

Introducing Beaulieu 58 wine

A tunnel vision has led to a surprising method to make high-quality still English wine

FOOD AND DRINK 27 MAR 2025



There's a new English vigneron to be aware of – and (here's the twist), it doesn't make sparkling wine. Finally, a conversation about English wine that doesn't have to include the hackneyed old trope of "there was a blind tasting and even the French judges voted the English one better than champagne". In 2019, Beaulieu Vineyard on the estate of the same name, which had been unsuccessful when run by Lord Montagu's own team, was taken over by Sandy Booth. He is the boss of the New Forest Fruit Company, which cultivates strawberries and other soft fruit, as well as asparagus in polytunnels – just as these vines are grown.



If that sounds like a means to industrial plonk, you haven't heard the whole story. Booth is a pioneer of sustainable practices in tunnel farming – the vines, like his other crops, are grown without chemicals on a bed of coir (coconut fibre) in the aerated tunnel. The effect of this hi-tech but low-intervention method is to ripen the grapes early and protect from mildew (because of the circulating air) and other disease, without the use of chemicals – only the use of coir stops this wine being certified organic.



Now, the first wines under the name Beaulieu 58 (a reference to the year a vineyard was planted on this land) have been released. These 2023 vintages are all still wines – and they are unusual varieties for England: the white is a Gewürztraminer (£30) and the B58 Rosé (£15) is made from Swiss grapes Pinotín and Cabernet Jura, the latter also included in the B58 Red blend (£35). The reason for this Helvetic influence is that winemaker Guillaume Lager learned his craft near Lake Geneva. 'These hybrid varieties are suitable for the English climate as they tend to ripen earlier than traditional varieties and have a high tolerance to disease,' says Lager.

Both the white and rosé have a subtle acidity to balance more fragrant fruit and floral notes, while the red blend has the tannins and spice to hold up against dark jamminess.

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