



# RATHFINNY

## ABOUT RATHFINNY WINE ESTATE

The Rathfinny Wine Estate in East Sussex, founded in 2010 by husband and wife Mark and Sarah Driver, is dedicated to producing some of the world's finest sparkling wine. Once a working arable farm, the first vines were planted in 2012 and today the Rathfinny vineyard comprises over 230 acres of predominantly Pinot Noir, Chardonnay and Pinot Meunier.

In addition to producing wine, the Rathfinny Wine Estate has become a popular destination for wine tourism. The RIBA nominated Winery is home to the Cellar Door shop where visitors can enjoy organised Vineyard tours and wine tastings. The Tasting Room restaurant, with its large balcony and panoramic views across the Vineyard - under the direction of Michelin-starred Head chef Chris Bailey - specialises in seasonal, modern British cuisine. The Estate also houses the Flint Barns, providing wonderful 'home from home' accommodation which hosts sumptuous evening meals and alfresco summer dining, whilst the Hut caters for drop in visitors.

## VINEYARD

The single-site Vineyard was planted in stages over the last ten years and now extends to over 93 hectares (230 acres) and with three principal grape varieties –Pinot Noir, Chardonnay and Meunier - planted for Rathfinny's Sussex Sparkling Wines and a small area of Pinot Gris, for the Cradle Valley still white and rosé wines.

## WINES

Rathfinny produced their first Sussex sparkling wine in 2014, a Blanc de Blancs made from Chardonnay and a still wine released in 2015 under the Cradle Valley label. The 2014 Blanc de Blancs was released in June 2018 and the full range comprising of a 2016 Classic Cuvée, 2016 Blanc de Blancs, 2016 Blanc de Noirs and 2017 Rosé Brut was released in Summer 2020.

Mark Driver, co-owner of Rathfinny Estate, said: "We produce high quality sparkling wines from our single-site vineyard in the South Downs in Sussex. We leave our sparkling wines to mature in the bottle for at least three years, which helps develop all those complex flavours you'd expect from a vintage sparkling wine."

He added: "All our wines are vintage wines, and they express the characteristics of the year. We're fortunate to be on a single-site and we can control our yields to ensure that we're only picking fruit with a perfect balance of flavours, sugars and acidity to produce our Sussex sparkling wines."

"Our ambition is that in twenty years' time you will walk into a bar or restaurant in New York or Beijing, and you'll be asked, 'would you like a glass of Champagne or a delicious glass of Sussex, I can recommend the Rathfinny.'"

## LOCATION

The Rathfinny Estate is located in the South Downs National Park, an area of outstanding natural beauty in



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Southern England. Rathfinny occupies the main part of Cradle Valley, on a south-facing slope close to the iconic Cuckmere Valley, about a half a mile south of Alfriston village, just three miles from the sea and the famous Seven Sisters cliffs, which feature on the top of our label.

Regarding terroir, the shallow but fertile, clay loam soils over chalk are free-draining and perfect for growing sparkling wine grapes. Chalk provides a ready source of water for the vines during the drier summer months, the warm semi-continental climate and long summer days ensure perfect ripening, and the proximity to the sea helps mitigate frost risk in late spring months, a major problem in cooler climate vineyards in northern Europe.

Cameron Roucher, the Vineyard Manager, who joined from New Zealand in 2011 said: “You couldn’t really ask for a better location than this for growing sparkling wine grapes. The soil, the climate, the geography – they are all perfect.”

## B-CORP - BUILDING A SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS

In April 2023, Rathfinny became the first sparkling wine grower-producer in the world to achieve B Corp status as a business that aims to balance purpose with profit, taking account of the environmental and social impact in everything they do.

Rathfinny set out to build a business that is both environmentally friendly and sustainable. They adopted sustainable technologies such as photovoltaic cells, which power the Winery, and wastewater recycling. The Estate is self-sufficient on water, nearly self-sufficient on energy and all the buildings are built with materials sourced from the local area.

During the accreditation process, Rathfinny fully embraced the B Corp values, adopting the Triple Bottom Line approach of valuing not only economic choices in decision making. Rathfinny has changed its articles to ensure that social and environmental considerations must be taken into account. In every area of its business – governance, workers, environment, customers and community – huge strides have been made. Sarah Driver said: “I’m really proud that sustainability and reducing our environmental impact has been embraced by all our staff, in all areas of our business.” Full details can be found in the [Sustainability Report 2021/22](#).

Rathfinny has become a major employer in the area, transforming an arable farm employing less than two people to a Wine Estate providing skilled employment to over 90 people and seasonal work for a further 200 required during harvest.

Rathfinny encourage walkers to visit the Estate and have worked with the National Trust and the South Downs National Park Authority to open the ‘Rathfinny Trail’, a permissive path along Cradle Valley and through the Vineyard. It is marked with ‘talking posts’ that give information to the visitor.

Investing in the future of English wine, as well as providing regular training to our staff, Rathfinny Wine Estate sponsored the ‘Rathfinny Research Winery’ at Plumpton College, to enable further research to be carried out to benefit the English wine industry.



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Working with Natural England, the National Trust and the South Downs National Park a programme of improvements is being implemented to enhance the local habitat, while reviving and reclaiming the natural chalk grass downland and creating wildlife corridors to improve biodiversity. The ‘Rathfinny Trail’ was established, allowing the public access to parts of the Rathfinny Wine Estate and running past the restored Flint Barns.

Sarah Driver said: “The Rathfinny project is not just about making wine: we are committed to supporting the wider ambitions of the English wine industry and that means nurturing the skills it requires to fulfil its potential.”

## SUSSEX PDO

In June 2022 the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) approved the registration of ‘Sussex’ as a Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) for wine under the new UK Geographical Indication (GI) scheme.

Sussex is the first region to be awarded PDO status for wine and only the second product to be granted protection under the newly created UK GI scheme. It joins a coveted list of products granted protection by the UK Government, that guarantees a product’s characteristics or reputation, authenticity and origin. The UK government protects the product name from misuse or imitation.

Wines labelled as ‘Sussex’ must pass a stringent analytical test and qualitative analysis, by an independent tasting panel. In the case of Sussex sparkling wines this means that the wine must have been aged in the bottle for a minimum of 15 months, before release, and the wines are assessed for their clarity, aroma, taste and the characteristics of their bubbles.