



Achaval-Ferrer

2008 & 2009 Vintage – En Primeur

Origins

The Achaval-Ferrer company was initially the brainchild of two wine enthusiasts, Santiago Achaval and Manuelo Ferrer who, eager for a change from the industrial rat race, set their sights on producing world class wine in Argentina, wines which would offer exceptional quality whilst remaining faithful to their origins.

This was an exceptionally ambitious goal, not least because few people in 1998 would have considered Argentina as anything but a volume workhorse.

The Achaval-Ferrer team, undaunted, pursued their goal passionately from the outset, their philosophy echoing the ideals of all our leading producers in that here the vineyard is key.

This has become something of a Corney & Barrow mantra – but is by no means universal. The importance of the vineyard is too-often belittled by emphasis on winemaking skills alone – not at Achaval-Ferrer. That said, including the world-renowned Italian winemaker Roberto Cipresso in the partnership was a significant and an inspired coup.

Vineyards

The choice of vineyards was fundamental to the ultimate success of the Achaval-Ferrer dream. Located very high in Argentina's Mendoza province, at between 730 metres and 1,100 metres above sea level, warm, sunny days and cool nights prolong the ripening season. This, allied to poor alluvial soils and low rainfall, sets the scene for the production of concentrated, mature grapes. These, in turn, make for impressive structure and complexity in the finished wines.

Over the past few years, Achaval-Ferrer has developed something of a 'cult' status internationally, winning a plethora of awards – richly deserved.

There are now five wines in total, each with very individual personalities. They all transcend what we would ordinarily expect of Argentinean wines, offering a wonderful balance of opulence, accessibility and classicism. These are a force to be reckoned with in any arena – truly outstanding.

Alison Buchanan
Associate Director, Buying
September 2010



2009 Vintage Notes

Mendoza enjoyed a really fine growing season for the 2009 vintage, with the exception of some vineyards which had hail damage. A moderately warm spring in October and November of 2008 made for rapid fruit set, achieved by the end of November. The speed and success of this stage in the growing period sets the scene for even ripening later in the year. Summer was hot and dry with temperatures slightly higher than average but evenly so, with no sudden peaks of excessive heat. *Veraison*, when the grapes take on colour, was rapid and very even, as predicted by the start of the growth cycle. A green harvest, as ever, served to reduce the crop, intensifying the remaining fruit. The weather leading up to harvest was exceptionally dry, with no rain at all in February. After more than a month of drought, the inch of rain which fell on the 3rd March was extremely welcome and picking began on the 5th March.

Quantities are a little lower than average as one parcel of leased vines damaged by hail and was not therefore harvested.

Malbec 2009

Corney & Barrow Score 18 to 19

This is an all time favourite amongst the Corney & Barrow team – small wonder. It is an outstanding ambassador for the Malbec grape, which is precisely the aim of the Achaval-Ferrer team. The grapes are sourced from three distinctive sites for added complexity, with different altitudes, varied soils and different densities and ages of the vines – as young as 13 and as old as 86. Complementary characteristics are brought together in an unfettered celebration of what is generally considered to be a rather commonplace grape variety. Winemaker Roberto Cipresso produces wines which are accessible and make people smile but he does not sacrifice complexity to that end. This is a Malbec which punches well above its weight. Intensely coloured, fathomless plum-ruby, it is immediately attractive. The nose and palate mirror one another in their flamboyant aromatics, hedonistic, spiced red and black fruit lifted by hints of citrus. There is a lovely balance here between innate power and refined elegance – a gorgeous wine.

Recommended drinking from 2010 to 2018 plus

£122/case of 12, in bond UK

2008 Vintage Notes

The winter of 2007/2008 was the coldest Mendoza had experienced in 50 years, with double the average snowfall in the vineyards. There were many days when the temperature did not rise above -5° C and on two days it was as low as -17° C! Exceptionally cold, this helped to eradicate pests and diseases prior to the growing season. Spring was dry, with normal temperatures, though bud-break in spring was later than normal. Flowering passed uneventfully, with everything set for an average size of crop. Summer, even and temperate, was ideal, possibly slightly cooler than normal but, more importantly, there were no sudden peaks of extreme heat.

For many, the hallmark of the vintage was established by ten days of almost constant rain at the end of January/beginning of February. The Achaval-Ferrer vineyards responded well to this unexpected catalyst which served to hasten *veraison*, thereby facilitating more even ripening. By the end of February, the vineyards were even showing signs of hydric stress. Harvest began on the 12th March, almost two weeks after the 2007 and 2004 vintages and one week after 2006. This delay was due largely to the cooler temperatures which had accompanied the rains. The grapes came in clean and well balanced, with attractive acidity, good colours and refreshing aromatics. Harvest finished on the 3rd April, some 2 to 3 weeks before neighbouring vineyards. Their harvest safely housed in barrel, the team at Achaval-Ferrer were able to help out these neighbours when a frost on the 14th, 15th and 16th April necessitated immediate harvest – one aspect of the Mendoza 2008 vintage which left Achaval-Ferrer's wines totally unscathed.

Quimera 2008

Corney & Barrow Score 16.5 to 18

Quimera, meaning “the search for perfection”, is a blend, the name of which evokes the idea behind the wine – the pursuit of perhaps the unattainable, where the finished wine is so much greater than the sum of its parts. This vintage is a blend of 40% old vine Malbec, 22% Merlot, 20% old vine Cabernet Sauvignon, 14% Cabernet Franc and 4% Petit Verdot, from 3 different sites at between 750 and 1,100m above sea level. Yields were a mere 18 hl per ha, which accounts, in part, for just how good this wine is. Just 3,073 cases (x 12 equivalent) were made. Deeply coloured, intense, with a deep cherry rim, this is much more avuncular and serious than the straightforward Malbec. Richly textured, it clings to the glass. Dark, brooding fruit dominates nose and palate, blueberry and black cherry, with a dark, earthy backdrop. The palate is fleshy yet straightlaced at this early stage, adroit, focused and extremely pure, all complemented by well-integrated, fine-grained tannins. Precise and focused, this 2008 has great potential.

Recommended drinking from late 2012 to 2022 plus

£110/case of 6, in bond UK

The Fincas

The Fincas are the product of Achaval's third concept. The Malbec is devised as the best possible ambassador for the grape, calling on varied origins to add different nuances and complexity. Quimera is about striving for perfection within a blend. The Fincas are all about being faithful to a specific place, translating their individual *terroir*.

Finca Altamira 2008

Corney & Barrow Score 18 to 19

The 5.5 ha Altamira vineyard sits at 1,050m above sea level, in the La Consulta region of the Uco Valley, Mendoza. Ungrafted vines of over 80 years are naturally low yielding, producing just 14 hl per ha. 980 cases were produced in 2008, aged for 15 months in 100% new French oak.

This is an opaque plum in colour, with a bright, firm, fuchsia rim. The nose presents really attractive, pepper-spiced dark fruit, brooding cherries and, lifting the aromatics, fresh raspberries and hints of citrus. Richly textured, the palate echoes the nose, adding a clear mineral focus and savoury intrigue. As ever, Altamira balances innate power with effortless elegance.

Recommended drinking from 2012 to 2024 plus

£250/case of 6, in bond UK

Finca Mirador 2008

Corney & Barrow Score 17+ to 18+

Mirador is a 6 ha parcel of old, un-grafted Malbec, situated at 700m above sea level in Medrano, Mendoza. In common with the other single vineyard wines, yields are very low, with three vines required to produce just one bottle of wine – around 14 hl/ha. 843 cases were produced in total, aged for 15 months in 100% new French oak. This is a deep jet-plum in colour with a firm, bright, cherry rim. The nose and palate are immediately inviting, presenting a blend of sweet summer berry fruit and spice. The palate is beautifully layered, aromatic dark fruit laced with violets and punctuated by refined minerals.

Heady aromatics and hints of exotic spice add to a tantalising balance. Fine-grained tannins are beautifully integrated in what is a more broad-shouldered, muscular style – very impressive.

Recommended drinking from 2014 to 2024 plus

£250/case of 6, in bond UK

Finca Bella Vista 2008

Corney & Barrow Score 17+ to 18+

We were delighted to be able to offer Finca Bella Vista for the first time last year. This is 5 ha in size, situated in Perdriel, on the south bank of the Mendoza river, at 980 metres above sea level, where the vines enjoy cooler nights. Yields are just 14 hl/ha from old vines planted in 1910 – about 1/3 of a bottle per vine. 980 cases were produced, aged in 100% new French oak for 15 months.

Deeply coloured, a shimmering jet-plum in colour with a bright, firm rim, this is immediately engaging, offering a heady array of spiced old vine fruit, crushed stone minerals and violets. The palate echoes this aromatic profile with a crescendo of flowers and wild fruit vying for dominance, all complemented by darker, brooding scorched earth and hints of tobacco. Luscious, succulent and ripe, there is clearly power here yet the dominant personality is all about elegance – really fine.

Recommended drinking from 2012 to 2024 plus

£250/case of 6, 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.

14-16 A very good to excellent wine.

16-18 An excellent to outstanding wine.

18-20 An outstanding to legendary wine.

- Wines are judged within their peer group.
- A definitive score of a young wine is almost always impossible. We usually offer a 'spread' (e.g. 14 - 16) which relates to the potential to achieve a higher mark. A 'plus' adds further to that potential.
- A score is a summary only. The devil is in the detail, so please focus on the tasting notes.

To order, please call 020 7265 2430 (**London**), 01638 600 000 (**Newmarket**),
01875 321 921 (**Edinburgh**) or +852 2537 3325 (**Hong Kong**)