

## Hampshire farmer tastes success with beer from competition-winning barley

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Mark Dunford competition winner Propino

Hampshire arable farmer Mark Dunford has an added reason to be raising a glass during the festivities this season, after winning 750 bottles of beer brewed from his own spring malting barley at St Austell Brewery.

Farming approximately 1,200 acres from Lower Preshaw Farm, Upham, near Southampton, he won the prize in an annual spring malting barley competition organised by grain merchant Robin Appel. The competition aims to find the cream of the crop among malting barley samples grown in the south and south west of England.

Growing 400 acres of spring malting barley each year on his predominantly chalky land, along with wheat and oilseed rape, Mark won the competition with a sample from his 2016 crop of the popular spring malting barley variety, Propino.

“We’ve been growing malting barley for as long as I’ve been farming,” explains Mark. “It’s potentially our best earner and works well with our soil and weather conditions in

Hampshire. Propino is our preferred variety here. It usually takes the lion's share of our acreage."

"We were really pleased with how the crop did in 2016. It averaged 8 t/ha with a 98-100% germination rate. We had quite low grain nitrogen at 1.6-1.7%, which we were happy with. It also screened well with 97.4% of grains retained over a 2.5mm sieve.

"We were absolutely chuffed to win the competition. It was a fantastic day having the opportunity to go down to St Austell Brewery along with Jonathan Arnold of Robin Appel Ltd and helping to brew our very own 'Dunford's Dazzler' beer. Creating the beer was a fantastic experience.

"With guidance from the brewery staff, we helped to create the taste and the strength, testing different hops and choosing which ones we wanted to use. It really was a great opportunity."

Naming the beer and designing the label was a proper family job, explains Mark. "We came up with the name over supper one evening, and the kids helped design the label - they're a bit more creative than me. We're really happy with how everything turned out, the logo really tells a story and the beer has been much enjoyed by friends and family."

Propino was among the varieties grown on the farm again this season, says Mark, and there are plans to sow the variety again in spring 2018. "We've been growing it for a number of years and I think we'll continue with it into the future. It always does really well for us," he adds, "consistently outperforming other varieties."

**Tags:**

Spring barley