

The Passionate Foodie

Sharing My Passion for Good Food, Wine, Saké & Spirits.

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THE WINES OF URUGUAY (PART 2)

BY RICHARD AUFFREY

If you examine the location and climate of Uruguay, there is little question why it is an excellent location for vineyards. It is located on the same latitude as South Africa and Adelaide, Australia. The Uruguayan climate is very conducive, with a predominantly maritime climate and about 1000mm of rain annually. The high amount of rainfall is possibly the greatest climatic obstacle to the vineyards, but Uruguayans have learned how to adapt.

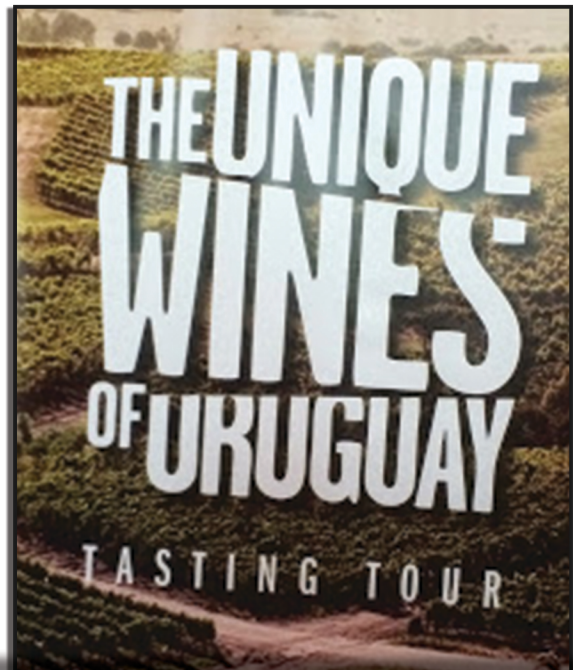
Their vineyards are planted with about 72% red varieties with Tannat, at 43%, leading the group. In a land where beef is king, it is easy to see why red wines are so popular, especially when most of their production is consumed within the country. The other main red grapes include 21% Merlot, 13% Cabernet Sauvignon, and 7% Cabernet Franc. You'll also find grapes such as Arinarnoa, Marselan, Tempranillo, Syrah, Zinfandel, Petit Verdot, Sangiovese, Pinot Noir, and Nebbiolo. A number of these grapes show the clear influence of Italian, Basque and Spanish immigrants.

As for white grapes, plantings include 27% Chardonnay, 22% Sauvignon Blanc, 8% Sémillon, and 5% Viognier. In addition, you'll find minor plantings of grapes like

Albariño seem to be additional immigrants from Spanish vineyards. Several researchers

The Uruguayans which

has more Tannat vineyards than the rest of the world combined. France probably has the second highest amount of Tannat vineyards though the grape has spread across the world, from Australia to South Africa. In the U.S., Tannat can be found in California, Maryland and Virginia, and in South America, Tannat is also found in Argentina, Bolivia, Peru and Brazil.



As exports continue to increase, you'll be hearing more and more about Uruguayan wines, and based on my recent tasting of their wines, you'll want to drink these wines.

Madiran AOC. Sometime before 1870, it is believed that Basque immigrants brought Tannat vines to South America and they ended up in Uruguay. The vines adapted well to the climate of Uruguay and it quickly became considered the national grape. This reminds me of Malbec, how that French grape thrived in Argentina and became their signature