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English sparkling wine producers turn to the U.S. after grape prices fell about 50%

A 510% rise in British vineyard plantings since 2005 has swelled inventories in a crowded premium wine market

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English sparkling wine has won attention in the United States, but producers are now under pressure to turn that interest into steady sales as rapid vineyard expansion at home creates more supply and squeezes grape prices.

The category was barely known in the U.S. market when Ridgeview sent its first shipment in 2012. More than a decade later, English bottles appear on restaurant lists, draw interest from importers and attract investment from major wine groups. According to Wines of Great Britain’s 2025 Industry Report, vineyard plantings in Britain increased 510% between 2005 and 2024, reaching 4,841 hectares.

That growth has helped establish English sparkling wine as a credible rival in premium sparkling, but it has also created a basic business problem. More vines mean more fruit and, over time, more finished wine. Producers are now trying to build export demand quickly enough to absorb that output, especially in the U.S., one of the world’s most crowded wine markets.

For the beverage industry, the shift matters beyond one niche category. It offers an early test of how new premium sparkling regions can attract investment, manage inventories and compete for shelf space and wine-list placements against Champagne and other established sparkling wines. The outcome could shape pricing, sourcing and import strategies for buyers across the trade.

One reason for the category’s rise is climate. England’s cool, wet conditions have long made viticulture difficult, but warming temperatures have improved consistency and made sparkling production more viable. A 2022 study on climate change and U.K. viticulture found that the warmest British wine regions could reach an average growing-season temperature of 17 degrees Celsius by 2040, up from an average of 15.7 degrees Celsius between 1999 and 2018. The same research projected that British wine regions could see conditions similar to the high-yield 2018 vintage more than 50% of the time.

That climate profile has helped preserve the high acidity that many wine professionals see as a defining strength of English sparkling wine. Some buyers say the style appeals to drinkers who want freshness and structure that can be harder to find as warming temperatures affect other regions.

At the same time, producers and importers say the category is moving away from constant comparison with Champagne, even if the traditional method, grape varieties and chalky soils encourage the parallel. Nick Bevan, executive vice president of

international business at Jackson Family Wines, told SevenFifty Daily that English sparkling should increasingly be seen as its own category rather than a copy of Champagne.

The sector’s progress has drawn outside capital. Champagne Taittinger established Domaine Evremond in Kent and released its first vintage in 2025. Jackson Family Wines, which had examined ways to expand its sparkling portfolio, also decided England offered long-term potential. Smaller investors have moved in as well, including new land buyers from London, according to Ana Sugrue of Sugrue South Downs.

Producers are also experimenting more with style and production. Some are exploring natural winemaking. Others are using solera systems for future blends. Silverhand Estate is among those working with the Charmat method, which could open a path to more affordable sparkling wines in a category often defined by small volumes and long aging.

As supply grows, exports have become more important. Wines of Great Britain said global exports rose 35% from 2023 to 2024. U.S.-specific export figures are not formally tracked, but several producers and importers told SevenFifty Daily that the American market has become a priority. Gusbourne, which began exporting to the U.S. in 2016, counts the country among its leading markets.

Laura Rhys, master sommelier and Gusbourne’s head of wine, communication, education and style, said familiarity has improved sharply over the past decade. Early on, she said, many Americans were surprised that commercial wine production in England was even possible. Now, she said, consumers are more likely to encounter the category on restaurant lists, hear about it through friends or try it in trade settings.

Importers say English-themed restaurants have helped. Cody Stephenson, world portfolio manager at Skurnik Wines and Spirits, which imports Wiston Estate, told SevenFifty Daily that the growth of British gastropubs in New York and the expansion of London-based restaurant groups such as Hawksmoor, Ambassador’s Clubhouse and Dishoom into the U.S. have created a natural channel for English sparkling wine.

The on-premise market remains central because the category often needs explanation at the table or in a wine shop. Kate Hamrick Foskett, who founded importer Bubbles of Britain in 2023, told SevenFifty Daily that her strategy has focused on placing the wines with the right buyers rather than pushing volume. Importers describe English sparkling as a hand-sell product: consumers may recognize the style once it is poured, but many still need to be persuaded that England belongs in a premium sparkling conversation.

That sales effort is becoming more urgent because the supply picture in Britain has worsened. Ana Sugrue told SevenFifty Daily that overproduction has become a major strain on the industry. More vineyards have brought more fruit to market, pushing down grape prices. Even though 2024 was the lowest-yielding vintage since 2016, it still became the fourth-largest harvest of the previous 10 years because newly planted vineyards had started producing. That followed a very large 2023 crop, leaving many wineries with heavy inventories.

Dermot Sugrue told SevenFifty Daily that, after the 2023 harvest, wineries had little appetite to buy more fruit in 2024, and grape prices fell by about 50%. He said the pressure continued through 2025, when favorable growing conditions added to supply and grape prices dropped to historic lows by year’s end. By 2026, pricing had become more mixed as more growers and wineries signed fixed-price contracts before harvest, but the oversupply problem had not fully disappeared.

Climate change, despite its benefits, is also a risk factor. Yields can still swing sharply from one vintage to another, and the same weather volatility that helps one year can hurt the next. The British wine sector also depends on a network in which many wineries buy fruit rather than farm all of their own vineyards. According to Wines of Great Britain, just 24 producers account for 88% of sales. That concentration means trouble at a handful of large companies can ripple across growers, contract wineries and suppliers.

The U.S. market presents a separate challenge: price. English sparkling wine is usually positioned near entry-level Champagne because of small production, vintage dating and lengthy aging. Hamrick Foskett told SevenFifty Daily that the category sits at a premium price point that can be hard to explain to customers who are already familiar

with Champagne, Prosecco or domestic sparkling options.

Some sommeliers argue the wines still represent value. Annie Shi, beverage director at Dean’s in New York City, told SevenFifty Daily that English sparkling can offer strong quality at prices below what the wines might command if the category were better known. She said she sells Hambledon and Hattingley Valley Brut for $105 on her list, where they serve as alternatives for guests who want something distinctive without paying more for famous labels.

Another unresolved issue is branding. Producers have discussed shorter, more marketable names for the category, including terms such as Brit Pop and Britagne, but none has gained traction. Bevan told SevenFifty Daily that a memorable identity could matter because Champagne has become not just a place name but a powerful global shorthand for premium sparkling wine.

For now, English sparkling wine has momentum, credibility and rising visibility in the U.S. It also has more vineyards, more bottles and more financial pressure than it did a few years ago. Whether the category can turn prestige into repeat purchases will determine not only the fortunes of English growers and wineries, but also how far buyers, importers and restaurant groups are willing to back another premium sparkling region in an increasingly competitive market.