# Majestic Wine backs Vagabond Wines to build UK’s largest urban winery at Canada Water



Vagabond Wines is set to create the UK’s largest urban winery at Canada Water, a significant step following its rescue acquisition by specialist retailer Majestic Wine. Majestic bought Vagabond out of administration last year in a £6.5 million deal and has since committed to a major investment aimed at quadrupling Vagabond’s English wine production. The new winery, located in the recently completed Dock Shed, will occupy a 6,000 square foot space featuring a 100-tonne working winery, a Vagabond bar with the brand’s signature self-pour wine machines, and several event and private hire areas. The facility is expected to produce up to 100,000 bottles annually.

Christobell Giles, Vagabond’s managing director, described the urban winery as “a cathedral to wine” that offers visitors a chance to engage closely with the winemaking process and the stories behind each bottle. “Wine shouldn’t live on a dusty shelf. It should be alive, expressive, and social – and that’s exactly what we’re building,” she told The Grocer.

Majestic Group’s CEO John Colley expressed enthusiasm for the project, highlighting it as a significant investment that underscores the potential they see in expanding Vagabond beyond London into major towns and cities across the UK. This expansion is a key part of Majestic’s broader strategy, which is not only about growing Vagabond's estate—aiming to double its size within three years—but also about capturing a younger demographic and bolstering its customer base. Colley noted the project had been in development for several months and they planned to welcome the first visitors later this year.

Majestic’s acquisition of Vagabond came after the wine bar chain filed for administration, a move that arose from various headwinds, including legacy costs linked to the COVID-19 pandemic and the loss of a major venue due to airport security reconfiguration. The purchase saved nine of Vagabond’s twelve bars along with 171 jobs, excluding the underperforming Canary Wharf bar and two Gatwick Airport locations. The deal also strengthens Majestic’s business-to-business arm, Majestic Commercial, complementing its retail operations. Industry sources indicate this move reflects investor confidence in experiential retail and hospitality offerings, which Majestic’s owner, Fortress Investment Group, has supported.

Since the acquisition, Majestic has been keen to develop Vagabond’s experiential credentials, with initiatives including the launch of new bars slated for locations such as St Paul’s and Liverpool Street later in the year. Vagabond also appointed Christobell Giles as managing director to oversee this ambitious growth phase. Giles brings substantial hospitality experience from her previous roles with brands like Wagamama and Hilton Hotels and is spearheading new customer relationship management programmes and enhanced staff training through Wine & Spirit Education Trust (WSET) certifications.

The business has seen encouraging signs since the acquisition. After a difficult start to 2024, Vagabond posted strong sales growth at the end of the year, with like-for-like sales rising by 16.3% in the six weeks leading up to late December. Food sales increased by 26.2% over the same period, with the chain’s fondue proving especially popular, reportedly selling more than 1,000 servings a week during December. These metrics suggest that Majestic’s investment strategy is already yielding positive returns.

This urban winery project and the overall expansion of Vagabond represent a notable commitment to revitalising and modernising the wine bar experience in the UK, aligning with wider trends towards immersive, socially engaging hospitality formats. As Majestic continues to foster Vagabond’s growth, both companies are signalling ambitions not just to expand geographically but also to deepen customer engagement through experiential retail and education.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.thegrocer.co.uk/news/majestic-backs-project-to-build-uks-largest-urban-winery-by-vagabond-wines/707377.article), [[2]](https://www.thedrinksbusiness.com/2024/04/majestic-completes-acquisition-of-vagabond-wines/), [[4]](https://www.retailgazette.co.uk/blog/2024/04/majestic-buys-vagabond/)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.thegrocer.co.uk/news/majestic-backs-project-to-build-uks-largest-urban-winery-by-vagabond-wines/707377.article), [[5]](https://www.thedrinksbusiness.com/2024/11/vagabond-hires-christobell-giles-as-new-md/)
* Paragraph 3 – [[1]](https://www.thegrocer.co.uk/news/majestic-backs-project-to-build-uks-largest-urban-winery-by-vagabond-wines/707377.article), [[3]](https://www.retail-week.com/grocery/majestic-completes-rescue-deal-for-vagabond-wines/7045945.article), [[4]](https://www.retailgazette.co.uk/blog/2024/04/majestic-buys-vagabond/), [[7]](https://www.thedrinksbusiness.com/2024/04/majestic-completes-acquisition-of-vagabond-wines/)
* Paragraph 4 – [[1]](https://www.thegrocer.co.uk/news/majestic-backs-project-to-build-uks-largest-urban-winery-by-vagabond-wines/707377.article), [[2]](https://www.thedrinksbusiness.com/2024/04/majestic-completes-acquisition-of-vagabond-wines/), [[6]](https://www.thedrinksbusiness.com/2025/01/vagabond-thanks-fondue-for-festive-sales-boost/), [[7]](https://www.thedrinksbusiness.com/2024/04/majestic-completes-acquisition-of-vagabond-wines/)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://www.thegrocer.co.uk/news/majestic-backs-project-to-build-uks-largest-urban-winery-by-vagabond-wines/707377.article), [[5]](https://www.thedrinksbusiness.com/2024/11/vagabond-hires-christobell-giles-as-new-md/), [[6]](https://www.thedrinksbusiness.com/2025/01/vagabond-thanks-fondue-for-festive-sales-boost/)
* Paragraph 6 – [[1]](https://www.thegrocer.co.uk/news/majestic-backs-project-to-build-uks-largest-urban-winery-by-vagabond-wines/707377.article), [[2]](https://www.thedrinksbusiness.com/2024/04/majestic-completes-acquisition-of-vagabond-wines/), [[4]](https://www.retailgazette.co.uk/blog/2024/04/majestic-buys-vagabond/), [[7]](https://www.thedrinksbusiness.com/2024/04/majestic-completes-acquisition-of-vagabond-wines/)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.thegrocer.co.uk/news/majestic-backs-project-to-build-uks-largest-urban-winery-by-vagabond-wines/707377.article> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.thedrinksbusiness.com/2024/04/majestic-completes-acquisition-of-vagabond-wines/> - In April 2024, Majestic Wine completed the acquisition of Vagabond Wines, a chain of wine bars, out of administration. This strategic move saved over 170 jobs and added nine of Vagabond's wine bars to Majestic's portfolio. The acquisition aims to invest in Vagabond's expansion and long-term growth, allowing Majestic to engage with a younger demographic of wine consumers and enhance its B2B business, Majestic Commercial. The deal also represents a vote of confidence in experiential retail and hospitality offerings by Majestic's investor, Fortress Investment Group.
3. <https://www.retail-week.com/grocery/majestic-completes-rescue-deal-for-vagabond-wines/7045945.article> - Majestic Wine has announced the acquisition of Vagabond Wines following its collapse into administration last month. The deal will save nine of Vagabond’s wine bars from closure as well as 171 jobs. Majestic said the deal will support its growth strategy and allow it to engage with a younger demographic of wine consumers as it bolsters its customer base. Majestic pledged to invest in the future of Vagabond and wants to open more wine bars, leverage customer relationship management (CRM) capabilities, and develop its offering of qualifications to colleagues and customers.
4. <https://www.retailgazette.co.uk/blog/2024/04/majestic-buys-vagabond/> - Majestic has acquired wine bar chain Vagabond after it fell into administration earlier this month. The deal will save 171 jobs and nine out of the chain’s twelve wine bars from closure, excluding its “underperforming” bar in Canary Wharf and two sites at Gatwick Airport. The wine retailer said the transaction supports its growth strategy by building on its existing customer base and allowing it to engage with a younger demographic of wine consumers. It added that it plans to invest in the long-term future of the Vagabond business, with ambitions to open more wine bars.
5. <https://www.thedrinksbusiness.com/2024/11/vagabond-hires-christobell-giles-as-new-md/> - Vagabond Wines has appointed Christobell Giles as managing director to lead the next phase of growth for its self-pour wine bar concept across the UK. Giles, formerly operations director and most recently acting general manager, steps into the role immediately. Having joined Vagabond in 2023, Giles brought years of hospitality experience from her roles at Wagamama, Hilton Hotels, and Megan’s Restaurants. Giles will now work alongside Majestic’s leadership team to spearhead this mission, which includes launching a new CRM programme and advancing staff training through Wine & Spirit Education Trust (WSET) certifications.
6. <https://www.thedrinksbusiness.com/2025/01/vagabond-thanks-fondue-for-festive-sales-boost/> - After a challenging start to 2024, wine bar chain Vagabond has revealed that it capped the year off strongly, selling more than 1,000 fondues each week in December alone. Having appointed an administrator in March 2024, citing “legacy Covid debts”, “the loss of the company’s highly successful Heathrow venue due to the reconfiguration of airport security” and other headwinds, Vagabond’s nine remaining bars were snapped up by specialist wine retailer Majestic in April. It would seem that Majestic’s investment is paying off. In the six weeks to 23 December, like-for-like sales were up by 16.3%, with all locations in London and Birmingham reporting sales growth. Food sales also boomed, increasing by 26.2% during this period year-on-year. In particular, the popularity of Vagabond’s fondue has been singled out, with the company claiming that more than 1,000 were sold across the nine bars each week in December.
7. <https://www.thedrinksbusiness.com/2024/04/majestic-completes-acquisition-of-vagabond-wines/> - UK specialist retailer Majestic Wine has confirmed it has purchased the Vagabond Wines out of administration as it vows to invest in the long-term future of the Vagabond business and open more wine bars. The deal, which is said to save over 170 jobs, adds nine of Vagabond’s wine bars to the Majestic portfolio – the underperforming bar in Canary Wharf, and two sites at Gatwick Airport are not part of the acquisition. Majestic said that it plans to invest in Vagabond’s expansion and long-term growth, and build on its existing customer base, which will allow the company “to engage with a younger demographic of wine consumers”. It will also allow the drinks specialist to enhance its own B2B business, Majestic Commercial, which has been an increasing focus for the business in recent years.