



## ACHAVAL-FERRER

### 2013 & 2012 VINTAGES, EN PRIMEUR

We are delighted to represent, exclusively, the wines of Mendoza-based Achaval-Ferrer both in the United Kingdom and Hong Kong. Although a very young company, Achaval-Ferrer rapidly soared to worldwide recognition, with the wines it produced enjoying widespread third party plaudits from the outset.

#### HISTORY

Achaval-Ferrer is the result of a group of Argentinian and Italian friends coming together with a single aim in mind. They had set their sights on producing world class wines in Argentina; wines which would offer exceptional quality, whilst remaining faithful to their origins.

This was 1998.

It is difficult, today, to appreciate the sheer scale of this ambition. At that time, few people would have considered Argentina to be anything but a volume “workhorse”, but Achaval-Ferrer was clear on what their point of difference would be. Wines from old, low yielding vines, with restricted production were to become key to Achaval-Ferrer’s iconic style.

The timing could have been better. 1998 marked the threshold of economic depression in Argentina. Yet the Achaval-Ferrer team, unphased by the task that lay ahead of them, passionately pursued their goal, undaunted.

The company’s philosophy echoes that of so many of our principles; here, the vineyard is considered fundamental. Viticulture too often takes second place, with commentators who tend to focus on winemaking skills; this is not the case at Achaval-Ferrer. That said, the including of Italian agronomist-come-winemaker, Roberto Cipresso, in the partnership was a significant and inspired coup. In a recent, very rare, visit to London, Roberto spoke of the DNA running through Achaval-Ferrer’s wines – intensity, complexity and elegance. This is what has attracted everyone’s attention.

#### 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 and 1,100 metres above sea level, the temperature gradient is perfect. 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 richly deserved awards.

This year we are offering four wines in total, each with very individual personalities. They transcend what we would ordinarily expect of Argentinian wines, offering a rare balance of opulence, accessibility, freshness and elegant classicism. These are a force with which to be reckoned in any arena – truly outstanding.

## 2013 VINTAGE REPORT

“Another fantastic year, in the guise of 2011 and 2012. Up there with our best.”

**SANTIAGO ACHAVAL**

August, 2014

2013 started well, with some much needed rain, there having been almost no snow over winter. Although the melting snows of the Andes provide welcome irrigation, nothing is better than proper rainfall, which contains dissolved nitrogen, much appreciated by the vines. The growing season, therefore, got off to a fine start at Achaval-Ferrer, continuing through to good fruit-set during the second half of November. Happily there was no frost.

Summer started with warm weather, quite similar to 2009, and continued in the same vein, with no heat spikes. This made for even ripening with the grapes changing colour (*véraison*) very quickly. Given that the fruit had set well, green harvesting was targeted not only on dropping bunches, but also thinning out the individual bunches and snipping off tips and shoulders of prolific fruit. Whilst hail at the end of January in Mendoza has been well-documented, Bella Vista, the closest, missed it by about half a mile. The storms, in addition, were not totally destructive, as they brought with them much-needed rain. Farmers are never happy, however, and their concerns then became focused on the possibility of a super-early harvest. These fears were assuaged by cooler nights arriving in mid-February. Harvesting was completed on 16<sup>th</sup> April, officially the latest harvest ever, with the grapes benefiting from this prolonged ripening period, gaining intensity whilst retaining freshness.



**ALISON BUCHANAN**

October 2014

## MALBEC

In the rest of the Achaval-Ferrer portfolio, Malbec is either a conduit for the expression of *terroir*, or proves its worth as a complementary element in a blend. Here the aspiration is specific and ambitious – the goal set at producing a standard-bearing 100% varietal, which celebrates the grape itself, in a pure, unadulterated form.

Malbec does particularly well in Argentina. Sun-loving, the quasi-desert conditions are ideal, allowing for a long ripening period. The grapes, from ungrafted pre-phyloxera vines, are sourced from three distinct sites, under the direction of the Achaval viticultural team. A variety of altitudes, vine age, vine density and aspect, adds considerable complexity. Promiscuous, younger vines have their exuberance restrained by rigorous pruning; whilst naturally low-yielding, sedate old vines of 66 and 86 years provide intensity and depth. Roberto Cipresso has given Malbec its head, allowing it to show that it is so much more than just a reliable “carthorse”. Achaval-Ferrer is a perennial favourite amongst the Corney & Barrow team, and an outstanding ambassador, placing both Malbec and Argentina firmly on the world wine map.

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### MALBEC, ACHAVAL-FERRER 2013

Very alluring, a shimmering deep plum, this is lustrous and inviting. From low-yielding old vines grown at high altitudes, the aromatics are intense, with very pure cassis fruit on the nose, cherries and juniper and hints of menthol and fresh herbs. Floral, with hints of refreshing citrus and stone fruit, this is a lovely wine. Powerful and richly textured, it nonetheless dances well - very fresh and upbeat, with good mineral focus.

**CORNEY & BARROW SCORE**

**17.5 - 18**

(RECOMMENDED DRINKING FROM 2015 – 2020+)

**£120/CASE OF 12 BOTTLES, IN BOND UK**

**£45/CASE OF 2 MAGNUMS, IN BOND UK**

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## 2012 VINTAGE REPORT

*“The quality of the wines is showing up as being equivalent to that of 2011. This is for us a major coup: we had believed from vertical tastings that 2011 was our best year ever!”*

**SANTIAGO ACHAVAL**

**August, 2013**

By the end of February, it looked as though the 2012 vintage would ease its way into the Mendoza norm. In 2009, 2007 and 2006, picking started in the first week of March. This was in contrast to 2008, 2010 and 2011, which had all been on the cool side, with harvest starting over a week later. The 2012 start date was delayed by 3 days, beginning on 7<sup>th</sup> March with Tupungato Merlot, destined for Quimera.

### QUIMERA

Quimera, meaning “the search for perfection”, is a blend, the name of which evokes the idea behind the wine – the pursuit of a perfect wine, perhaps the unattainable, where the finished wine is so much greater than the sum of its parts.

The 2012 vintage is a blend of 50% old vine Malbec from Medrano and from Luján de Cuyo, 24% Cabernet Franc from Tupungato, 16%, Merlot from Tupungato, 8% old vine Cabernet Sauvignon from Medrano and Tupungato, and 2% Petit Verdot. The three sites vary in altitude, lying between 750 and 1,100 metres above sea level. Yields were a mere 18 hectolitres per hectare (hl/ha) – a scant kilo of grapes per vine. Restricting yields is to a large extent responsible for the quality, and certainly the intensity, of the finished wine. To put this in context, First Growth clarets regularly produce over 40 hl/ha. 7,212 cases of 12 bottles were made of the Quimera 2012. The wine was fermented in small tanks before blending and undergoing malolactic fermentation and maturation in wood, 40% new, 60% one-year-old, for 12 months. Early blending can be risky, but it really facilitates the integration of the constituent parcels. In 2013, the team at Corney & Barrow head office had the great fortune of a vertical tasting of Quimera, the better to understand the journey this wine has made. This was presented live, via Skype, from Mendoza, by Santiago Achaval himself and was both fascinating and inspirational. This is a wine to watch.

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### QUIMERA, ACHAVAL-FERRER 2012

Year on year, Quimera seems to grow in stature, drawing closer to the unattainable goal sought by Roberto Cipresso and his team. This 2012 is a lustrous black-shot plum. The palate presents a combination of ripe and supple red and black fruit, beautifully focused, with real drive, supported by full, well-integrated tannins. Beautifully balanced and elegant, pretty, deft and lithe, this is ripe, without being at all cloying, mineral rich and perfumed on the finish.

**CORNEY & BARROW Score**

**17.5 - 18.5**

(RECOMMENDED DRINKING FROM 2016 – 2026+)

**£95/CASE OF 6 BOTTLES, IN BOND UK**

**£75/CASE OF 2 MAGNUMS, IN BOND UK**

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### THE FINCAS

Achaval-Ferrer’s third concept revolves around single vineyards – Fincas. This project is based on a very different set of ambitions from the other two wines.

Whilst the 100% Malbec wines aim to be the very best possible ambassadors for the variety, calling on a number of different origins to add nuances and complexity, the Quimera has a different brief. Here

the goal is simply to achieve perfection through creating a Utopian blend. The Fincas, however, are in a class apart, centred upon the wines being faithful to a specific place, translating their individual *terroir* and altitudes.

There is one element here which is unusual within the concept of *terroir*; altitudes, aspects and specific plots notwithstanding. The soils of all three Fincas are essentially the same, comprising rather impoverished, alluvial silt, stones and clay. A very clear point of difference, however, in this arid, desert-scape is 'imported *terroir*', the varied geologies in the Andes, which provide irrigation water. This water, coupled with the variety of rocks through which it passes, plays a crucial role, defining the differences in style between the three Fincas.

When we taste the range, individual tasters tend to favour, rather stridently, one or other wine, with no clear front-runners emerging. This is not surprising, as they are all world-class wines, and although each one displays individuality and personality, the buying team's scores here are very similar. Please note that the Fincas are better decanted at least one hour before serving.

N.B. There is no Finca Mirador in 2012.

### **FINCA BELLA VISTA**

This is 6.88 ha in size, in the heart of the Malbec region, in Perdriel, on the southern bank of the Mendoza river. The vineyard here is set at 980 metres above sea level, thus allowing the vines to enjoy cooler nights. The soil is lime-sand over deep gravels. In common with the other Fincas, each vine produces about 1/3 of a bottle per vine.

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#### **FINCA BELLA VISTA, ACHAVAL-FERRER 2012**

Jet-shot plum, with a tight, firm, bright rim, shimmering and enticing, this presents an appetising, savoury and ripe fruit profile. This offers really attractive and intriguing complexity, a rather sexy balance of rounded fruit and earthy undertones, ripe and attractive, with lovely freshness and a delicate menthol character. Being both lithe and focused, this has that Achaval-Ferrer hallmark of opulence, allied to vitality and upbeat energy - impressive.

#### **CORNEY & BARROW SCORE**

(RECOMMENDED DRINKING FROM 2016 – 2026+)

**18 - 18.5**

**£240/CASE OF 6 BOTTLES, IN BOND UK**

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### **FINCA ALTAMIRA**

This was the first vineyard to capture Roberto Cipresso's imagination. Discovered on a research trip, it was neglected, semi-abandoned and hideously overgrown, requiring both considerable imagination and nerve. How well the gamble has paid off!

The 5.67 ha Altamira vineyard sits at 1,050 metres above sea level, in the La Consulta region of the Uco Valley, 50 miles south of Mendoza. The soil is lime-sand, with volcanic ash over eroded rock, rich in volcanic residue, just 20 metres or so from the Tunuyán river. Ungrafted, naturally low-yielding vines, of over 80 years, produce intense, concentrated, fruit. Three vines are required for just one bottle of wine.

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## **FINCA ALTAMIRA, ACHAVAL-FERRER 2012**

Really intense in colour, clinging to the glass, this has a lovely nose, rich, with black and red fruit in abundance, complemented by cream and herbal notes. The palate is positively decadent with super-ripe primary fruit, refreshed by underlying vitality, citrus notes and minerals. Lovely plump and rich on both the nose and palate, this is very fine, with an elegant, classical, feel.

### **CORNEY & BARROW SCORE**

(RECOMMENDED DRINKING FROM 2016 – 2026+)

**18.5 - 19**

**£250/CASE OF 6 BOTTLES, IN BOND UK**

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## **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, e.g. *Villages, Premier Cru, Grand Cru*. A definitive score of a young wine is almost impossible.

We usually offer a spread (e.g. 14-16) that relates to a potential to achieve a higher mark. A '+' 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**

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