



## ENGLISH SPARKLING?

**A blind tasting brought into focus a delightful sparkling from England – Jenkyn Place Brut. Neetinder Dhillon on the delightful glass of bubbly.**

It was an interesting evening with surprising results. Ten journalists, sommeliers and champagne connoisseurs participated in a rather friendly blind tasting at the Decanter Bar, St. Regis Bangkok, hosted by boutique wine importer Fin (Fabulous Is Needed). Lined up with their labels concealed were 10 sparkling wines from France, England and Germany – seven white sparkling and three rosé sparkling wines. Of which three sparkling wines were from England. The reason for the entire exercise was to see how well the English wines scored against the three champagnes, three French crémant and one riesling sekt from Germany.

After tasting and pondering over all 10 wines, the participants voted for their three favourite sparkling wines. The result was startling. The winner was: **2007 Jenkyn Place Brut, Jenkyn Place, Hampshire, England**. Crafted from Chardonnay (60%), Pinot noir (25%), and Pinot meunier (15%), the wine has a steady stream of fine bubbles. On the nose it is toasty and nutty. The palate is light and fruity striking a perfect balance between sweetness and acidity. It is also marked by good length. An altogether well rounded wine. In second place was *Crémant de Limoux AC, Bernard Delmas, Languedoc-Roussillon, France*. An organic and vegan sparkling wine from Bernard Delmas with intense apple and a fresh bite. Also in the second place was 2008

*Riesling Sekt Brut, Wittmann, Rheinhessen, Germany*: crisp and intensely fruity. Coming in at three was *Champagne Blanc de Noir Brut 1er Cru AOC, Gonet-Medeville, France* with its strawberry, berry and mineral notes and a firm finish. This wine got 89 points from *Wine Spectator*.

Of course any tasting is all about individual preferences but even so, it was surprising that an English sparkling managed to knock a French Champagne off the top slot. There were quite a few perplexed faces at how the results turned out but no amount of going back to the English sparkling and comparing it with its French cousin could convince anyone that the Jenkyn Place Brut did not deserve its number one slot. The richness of the chardonnay and the perfume of the pinot noir combined with the light minerality made it a perfect glass of dry bubbly with a steady stream of

fine bubbles. That it wasn't French detracted not a bit from the elegance in the glass. This wine which spends over 30 months on lees comes from vineyards that are south-facing on the north downs in Hampshire. Before the grapes took over, this land was interestingly devoted to hops.

In 2011, the year the wine was released, the Jenkyn Place Vineyard Sparkling Brut 2007 won a bronze medal in the International Wine and Spirit Competition; and a silver at the UKVA English and Welsh Wine of the Year Competition.

In another blind tasting this time at The Ivy restaurant, London, it was second to Pol Roger. Competing along with it were a number of well known Champagne houses and sparkling wines from around the world.

Heartened by the result Fin is bringing the English Sparkling to Thailand soon. Keep a look out. ☑