Domaine Evremond

GENESIS

Domaine Evremond is an English sparkling wine estate in Chilham, Kent, that was founded by two longstanding friends, Pierre-Emmanuel Taittinger and Patrick McGrath MW. The property is named after Charles de Saint-Évremond, an exiled French poet at the court of Charles II and the first ambassador of champagne in England. Comprising 125 hectares of land, including 60 hectares of vineyards, and a state-of-the-art winery, Domaine Evremond realises Pierre-Emmanuel and Patrick's dream of creating an outstanding English sparkling wine.

Champagne Taittinger is the majority shareholder, along with Hatch Mansfield and smaller private shareholders.

THE ESTATE

Kent is a spiritual home for the Taittinger family: as Mayor of Reims, Pierre-Emmanuel's father, Jean Taittinger, twinned the French city with Canterbury over 45 years ago.

Known as The Garden of England for its fertility, Kent is the UK county with the most annual sunlight hours. The Kentish terroir – its soil, microclimate, and topography – is very similar to that of Champagne, and has already proven to be an excellent area to grow Chardonnay, Pinot Noir and Pinot Meunier.

Pierre-Emmanuel and Patrick found a site in Chilham that had the perfect combination of deep, free-draining chalk soils, south-facing slopes, and an ideal altitude some 50 to 90 metres above sea level.

Domaine Evremond is proud of its Kentish roots and hopes to play a key part in building the reputation of this viticultural region.

THE VINEYARDS

The viticulture is managed by Christelle Rinville, Taittinger's Vineyard Director, working closely alongside Mark Gaskain, who has local and extensive knowledge of the land, the climate, and its idiosyncrasies.

This project has required a formidable sharing of knowledge between the Taittinger team and local expertise on the ground. If the estate's terroir is defined by its soil, climate, and exposure, the role of people cannot be overstated. The soils, an extension of the Paris Basin, were familiar to the Taittinger team, but Chilham's maritime influence - located less than 15 kilometres from the sea - is very different to Champagne's continental climate.

Christelle Rinville, Taittinger's Vineyard Director, and her team brought a wealth of viticultural experience, for example in the choice of plant material, sustainable practices, and harvesting. Seamless communication has been crucial to get the best out of this unique land, thanks to the local expertise of the Gaskain family, who owned the orchards on which the first 20 hectares of vines were planted in 2017.

The past seven years are only the start of a journey of working and learning together.

THE WINERY

Following two years of extensive surveys and submissions to Ashford Borough Council, Domaine Evremond received planning approval to build the winery and Cellar Door. Being located in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, consideration was given to factors such as topography, landscape, ecology and heritage.

All production processes will take place in the winery - from winemaking and bottling to storage and disgorgement (it can hold up to 1.5 million bottles). The winery is two-thirds underground, enabling a naturally gravity-led winemaking process. This not only protects the quality of the wine, but also minimises the winery's visual impact on the countryside. Additionally, this provides naturally cool conditions that limit energy use and mimic those at Champagne Taittinger, whose wine is matured in underground chalk cellars.

The building has been designed to the highest sustainable credentials through the BREEAM (Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Methodology) assessment process.

The project is a genuine Anglo-French collaboration, and will continue to be so. The winery was designed by Giovanni Pace, a French architect, alongside a British co-ordinating architect. It was built by a British company, based on the technical design of a French expert who has designed many French wineries.

THE WINE

Champagne Taittinger's Chef de Cave, Alexandre Ponnavoy, is responsible for the winemaking.

The First Edition of Domaine Evremond Classic Cuvée comprises 55% Pinot Noir, 35% Chardonnay and 10% Pinot Meunier, with a dosage of 7g/L. The wine is fermented and matured entirely in stainless vats, and undergoes malolactic fermentation. The base vintage is 2020 (80%) alongside 20% from 2019. The blend's proportions will be similar for the first few releases, with the percentage of Chardonnay increasing as the estate's newer Chardonnay plots reach maturity.

The aim is to produce 300,000 bottles annually, which will be achieved once the newest vineyards mature and are added to the blend. The inaugural release will see around 100,000 bottles enter the market.

Creating the First Edition was a lengthy process. The project was launched in 2015 and the first vineyards were planted in 2017. Following a small inaugural harvest in 2019, 2020 brought a more bountiful crop. This wine was blended and bottled in the spring of 2021 and has spent over three years gently maturing on its lees. The disgorgement for the First Edition took place at the end of August, and the wine will be officially released for sale in spring 2025. It will be available in the UK's leading restaurants, hotels, and from wine merchants and retailers, as well as in key international markets.

Today, the estate is delighted to be offering an exclusive preview of Classic Cuvée's First Edition, coinciding with the winery's opening.

SUSTAINABILITY

Sustainability is a major focus at Domaine Evremond, one that has informed the design of the winery, planting of the vineyards and work in the cellar. The estate is dedicated to carefully measuring the impact of its eco-conscious efforts, and is currently recording a range of metrics as the team works towards the Sustainable Wines of Great Britain (SWGB) certification.

The winery itself was designed to consume as little energy as possible, having the smallest footprint possible on the surrounding landscape and wildflife. In addition to being largely subterranean, the building's design guards against light seepage, minimising light pollution, while lighting will turn off automatically when the site is not in use. A living green roof sits atop the winery.

Furthermore, a celebrated landscape architect, Marian Boswall, was commissioned with the brief of enhancing the estate's biodiversity and sustainability. The eight hectares around the vineyard and the winery have been designed to provide a haven for wildlife, including through the retention and replanting of hedgerows, the creation of two ponds, and a wildflower meadow. Since the large pond - fed by rainwater harvested and filtered through the winery's planted roof - was dug, swallows, dragonflies and redstarts have returned to the site.

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