

Wine Whisperers

Meeting 10: A visit to Greyfriars Vineyard, Hogs Back, Puttenham

An accompanied tour and tasting in Greyfriars vineyard.

Greyfriars

Originally established in 1989, Greyfriars was one of the first UK vineyards to plant the three Champagne grape varieties of Chardonnay, Pinot Noir and Pinot Meunier. IT has now expanded to 40 acres across two site with predominantly south facing slopes.

They focus on sparkling wines but also produce some still wine and their approach is driven by what is delivered each harvest. Having visited a couple of years ago, they have definitely matured in both the wines they produce and the tour itself. Thanks to Amy we had an informative and enjoyable tour culminating in taking in the views from their viewing deck.

Wines Tasted:

Classic Cuvee 2015: This is a 2015 vintage sparkling wine made from 61% Chardonnay, 23% Pinot Noir and 16% Pinot Meunier. The grapes were hand-picked and whole bunch pressed, fermented and aged in stainless steel tanks before bottling and put through malolactic fermentation. The wine was aged on the lees for 4 years giving a creaminess to the mouth feel and a more biscuity character. The tension and ripe citrus fruits of this dry sparkling wine works particularly well with Thai inspired recipes. The roundness and subtle mouthfeel of the wine matches with quality fish and seafood such as gurnard, bass or scallops.

Price: £29 per bottle

Sparkling Rosé Reserve 2021: This is the eleventh release of their most acclaimed sparkling rosé wine. Made with 92% Pinot Noir and 8% of Pinot Meunier picked at the end of a cool and challenging season. The grapes were from the ripest plots across their two sites picked around the end of the third week of October. Two thirds of the grapes were crushed and destemmed and soaked for two hours prior to pressing to obtain the light 'salmon pink' colour before fermentation in stainless steel tanks. One third of the grapes were whole bunch pressed with the base wine (using only the Cuvée) fermented and aged in used oak barrels. Both batches went through malolactic fermentation. It has been matured on the lees for over 30 months.

Displaying a very pale pink colour this rosé sparkling wine boasts a rich nose of ripe summer strawberries with a palate that begins with luxurious flavours of creamy red apple, leading to bright cranberry fruit and a fresh strawberry finish. This wine would go down beautifully with a mackerel paté with blinis or with a good old fashioned Eton mess!

This wine has won Gold medal in 2021 International Wine Competition (IWC) (2015), Gold medal and Trophy Winner for the best English Sparkling Rosé 2019 (IWC) (2014) and Decanter Silver Wine Award in 2019, 2020 and 2022 (DWWA) - 94 points (2014, 2015 and 2018)

XV anniversary Blanc de Blanc (limited edition): The grapes for this wine (100% Chardonnay) were crushed and destemmed before fermenting. Part of the wine was fermented and aged in used oak barrels with the remainder in stainless steel tanks. Both batches went through malolactic fermentation. It was bottled for secondary fermentation in July 2016 and has matured on lees for 6 years. The wine is dry yet the aromas are reminiscent of baked apples and lemon peel, it's a good wine to drink with food and it will naturally match most fish dishes, and especially those prepared with a creamy sauce or with a hint of spice.

Still Rosé: Using their best Pinot Noir grapes, this is a pale pink dry rosé wine that is balanced and poised. Boasting rich aromas of wild strawberries which continues on the front palate, giving way to summer berry fruits and dried herbs with a juicy red apple finish. Bottled in March 2024, the wine offers summer berry fruit flavours and a dry, zesty finish. The Pinot Noir grapes came from the ripest corner of our Monkshatch vineyard, along with their Pinot and 2011 plots at Greyfriars. The grapes were soaked for 12 hours prior to pressing with none of the juice going through malolactic fermentation to preserve the fruit and maintain acidity. All the juice was fermented in stainless steel tanks. There was an addition of 10% reserve wine from their Pinot Noir Solera to give the wine additional complexity. Bottled in March 2024.

Still Sauvignon Blanc: This is the sixth release of a Still Sauvignon Blanc at Greyfriars. It is an intense, dry and aromatic white wine, with an elegant bouquet expressing a mix of elderflower, gooseberry and greengage. Fresh and zippy with ripe gooseberry fruit on the palate leading to a delicately herbaceous finish reminiscent of fresh garden peas.