

# Ep 151: The English Wine Movement with Henry Jeffreys, author of Vines in a cold climate (Part 1)



**Janina Doyle 00:00:07** Welcome to Eat Sleep Wine Repeat, a podcast for all you wine lovers, who, if you're like me, just cannot get enough of the good stuff. I'm Janina Doyle, your host, brand ambassador, wine educator, and sommelier. Stick with me as we dive deeper into this ever evolving wonderful world of wine. And wherever you are listening to this, cheers to you!

Hello, wine friends and welcome back to another episode. Now I am so keen to show the next two episodes with you. I've had the absolute pleasure to talk with Henry Jeffreys, who is not just a phenomenal writer but a wonderful speaker as well.

He's been on BBC Radio Four and Five. He was the wine critic for The Lady. He's been in The Spectator and The Guardian. Now, last year, Fortnum and Mason awarded him Drinks Writer of the Year and you can find some of his books such as 'The Home Bar,' 'The Cocktail Dictionary.'

However, I will be picking Henry's brains about his latest book released called 'Vines in a Cold Climate,' which was released this year. You can get it from Amazon. I being very lazy or, no, okay wait, 'Busy', decided to download it as an audio book. And it's read by Henry himself. Now this book is about the people behind the English wine revolution. And it is absolutely fascinating.

Now I appreciate for those of you living in the UK, this is going to be far more relevant because we can access all these wines that are mentioned. However, the way in which the book is written there is something in this book for everyone.

There's chapters looking at the different sparkling wine styles of the world. There's a chapter on organics, which really dives deep into the pros, the cons, what's right, what's wrong, allowing you to make up your own opinion. This talk on global warming and how it's affecting vineyards and a whole chapter on tourist attractions for those of you abroad, coming to London and wanting to perhaps go and visit somebody.

Now in this specific episode mentioned, there will be masters of wine and instrumental winemakers that have really helped the English wine industry. I promise you some fantastic gossip about Pierre-Emmanuel Taittinger. So, we are going across to Champagne, and talking of Champagne. It's really interesting comparing the climate, the volume, the yields between England and Champagne. So, we'll be discussing that a little bit more.

You will learn about the evolution of wines in England. Henry in the book talks about a specific old formula that was just applied to cool climate wines when they were made in the winery, which we will

discuss and I found fascinating. We'll be going down the route of talking about Tibetan singing bowls in a winery. We cover it all in part one.

Now, before we go to the episode, as you know, I have received the immense support of [Wickhams Wine](#) this season as they sponsor all of the episodes. So, I'm really happy to be able to share the news that for the third year in a row, they've been shortlisted by the Decanter Retailer Awards for best online retailer and best England and Wales Specialist.

Now, when you are listening to this, the results will already be out. But I don't know what they are yet. So, in the following episode, I will let you know if they have won. But I'm genuinely super happy that they've even had this recognition yet again. And if you want to go over to their website, the website link is in the show notes. And if you use the code, EatSleep10, you're gonna get yourself 10% off on your first order. But for now, pour yourself a glass ideally of English wine and prepare yourself for some wine stories, some wine facts and some behind the scenes wine gossip.

**Janina Doyle 00:04:26** I have to go to the first most important question, of course, why did you end up writing this wine book? You've obviously been in the wine trade and in publishing for years. But was there a moment that made you think, the world needs to know about English wine and the people behind it?

**Henry Jeffrey 00:04:46** The moment came actually when somebody phoned me up and said, "Do you want to write a book about wine?" I can remember the exact moment. It's a chap called Derek Wyatt, who is a publisher. My first thought was, "No!"

I thought Oz Clarke had written great books. I thought Stephen Skelton's books were brilliant. I thought the world doesn't really need another book about English wine. And then, I sort of thought about it a bit and just thought, how could I approach it differently?

Obviously, Oz and Stephen have their own distinct styles. They know far more about the subject than I ever will. But what can I bring to it? And I was very lucky. I went to a wine lunch that was put on by a Frenchman called Jérôme Moisten, who makes cosmetics out of leftover grape stuff.

**Janina Doyle 00:05:44** Oh, I like this!

**Henry Jeffreys 00:05:45** Yeah, he works with Adrian Pike from Westwell. I sat next to Adrian at this dinner, or lunch. And he was so full of stories. Most of them, totally scandalous and unprintable about people in the wine industry. I thought to myself, there's a story here. Because most of the time, all you hear about is everyone gets on brilliantly, isn't it? Great, bright future. I thought, well, that's one side of the story. But also there's kind of conflict, there's big personalities who don't get on. So, I thought I'd kind of approach it as if it was like Dallas, or maybe not quite Dallas, Howard's way sort of big personalities, argument conflict.

**Janina Doyle 00:06:31** I love it. I did. The way I was describing it to people was like, "No, this is like getting all the insider secrets. It's like a sophisticated gossip column."

**Henry Jeffreys 00:06:45** I can't compete with Oz and Stephen on the wine and stuff, so I just thought, make the wine secondary and make it about the people. And as soon as I thought, make it about the people, then I wouldn't say the book fell into place, because it was bloody hard work trying to condense

all of it. But I then knew what I had to do, which was just to go for the big stories, and then see how the book worked once I had the stories.

**Janina Doyle 00:07:10** Amazing that was the idea. Was there something that was far more challenging for you, when you were writing this book? Were there any surprises on the way?

**Henry Jeffreys 00:07:20** I mean, there were a lot of surprises on the way. I think we can sort of go into that. But I think the biggest challenge was just like, "Who do I include? And who do I not include?"

Looking at the early days, there aren't that many producers who were going in the 70s, who are still going so you've got to have Peter Hall, you've got to have Biddenden. You've got to get Stephen Skelton in there. But when it got to like the present day, I mean, there's five wineries in London all making wine, I can't put them all in.

So, that was really, really hard deciding who to put in and who to leave out. And in the end, it was just sort of like, what do these producers represent? So, you've got some kind of money man, you've got some big businesses, you've got some Mavericks, you've got some urban wineries.

Once I had a couple of voices for each sort of segment of the industry, and enough good stories, then I kind of almost deliberately put my hands over my ears and was like, "I'm not gonna listen to anymore," because there's too much going on..

**Janina Doyle 00:08:23** Yeah, I mean, you mentioned there were so many stories. I wonder whether some didn't make the cut. What were some of the most memorable or did you have some pretty unique wine related experiences on this journey that you can kind of share with us?

**Henry Jeffreys 00:08:40** Some of the stories are literally like sitting down with Owen Elias from Balfour, who you know very well.

**Janina Doyle 00:08:48** Yeah, very well.

**Henry Jeffreys 00:08:49** It was just such an experience of him talking about the early days of Chapel Down. And in the end, there was just stuff where he described a certain producer in a certain way, which I'm not going to say. I can't put that in because it's libelous but at the end, what he said was so entertaining describing working with like crooks and charlatans and things, which was just brilliant.

After the book came out all this stuff about Pierre-Emmanuel Taittinger, who's involved with Domaine Evremond in Kent came out about his Champagne fueled sex parties and things like that.

**Janina Doyle 00:09:26** Hang on a minute! That wasn't in the book was it? Did I miss that?

**Henry Jeffreys 00:09:29** I missed that. That story broke basically just as the book was published, and I was like, "Ah, if only I could have got that in!

**Janina Doyle 00:09:36** How did I miss that? Hang on!

**Henry Jeffreys 00:09:40** It was his ex-mistress who was stalking him and there was a set of restraining orders. Just look it up here Pierre-Emanuel Taittinger. I remember meeting him at the launch for the planting for Domaine Evremond.

So, this is Taittinger's joint venture very near me in Faversham. He gave this tremendous speech and you could see he was one of those French men with a twinkle in his eye and eye for the ladies. So, I described him in the book as clearly a bit of a rogue, but I couldn't have even comprehended how much of a rogue.

**Janina Doyle 00:10:17** But you could smell it.

**Henry Jeffreys 00:10:19** Yeah, exactly. I missed that one.

**Janina Doyle 00:10:23** That's a shame.

**Henry Jeffreys 00:10:24** That's a shame. But then unusual stories, it was really funny going down to Oastbrooke. Do you know Oastbrooke?

**Janina Doyle 00:10:29** I do. I mean, yes, America is definitely a character, is she not? She's very memorable.

**Henry Jeffreys 00:10:36** She is Brazilian. Her name is America Brewer. She was born on the 4th of July, which is why she called America. I met her and her husband and they farm a very small plot near sort of on the Kent Sussex border.

They were talking to me, and then they produced this thing. It's called a Tibetan Singing Bowl. It's made of brass and you put it on your head, and they spin it, and then they hit it with a hammer. And you get all this kind of... Not very hard. Not with a sledgehammer. You know, gently. And then you get all this weird sort of hypnotic noises and stuff. This was spinning in my head, all these weird noises while they were trying to explain to me their journey into wine. So that was dead... And also they have a hobbit house on the property.

So, the whole thing was like being in a dream, I just sort of turned up. And then I had a bowl on my head. And then there was a hobbit house. And then we were having some wine. And the whole thing was just very, very Alice in Wonderland.

**Janina Doyle 00:11:39** I mean, I can vouch for that, because I've been down to that estate. And of course, they live on the estate and they've got a swimming pool, which you basically drive past to get to the actual winery part. It's kind of crazy. You do feel on a sunny day that you could be in Brazil. It's like she's brought Brazil to the Kent Sussex countryside, which is really bizarre. And yeah, you'll see her driving around on her tractor in the highest of heels thinking, "What the hell are you doing?" And if you meet her, she'll be like, "What? It's my tractor. I can do what I want."

**Henry Jeffreys 00:12:15** When you sort of tell the story like that, it makes them seem like they're not serious, but you taste the wines and they are deadly serious. The still wines, their Pinot Blanc, I think is one of the best still wines in England. But if you kind of sort of saw them on Instagram, you just think who are these crazy people.

**Janina Doyle 00:12:31** I know. Isn't it wonderful? I think, people think that English wine is probably just so basic and so simple. People are not aware that we're even doing still wines. And it's like, honestly, like you said the characters, the people behind it or the excitement – there is so much to talk about. You've actually really encapsulated that in your book. Oh my god, that is so funny! I will keep that

in mind. Tibetan bowls bring the spiritual experience to wine. I love it. Do you think that when you tasted the wine, it tasted better because of the tuning of the Tibetan bowls?

**Henry Jeffreys 00:13:07** Actually, the bowl was after the wine. So maybe I should have done it before and after.

**Janina Doyle 00:13:12** Now, that is something that could be an interesting experiment, could it not, tasting wine and then tasting it after having done one of these tuning and getting the frequency? There has to be something with it. If you're changing the frequency of the energy around you, surely your taste buds would be different.

**Henry Jeffreys 00:13:31** It's very biodynamic, isn't it? I imagined that thing that people were heavily into biodynamics would do.

**Janina Doyle 00:13:38** Well, I'm gonna investigate that and then I'll get back to you. Actually I just want to hear some of your own personal stories, because actually, you touched on them in the book, which I think is bizarre. You're a wine writer, and you were in Germany on the steep slopes of Mosel, you didn't really talk about how you felt about this, from 6am in the morning, but kind of dragged onto the slopes to pick grapes to, basically midday, which for anyone who doesn't know picking grapes is nowhere near as romantic as it seems. After half an hour, you're exhausted, your back aches and you want to drink some wine. I mean, what was it like actually picking for that amount of time on the steep slopes of Mosel?

**Henry Jeffreys 00:14:22** It was horrible actually. We weren't, in the itinerary. This was on a press trip to the Mosel to show off their famous steep slopes. And on the itinerary was sort of to see how the grapes are harvested. So, I thought we'd be there and we'd watch the grapes be harvested for 10 minutes, go off and try some wine. Instead, we were picked up in a van at six in the morning, freezing cold October day, damp and misty, driven to the steep slopes, then given some secateurs and told to get working.

**Janina Doyle 00:14:53** It's so mean.

**Henry Jeffreys 00:14:54** We woke up at six but we started at 6:30 - 7 o'clock. And then, we picked for hours and hours and hours until 12 - 12:30. And then we went to have some lunch, and it was cold. It was damp. And then you're on the slopes. I don't know if that is quite 45 degrees, but they're bloody dangerous. I mean, if you slipped, you could fall all the way down to the bottom into the river. So, one of the people on the trip was this Canadian wine writer who was in his 60s and he was not looking very happy at all. I think the whole press trip was basically a way to get free labour out of journalists because they were struggling to get pickers from Romania and Bulgaria because they're so in demand. So, they're like, "We'll get these Canadian journalists to help out." We put in a full mornings work.

**Janina Doyle 00:15:48** Well, I hope you get a bottle of that wine from the exact venue that you picked. At the very least.

**Henry Jeffreys 00:15:54** We did get a very good lunch but no, we didn't get a bottle of wine, sadly.

**Janina Doyle 00:15:58** Well, anybody who's not in the wine industry listening to this, trying to find pickers, I think, all over the world, it's just a constant problem. I mean, we certainly have that in England. You touch on that in the book. I think hence why you talked about your own personal experience being

abused. You think you're going to be flown, have a wonderful experience, sit down, go through beautiful tastings. But yeah, a bit more labour than expected her.

**Henry Jeffreys 00:16:23** Exactly. Making journalists work.

**Janina Doyle 00:16:26** How dare they? Bring it back to English wines, what were the first few English wines that you've ever tried? And I guess, your thoughts?

**Henry Jeffreys 00:16:38** I think the first one I ever had was at a wedding in Suffolk. It sort of was in the 1999-2000s. And it really wasn't very good. It was sort of off-dry, some sweet, sugary, but with this acidity, like nothing else I'd ever tasted. It sort of makes your whole mouth closed down.

My father used to sometimes bring back English wines, because he lived in Buckinghamshire. He'd go off for walks and he'd go and visit some little vineyard and he'd buy some wine. It was generally pretty awful.

And so, it wasn't really until 2009-2010 that I started having English sparkling wines that were quite good. I think I had my first Ridgeview or something in '07 '08. And they were quite good, not earth shattering, but very, very good quality. But I've always been quite sceptical about the still ones.

So, it took me a long time to find English still wines that I actually really appreciated. I think they've gotten exponentially better. Even in the last three years. I think they just get better and better every year, as people learn how to grow the grapes better and how to harvest them riper and then how to deal with that acidity. There are certain techniques that producers use.

But I wasn't a fan. And I think that shows in the book. I didn't come into the industry as someone who is in love with it. I'm very sceptical about English wine. So, when I do love an English wine, it generally tends to be really, really good.

**Janina Doyle 00:18:20** Well, in that case, because I think you touch on the book, you say in the 1970s, basically, which is before, I haven't even started drinking wine until, for me, I started drinking wine about 15 years ago. So, definitely, I have no stories from the past of English wines.

But you were saying in the book that basically in the 1970s, you just needed to add grape juice and you could reach 5, you know, 10 grams of residual sugar per litre because nothing was ever bone dry, I guess because everyone was just trying to deal with that crazy amount of acidity, right?

**Henry Jeffreys 00:18:58** I think Peter Hall was trying to make bone dry wines. I never tried them but I think that was his thing. He had Seyval Blanc and Müller-Thurgau. And he wanted to have no residual sugar.

But most other producers were adding what the Germans called Süss Reserve, which I think was the way of tempering that really hard acidity. I haven't actually tried these, obviously, nor reviewed the 70s and 80s wines. But this is what from reading Stephen Skelton and talking to various producers that most of them had grape juice added, otherwise they would have been undrinkable.

**Janina Doyle 00:19:35** Well, one of my takeaways from the book, we will hardly be discussing anything as there's so much in this book, but you mentioned Peter Hall. And I wrote down the formula

that you spoke about because the problem was that people didn't really know how to make wine in England. And you talk about how he was working with – what was the winemaker?

**Henry Jeffreys 00:20:00** Karl Heinz Johner.

**Janina Doyle 00:20:01** Karl Heinz Johner. And he ended up getting sued by Peter Hall for completely destroying the first wine, right?

**Henry Jeffreys 00:20:12** Yeah. But I'm not sure if he was quite sued but he demanded payment from Lamberhurst, the vineyard where the wines were made for the payment of the wine for mucking up the wine.

Basically, what Karl Heinz Johner had done, and I think, he's gone on to become one of the most respected figures in English and later German wine. But I think he was very, very new. He was just out of Geisenheim. He was given some grapes by Peter Hall. I think they were unusually good quality grapes. And he'd applied some sort of formulaic techniques to it, assuming that the grapes wouldn't be right.

So, he diluted them to bring down the acidity, he added sugar to bring up the alcohol. I think he added citric acid. Basically, he just did all this stuff to the grapes that didn't need it, and ended up as Peter Hall put it, "Completely goofing it up."

And then Peter Hall had a sort of legal fight on his hands. And eventually, a year or two later, got some money out of Lamberhurst, the producer, where the wines are made. But apparently, there were no hard feelings. And Karl Heinz Johner, I should add, has gone on to become a very well-respected figure so we won't...

**Janina Doyle 00:21:29** We won't dwell!

**Henry Jeffreys 00:21:29** We won't dwell on this one mishap!

**Janina Doyle 00:21:31** Well, anyway, I just think that for me that just stuck out in my head, it's so cool to really know all the behind the scenes, where did we come from, because many people will be listening to this as well don't live in England who are perhaps not as interested in English wine because they can't get their hands on it as easily as we can, but I would imagine that this is true for many, many wine regions and wine countries that have perhaps only just taken off in the last 20, 30, 40 years as well. So, it's just fascinating, just to kind of have that better understanding of the accidents, the evolution that can happen in the wine world. So, I thought that was brilliant.

**Henry Jeffreys 00:22:08** Well, this is the thing that nobody knew what they were doing, because it was new. Whereas if you go to the Loire, they have all these vintages and they go, this is what we do in a vintage like this. This is what we're doing with a vintage like that. Even in Australia, they'd been making wine for a hell of a long time in Australia. But in England, there were no records. There was no one to talk to so it was people just kind of making it up or trying to base it on what happens in Germany. Germany has a very, very different climate. It's much, much warmer. They have much longer summers. So, you can't blame these people for getting it wrong because there was no there was no precedent.

**Janina Doyle 00:22:45** Well, it's funny as well, that you said about how we had no idea what we were doing. One of the other things you talked about, Steven Skelton gets mentioned a lot because he is a very important person to know about considering the evolution of the English wine movement. But

apparently, people were really upset with him and considered him cheating because he actually had a viticulture degree.

**Henry Jeffreys 00:23:09** Yes, he won some award. And then, the person from the UKVA, the United Kingdom Viticultural Association phoned up and said, "Skelton, you've won this award, but I say it's not cricket you, you know going off to Germany and learning how to do it properly."

That was the attitude of the time. It was an amateur industry and people like Skelton, Hall, they were the sort of Mavericks because they were actually going, Look, we're going to do this properly, we're gonna make money out of it. Everyone else before them, it was a retirement project.

**Janina Doyle 00:23:42** Fascinating. I suppose it's worth mentioning as everyone is listening, we keep on saying or you keep on talking about Peter Hall. That is the winery, Breaky Bottom, which actually has been going for a long time now. So, if anyone wants to try and get hold of a Breaky Bottom Wine...

**Henry Jeffreys 00:23:58** Nowadays, they are absolutely wonderful. And if you can get one of his sparkling Seyval Blanc, especially the old vintage, there's nothing like them. They're absolutely extraordinary.

**Janina Doyle 00:24:07** And he's got quite a few wines. I don't know if there's Seyval Blanc in Waitrose, but they do have quite a few wines in Waitrose. Actually, anyone who wants to try a Breaky Bottom Wine, it's quite easy to at least find a few of his wines. Whether several Blanc is in there, I don't know.

Now let's talk about another producer, who of course started all the Nyetimber effects. If it wasn't for them planting, who knows where we may be. But I know that you have tasted the Nyetimber Blanc de Blanc 1992, which I believe was the very, very first vintage, right?

**Henry Jeffreys 00:24:45** It was the very first commercial vintage. Apparently, they made a very small vintage in '91 just to check. And funnily enough, I tried it with Jérôme Moisten, who is this peculiar Frenchman who collects English wine and lives in Maidstone.

He brought out a bottle in 2021 from his collection. I don't know when it had been disgorged, but I think a while back, and it was absolutely extraordinary, just so fresh, still loads of fizz, incredibly long sort of hazelnuts, a lot like a sort of sparkling white burgundy. If anyone's ever had an aged white burgundy. It had those kinds of flavours, but still so fresh. It hadn't got brown or anything. It was still very fizzy. There were no Sherry notes. It was really, absolutely impeccable. One of the best sparkling wines I've had. That was their first vintage, which was just incredible, and just that vision.

So, you have Sandy and Stuart Moss, who are two Americans from Chicago, made lots of money selling dental equipment, and they came to England and they had this crazy idea to start making sparkling wine to take on Champagne. And what was sort of so interesting about the way that they did it is that people had made sparkling wine in England before. And people had even made sparkling wine with Chardonnay and Pinot Noir. But what they were prepared to do was to sit on it for three years until it was ready. No one else would have had the money to do that. They would have wine and they'd sell it as quickly as possible as soon as it had got some fizz in it.

Whereas, Stuart, I was very, very lucky because he died while I was researching the book, but I spoke to him at length down the line from California, where they now live or where we live before he died.



He told me all about it. He just said that he wanted it to be absolutely right. So, the vintage was '92 and they didn't release it until 1996, when he deemed it ready to drink. So, that kind of level of perfectionism backed up by lots of money has never been seen before. And totally changed the playing field for English wine. Before that, it was...

**Janina Doyle 00:27:02** There weren't many varieties.

**Henry Jeffreys 00:27:03** Yeah, and after that, it was like, "Hang on! You can make wines that are as good as Champagne." I don't think you can really overstate how important they are to the story.

**Janina Doyle 00:27:17** Well, it's funny you also talk about Sandy Moss, and also Mike Roberts, who was very integral behind Ridgeview. The two of them visited Champagne. And the Champenoise thought it was really funny that the English were thinking about making sparkling wine. They had no idea.

**Henry Jeffreys 00:27:37** Both of them were in the first intake of Plumpton college. Plumpton College is the other part of the jigsaw of how English wine became serious. It's an agricultural college near Brighton and it started a wine programme under Chris Foss who was from Bordeaux, in the late 80s. In the first year, they had Sandy Ross from Nyetimber. And Mike Roberts, who would go on to found Ridgeview, both nearby. They went on a field trip to Champagne to learn about how they do it in Champagne. And apparently the Champenoise thought that it was the funniest thing that these two people could come over from England. And 30 years later, Taittinger, and Pommery would both be making wine in England. It was inconceivable at the time that that would be happening.

**Janina Doyle 00:28:26** I know. It's fascinating. It's brilliant because that really helps me obviously as you know, working for Balfour, we're still trying to prove to people that English sparkling wine is as good as Champagne. It's like, look, when the Champagne houses are here that says something loud and clear. Yes, I'm very excited when the first vintage of Domaine Evremond by Taittinger comes out, which I think is going to be next year, 2024.

**Henry Jeffreys 00:28:54** Yeah, I think they're aiming for next year. So that's going to be a huge story. I have no doubt with the people who are involved, that the wine is going to be anything less than absolutely first rate.

**Janina Doyle 00:29:05** Have you taken part in blind tastings of our English wine versus the rest of the world? I say that, I'm presuming more English sparkling wine versus Champagne. Have you taken part in a few?

**Henry Jeffreys 00:29:18** I've done it once. It was a very, very interesting experience because basically it shows how terrible I am at it or how good English wine is. I was there and I tried one. We tasted all these wines and I was sort of going, "Oh, this one's definitely English." And then I tried one I was like, "Well, yeah, obviously this one is so French." I thought it was Roederer or something. I thought it was so rich and biscuity. I was thinking, this is like really good Grande Marques Champagne. And it was Westwell non vintage from Kent.

**Janina Doyle 00:29:50** Oh wow. Yeah!

**Henry Jeffreys 00:29:51** So, there we go. I have done it. It's a very interesting experience because it shows just how good English wine is and how they do taste pretty similar, a really good Champagne and a good English wine.

**Janina Doyle 00:30:03** That's actually something that you do mention. There's loads of stories, as I already mentioned, great gossip columns with sophistication. That is what this book is. But there's a lot of takeaways with some numbers, which is really interesting.

For me, I wrote these down because I wouldn't remember them. Or that maybe I should test you and see if you do. But as an example, land price per acre, I thought that was fascinating, we're still at about £15 to 25,000 per acre compared to £500,000.

**Henry Jeffreys 00:30:38** Champagne has some of the most expensive vineyard prices in the world.

**Janina Doyle 00:30:45** When people are saying as well, that they think English wine is so expensive, they're expecting it to be so cheap. For me, I'm thinking, well, actually, that's bloody good value, to be honest, for our climate, it's not exactly very reliable, for the fact that we obviously pay high wages in comparison to the rest of the world. I think that our pricing point is actually pretty good. Tell me what you're gonna say.

**Henry Jeffreys 00:31:10** But also our yields are low. Our yields are 2/3 - half of really good vineyards in Champagne. It's because even though we sort of compare it to Champagne, Champagne has a continental climate. It's a lot drier. It's a lot less changeable.

England is damp. We all know it's damp. And therefore, the big problem is dealing with mildew, dealing with botrytis, all that kind of stuff. Especially in a year, like this year, where there's been such a wet summer, it's a real struggle to get a good yield. And that's never gonna go away. I think the climate will get warmer but it's always going to be damp because we're surrounded by the sea.

**Janina Doyle 00:31:53** We are an island. We forget that. We do have a similar climate. But yeah, you really point out that we're maritime here, and they are more continental. It's really, really interesting that there is that slight difference.

The other thing as well, I thought in terms of numbers, which I thought was fascinating was that at the moment, bless us, in 2018, it ended up being right, it changed around the numbers, but I actually looked online, and apparently, officially, according to WineGB, we made 13 million bottles in 2018. And they made 300 million. We've got a long way to go, right?

**Henry Jeffreys 00:32:30** Exactly. I will love it. We're never gonna be that big and I don't think we should ever try and be that big. I think just aiming at the sort of mid to top range is the way to go. It's impossible to make really good cheap wine in England. And I do think we should try.

**Janina Doyle 00:32:47** Precisely. Actually, you do touch on as well, though, there are the Pét-nats, there are the Charmat method sparkling wines in England. So, of course, a very small percentage that literally have all of our sparkling wine, it accounts for about 2%.

But you go into detail on that as well, which I think is fascinating, so people can actually understand that there are different versions, there are things to try. It isn't all just the traditional method and it's not like a knockoff of Champagne. I think there's far more to explore than people might possibly realise.

**Henry Jeffreys 00:33:18** The Charmat method is really interesting. I did a talk at Rye recently. I asked people, obviously a very engaged wine loving audience if they're coming to a wine talk, and most of them didn't appreciate the difference between Charmat and Champagne method.

They didn't didn't know that there was a different method. And they didn't know that one was a lot more expensive than the other. But what they did know is that Prosecco tastes very different to Champagne and I have to pay a lot more for Champagne than for Prosecco.

So, the problem that English wine has is in communicating that one is one and the other is the other without getting into the kind of boring stuff about production methods that most people don't know about but they do appreciate the difference in tastes.

So, it's sort of a kind of potential challenge for the future. Though I think it's one that most producers do quite well, by having a bottle that looks very Champagne-esque. So, it looks like Champagne. It tastes like Champagne. And then, the Charmat ones or the Pét-nats, they're a little bit funkier and people are like, they don't taste like Champagne and don't look like Champagne. So, perhaps we'll muddle through with that.

**Janina Doyle 00:34:35** Well, I mean, I've been trying to let everyone know as well once they do understand if it says English sparkling wine, the three letters, it has to be the traditional method. Whereas actually the Charmat method, it will just say sparkling wine, and then it will probably say somewhere "Made in England."

But again, as you've just said, the marketing somehow that message needs to be brought to consumers. And considering we're still in that place where people don't even think that English sparkling wine is good. We need people to be behind it and then understand the difference.

That's true. If in doubt, if it's a funkier, funner, more colourful bottle, it's most likely a tank method. If it looks classic, it's the traditional method. I think that's a fair way to say it.

**Henry Jeffreys 00:35:20** It's how it works at the moment. We'll see how that one does. One to worry about it.

**Janina Doyle 00:35:26** That's tomorrow's problem! Do you have any other anecdotes or stories from your research and travelling around that didn't make the book that now you're thinking of, you know what? Maybe I should have put it in.

**Henry Jeffreys 00:35:40** It's just stuff that is potentially libelous. So, I actually can't tell you. It's just like someone will say, so and so treats his workers really, really badly and his vineyard manager has just left. Or so and so mucked up the harvest one year and was fired.

There was actually one that didn't go in the book because I didn't do it in time. Apparently, the winemaker at Rathfinny botched up a batch of sparkling wine. He didn't put enough dosage in some of them and the fizz didn't develop properly. There was a big story in the papers about him being fired for gross misconduct. So, that's on the record. I don't need to be liable. But that one didn't go in the book because I missed it. The book was pretty much done by the time that story came out. But yeah, I can't really say the ones that didn't go in because all the good all the ones that I could legally tell you about have gone in unless they broke. But there was so many stories. This is the annoying thing. There are so many stories of broke just as I was putting the book to bed. So, for example, Bolney in Sussex, they were bought by Freixenet, a Spanish, German, sparkling wine behemoth.

And I went to visit Sam Linter because his family owned it or did own it. I interviewed her and I said, "Will you be stepping down?" She said "Oh, no, I'm staying on for the long term. There's no way I'm not

going anywhere. It's money behind us, but nothing's going to change." And then just as I was about to press 'Send' in the book, an eBook came through saying, "Sam has left." So, there was an awful lot of that in the book where I just managed to get a footnote to say, "And then she left." But there were loads of other stories like that, where I just missed them.

**Janina Doyle 00:37:36** Well, it just goes to show the English wine industry is evolving and changing. It's very dynamic and you're just gonna have to write part two in a few years time, aren't you?

**Henry Jeffreys 00:37:47** Well, exactly. Think of Charlie Holland from Gusbourne. Just after the book came out, he left Gusbourne and is now working at the California wine company, Jackson Vineyards in Essex. I mean, that's huge news. I missed that one because the book was already done.

**Janina Doyle 00:38:03** And that is going to be very exciting. It was chatting with Charlie just the other day at the Wine GB Trade Tasting. And I said, "Well, you've done amazing things at Gusbourne. Gusbourne is winning award after award. Everyone knows these phenomenal wines." You've gone across the Jackson family vineyards and you haven't got any grapes yet. They're just planted. "What's happening?" He's like, "You know what? It's just a very exciting project." I guess, when you've got such a big family behind it, and I think he's probably going to be left to shape it or really grows that whole arm, the English arm. Who knows? We need another conversation in, it's gonna have to be what, six, seven years before we actually get to taste a wine he's made from their own grapes, but they will be making stuff, won't they from some grapes.

**Henry Jeffreys 00:38:58** Yeah, I think they're going to be buying some grapes or going to 'Defined' in Canterbury and getting some things made, so that to kind of build the brand. But the proper estate wines won't be out for a long time.

But you know, I won't say Charlie achieved everything he could with Gusbourne because I feel like Gusbourne, kind of the sky's the limit, but he had achieved a hell of a lot and was making among England's best sparkling wines. And I think it's a very, very good still wine and I think he thought, you know what? I want to try a new challenge. So I don't blame him at all. They're meant to be a great company to work for as well.

**Janina Doyle 00:39:32** I have also heard the same thing. So, there we go. Everybody that gets a big tick, we don't know about. We can't get the gossip out of Henry to tell us who the real bad guys are. The Gusbourne are good guys. Tick.

**Janina Doyle 00:39:48** So, we will be continuing this conversation again next week, we'll be looking at Piwi varieties, hybrid-Germanic grape varieties. We will be talking about how John Atkinson, who's a master of wine, thinks that we have our very own Petrus in Essex soils. Those of you that don't know about Chateau Petrus. This is a renowned French winery in Pomerol, in Bordeaux, and it's known for producing some of the world's most sought after and expensive merlot based red wines. So, you'll know far more about what that means on the next episode.

I will be putting Henry on the spot and asking him, Where is the number one place in England to go and visit? So, you definitely want to hear what his answer is. There's loads in part two, just as much as this episode.

I will close out today, of course, like usual with a wine quote. And I have a very simple one from Robert Louis Stevenson. He was a Scottish novelist. He was a poet. I thought I needed to find one from a writer to be true to this episode. And very simply, he said, "Wine is bottled poetry."

And it is literally so true. Wine and poetry can be subjective. Not everybody has the same tastes. Wine has all this complexity and layers as you allow the flavours and aromas to evolve. But equally with poetry, you can dig deep, and find extra meaning and emotion as you go and explore deeper. Both offer sensory pleasures. And there of course, is the connection and the sharing with other people.

And just as poetry dives into that personal and intimate emotion very often, so does wine. And it's my job to try and pull that out of each bottle of wine and transmit it to you. And I think Henry as well has done an epic job of doing just that.

So, that's it for today's episode. May you all have a successful week, savour the present, and drink in the beauty of each day. Don't forget, if you are enjoying these episodes, the best way to show your support is to leave a review on Apple podcast, specifically. Or the app that you're listening to because it makes the podcast more discoverable.

Take a screenshot if you're listening on your mobile phone and put that up on your Instagram story or share it somewhere on one of your social media platforms. Don't forget if you have any thoughts, comments, anything that you would like me to talk about, send me an email at [Janina@eatsleepwinerepeat.co.uk](mailto:Janina@eatsleepwinerepeat.co.uk). Or of course on Instagram. You can direct message me [@eatsleep\\_winerepeat](https://www.instagram.com/eatsleep_winerepeat).

And now, I shall get back to my glass of English sparkling wine, which I am going to tell you about on the beginning of next week's episode. So, raising my secret glass to you all. Until next week, cheers to you.