

U3A Wine Appreciation Group: Eighth Lockdown Newsletter

Welcome

Hello Wine Appreciation members, this is the eighth of our regular emails during the Coronavirus period of restrictions.

Members Feedback

Many thanks to Val Worthington for the following piece relating to the wines of Austria covered by Nick in the last Newsletter.

Heurigen

Some years ago Geoff and I lived in Grinzing which is a suburb of Vienna on the fringes of the Vienna woods. It is an area well known for its Heurigen. They are wine bars where the owners grow their own grapes and serve it to their customers when it is newly pressed and bottled. It is often only a couple of weeks old. In the mid 18th century King Josef gave permission for the owners of these establishments to serve their wares, the custom has continued to this day. They are very attractive places and nowadays you can have food as well as wine. The most popular wine is Grüner Veitliner and it is served in large glasses, almost reminiscent of tankards. We of course were keen to join in the traditions of the area and visited our favourite Heuriger frequently. However, the wine gave us what I can only describe as “gut rot.” Geoff reverted to drinking Zweigelt which was palatable but to this day I could never face even trying a sip of the dreaded Grüner Veitliner!

To be fair that was in the early 1990’s and I am sure there is good Grüner Veitliner available now, I did see some on the shelves at Waitrose but was not tempted.

Val



Thanks to Ken Arkell for the second attachment to the email distributing this newsletter.
Certain to raise our spirits without consumption!

If you have wine-related news or information to share, please let us have that and we will try to include that in the next newsletter. Also, if you are able to offer help to or if you need help from any members, please let us know and we'll share that as necessary

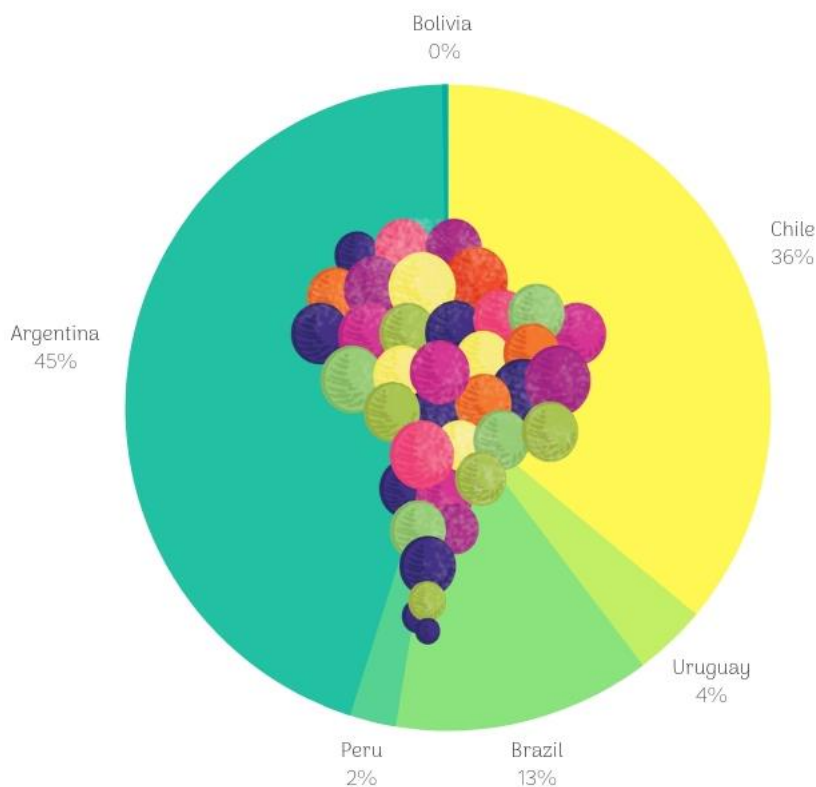
Study topic

We are a learning organisation so each newsletter will cover one wine learning subject each time. Your suggestions for future subjects and the way that the subject is covered will be gratefully received.

This time the topic is the wine of Uruguay

South America wine production (in figures): Argentina, Chile, Uruguay, Brazil, Bolivia & Peru

written by Amanda Barnes | October 29th, 2019,



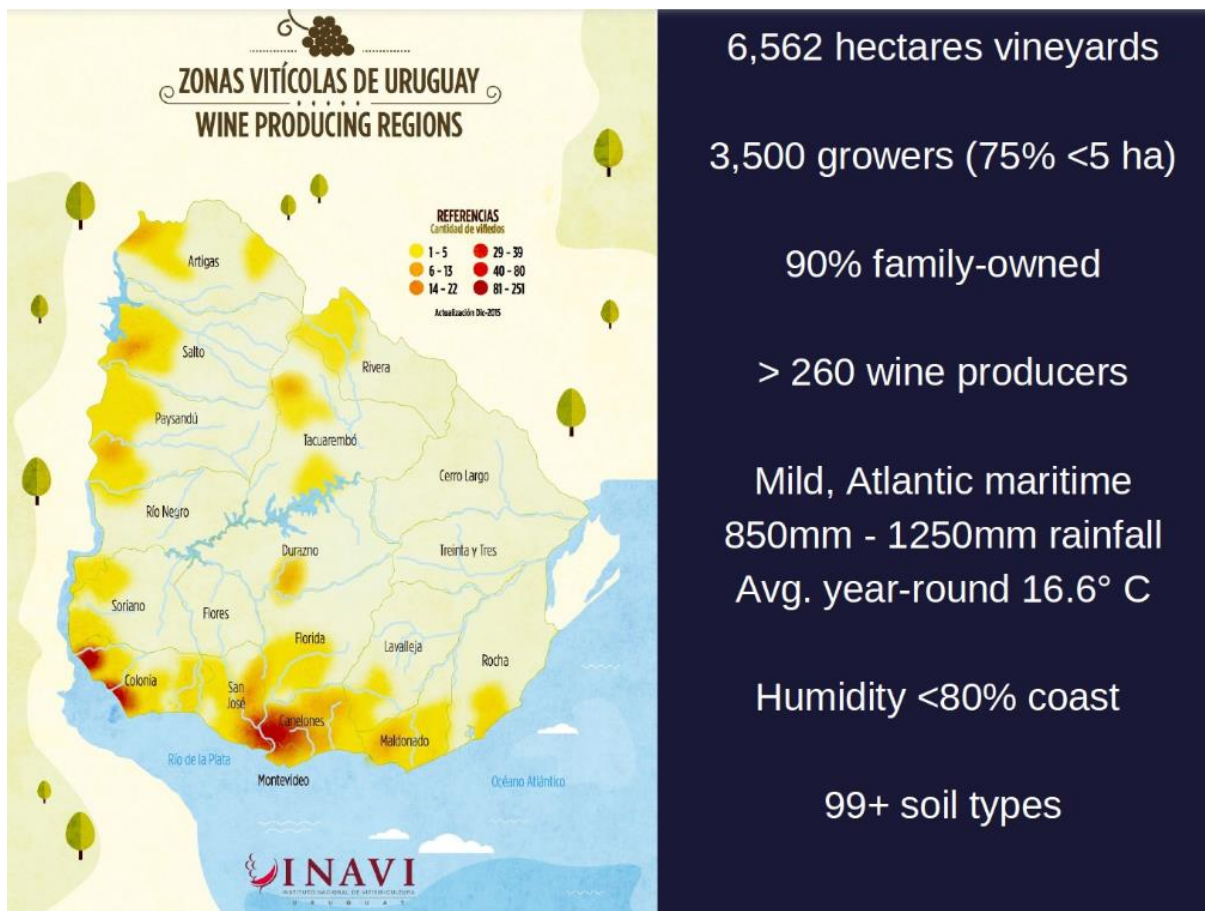
Uruguay may be one of the smallest countries in South America but it has quite a few big claims to its name. With the largest wine consumption outside of Europe (an impressive 28 litres per capita), wine is always on the menu in Uruguay.

Uruguayan wine production started in the 1600s with the first European settlers who brought their winemaking and winegrowing traditions to the continent following the Spanish

colonisation. Many of Uruguay's wine families today can trace roots back to wine regions in Spain, Italy and France among other European wine countries.

In the 1970s the Uruguayan wine industry turned its focus toward the production of finer, higher quality wines and in 1988 the Vitivinicultural National Institute's (INAVI) work with State growers to modernize the industry and to help with economic plans marked 20 years of improved quality and modernization.

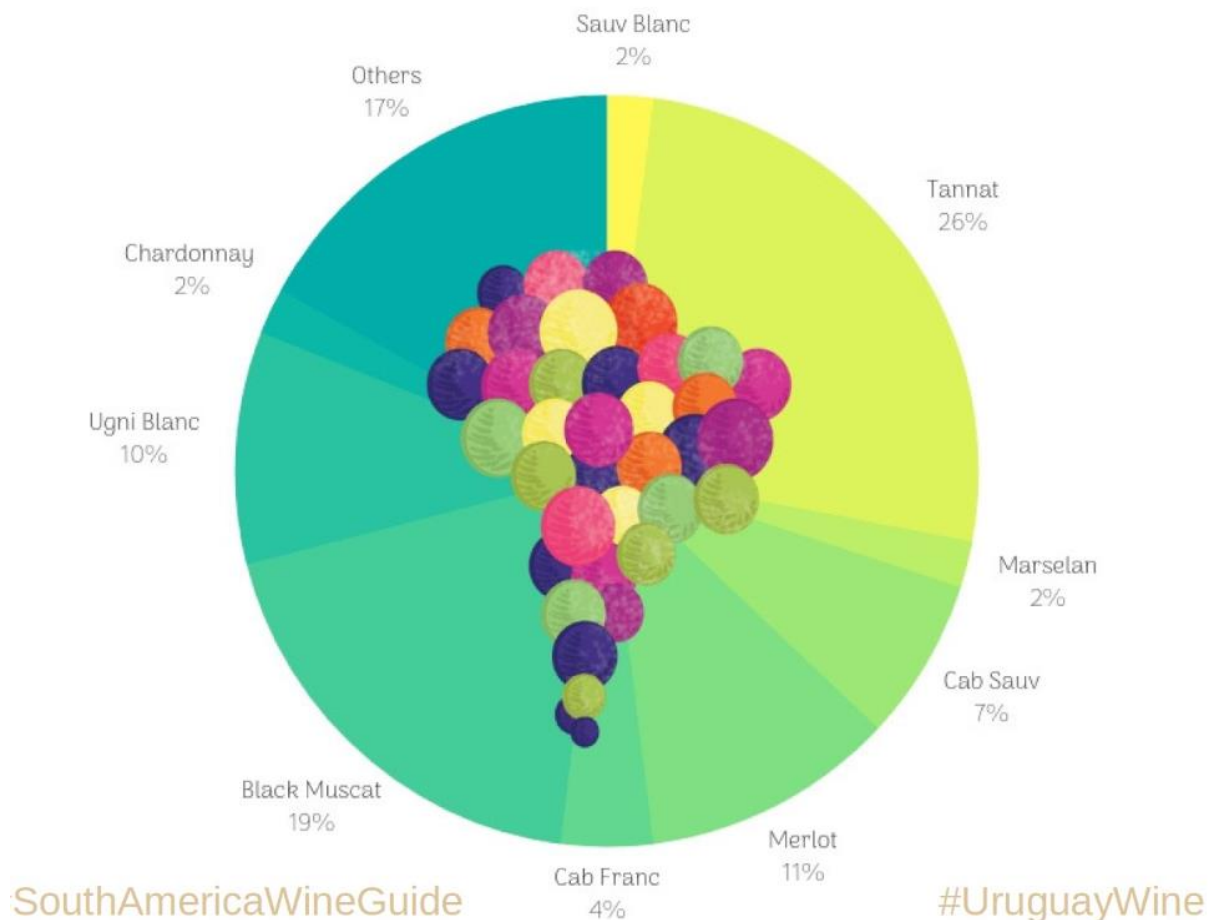
How many wine producers are there in Uruguay? Uruguay has over 3,500 growers, most of less than five hectares in size. There are over 260 wineries in Uruguay and the majority of those are small family-owned businesses. Uruguay's wineries enjoy sunshine over 220 days a year, and the Atlantic coast keeps the vineyards well ventilated. The subtropical climate mirrors that of Bordeaux France and soil conditions and quality control are closely monitored. Residing on approximately the same latitude as Chile's and Argentina's wine belts, Uruguay enjoys a similar climate as well as the same success as its neighbours. Uruguay's exports are to other Latin American countries as well as Europe and to specific regions of the United States. By 2015 the UK had become the third largest importer of wine from Uruguay after Brazil and the USA but much of this is supplied through the restaurant trade.



Uruguay's wine regions are spread all over the country, however the majority of wine production is concentrated in the coastal regions – especially in Canelones outside of the capital city of Montevideo. Over 60% of Uruguay's wine production comes from Canelones. Almost in the middle of the coastline, Canelones is home to two-thirds of the country's producers—most of whose holdings are family run and boutique in size. However there is considerable growth further along the coast in the region of Maldonado at the moment too, and pockets of discovery in the western, central and northern territories of Uruguay too.

Pioneered in 2001 by [Alto de la Ballena](#), Maldonado a cooler coastal region, has experienced fast growth; more than a dozen producers are located there today, drawn to the poorer, rocky soils and cooler temperatures that are suitable for a wide range of red and white varieties. The biggest producer in Maldonado, and one of Uruguay's leading exporters in value (exporting over 250,000 liters annually to the USA), is [Bodega Garzón](#), founded by Argentine billionaire Alejandro Bulgheroni, who has invested over \$1 billion over the last decade in wine estates across four continents.

The climate of Uruguay's main wine regions along the coastline is a mild maritime Atlantic climate, similar to that of Bordeaux. Annual rainfall is between 850mm and 1250mm a year, and the climate is an average of 16C year round.



These are 2018 figures. When Uruguay converted to quality wine production from the 1970s onwards, international consultants and flying winemakers were quick to advise the wineries to keep their Tannat vines and make it the champion of Uruguay which it has remained.

Grape types

[Tannat](#) (red) has a deep violet colour with aromas of black plums, raspberries, liquorice and spice. It has a dry, mouth-watering acidity, grippy tannins and a full body. Traditionally Tannat was given a long extraction with at least a year's barrel ageing and another year in bottle, but modern styles use gentle maceration techniques and some have no oak influence at all. Strength is usually 13-14%.

Tannat found a natural affinity with the Uruguayan climate and with over 1,600 hectares dedicated to the variety around Uruguay's different wine regions, there's a huge diversity of styles of Tannat to discover. Although Tannat originates in South West France, it has unquestionably made Uruguay its home — and, with some of the best single-variety Tannat wines in the world, Uruguay has mastered Tannat. The thick skins of this variety originally from the Basque region of France are resistant to the humid conditions and hardier to changes in vintage, delivering good quality wines year on year — suiting Uruguay's changeable coastal climate down to a tee. Tannat's resistant nature — able to handle heavy rain and drought, while always delivering acidity, colour and aroma — meant it survived throughout the 20th century, always adding value to a grower's vineyard, even alongside the busy hybrid varieties that were popular throughout much of the 20th century. It has remained a staple in Uruguay's vineyards ever since Pascual Harriague first introduced it to the country in the 1870s (and is still often called Harriague after its pioneer).

A cross between Grenache and Cabernet Sauvignon, [marselan](#) (red) is well suited to the humid conditions of Uruguay (with its naturally high resistance to mildew and botrytis) and can produce quality wines year on year. A medium bodied wine with finer tannins, rich colour and deep notes of cherry and blackberries. You'll find Marselan planted in some of the most traditional regions of Canelones but also in the new coastal regions in the north. Marselan is often blended but also found as a single variety. Top Uruguayan Marselan wines to try include wines by [Traversa](#), [Garzon](#) and Familia [Familia Deicas](#).

[Albarino](#) is currently a rising star in Uruguay. Considering the country's maritime climate, which is similar to that of Galicia and northern Portugal, it's no surprise that it thrives here. But it wasn't until recently that Albariño was first planted in Uruguay—by the [Bodega Bouza](#) family in their Canelones vineyard in the early 2000s. The thick skins of Albariño prepare it well for the more humid weather, and it produces aromatic, fresh and characterful wines. Uruguay's Albariño wines can be enjoyed young but recent vintages are seeing some of the more complex styles that can be aged for a few years. Another key Albariño player is [Bodega Garzon](#) in Maldonado, producing more Albariño than anyone else. And other wineries making Albariño wines today include [Bodega Oceania Jose Ignacio](#) and [Juanico](#).

Where to buy wine from Uruguay

[Vin Wine Merchants](#) (6 Queen Street, Emsworth, 01243 698838) certainly has Uruguayan wines, currently offering free delivery on 6 bottles but no online wine list. [Wines of Uruguay](#)

is a specialist importer with whites and reds from £9.99 upwards. [The Fine Wine Company](#) has a good selection of red, white and some rose mostly from Garzon.

Lottery win wines, sorry vineyards!

Usually this is one of an occasional series about the world's greatest (and most expensive) wines. Ones which probably are only something we could only consider buying after a very big lottery win and even then might balk at the price! However, this time we are concerned with a vineyard, where even the largest lottery win in the world would only buy part of the land!

One of the major Bordeaux wine regions is Médoc, where the grandest châteaux each produce about 20,000 cases a year. On the other hand Pomerol is the smallest of the major Bordeaux wine regions. The vineyards of leading Pomerols — Pétrus, Le Pin, Lafleur and L'Église-Clinet — are roughly the area of St James's Park in London. Durantou of L'Église-Clinet rarely produces more than 1,000 cases in a vintage. There is no classification system, so price alone defines where each château is located in the pecking order, and the top three Pomerols are the most expensive wines in Bordeaux. L'Église-Clinet is the “bargain” of the Pomerols at 3 to 10 times less expensive than the other three. Typical pricing for the 2016 vintage per bottle is L'Église-Clinet £230, LaFleur £800, Le Pin £2,500 and Petrus £3,000.

But the real money is to be found in the value of the vineyard ground. A portion of Château Pétrus was sold recently, which valued the entire property of 11.4 hectares or 28 acres at £900 million. It is difficult to explain the reason for this, although there is an old saying in Bordeaux that the Médoc is the equivalent of a refined aristocratic lady, and St Émilion a friendly peasant girl, while Pomerol is the courtesan of wines.

Members cellar

In this section we'll share information about your current favourite bottle or something you're saving for a special occasion, please let us have that and we'll include in future newsletters.

The best wine or wine experience

Do you have a real wine highlight either the wine itself or the overall experience? Please email in to share with other members?

Happy Drinking. Keep happy!

Cheers

Steve

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