

RobertParker.com

The Independent Consumer's Guide to Fine Wines

## Patagonia

From the north I moved to the south. Patagonia is a huge region, mostly deserted. There are 1,700 hectares of vineyards in each of the provinces of Río Negro and Neuquén. While Río Negro is a traditional wine-growing region, Neuquén is a new development. Río Negro had plenty of old vineyards in the past, but not that many remain. They are the source of the best wines in the region. San Patricio de Chañar in Neuquén is a new wine region, created as water became available and the government lent money to develop the local economy by building large vineyards and wineries. The vineyards are all drip-irrigated and planted around 1999 - 2000. Río Negro is cooler than Neuquén, but Patagonia is a southern region, which in the southern hemisphere means cooler. It's the place for cool-climate varieties, Pinot Noir, Riesling, Merlot, and yes, Malbec! the same as many wineries from Mendoza source their Torrontés from Salta, those interested in Pinot Noir often come to Patagonia for it.

In Río Negro, the vineyards are on a long, thin strip of land by the river (Río Negro is the name of the river, the black river), basically an oasis, as it only rains 190 liters per year, but they have very good light (80% of days with sun), with cold winters and warm summers. The land is quite flat and it's very windy, so you have trees to act as wind barriers everywhere. The vineyards are always surrounded by poplar trees (álamos in Spanish). The quality leaders there are Chacra and Noemía, and the historic winery is Humberto Canale. Those were the three properties I visited, as I wanted to understand them better and taste in depth. Both Salta in the north and Patagonia in the south are a lot more isolated than Mendoza. For me it's easy to have access to wines from Mendoza, but not so easy to taste wines from the rest.

You only need to look at my scores and read the comments to realize that Chacra and Noemía do not only rank among the best from Patagonia, but among the best from all of Argentina. While Chacra focuses on Pinot Noir, Noemía's specialty is Malbec. Basically Noemía was my biggest surprise in a large tasting last year, so I decided I needed to go and see the place and the vineyards. Chacra, which produces the best Pinot Noir in South America, had never appeared in The Wine Advocate before. So the decision about who to visit was a no-brainer. Both wineries are foreign investments, both with Italian capital, and both sharing the same winemaker, Danish-born Hans Vinding-Diers, cousin of an old acquaintance of yours truly, Peter Sisseck of Pingus-fame in Ribera del Duero.

Noemi Marone Cinzano and Hans Vinding-Diers arrived in Río Negro when Hans started consulting for Humberto Canale and they fell in love with the place, found the old Malbec vineyard that is now the source for Noemía. They also found a very remote and isolated place in the Valle Azul, 50 kilometers away from Mainqué where the Noemía vineyard is. It is basically a plot of land in the middle of nowhere where they built their house and planted a new vineyard. They also persuaded Piero Incisa della Rocchetta, Marone-Cinzano's cousin to have a look at the Pinot Noir in the zone. He was also hooked. He located two vineyards, one planted in 1932 and the other one in 1955, and that's how Chacra was born. I conducted extensive tastings of both wineries and I think I now have a clear understanding of where they are coming from, and where they are going, with both producing their best wines in the 2013 vintage. More on their profiles and tasting notes.



Piero Incisa Della Rocchetta, the soul of Chacra

# BARDA 2014



August 2015

The just-bottled 2014 Barda could be the longest-lived of the four vintages I tasted. It looked like a very good vintage early on, with a few warm nights before the harvest. The grapes were picked quite early and vinification was softer than normal. They use the new barrels for Barda as they stopped using new oak for the Treinta y Dos, so there is a very slight note of wood, spices and smoke only noticeable when compared with the older vintages, but almost imperceptible out of that context. The palate is medium-bodied, with very primary flavors, fine-grained tannins that should get polish with a little bit of time in bottle. A very complete Pinot from Río Negro. 89,000 bottles produced. - Luis Gutierrez

91  
POINTS



# CHACRA 55 2014



## August 2015

The 2014 Cincuenta y Cinco feels very complete even at this early stage with good concentration, ripeness and balance. It combines the elegance of the 2013 with the exuberance of 2011. Since 2011 they went for a light toast of the barrels and also started using larger volume, 600-liter formats. The oak feels perfectly integrated in the wine. In the context this is more powerful, and has a little more concentration and ripeness, but it's still a very balanced and fresh. Different to 2013, but at the same high-quality level. 19,000 bottles produced.  
- Luis Gutierrez

94

POINTS



# Chacra 32 2013



## August 2015

The 2013 Treinta y Dos was the first vintage when there was no new oak whatsoever in the aging of the wine. Limpid, bright ruby-colored and showing a very subtle nose, this elegant and young wine is starting to show signs of complexity. There are nuances (wild herbs, fennel) that I didn't see in other vintages. There is tension and a fine thread of acidity, filigree, poise and great length. It has gobsmacking balance and great length. While it looks light, there is tremendous inner power, in the way of a powerful ballet dancer rather than a bodybuilder. Complete and long, this should age superbly in bottle, but it's hard to resist now. World-Class Pinot Noir from Patagonia. Super! 5,855 bottles produced. - Luis Gutierrez

96  
POINTS





# Barda 2013



August 2015

2013 was a cooler vintage and the light-colored 2013 Barda feels lighter and more delicate with raspberry leaf aromas that are quite ethereal and that have a slightly rustic and wild edge. The palate is extremely elegant with lively acidity that is very fresh and dances on your tongue as the flavor lingers in your mouth. Straight, linear and fresh, it is already developing elegance, tension and subtlety. This is a great Pinot from Patagonia at a very nice price. 50,000 bottles.-Luis Guitierrez

92  
POINTS



# Chacra 55 2013



## August 2015

They went for a slightly more reductive style in 2013, which shows as austere and backward in the 2013 Cincuenta y Cinco. That, combined with a cooler growing season resulted in a very elegant, subtle wine that is light-colored and has floral (roses, lilies) notes alongside wild strawberries and raspberries. It feels light but has very good concentration of flavors and enough clout, while keeping the poise. The tannins feel very refined, there is good freshness and acidity. It should have a very nice evolution in bottle. This would be the proverbial iron fist in a velvet glove. Bravo! 16,000 bottles.  
-Luis Gutierrez

94  
POINTS



# Chacra 32 2012



## August 2015

The 2012 Treinta y Dos had aromas of fountain pen ink, tempera paint, leather and something organic, akin to peat. This was one of the first vineyards to be harvested at the property in this vintage, which has a very restrained 13% alcohol. The palate has grainy, slightly dusty tannins ending quite dry. There is a nice wine here but beware of the animal quality of the aromas. 4,988 bottles produced. - Luis Gutierrez

90  
POINTS

