

BODEGA CHACRA

PATAGONIA ~ RIO NEGRO

The Vines of Mendoza *The Vines Blog*

April 27th, 2011

It's All About the Dirt...

by Emily

Or for Piero Incisa della Rocchetta its all about the compost. At his winery Bodega Chacra, which he founded in 2003 and which is located in the Rio Negro Valley in Patagonia, 620 miles south of Buenos Aires, he focuses on the pure, unadulterated expression of Pinot Noir. He hails from one of the most esteemed winemaking families in Italy and spends part of the year at his family estate Tenuta San Guido which makes the stunning Sassacaia wines, a European wine that broke the mold of what world class wine is made of and the traditions that surround it.

Piero is boisterous, passionate and an amazing host, waxing on not only about dirt but the property that he brought back from the dead. He has named his wines after the years that the vineyards were planted, one in 1955 and aptly named Cincuenta y cinco and the other Treinta y dos from a single vineyard planted in 1932 and then later abandoned. The finca is unassuming and modern with clean lines and a beautiful winery filled with concrete tanks. The focus is entirely biodynamic- not only in the vineyard but in the winery as well, which is often difficult in and of itself. It is surrounded with chickens, goats, and bee's as well as an incredible vegetable garden which we were luckily able to sample from for lunch. The setting is a country idyll. Located pretty much in the middle of nowhere, the climate of the Rio Negro valley is dry at around 750 meters in altitude and often experiences high winds and harsh frosts, however like Mendoza, it is free of pests and phylloxera due to the



aridity. That being said, Patagonia is making a name for itself with Pinot Noir and Piero is definitely leading the charge with his expressive and intense wines.

The wines themselves are silky, elegant and entirely a Patagonian expression of Pinot Noir. No mechanization is used at all during the wine production which results with rich aromatics, deep color concentration and lush flavor profiles. We tasted a 2010 Cincuenta y Cinco which was delicately floral with caramel, coffee and strawberries in the nose with sweet, succulent cherries and spice throughout the lovely finish.

The Treinta y Dos 2009 was much more masculine and expressive with brooding, dark colors and flavors. Blueberries, black cherries with graphite, tobacco and a bit of tar entice your senses with rich round fruit in the mouth accented with black licorice, dried fruits and structured yet extremely elegant tannins.

The Barda Pinot, a declassification blend of the other wines is an amazing value and a lush Pinot to seek out when you can. There is lots of spice and acid, (one of my favorite wine components) with tart cherries and strawberries and dusted with dried herbs through the finish.

Piero's wines are not just wines, but an expression of the terroir as well as his innate personality. Talking with him you begin to understand the integral relationship a winemaker has with the land, the grapes and the final product. His passion and attention to detail is apparent from beginning to end. We were lucky enough to spend the afternoon with Piero and some of his friends, harvesting fresh vegetables from the garden for a succulent impromptu lunch that was definitely a highlight to our trip to Patagonia. Indeed, his wines are essentials in your cellar.

The wine drinking public is also falling in love with Piero and his wines, check out the latest issue of Food & Wine magazine where they profile the winery as well as include some of his secret recipes!

Also the Wine Spectator mentions his wines as 14 new enticing wines from Argentina saying:

“Bodega Chacra, founded in 2003 by Piero Incisa della Rocchetta, whose grandfather started the “super Tuscan” Sassicaia, is setting the benchmark for Pinot Noir in South America. The bodega's entry-level Barda bottling is sourced mostly from 20-year-old vines, with additional juice coming from 80- and 55-year-old vines. Della Rocchetta has also recently begun bottling a Merlot; both wines display the estate's penchant to couple a pure, elegant fruit profile with the region's racy graphite and aromatic notes”.

For more information check out their website: www.bodegachacra.com