



FUNDING FOR INNOVATIVE NEW WINEMAKER IN NORFOLK

A Norfolk vineyard is cracking open the bubbly as it celebrates a £23,000 grant to carry out research on one of the UK's most promising grape varieties.

Flint Vineyard is a new vineyard and winery based in Earsham, South Norfolk. It intends to use advanced and experimental winemaking techniques to produce premium wines with help from a grant from the Eastern Agri-Tech Growth Initiative.

With the funding, the company will carry out scientific fermentation trials using the Bacchus grape to develop the perfect taste and aroma in the wines produced. Bacchus makes a crisp and aromatic white wine, similar to New Zealand Sauvignon Blanc, and is particularly well-suited to the East Anglian climate.

Winemaker Ben Witchell trained at internationally renowned Plumpton College and went on to hone his craft in France, California and England.

A state-of-the-art winery with its own laboratory will allow this intriguing new winemaker to create a range of exciting wines, which push the boundaries. The vineyard will benefit from the ideal growing conditions of the beautiful Norfolk countryside, which is reported to be the combined driest and sunniest region in England. Flint Vineyard will be open to visitors from 2017.

Ben Witchell, winemaker at Flint Vineyard, said:

“We are thrilled to be in position to carry out such exciting trials. The UK is being taken more and more seriously as a cool climate grape growing region and needs research like this to be on an equal footing with other new world countries. The Bacchus grape has huge potential to really transform people’s opinions of English wines and we hope, through this work, to achieve this. It’s all about putting science into the art of winemaking.”

Mark Reeve, Chairman of the Eastern Agri-Tech Growth Initiative and the Greater Cambridge Greater Peterborough LEP, said:

“Flint Vineyard’s project will progress wine production in the East by using innovative fermenting processes and scientific techniques to create high quality wines. The company will carry out research and trials on the Bacchus Grape to achieve the perfect taste and aroma.

“The Food and Drink industry is a key element of our local economy, so I am pleased to be able to offer a grant to Flint Vineyard to support the growth of their business and the development of winemaking in Norfolk.”



Chris Starkie, Managing Director of New Anglia LEP said:

“Norfolk and Suffolk are home to a wealth of household names in the food, drink and agriculture sector and we are always delighted to welcome new additions. It’s great that we can support Flint Vineyard with a £23,000 grant as the Norfolk winemaker explores the science behind wine making and we look forward to enjoying a glass or two when their bottles hit the shelves soon.”

Colleen Walker, Chair of Norfolk County Council’s Economic Development Sub-Committee, said:

“We are very excited to support this exciting R&D project that will help secure the future of the local wine industry and provide the research base for the most effective use of the Bacchus crop, placing Norfolk in a leading role for best practice in the industry.”

The Eastern Agri-Tech Growth Initiative is run by the Greater Cambridge Greater Peterborough Enterprise Partnership (LEP) with support from New Anglia LEP, Norfolk County Council, Cambridgeshire County Council, and the local authorities covering this area.

Grants are available to organisations looking to invest in specialist equipment, new market and supply chain development, ways to improve productivity and efficiency, and the application and commercialisation of Research and Development.

To find out how the Eastern Agri-Tech Growth Initiative could help to grow your business, visit www.agritechgrants.co.uk or call the LEP on 01480 277180.

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Notes to editors

1. Photo caption: Flint Vineyard's winemaker, Ben Witchell, honing his skills in Beaujolais last year.
2. The Initiative has two separate funds that are available for businesses. The first is an Agri-Tech Growth Fund, which will provide grants of between £10,000 and £150,000 to support improvements in agricultural productivity. Whilst the R&D and Prototyping Fund will provide grants of between £10,000 and £60,000 to support the development of innovative technology. Find out more at www.agritechgrants.co.uk.
3. Flint Vineyard has been awarded a grant of £23,000 towards this project.

For further information and interview opportunities, please contact Louise Bellwood at the LEP on 01480 277180 or email louise.bellwood@gcgp.co.uk.