

CHACRA, BARDA PINOT NOIR 2013

PATAGONIA

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May 29, 2015

FIND THIS WINE

I was even more impressed by Chacra, Barda Pinot Noir 2013 Patagonia tasted at a presentation of some of the wines Lea & Sandeman are proudest of in London earlier this week. I gave it a score of 17 (a skyward score for me) and thought it particularly good value. Bodega Chacra has a fascinating, if slightly bizarre, history. The Rio Negro valley is essentially at 15-mile-wide glacial bed at about 750 m elevation in the middle of a desert. Thanks to the combination of altitude and latitude, there is marked diurnal temperature variation with summer nights averaging only 9C/48 F that helps prolong the growing season. Rainfall is minimal but irrigation channels have been in place since the early nineteenth century. The region's isolation helps to keep the air notably unpolluted. Thanks to the surrounding desert, there has never been phylloxera here so the vines are ungrafted. In 2004 Piero, nephew of Nicolo Incisa della Rocchetta most famous for the noble Sassicaia produced on his Bolgheri estate Tenuta San Guido and seen with the Chacra team above, fell for an ancient, abandoned vineyard planted in 1932 and then home to gnarled old Pinot vines on their own roots. Treinta y Dos is the exceedingly meagre produce of these ancient vines. Piero then added two further vineyards planted in 1955 and 1967 respectively from which, for obvious reasons, Cincuenta y Cinco and Sesenta Y Sete Pinot Noirs are produced.



Lea & Sandeman were also showing Chacra, Cincuenta y Cinco Pinot Noir 2011 which is about twice the price of the Barda (full single-bottle price E36.95 as opposed to E18.95) and will probably last longer, but I found the Barda much more attractive for current drinking. The produce of these particularly old vines is marked by some pretty grainy tannins which makes me wonder whether the vines are not just too old and the yields just too low for such a dry climate. (Chacra pride themselves on irrigating only five times a year).

Barda, which means Ridge, is designed as fourth wine based on ingredients deemed not quite up to scratch for the 32, 55 and 67 bottlings, together with the produce on a 10-acre vineyard planted earlier this century, on the original 1932 property where the outfit's winery is located, with cuttings from the much more senior vineyards. I have reason to believe that this particular vineyard is the rather immaculate one shown below. No, it doesn't look remotely like the Cote d'Or- but its produce is so non-sunbaked.



I loved the nose of the pale ruby 13.5% Barda Pinot made by the talented Hans Vinding-Diers, who aged this particular vintage for 12 months in mainly used French barriques. The nose has a convincing earthiness about it (I had just been tasting Pinots from California and Germany). The palate began with Pinot's trademark sweet fruit but this soon gave way to flirtatious lift and delicacy (not common in Argentine wine) with real refreshment value but not a hint of leanness. It's not all like any other Pinot Noir-based wine I can recall but I particularly liked the way it finished dry but not drying. I'd say you could drink this with or without food any time over the next three years, but it's already delicious and good buy at the price.

I'm delighted to see how far and wide the 50,000 bottles filled have travelled. It is relatively easy to find in the US and is also available in Canada, the UK, Italy, Sweden, Denmark, New Zealand and Russia.

As usual, the best prices recorded by [winesearcher.com](http://www.winesearcher.com) are in the US and mainland Europe. Lea & Sandeman, incidentally, charge only E16.95 for a bottle bought as part of a mixed case.

Back in Tuscany, Uncle Nicolo sounds rather bemused by this South American adventure, its produce so very, very different from anything grown in the Maremma. In our 112,000-strong database of tasting notes, we have reviews of Barda 2009 and Barda 2007. both garnering scores of 16.5, but this 2013 seems particularly fine to me. I wonder whether the produce of that newer vineyard is having a beneficial effect?.

