



Meet the makers #2 The Solaris specialists

With 10 hectares of vineyard and 30,000 plants, Dyrehøj is the largest of Denmark's vineyards, and sits on a beautiful sandy peninsula alongside Kalundborg Fjord, surrounded by legally protected tracts of wild land. Originally a farm, it was taken on in 2007 by Bettina Newberry and her brother Tom Christensen, who were startled to be told that the relatively poor, sandy soil and sunny position made it a perfect place for vines. Since then, the 100-year-old farm buildings have been turned into a café, farm shop, winery, distillery and events space, all serving to showcase the unique wines they make here.

"This far north we have to concentrate on wines that express the place," says Newberry, who grows mostly Solaris and jokes that the peninsula is known as #solarisland. "We have slow maturation and big aromas, low sugar and high acidity. That suits sparkling, rosé and white wines. Taste our wines, you taste this place."

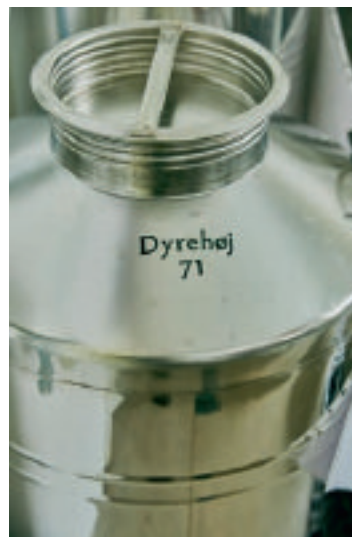
No one in the family had a background in wine, so initially they brought in a German winemaker, and now employ a young specialist from New

Zealand, Zachary Brierly. "The whole trick when you are a business person is you hire someone who is cleverer than you," laughs Newberry. "He's got the opportunity to work with difficult years – sometimes the Danish summer just never happens – so he can develop as a winemaker, solving problems in an up-and-coming country."

Together they are dedicated to figuring out what Danish wine should be. "We had a tasting in December, with 25 different Solaris wines, and did three pages of description for each bottle, just data collecting, to understand the wine. One day we will get to the truth – what is Danish wine?"

Newberry is equally committed to dispelling the myth that the story of wine in Denmark is about climate change. "We are here because scientists made disease- and fungus-resistant plants," she says, firmly (see box, right). "They can't use these plants down south, and we can't use theirs here, either. We have a special climate and we should use it. Science created the right plants for us."

dyrehoj-vingaard.dk



Clockwise, from top left - Bettina Newberry walking the rows of vines; winemaker Zachary Brierly; the 10-hectare Dyrehøj vineyard; fermentation equipment

"Taste our wines, you taste this place"



Cool-climate grapes: key to Danish success

Solaris is Denmark's most significant grape and it's incredibly versatile, making light, food-friendly sparkling, dry, blended, sweet or table wines, often with flavours of elderflower and gooseberry.



It's one of the cool-climate, disease-resistant vines that were developed at Germany's Staatliches Weinbauinstitut in the 1970s and '80s, and are now grown right across northern Europe.



The institute – in Freiburg, south-west Germany – specialises in wine-quality optimisation, and the breeding and cloning of grapes for sustainability and disease resistance. By selectively marrying grape varieties, its oenologists (wine scientists) have created several strains that thrive in cooler summers and northerly climes.



Others to look out for in Danish winemaking include: Muscaris, which contains notes of honey or dried fruit; Johanniter, a Riesling cross that can be used to make both dry and sweet wines; and Sauvignier Gris, a Pinot Gris-style grape with pink skin.



While most of Denmark's grapes are used to make white wine, there is one notable exception. Rondo was originally planted 15 years ago in an abortive attempt to make rich red wines, but this dark-skinned grape is now used in fruity, bright pink rosés instead.