Tapiz Malbec 2007 Luj□n de Cuyo

7 Apr 2009 by Jancis Robinson

From £7.99, $15.12 in the US, $41 in Brazil

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Purple pagers know that in my tasting notes I am horribly stingy with the suffix GV for 'good value' but in Great value from Argentina recently I found myself positively littering my notes with GVs and even the odd VGV. These were mainly reds retailing around £9 in the UK and, unusually, for a bit more than the dollar equivalent in the US. British wine lovers may not realise that Argentine wine is much more fashionable in the US than it is in the UK, has a much higher status there than Chilaen wine for instance, and has been steadily taking ground from the likes of Australia for some time.

I did notice that a significant proportion of my GVs were given to wines made by Tapiz in Mendoza and NQN much further south in Patagonia, both ranges imported into the UK by Hispa Merchants (www.hispamerchants.com, tel 020 8740 4556, fax 020 8740 4466, sales@hispamerchants.com). Please note that Hispa's website is out of date and that they list only the 2004 vintage, but are currently selling the 2007 at £8.49.

For sheer value I was particularly taken by the current release of Tapiz's regular version of Mendoza's classic grape variety, **Tapiz, Agrelo Malbec 2007 Luján de Cuyo.** The nose was intriguingly, even tautly, mocha but there was none of the heavy syrupiness of texture or hot, alcoholic finish that used to dog many Argentine reds. What I loved about it was that it had such great intensity of flavour, but also great balance with wonderful freshness on the finish and yet seemed to have enough structure to be worth ageing for two or three years too - not bad for a wine that you can buy from AdVintage Wine Merchants for £7.99 per handsome (and possibly naughtily heavy) bottle. I admit that I did not lift it and apologise in advance if I am recommending a bottle that should be rights belong to my Name and shame heavy bottles campaign.

The Malbec comes from Agrelo at 900 m above sea level in the Luján de Cuyo subdistrict outside the city of Mendoza, the first to be accorded its own appellation, and Tapiz, or rather the company that owns Bodega Tapiz, Fincas Patagonicas, owns hundreds of hectares of fine vineyards in a range of different hand-picked locations around Argentina - including Salta to the north but not, despite the name, in Patagonia. Their **Tapiz Cabernet Sauvignon 2007 Mendoza** was also extremely good, and VGV - and also 'just' 13.5% alcohol. I found notes of bitter chocolate and fresh tobacco on the nose of this wine, which should last a year or two more than the Malbec, I would imagine – although it doesn't seem as widely distributed as the Malbec, which is on offer in the UK, US, Brazil and Argentina, according to wine-searcher.com. **Tapiz, Reserve Malbec 2005 Uco Valley** is also very good - more complex, but probably not quite such a good buy at around £12.

My enthusiasm for Tapiz reds is based on a recent tasting in London of some of the Argentine wines imported into the UK by specialists Hispa Merchants and Las Bodegas (sales@lasbodegas.co.uk, tel 01435 874442, fax: 01435 873 796). Coincidentally I visited Club Tapiz on my last visit to Argentina and was impressed by the smart little hotel and and restaurant they have created on this old homestead with stunning views just outside Mendoza.

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