



ACHAVAL-FERRER REVISITED

There have been some really positive and exciting changes at Achaval-Ferrer over recent years, in terms of personnel and investment – changes which we are delighted now to be able to share with customers who have followed the wines since we first started working together and indeed people who do not yet know about this splendid project.

The company was founded by a group of Argentinian and Italian friends from various walks of life. The wine professional was the celebrated Roberto Cipresso. Their ambition was bold – to make a world-class wine in Argentina. Obvious pioneers and innovators, having put the wines of Achaval-Ferrer on the map and secured external investment, the original protagonists gradually spent less time with the company, working on other, new, personal projects.

The great news for us is that the new young team in place is just as passionate about the Achaval wines as the founders.

The new winemaker Gustavo Rearte has had international experience in New Zealand and California and has been at Achaval-Ferrer since 2013 so had a good handover with both Roberto Cipresso and Santiago Achaval to guide him.

In overall charge we have Portuguese-born oenologist Manuel Louzada. He lives and operates a sister winery in Spain but spends a great deal of time in Argentina, particularly over the harvest period. He lived and worked in Argentina for ten years, as winemaker, running Chandon sparkling wine and Cheval des Andes, so knows the territory well. Independently, he was a private customer of the wines of Achaval-Ferrer from the first, using Altamira as a benchmark to judge other wines.

Significant investment means that there is now a magnificent state of the art winery being built. A far cry from what some customers have visited – little more than a large hut with a tightly packed, cramped barrel cellar.

As important to any changes however is the fact that the fundamental principles of Achaval-Ferrer are as important as before – stronger perhaps - with renewed confidence.

The wines will continue to come from the same low-yielding, high altitude sites and the same ancient, ungrafted vines, overseen by viticulturalist Leopoldo Gomez, alongside Manuel Louzada. Goals are absolute quality, a very pure expression of Malbec, and vibrancy and freshness across all of the wines.

ALISON BUCHANAN
NOVEMBER 2017

ACHAVAL-FERRER

2015 & 2016 VINTAGES, EN PRIMEUR

In this release we offer Mendoza Malbec 2016 and the 2015 vintage of Quimera and the Fincas.

Many people assume that vintage is of little importance in this generally hot, desert-like landscape but there are major differences and sometimes the challenges are overwhelming. There was no Finca Mirador in 2012 through hail, for example, nor will there be Bella Vista in 2016 – also due to hail.

We were fortunate to host a vertical tasting of Quimera in London and Oxenfoord Castle led by Manuel who eloquently talked us through each vintage, revealing just how different they can be – making a rod for his own back by proving we are correct, if irritating, in always requesting vintage reports.

THE VINEYARDS

It takes three vines to make one bottle of the Finca wines. Firstly, ancient vines are naturally low yielding and then the Achaval-Ferrer team exercise vigorous green harvesting. We learned during Manuel's presentation that they allow bunches of grapes to protect a central core, the outer bunches suffering sunburn and being dropped not long before harvest, This means that the one or two bunches remaining are concentrated and ripen earlier allowing for an earlier harvest than neighbours and often a degree or so less alcohol

Also, differing from many neighbours, Achaval-Ferrer do not erect hail nets as they create shade – a costly but qualitative decision.

The Rio Mendoza is responsible for the area's alluvial soils and permits flood irrigation – here via precise furrows channelling melt water rather than the more usual general inundation.

THE WINEMAKING

The winery itself, built in 2006, is utilitarian but plans for the new winery incorporate the original building and are sympathetic to the landscape. Fermentation is in epoxy-lined concrete tanks, the better to control temperature although unusually, and ambitiously, fermentation is warm, up to 32.5 degrees Celsius. This keeps alcohol levels in check, ethanol being dispersed along with evaporating water. Extracting tannins from the fermenting grapes is done very gently. There is no lack of body here so extraction is not needed. This is hands-off winemaking. Achaval-Ferrer call it "lazy"... no added acidity, no cold soaks, no extended maceration, no fining, no filtering. There is no extended maceration as the grapes skins are pressed the day after fermentation finishes. The wine is then racked into oak barrels in April for the malolactic fermentation. The oak is French, mainly from the Boutes and Mercurey cooperages. Achaval-Ferrer now uses small 160 litre *cigarro* barrels for the Finca wines, which permit greater oxygenation.

2016 VINTAGE REPORT – MENDOZA MALBEC

“Acidity levels are high and as a consequence we have wines where freshness and vivid fruit expression are their most evident characteristics.”

MANUEL LOUZADA
OCTOBER 2017

Manuel describes 2016 as a very challenging year, cooler and wetter than normal but, being the third vintage with unusual weather for Mendoza, much had been learned in 2014 and 2015 to inform how to act in 2016. Spring had been largely dry and warm, delaying budburst. This year the vineyards were spared both frost and a cruel wind known as the Zonda so flowering went well. In other years Zonda or late frost can wipe out an entire vineyard at this stage. Summer in Mendoza began with rain in early January and unstable weather lasted through to mid-February. High humidity, allied to cooler temperatures than normal, made for steady, gradual ripening- which is good – but required strenuous efforts in the vineyard to allay any disease. In autumn temperatures reverted to normal and the extensive canopy management helped in producing a fine harvest.

2015 VINTAGE REPORT – QUIMERA AND FINCA WINES

2015 was also described as being a challenge. Winter 2014 was cold and dry, with some intense frosts which helped to bolster water reserves throughout the region. Spring brought warm weather, still dry, which resulted in an early flowering, around a week earlier than average. Hail damaged one vineyard destined for the estate Malbec, but being early in the season, the only effect was on the size of the crop. Harvest was in the same week as 2014, starting on 16th March. 2015 has been characterised as a very aromatic vintage in Mendoza, with excellent perfume and freshness.

THE WINES

MALBEC, ACHAVAL-FERRER 2016

Richly textured, lovely primary fruit - almost grape must on the nose, fresh and appealing - very generous in its overtures. The palate reflects the aromatics on the nose, fruit melding with rose and violet, underscored by earthy minerals. Delightful freshness and innate power were complemented by dark coffee notes and chocolate, all supported by a firm tannic structure, beautifully integrated - so floral and upbeat through to a long, layered finish. It takes one vine to produce one bottle here- fabulous value.

CORNEY & BARROW SCORE
(RECOMMENDED DRINKING FROM 2018 - 2023+)

17+

£145 /CASE OF 12 BOTTLES, IN BOND UK
£55 /CASE OF 2 MAGNUMS, IN BOND UK

QUIMERA, ACHAVAL-FERRER 2015

Very intense jet-plum, clinging to the glass, this presents a mix of blueberry, raspberry, cassis and *crème de mûre* - very accessible and upbeat. The palate is aromatic and very pure, prickling with underlying spice and minerals. Beautifully textured, opulent and supple, this dances on the palate - incredibly fresh and perfumed with rose and violet vying with hints of mocha, dark chocolate and dried fruits - tannins well integrated and ripe. As always Malbec is key here but in a quest for perfection Cabernets Franc and Sauvignon, Merlot and Petit Verdot play a role in what is considered their Bordeaux blend. The grapes come from three different sites. Two vines make one bottle of

Quimera. After fermentation in tank, the wine is blended before being transferred to oak barrel for malolactic fermentation and 12 months' ageing. The barrels are 40% new and 60% one year old. Average production is 9,000 six-bottle cases.

CORNEY & BARROW SCORE
(RECOMMENDED DRINKING FROM 2019 - 2027+)

18

£135 /CASE OF 6 BOTTLES, IN BOND UK
£95 /CASE OF 2 MAGNUMS, IN BOND UK

THE FINCA WINES

Achaval-Ferrer began with a single dilapidated vineyard – our revered Altamira. These single vineyards *Fincas* represent the core of the business, each vineyard planted at varying altitudes. Here the concept of *terroir* is really evident although the team stress that Malbec is still the headliner, Malbec with a sense of place. One notable quality, at altitude is the variation between day and night temperatures, which is marked, allowing the vines to rest. The daytime is all about photosynthesis, by night tannins mature and there is increased intensity and complexity.

The three wines are set out below in increasing altitudes, from 700 to 1,050 metres above sea level.

All three Finca wines are made from very low yields, with three vines required to produce just one bottle of wine. They are all aged for approximately 15 months in 100% new French oak 160 litre *cigarro* barrels.

FINCA MIRADOR, ACHAVAL-FERRER 2015

Mirador is a six hectare parcel of old, ungrafted Malbec, lying at 700 metres above sea level in the Medrano district. Dark fruit and earthy notes prevail on the nose yet the palate leans more towards the red fruit spectrum, the texture silken and supple. This is generous and bright with hints of citrus - orange zest providing an extra dimension - dark chocolate and espresso, layered with fruit and directed by a well-integrated tannic structure through to a very rich, elegant finish. Average production is 2,750 six-bottle cases.

CORNEY & BARROW SCORE
(RECOMMENDED DRINKING FROM 2020 - 2029+)

18

£335 /CASE OF 6 BOTTLES, IN BOND UK
£230 /CASE OF 2 MAGNUMS, IN BOND UK

FINCA BELLA VISTA, ACHAVAL-FERRER 2015

Bella Vista is the seven hectare vineyard adjacent to the winery - some 980 metres above sea level. The soil is lime-sand over deep gravels. The nose is savoury and intriguing. Dark fruit comes through on agitation, combined with red fruit and floral refreshment. Super silky, the tannins meld seamlessly within layers of ripe, bright berries - a stunning ambassador for Mendoza, crying out for great food - a fine example of how power can balance with elegance Average production is 3,500 six-bottle cases.

CORNEY & BARROW SCORE
(RECOMMENDED DRINKING FROM 2020 - 2029+)

18.5

£345 /CASE OF 6 BOTTLES, IN BOND UK
£235 /CASE OF 2 MAGNUMS, IN BOND UK

FINCA ALTAMIRA, ACHAVAL-FERRER 2015

Altamira is the cornerstone of Achaval-Ferrer, the vineyard planted with 80 year old (plus) ungrafted vines at 1,050 metres above sea level. Semi-abandoned when discovered by the Achaval-Ferrer team in 1998, the six hectare Altamira vineyard is in La Consulta, 50 miles south of Mendoza. The soil is lime-sand, with volcanic ash over eroded rock. Deep ruby-garnet, this offers almost white wine aromatics, complementing attractive primary fruit, summer pudding berries and cherries. Wonderfully fresh and enticing, appetising and upbeat, the palate is light and airy - rather lovely in fact with precision and focus through to a crescendo on the finish – stunning. Average production is 1,600 six-bottle cases.

CORNEY & BARROW SCORE 18.5++
(RECOMMENDED DRINKING FROM 2020– 2029+)

£355 /CASE OF 6 BOTTLES, IN BOND UK
£245 /CASE OF 2 MAGNUMS, IN BOND UK

TASTING GUIDE

Our tasting notes provide full details but, at your request, we have also introduced a clear and simple marking system. We hope these guidelines assist you in your selection.

Wines are scored out of 20; it has the benefit of simplicity.

We will often use a range of scores (e.g. 16.5 to 17) to indicate the potential to achieve a higher mark. When a '+' is shown it adds further to that potential. Wines from lesser vintages will, inevitably, show a lower overall score.

Wines are judged, in a very broad sense, against their peers. Why? Well, you cannot easily compare a Ford with an Aston Martin, other than they are both cars and have wheels. It is not that different with wine.

A score is a summary only. The devil is in the detail, so please focus on the tasting notes and, as always, speak to our sales team.

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