

THE SPIRIT OF ENTERPRISE

LOVE IS IN THE...POUR

An enterprising aristocratic couple's own love story is the inspiration behind their blossoming Alcester business launched in lockdown - but now set for expansion.



Described as 'a little drop of England's heart,' St Maur Elderflower Liqueur has already earned its proud producers three prestigious industry awards. Those producers are William and Kelsey Seymour, Earl and Countess of Yarmouth who count among their ancestors Henry VIII's wife Jane Seymour.

William, 28, is the eldest son of the Marquess of Hertford, and grew up at Ragley Hall, his family's seat since the 18th century. But St Maur signals an exciting new direction for the Earl who is driven by his vision to build not just a livelihood, but a 'new legacy' to be proud of for his two sons.

Now, expansion plans and new premises at Alcester Park Farm mark the latest chapter for the couple whose own personal journey and entrepreneurial ethos underpins their product.

William said: "St Maur originates in a drink we produced for our guests on our wedding day three years ago, to celebrate with us with a glass of something uniquely special. We wanted a drink that would capture the spirit of that lovely day, something quintessentially English.

"The brand is all about authenticity. It is an artisanal English product from the Heart of England. St Maur is delightful on its own, and it's also very versatile. Our aim has been to inspire accessible easy-to-make drinks and sublime pre-dinner and brunch cocktails. This is where St Maur really excels.

"We first brought St Maur to market in May last year, and we had intended it to be a wedding drink, but with the pandemic and couples no longer having weddings, we changed tack to start building our business position in central England through farm shops, delis and independent merchants, which were thriving, as our route to market."

Kelsey, 36, added: "We decided a drink was the way forward because you can use it for celebrations like anniversaries and christenings, events that are all about sharing and enjoying with those you love to be with. The smell and taste of wild elderflower are also very evocative, so it takes us back to a time that is very special to us.

"As a final flourish, we gave St Maur the Provençal rosé colour – the colour of love. There is, of course, more than one meaning of the word love and the spirit of St Maur celebrates them all."

From the recipe, to the ideas on the label, and the name itself, St Maur brings together 1,000 years of heritage and family. Indeed, provenance is core to the brand's success. The map co-ordinates on the logo lead to Ladies Wood and an elder grove in the ancient Ragley Woodlands, now cared for by Earl of Yarmouth Estates. Here and in the hedgerows at Alcester Park Farm, in early summer, you'll now find the elderflowers being feverishly harvested by friends and family members. There's also a red-legged partridge on the bottle, a bird successfully introduced to England in the 19th century by an ancestor Francis Seymour, the 5th Marquess, and now the brand's mascot.

Kelsey said: "It was very important that everything associated with the product had to be authentic. You have to do justice to this fabulous heritage."

But William added: "My family has an interesting history, in years gone by, and more recently, with characters some good and others less so. I want my sons though also to inherit a contemporary story that's not based on the mores of the past, but which is much more forward looking. I want to pass on the values of tenacity, honesty, and hard work, and reinvigorate the spirit of our family motto 'by faith and love.'"

St Maur already lays claim to a Great Taste Award 2 Star rating, International Spirits Challenge Silver Award, and Best English Floral in the World Liqueur Awards. The business expansion comes at a time of increasing demand for the product which can now be found in an ever-growing number of retail outlets.

Kelsey added: "Moving to the farm is hugely exciting and completely transformative for us as a family and business. We now have space to dedicate to production after previously taking over my parents' house!"

Continuing in the St Maur's spirit of love, the couple have also been working with local charities which are both close to their hearts, such as Warwickshire-based Riding For The Disabled. They're keen to give back to the environment too, including a commitment to pick no more than 30% of the wild elderflower blossom.

William said: "We aim to run a responsible sustainable business and to perform to the 'triple bottom line' of people, planet, profits, in that order. Our ethos is to make the most of what you have, when you have it, where you are. That must include the environment too."

Another St Maur director – and Kelsey's father - Andrew Wells said: "The pandemic slowed the business down at first but there was some benefit in that we were able to take time to gain a better understanding of our consumers and our product's appeal.

"So far we have proof of concept that we have a cracking product and now moving to the farm means the business has space to expand. It is hugely exciting because we're able to leave behind the limitations and uncertainty we had before and focus on growth whilst still maintaining the essential and authentic craft nature of St Maur."

"St Maur offers a little drop of England's heart – but the world is our oyster."

