot Noir, Chardonnay and Pinot Meunier. Those varietals are highly adapted to marginal cool climates as is present in the southern part of the UK, which mainly acts as the residence of most producers of ESW.

The cool climate of southern UK can be considered as the same as in the Champagne region, a region that makes SW for more than decades. Both regions are receiving about the same amount of sun hours throughout the year. The Champagne region about 1,600 hours, the UK between 1,550 and 1,600 hours. Precipitation does differ, 670 millilitres in to 950 millimetres in the UK. However yields are much lower in the UK compared to the Champagne region. This makes site selection one of the most important subjects while maintaining a vineyard in the UK.

To increase sales, quality has to improve and prices have match Champagne in the middle and match the price of the best examples as Prosecco, which is the leading SW in the UK. Overpricing ESW will result in a decline of sales. With Brexit in mind the future of prices and production is quite unpredictable.

Vineyard soils are comparable as both regions are located on the same plateau that runs underneath the Chanel of Calais. Soils are considered to have a high amount of limestone and chalk. The inland southern part of the UK is considered to have a higher amount of sand and clay, comparable to the slopes of the Montagne de Reims in the Champagne Region. The eastern sites near Dover are considered to be equal as the slopes of the Côte de Blancs near Epernay.

The market for ESW counts currently 2.25 million bottles. This is in contracts to the Champagne region that produces over 300 million bottles. The Champagne region is a demarked area, which has been protected by the EU and has filled its land upon its boundaries. In the UK this is not the fact.

Although the Champagne region produces more bottles, the UK has much more land that could be planted, resulting in an increase in production that could be larger than the whole of Champagne region. However, to increase plantings by anything like this may take many decades in the future.

FINAL CONCLUSION

Coming to and end: the future of ESW will be bright, with an estimate of a growth to 6 million bottles in 2023. The aim to give ESW a better platform is to seek for regionality. This can lead to a strong brand name that can be listed in multiple PDO's that has been stated by law, ensuring a specific quality and dedication of ESW producers. Producers are tremendously eager to make a both a national as international success of the product, although there is still a long way to go.