

RATHFINNY



For Immediate Release

Largest planting of vines in England this year begins at Rathfinny Estate

The largest planting of vines to take place in England this year has begun at the 600 acre Rathfinny Estate in East Sussex.

The first 20 hectares (50 acres) of vines were planted in April 2012 and this year's planting will see 85,000 vines planted across a further 20 hectares of land. Eventually 160 hectares or 400 acres will be planted.

The winery at Rathfinny, near Alfriston, East Sussex, which will be completed in August this year, will eventually produce up to one million bottles of high-quality sparkling wine a year. It is hoped that the first still wines will be bottled early next year, with a limited quantity for local sale under the "Cradle Valley" label.

The multi-million pound winery is nestled at the heart of the Estate and features sustainable design techniques and the use of innovative low carbon technologies. The extensive grass roof, has been seeded with a mix of South Downs grassland to match the surrounding fields and helps the winery blend into the national parkland setting as well as contributing to the thermal insulation of the building.

Mark Driver, the founder of Rathfinny, said: "We are delighted that the progress of the Estate is going as planned and that we have been able to plant another 85,000 vines this week, despite the cold weather.

"Spring has yet to arrive across the whole of northern Europe, but the relatively dry weather of recent weeks makes for perfect planting conditions. I am confident that we will be able to put our new winery to good use at the end of this summer by harvesting our first small crop – and hope to produce a small amount of still wine and Sussex sparkling wine.

"The construction of our winery is also moving along at pace – in fact the grass roof was completed this week. Adding this specially designed grass roof, will help minimise the profile of the building and enables the building to blend in with the beautiful Sussex landscape."

Rathfinny has also commenced work on its flint barns, which are being lovingly converted into accommodation for up to 46 seasonal workers, as well as other special interest and educational groups visiting the South Downs National Park.

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About Rathfinny

The Rathfinny Estate was founded by husband and wife team Mark and Sarah Driver to be England's newest and largest single-site vineyard.

The first 50 acres of vines were planted in April last year and the first wines will be available to purchase in early 2014. By 2020, Rathfinny will produce about 1 million bottles of high-quality, bottle fermented, Sussex sparkling wine a year.

The terroir and climate at Rathfinny is perfectly suited for producing high-quality sparkling wines.

Rathfinny aims to eventually sell up to 50 per cent of its production to key overseas markets in Europe, Asia and North America.

The Pinot Noir, Chardonnay and Pinot Meunier are the three principle grapes varieties traditionally used for top quality sparkling wine, but Rathfinny may also use small quantities of Pinot Blanc, a grape also used in Champagne.

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