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WINE MERCHANTS
CORNEY & BARROW LIMITED
LONDON



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HIS THE PRINCE OF WALES
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BARROW

INDEPENDENT WINE MERCHANTS-1780

ACHAVAL-FERRER

2016 & 2017 VINTAGES EN PRIMEUR





“Achaval-Ferrer ticks all of the boxes. Ancient, low yielding vines, high altitude freshness and large diurnal variation helps to give complexity in these wines - the basis for a long term exclusive partnership, very close to our hearts.”

ALISON BUCHANAN

January 2019



INTRODUCTION

Last year we announced some really positive and exciting changes which had been implemented over recent years at Achaval-Ferrer, news of impressive investment and an introduction to new personnel.



Achaval-Ferrer had originally been founded by a group of Argentinian and Italian friends from various walks of life, businessmen who loved wine, inspired by their friend the celebrated Italian oenologist Roberto Cipresso. Immediately enthralled by the potential here, in high altitude Mendoza, Roberto's enthusiasm was infectious and his colleagues became similarly captivated. Their ambition was simple yet monumentally audacious, namely, to make a world-class wine in Argentina. Against all odds, these very obvious pioneers and innovators put the wines of Achaval-Ferrer on the map.

From the outset the wines received many plaudits, ultimately capturing the interest of external investors. A deal was struck and now, with the security of extra funding, Achaval-Ferrer enjoys the luxury of a state of the art winery manned by a new young team which is just as passionate about the Achaval wines as the founders. The original protagonists gradually scaled down their time with the company as they moved on to new, personal projects, ensuring a watertight handover before their departure.

It is wonderful to be working with people so steeped in the world of wine with a sense of place.

The winemaker, Gustavo Rearte, has been at Achaval-Ferrer since 2013 so he had the good fortune to have both Roberto Cipresso and Santiago Achaval to guide him. In addition, he has had previous international experience in New Zealand and California.

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 very beginning. He has always used Finaca Altamira as a benchmark with which to judge other wines. The new sales director Julio Lasmartes is also from a winemaking family.

The changes to Achaval-Ferrer of old may well be profound but the fundamental principles of the company are as important as before – stronger perhaps – reinforced by renewed confidence.

The wines will continue to come from the same low-yielding, ancient, un-grafted vines – high altitude sites – 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
January 2019



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2016 & 2017 VINTAGES EN PRIMEUR

In this release we offer Mendoza Malbec 2017 and the 2016 vintage of Quimera and the single vineyards Finca wines.

Many people assume that vintage is of little importance in this generally hot, desert-like landscape but there can be major differences in the growing seasons and sometimes the challenges are overwhelming. There was no Finca Mirador in 2012 through hail, for example. Manuel Louzada took us through a vertical tasting last year, the better to make this point. The variations vintage to vintage were remarkable.

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THE VINEYARDS

We often quote production in terms of hectolitres per hectare – which really only allows some comparison with other producers. Here the story is eye-catching in its simplicity. It takes three vines to make just one bottle of the Finca wines. Ancient vines are naturally low yielding in any case but then the Achaval-Ferrer team exercise a vigorous and very specific green harvesting. We learned during Manuel's presentation that they allow bunches of grapes to protect a central core crop, 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 a harvest well before neighbouring vineyards and often a degree or so less alcohol.

Also, a road less travelled, Achaval-Ferrer choose not to erect hail nets as they create shade. This is a rather costly but quality-driven decision.

The Rio Mendoza is responsible for the area's alluvial soils and permits flood irrigation. The team at Achaval-Ferrer use very precise furrows to channel snowmelt water rather than the general inundation practised elsewhere.

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THE WINEMAKING

The new winery incorporates the original 2006 structure and is 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. Extraction, thankfully, is extremely gentle – there is no lack of body here.

Introduced for the 2017 vintage are a new, more temperate de-stemming machine and an optical selector – a big investment with view to pushing quality even further. The team at Achaval-Ferrer prefer hands-off winemaking. They call it "lazy"... no added acidity, no cold soaks, no extended maceration, no fining, negligible filtering. The wine is then racked into oak barrels in April for the malolactic fermentation. French oak is used, mainly from the Boutes and Mercurey cooperages. Achaval-Ferrer now uses small 160 litre *cigarro* barrels for the Finca wines, which permit greater oxygenation.



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. For the benefit of simplicity, wines are scored out of 20. 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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2017 VINTAGE REPORT MENDOZA MALBEC

2017 broke the trend of recent cool and wet years, returning to the more usual dry and sunny weather and consequently a very healthy crop.

Assuming that summer was going to be hot and dry, the Achaval team had tailored their canopy management, leaving more leaves than in previous years, the better to protect the grapes from the sun. They also managed a very controlled irrigation programme, in recognition of the different soil types and their varied ability to retain water. Despite frost in Mirador and hail in Altamira, 2017 is a standout vintage

MALBEC 2017

Intense jet-plum in colour, this has a fresh, nose redolent of fresh berries blended with violet and rose and wild herbs. There is a hint of citrus which accentuates the sense of focus. The palate is silken and beautifully rounded, rich in plump primary fruit, underscored by earthy minerals and heady floral aromatics. This is a very complete Mendoza Malbec, well-balanced with layered complexity, fruit enhanced by mocha notes, all supported by ripe firm tannins. It takes one vine to produce one bottle here - fabulous value.

Corney & Barrow Score 17+
Recommended drinking from 2018 - 2024+

£150/CASE OF 12 BOTTLES, IN BOND UK
£60/CASE OF 2 MAGNUMS, IN BOND UK



“2017 will be remembered as producing wines with depth in colours and aromas and a well-balanced acidity - the Achaval-Ferrer style”

JULIO LASMARTRES
January 2019





2016 VINTAGE REPORT QUIMERA & FINCA WINES

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

MANUEL LOUZADA

The winery states that 2016 was a harvest “full of challenges”, 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 in autumn, allied to cooler temperatures than usual, 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.

QUIMERA 2016

Jet-plum, essentially opaque and clinging to the glass, this reveals a spicy array of red and black fruit, cherries and berries on the nose, allied to rather savoury, mushroom notes, juniper, pepper - rather hedonistic. The palate reflects the aromatic character of the nose with additional floral notes. Layered and complex, supple and opulent, this is a very fine Quimera, supported by refined, ripe, rather noble tannins. The aim for Quimera is perfection, blending Malbec with Cabernet Franc, Sauvignon, Merlot and Petit Verdot. This is what they refer to as their Bordeaux blend and although less often seen, Malbec does constitute one of the Bordeaux varietals. Two vines are required to make one bottle of Quimera. The wine is fermented in tank before being blended and 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 17 - 18
Recommended drinking from 2020 - 2028+

£155/CASE OF 6 BOTTLES, IN BOND UK
£100/CASE OF 2 MAGNUMS, IN BOND UK





THE FINCA WINES

The Achaval-Ferrer dream began with a single dilapidated vineyard – our revered Altamira.

Today, this and the other single vineyard *Fincas* represent the core of the business.

They would be the grandest of *grand crus* if such a classification were to exist, ancient vines all planted at varying altitudes. The concept of *terroir* is indeed evident, but the team stress that the Malbec grape still reigns supreme, Malbec with a sense of place.

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

One notable quality, at such high altitudes, is the variation between day and night temperatures. This is very marked here, the cool nights allowing the vines to rest. The daylight hours are all about photosynthesis whilst, at night, tannins mature, increasing intensity and complexity.

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 2016

Mirador is a four hectare parcel of old, ungrafted Malbec, lying at 700 metres above sea level in the Medrano district. Generally a warm site, the vines here responded to the fresher conditions of the growing season by producing aromatic dark fruit and spice. This was aged for 15 months in new French oak – 160 litre *cigarro* barrels. Deep ruby in colour, this sets the stage with warm, toasted fruitcake on the nose, iodine and vanilla cream. The palate centres on dark fruit, chocolate cherry liqueur and delicate citrus. There is something vaguely reminiscent of black forest *gâteau* here, a warmth and layered complexity. The finish is long but in these early stages somewhat marked by oak. This will become better integrated over time as there is an abundance of fruit which will devour any overt oak character. The finish is generous and long. Average production is 2,750 six-bottle cases.

Corney & Barrow Score 17
Recommended drinking from 2021 – 2030+

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

FINCA BELLA VISTA 2016

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. Freshness and elegance in this vintage was clear from the outset, with heady aromatics during fermentation. Jet purple, intensely-coloured, this has a rather sublime nose, rich in supremely pure fruit, cassis, raspberry and cherry, refreshed by citrus notes and clear mineral definition. This is more than decadent on the palate, silky and sappy with fruit-coated tannins underpinning a wealth of opulent, seductive fruit. Tasted at 14.00, not having had lunch, this suggested an impromptu food pairing – something grilled and juicy. This year's Bella Vista is a fine example of a wine treading the fine line between innate power and sheer elegance. Average production is 3,500 six-bottle cases.

Corney & Barrow Score 17.5 – 18.5
Recommended drinking from 2021 – 2030+

£360/CASE OF 6 BOTTLES, IN BOND UK
£240/CASE OF 2 MAGNUMS, IN BOND UK

FINCA ALTAMIRA 2016

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 eight hectare Altamira vineyard is in La Consulta, 50 miles south of Mendoza. As a result of the cooler year, the grapes took an additional two weeks to ripen, benefiting from fine, stable weather to maximise expression and attain refined balance. 2016 was unusual in providing both quality and reasonable quantity from these gnarled low-yielding vines. The soil is lime-sand, with volcanic ash over eroded rock. Concentrated ruby-garnet this offers an appetising array of bright red fruits, citrus zest and cherry compote. As last year, there are shades of white wine aromatics on the nose – upbeat and pretty. The palate is breezy, bright and fresh, as perfumed as the nose. This is, as always, something of a paradox – a wine with such power and muscle coming through as almost weightless. Precise, with streamlined acidity and layer upon layer of pure fruit it finishes with a protracted flourish – lovely wine. Average production is 1,600 six-bottle cases.

Corney & Barrow Score 17.5+ to 18.5+
Recommended drinking from 2020 – 2029+

£370/CASE OF 6 BOTTLES, IN BOND UK
£250/CASE OF 2 MAGNUMS, IN BOND UK

To Order

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PLEASE NOTE

These wines are released en primeur. Delivery dates to be confirmed. All prices are quoted in bond UK.



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