



## PINOT NOIR LIKE NO OTHER

By Ben Giliberti

CW Director of Wine Education

**A**lthough Piero Rocchetta is a member of one of Italy's proudest winemaking families, **his true passion is French red Burgundy.** Such things can happen, even in the best of Italian *famiglie*.

In 2004, the young vigneron established **Bodega Chacra**, a new winery devoted to the production of world-class Pinot Noir. Although red Burgundy is made from Pinot Noir, Bodega Chacra is not from there. It's from the Rio Negro area of **Patagonia, a remote wilderness region of Argentina.**

In Patagonia, Piero found what he knew he could never find in Burgundy. **It is among the last places on earth where ancient Pinot Noir vines still survive on un-grafted, pre-phylloxera rootstock.**

Although the yields are miniscule, such vines produce a highly distinctive wine. That is putting it mildly. **In the words of Matt Kramer from *Wine Spectator*, Bodega Chacra makes a "Pinot Noir like no other in my experience."**



My own thought is that Bodega Chacra is a lot more like the sturdy Burgundy Napoleon took with him to Russia than the more gossamer expression of today's Burgundy. In any event, **it is a fascinating and thoroughly original interpretation of this multifaceted variety, which no true Pinot Noir lover will want to miss.**

We are proud to present the **2009 Bodega Chacra "Barda" Pinot Noir at an introductory price of \$24.99.** Because quantities of this unique wine are limited, we suggest that you place your order early.

*Read on after the jump to get the rest of the amazing story behind Bodega Chacra.*



### [2009 Bodega Chacra - Barda Pinot Noir Río Negro](#)

Bodega Chacra's two other Pinot Noirs, *Treinta y Dos* and *Cincuenta y Cinco*, sell for over \$100 per bottle. Barda, which sells for about 1/3 as much, is the estate's "second wine." It is made from declassified lots of the first two wines, blended with

production from younger vines, to produce a more fruit-forward and readily accessible version of the first two. Deep ruby in color with garnet lights at the rim, the 2009 Barda opens with a bouquet of roses, ripe red berries, and a hint of earthiness. On the palate, Barda is smooth and supple, with a subtle denseness that belies its seemingly easy-going fruit. Although enjoyable now, Barda can be cellared for 3 to 4 years. Pair it with grilled duck, pan-seared salmon, veal, or hanger steak with pommes frites.

Regular price ~~\$29.99~~

**SALE! \$24.99**

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## The Story Behind Bodega Chacra

**A**lthough Piero Incisa della Rocchetta is the scion of the Italian winemaking family of Tenuta San Guido, which makes the celebrated Sassicaia, his true passion had long revolved around making French red Burgundy. Around ten years ago, a winemaker friend offered him a sample of a homemade Patagonian Pinot Noir. **Although it was totally unlike red Burgundy, Piero was simply blown away by its quality.**

The next summer, he was in Argentina scouring the desolate Patagonian landscape for a Pinot Noir vineyard of his own. After weeks of bouncing around the hinterlands in a dusty old truck, he finally saw exactly what he was looking for -- a vineyard with tiny bunches of small, concentrated grapes hanging from the thickest, most gnarled Pinot Noir vines he had ever seen.



**The rundown 7.4-acre vineyard he had stumbled upon had been planted nearly 70 years earlier**, and then virtually abandoned due to the harsh growing conditions of the region. Although untended and choked with weeds, he immediately recognized its potential. **The vines were planted on their original, un-grafted rootstocks**, something that had virtually ceased to exist in Burgundy, California or virtually anywhere else for that matter, due to phylloxera, a nasty vine pest. Because of Patagonia's isolation, it had never spread there.

In 2003, Piero purchased a few baskets of grapes from the owner of the vineyard, who had been planning to rip it out because it produced so little fruit. He then made a test batch of wine. It was stunning. He soon persuaded the owner to sell, and in 2004 he produced his first commercial release -- a precious 110 cases -- which he christened

*Treinta y Dos* ("1932"), in honor of the year the vineyard was planted.

## A Restoration Begins

Piero immediately set about restoring the vineyard, removing dead vines, redoing the trellis system, enlarging the canopies, and began to farm biodynamically. Over the next two years he discovered and purchased two additional old vine Pinot Noir vineyards, which led to the addition of two more Bodega Chacra wines. The first addition, from a vineyard planted in 1955, he christened "Cincuenta y Cinco." The newest wine, **Barda ("the Ridge")**, is **Bodega Chacra's entry-level Pinot Noir. It is blend of grapes from *Treinta y Dos* and *Cincuenta y Cinco*, blended with production from a fifteen-year-old vineyard located on the original *Treinta y Dos* property.**

Production standards are extremely high. All grapes are harvested by hand and de-stemmed before undergoing fermentation with natural yeast. Following fermentation, the wine is gravity-fed into a combination of new and used **French oak barrels, where it is matured for 11 months before being bottled without fining or filtration.**



Bodega Chacra will always be a labor of love. The climate is challenging, with low humidity and an average annual rainfall of just 7 inches. This aridity, coupled with a poor soil composed of clay, sand, sediments and limestone, severely limits yields. This is good for the wine, but limits the amount that can be produced. **Production is still less than 3,000 cases per year.**

Although but Piero hopes to increase production as time goes on, quantities of a wine like this can never be great. Bodega Chacra Pinot Noir is likely to remain a rarefied pleasure.