

PRIORS DEAN VINEYARD

FINE ENGLISH WINE

www.priorsdeanvineyard.co.uk

Information and sales.

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NEWSLETTER CHRISTMAS 2015

Competition success

The Wessex Vineyards Association annual competition is held in November each year and this time we entered two wines. **Our Classic Dry 2013 gained a Bronze Award and the 2014 Beech Hanger Gold Medium Dry a Silver.** This is a prestige competition with Judges including 3 Masters of Wine and there were 42 entries with wine of all types from very dry to sparkling. The Judges do a blind tasting, and award marks which are averaged out to give the award. Only 4 wines were awarded Silver, so ours is obviously a really good product and many thanks to Emma and the team at Hattingley Valley Winery for this. The only Gold award and the Cup went to Exton Park for a Rose Sparkling.

The judges' comments seem very favourable, For the Bronze Medal winning 2013 Classic Dry they are; -"Very light aromas of dried fruit and cox apple: Palate juicy and zesty: Hint of spice – white pepper: Well balanced, lacks length."

The comments on the Silver Medal 2014 Beech Hanger Gold are –"Zesty, rounded, yellow fruit aromas: Rich palate profile with some sweetness: Good fruit quality, balanced: Residual sugar works well with good fruit quality."

Our sparkling wine

As many of you know we had such a surplus of the Seyval grapes in 2013 that our winemaker Emma suggested we had this made into a sparkling wine. Only having dealt in still wine all these years I had very little idea of the process and thought it would be ready about now. However it seems that for optimum quality it needs three years. The process used is exactly the same as for Champagne, but because of a French embargo we cannot use that term. Incidentally our soil is also similar to that in Champagne and the result, when we get it, should be pretty good. I am hoping now it will be ready in the summer.

This year's crop

It started off very well with no frost and a bright and breezy flowering time. This is essential as the baby berry buds are covered with a cap and this has to come off to reveal the flowers and let fertilization take place. If the weather is cold and damp the caps stay stuck on and nothing can happen.

This year all went well, and the vines set a full crop. Then the weather changed and became wet and cold. Our spray routine kept the mildew at bay, but the lack of sun meant they never really got very sweet. This can be compensated for during wine making by adding sugar but natural sweetness is better

However the total of the two pickings was two and a half tonnes, which should make a good few bottles.

Grape picking

This is always a fraught time. We have to sample the berries and decide whether they can be left to get riper, or if we do so will they go over and the rot set in. Then we have to contact the winery, book a van and notify the pickers. And all this depends on getting a fine day. This year we decided the time had come but the forecast indicated the only reasonable day would be the Thursday. But this was the one day Sid our tractor and van driver was doubtful about; he had to take his wife Sue to Basingstoke hospital for a check up after her recent operation. Eventually he decided that as Sue's appointment was early he could leave us to make a start and get over later. For those who don't know the procedure the vineyard is down a rough track and the van has to park at the top, and the crates full of grapes taken up to it on the tractor. With this settled I rang the van hire company we normally use, Alton Van Hire only to be told that they had nothing at all available. I was resigned to putting it off for a week, but after much telephoning, Sid managed to find a van at Basingstoke, and from then on all went well.

The Seyval grapes ripen later than the others so need a second picking two to three weeks later. This time the weather forecast was the problem. Usually at this time of year a succession of depressions line up to come over, but there are gaps between them, it usually question of spotting them. This time some complex weather pattern was stuck over us and none of the forecast sites seemed to have any definite idea of what was to happen. I usually use the Met Office site, but this seemed to alter every hour. The trouble was we really needed to get the crop in. I spent the weekend dithering between Tuesday Wednesday and Thursday, then on Monday I rang the Van Hire and found they only had large vehicles available except for Wednesday when there was a small Transit. This made up my mind and started everything going for Wednesday, although there was no definite news of a fine day. I need not have worried, the fates were kind, the sun shone and we had enough people in spite of the short notice.

Work parties

None of this success would be possible without our volunteers. Jim and I are feeling our age and could not cope without you, particularly with winter and summer pruning. Anyone that would like to help would be very welcome.

For those who don't know, volunteers meet on occasional Sunday mornings to help out for a few hours. No money is involved, but free bottles of Priors Dean wine are available, and you can have use of the vineyard whenever you want, say for family picnics or barbecues. The first working parties for 2016 will be on **Sunday January 3rd and Sunday January 16th.**

We start about 9.30 and go on until lunchtime with a coffee break. It is a help if you could let me know if you are coming, but otherwise just turn up. Bring secateurs if possible. Of course this depends on the weather as the road to the farm can be impossible if there is any snow. Please phone for information if any doubt.

Wine sales

As you can see our wine is of really good quality and makes an ideal present and a talking point for your guests.

The 2013 Classic Dry is light, crisp and refreshing, ideal as an aperitif. The 2014 Beech Hanger Gold is classed as Medium Dry and is a bit sweeter, it has a bit more body and suitable as a table wine.

Both wines are available from us @£8, 50 per bottle; case of 12 bottles £100.00. Local delivery free, minimum order 6 bottles.

Durleighmarsh Farm Shop, Rogate, Petersfield

Other stockists East Tisted Post Office Stores
Selborne Post Office Stores

A Merry Christmas and a prosperous New Year to you all

Pam and Jim