Lo Tengo 2002 Malbec, Mendoza

8 Nov 2004 by JR

It's not often that I bother to show my children a new wine label. It's even rarer for any of them to laugh spontaneously at one of them. But so it was when I showed both my 18-year-old giant and his 11-year-old sister this new offering from Bodega Norton in Argentina. Its British importers Berkmann Wine Cellars are so fed up with the way so many wines are now sold in the supermarkets merely on the basis of regular 'promotions' (ie, shelf space bought through regular offers at discounted prices) that they have put some real effort into packaging.

This bottle carries this atmospheric black-and-white photograph of a couple - knee to toe only - doing the tango on a paved street remarkably reminiscent of the San Telmo market district of Buenos Aires. By harnessing what I'm told is lenticular technology, in three dimensions the picture 'moves' when you do - just like some of the cards that kids collect. So as you sway your head in front of the bottle, or walk past it in the supermarket aisles, it seems as though the couple really are dancing, hence the name *lo tengo* or, 'I've got it'.

I should say however that I viewed the label of this wine only after tasting it from an unlabelled bottle and thinking it rather delicious on its own merits. For the past few years I have not been knocked out by the quality of Norton's wines. The most interesting aspects of my visit there last February were their investment in China (see a report on the burgeoning wine scene in China and a recent post in your turn - both in purple pages 2003) and discussion of various viticultural techniques. Although I see in my notebook a quote from Michael Halstrick, the *bodega*'s youthful director and stepson of its Austrian owner Gernot Langes-Swarovski, 'this is a great opportunity for Argentina. We need some new surprises in the market, new products.' Ah ha!

Well this youthful, ultra-modern Malbec tastes very juicy and fruity and warm and comforting. Apparently my fellow British Master of Wine and roving wine consultant Angela Muir had a hand in the blend, which includes a little bought-in Tempranillo, so perhaps she injected that little bit of excitement to the wine - or perhaps it's tasting particularly good at the moment because the 2002 vintage was so good and it is still enjoying the bloom of youth. To be honest, I can't really see any connection with the tango other than its country of origin, but I would heartily recommend it as a very worthy - fruitier? - rival to the established branded Argentine Malbec at the same price from Catena, Argento. A bottle of sunshine for winter drinking.

Now I have to come clean and admit that at present it is available only in Britain, indeed only at Sainsbury's stores in Britain for the next four months, at £4.99.