



## Partners in Wine

**English sparkling wines are taking centre stage, with Rathfinny Estate a new entrant to the market – and the good news is that it's now available in Hong Kong.**

The perfect soil, ideal location and years of dedicated planning, planting and ageing have allowed vineyard-owners Sarah and Mark Driver of Rathfinny Estate, to produce the best of sparkling wines from their Sussex vineyard. English sparkling wines are having their moment – making their mark rivalling some of the best 'Traditional Method' sparkling wines in the world. In 2016, the value of English wine sales had risen to £100 million and over the last eight years, English wine producers have won more international awards for sparkling wine than any other wine-producing region. As a fresh entrant to the wine market, Rathfinny Sussex Sparkling Wines, launched in June of this year in the UK to glowing reviews from their peers and made their first international debut in Hong Kong last month.

Located in the South Downs National Park, just three miles from the sea and the famous Seven Sisters cliffs in Southern England, Rathfinny Wine Estate was established in 2010 on the site of a working arable farm by solicitor Sarah Driver and her husband, financier Mark Driver. Still in its relative

infancy, the vineyard's first production of wine – 11,000 bottles – debuted a Blanc de Blancs 2014 and a Rosé Brut 2015. "It's taken eight years of hard work to get to this point. It's just fantastic to be able to share our first sparkling wines with everyone. The wines are a superb reflection of our fantastic terroir," says Mark.

Rathfinny lies on the same band of chalk that forms the Paris Basin, running up through northern France, crossing the Champagne region and into Southern England to form the South Downs. Owing a great deal to this land – where light, thin clay loam soils over chalk are free draining, the warm semi-continental climate (aided by global warming), and proximity to the sea, provides Rathfinny with the ideal conditions to grow sparkling wine grapes. The Estate is self-sufficient in water and nearly self-sufficient in energy, and is a major employer for the local area.

Rathfinny is also a destination for visitors, both nationally and internationally, being only an hour and

a half from London and 45 minutes from Gatwick Airport. It offers tours, tastings, fine dining in its newly opened Tasting Room Restaurant as well as accommodation in their 'home away from home' Flint Barns. "Visiting Rathfinny is all about delivering a great experience and with so much to do and see in Sussex, it should be on everyone's itinerary," says Sarah.

Three principal grape varieties; Pinot Noir, Chardonnay and Pinot Meunier are currently planted. Distributed across 86ha (217 acres) of land, this is expected to grow by a further 53ha (133 acres) of vines within the coming five years. When at full capacity, the winery will produce almost 80,000 cases of Sussex Sparkling wine per year, making them one of England's most significant wine producers.

Rathfinny's first sparkling wines, produced conforming to the strict Sussex PDO guidelines – ensuring provenance as well as quality – were bottled in early 2015. After the primary fermentation, the wine is blended and bottled with a small amount of sugar and yeast allowing for a secondary fermentation, creating the bubbles. Once the yeast has finished fermenting the "yeast lees" stay in the bottle and it is aged for a minimum of 15 months prior to release. Sparkling wines are traditionally blended from three grape varieties: the white Chardonnay gives a fruity taste and two reds, the Pinot Noir helps give backbone and the Pinot Meunier aids autolysis.



It is not just the sophistication of the Hong Kong wine market that made the city the first international location to sell their wines. Sarah and Mark Driver both have a unique affinity and deep personal connection to Hong Kong. Sarah was brought up on the Lantau Tea Plantation in Ngong Ping, below the Big Buddha, and went to school here. Her father, Brook Bernacchi QC, set up the Reform Club in Hong Kong and was elected to the Urban Council. Mark spent over 15 years working as a specialist Asian Stock Broker before helping to set up and run the highly successful Horseman Global Fund – a long-short Global equity hedge fund. Rathfinny Sussex Sparkling is already served at Le Gavroche and the Savoy Hotel in London and available across many of Hong Kong's finest restaurants including Arcane, Bo Innovation, The Continental, Wagyu and the Royal Hong Kong Yacht Club. 🇬🇧



**Sarah and Mark Driver**  
Founders,  
Rathfinny Estate

**Rathfinny Estate in East Sussex was founded in 2010 by husband and wife, Mark and Sarah Driver. Once a working arable farm, the first vines were planted in 2012 and today Rathfinny comprises 217 acres of predominantly Pinot Noir, Chardonnay and Pinot Meunier, with a further 133 acres to be planted by 2021. <http://rathfinnyestate.com/>**



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