

Hollywood star enjoys wine on a water chariot



SMOOTH RIDE: Riki Hutchinson supplies wine to visitors to the Olympics

HOLLYWOOD star Kevin Spacey was one of the first customers to sip on champagne supplied by Riki Hutchinson to Water Chariots, a company carrying spectators to the Olympic Park by canal.

Riki expects to more than double his £150,000 turnover for his drinks and event management firm, The Drinks Lover, thanks to the contract.

The 40-year-old is supplying the wine and managing catering on the 16 boats run by Water Chariots. At a pop-up stall at Limehouse, east London, visitors are given a glass of champagne or wine as they board the boats.

He won the deal after attending an event run by Business Networking International. Corporate customers have included Aviva and Nokia, with £45 return tickets, or £95 for VIPs, offering a 'more peaceful' journey to the Victoria Gate entrance to the park than by public transport. Riki says: 'The Olympics has

seen more sports tourists and fewer Londoners because they have not been able to get tickets, but for the Paralympics we are expecting Londoners to be out in force, and the pricing will be a lot less corporate.' He expects profits to continue after the Games as people visit the Olympic Park.

He says: 'People are talking about one or two million visitors to the Park site after the Games, and we want to be a part of that experience, showing them East London's waterways.'

With 20 years' experience in vineyards including at Montana Wines in New Zealand, Riki set up The Drinks Lover in Plaistow, east London, in 2010 with a £500 order.

He says: 'I source interesting wine, rather than just saying "here are 500 cases". I look for the right products. The champagne Kevin Spacey was drinking was from Silverado, a company co-owned by Walt Disney's daughter.'

Vicki Owen