

VINOGRAPHY: a wine blog

Wine and food adventures in San Francisco and around the world

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The Quiet Neighbor: An Introduction to Uruguayan Wine

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When prompted with the phrase "South American Wine" even the most experienced wine lovers will likely call to mind only the wines of Chile and Argentina. Perhaps the most adventurous might have had a wine from Brazil. But very few people have tasted, let alone heard of wines from Uruguay. In fact, a random sampling of adults I interrogated proved that some didn't even know on which continent they were found (some guessed Africa).

Though it languishes in obscurity, thanks in part to the long shadow cast by its neighbor and friendly arch-rival Argentina, Uruguay has been producing wine for well over 100 years, and in the last thirty years, some of that wine has become extremely high in quality. Add to that the charms of the Uruguayan coastline, culture and cuisine, and you've got a sub rosa wine destination of epic proportions. Mark my words, Uruguayan wine is South America's hidden gem.

Simply put, Uruguay is the most democratic country in South America (and ranks higher than the US in objective democracy scores). It is also ranked #1 in South America for peace, lack of corruption, quality of living, digital government capabilities, size of its middle class relative to the overall population, prosperity, and security.

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The unfortunate fact that the Portuguese and Spanish essentially killed or drove out all the native peoples in the 15th through the 17th centuries means that more than 90% of the population are of immigrant descent, which has resulted in a remarkable lack of racial tensions in the country.

On a per capita basis, Uruguay contributes more troops to the United Nations than any other country on earth. It is ranked second in South America for economic freedom, income equality, and per-capita income. Its constitution guarantees religious freedom; it ranks 26th in the world on measures of press freedom (the US is at 46); and it formally legalized abortion in 2012, same sex marriage and cannabis in 2013. Voting in national elections is compulsory, and failure to do so will result in fines and the inability to renew your driver's license. In 2009 Uruguay became the first country in the world to guarantee one laptop per child in every school. Schools by the way, are free to all citizens from pre-school through university.

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By: Alder Yarrow, Founder & Editor, Vinography

