

FOOD AND DRINK



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The hard-to-grow varieties taken on by Forest winemaker

Fruit grower Sandy cultivates Shiraz and Gewürztraminer

BY LIZ HENDRIE

A WINEMAKER is "pushing boundaries" by growing grape varieties that are notoriously hard to cultivate in the UK climate.

The founder of the East Boldre-based New Forest Fruit Company, Sandy Booth, has launched his own wine collection after managing to produce grapes including Shiraz and Gewürztraminer.

He has been growing strawberries and asparagus in the New Forest for nearly 30 years, but his passion for wine inspired his decision to plant a vineyard in 2021.

After teaming up with winemaker Guillaume Lager, of Sway micro winery The Wharrie Experience, Sandy has just launched a still white and red, along with a rosé.



Beaulieu 58 Wines' inaugural collection

are a little less expected but hopefully still celebrated as examples of just how exciting the world of English wine continues to be," he said.

In 1997, Sandy joined tenant farmer John Boyd in East Boldre as soft fruit manager and played an instrumental role in the innovative move to growing fruit in tunnels.

Sandy played a significant role in increasing the strawberry yield from 50 to 2000 tons, and in 2008 he formed a business partnership with John.

Over the past 16 years, he has grown around 4,500 tons of strawberries annually and trialled crops such as artichokes, apricots, melons and asparagus.

The asparagus-growing techniques, using recycled coir from strawberry production, along with different bacteria and fungi to grow healthy, tasty, residue-free asparagus, makes New Forest Fruit the earliest asparagus grower in the UK each year.

In 2021 he set out on a quest to work with vines in similar growing conditions.

"My long-term goal is to break away from conventional approaches, challenge the status quo, and pursue innovative paths to achieve something truly unique and impactful," he said.

Sandy's recent innovations include New Forest Fruit Snacks, which turns 'wonky' strawberries, otherwise destined for food waste, into gluten-free, vegan-friendly snacks.

The B58 Gewürztraminer is a dry, aromatic white wine with a "fragrant character and a rich



Guillaume Lager and Sandy Booth of B58 Winery (Picture: Monika Grabkowska)

profile". With enticing aromas of lychee and rose petals, this wine has a delicate acidity and is ideal for pairing with spicy cuisine or aromatic cheeses.

It recently won bronze at the Wine GB Wessex Awards 2024.

The B58 Red, made up of grape varieties shiraz, merlot, cabernet franc, and cabernet jura, is full bodied, offering a "bold and rich, yet balanced taste experience". It has aromas of blackcurrant, blackberry and plum and a hint of spice and oak, pairing well with grilled meats, hearty stews or aged cheeses.

This secured a silver in the Wine GB Wessex Awards 2024.

And finally, the Beaulieu 58 Rosé, with grape varieties pinot and cabernet jura, is medium-bodied with vibrant notes of ripe, soft fruits, a hint of citrus zest and a subtle acidity. Refreshing with a smooth finish, it's great with seafood.

Beaulieu 58 Wines is now available to purchase online at www.b58winery.com and through select retailers.

For more information, visit www.b58winery.com



Beaulieu B58 vines



The New Forest Fruit Company's dried strawberries