



CORNER

Argentine Shine

Rick Staff
with a remit to sniff, taste,
and spit his way around Nanjing
and disseminate the drinkable.

POINT SYSTEM
0-10 A WARNING
11-14 A Feasible Party Prop
15-17 Heartily Recommended
17-19 Exceptionally Good
20 The Apogee Of
WINE EXPRESSION



More than the sting of his first defeat at Stamford Bridge at the hands of Mourinho, what really queered the pitch for Ferguson was the Portuguese maestro producing a post-match bottle of Argentine Shiraz; though I wonder if the tempestuous Scotsman went as far as to actually taste the contents of the offending bottle. Malbec, being Argentina's well merited wine badge of honour through a reliably exuberant and velvety textured style, which now pretty much owns the grape, has singlehandedly made Argentina a major player as a wine exporter, almost completely obscuring the more abstruse and gritty examples to be found in its mother country, France. This prominence of Malbec has put anything else from the vineyards of Argentina in the shadowlands, where football managers and other aspirant sophisticates fear to tread. Americans, in particular, are sold on the stuff; wine being as subject to fashion as any other industry, Argentine wine is in danger of industry devastation from one flick of the fickle tail of American whim.

Thus the Argentines are busy making more baskets for their vineous eggs. San Juan valley, to the north of the mighty Mendoza (the main engine of Argentine wine production), is one area rapidly and creditably increasing its Shiraz plantation among the ubiquitous Malbec vines. Typically less punchy and juicier than the Australian fruit-bombs which have laid claim to the grape in the new world, they have in common a useful spicy kick. Osaado Shiraz 2011 (¥78) is in such a style; quieter on fruit definition at first it firms up to a peppered tannic thrust at the finish, it is a refreshing alternative to the Aussie paradigm and could stand a light chill for warmer day glugging (16 points). Also hailing from San Juan, the Signos Shiraz 2011 (¥70) has a similar slosh of jammy juice, with a spicy lift at the edges, though more firmly shaped throughout and a tad fruitier than the Osaado, and makes for a good Chili partner (16 points, raised from 15.5 after an hour in a decanter). Both Shiraz can be found at Newold Wine World in New City Plaza.

If you feel the need for a real spring in your step (as opposed to the ersatz teasing from the elements at this time of year), then the peachily floral grape Torrontés should fit the bill. A green-skinned grape which has a claim to be Argentina's second signature variety with little to be found outside the country and, paralleling the famous Malbec, is an émigré (being originally from Spain) just beginning to emerge from the shade of its compadre. The Suelo Argento Torrontés 2011 carries notes of white flowers among citrus and hints of mint; light and dry with a lively acidity lasting to a long finish; a perfect aperitif and all this for just ¥65 from Metro (15.5 points).

Older wine is always remarkable and sometimes undrinkable; generally Chardonnay, apart from some of the more venerable Chablis and Torrontés especially, are intended for early drinking for their liveliest and most voracious expression. Callia Alta Chardonnay/ Torrontés 2007 (¥96, another find from Newold Wine World) is pale and bright and very fresh in its more nubile stages; at the seven year mark the liquid is enveloped by a dull-gold tan, suggesting the beginnings of oxidation, however, those muted shades still hold thrall with rich and warm, extremely rounded, sherryish, flavours on the tongue which mingle perfectly with a ripe blue cheese, the sense of curtain fall imbuing an overarching elegiac cadence. Moved to tears by the third glass, beaming by the fifth, and scoring an "interesting" 15 points. **N**