

Six from Gimenez Mendez


In the South American league table for production of wine Uruguay takes fourth place behind Argentina, Chile and then Brazil. The vine arrived in the country in 1870 having been introduced by settlers who naturally brought the varieties from their Basque homeland which straddles the Pyrenees and includes the vineyards of southwest France. Thus the predominant red variety is Tannat, known locally as Harriague, and the whites feature Petit Manseng; anyone who knows the Madiran and Jurançon appellations will be familiar with the potential of these two varieties. Nevertheless, as the wines are not heavily exported, and there is a ready local market in the shape of the thirsty populace, my experience of the wines of Uruguay is not expansive. There


are, however, a few Uruguayan producers making real efforts to develop export markets, and recently I had the pleasure to taste six wines from one such producer, Gimenez Mendez.




Luis A. Gimenez founded this eponymously named winery in 1990 having first accrued 40 years of experience in the business. There are 100 hectares planted up, naturally featuring Tannat, but also varieties both less and more familiar, including Arinarnoa (a Merlot-Petit Verdot crossing), Torrontés (a white variety readily associated with the vineyards of Argentina) and of course the internationals, lead by Cabernet Sauvignon and Shiraz. There are moves afoot to seek export of the wines to the UK and other markets, so expect to see these wines appearing on a shelf near you soon. The Super Premium Tannat, the last wine tasted here, is certainly worth watching out for. Although currently not imported into the UK, these wines were sourced by Future Wines & Spirits, who can be contacted on 0207 898 0564. (23/5/08)

Six from Gimenez Mendez - Tasting Notes

Tasted in **May 2008**. Click  for stockists.

Gimenez Mendez Sauvignon Blanc (Las Brujas, Uruguay) 2007: This wine has a very pale hue, in fact it is almost crystal clear, showing just a faint tinge of straw. The nose is very pungent, filled to the brim with grassy, weedy, green capsicum aromas. It has a very full-on character on the palate, with a very firm and forceful structure. There is plenty of tart acidity, a lot of green, grassy character, and again a pungent style as on the nose. A firm although slightly juicy style, dominated through to the finish by that firm acidity. 14/20 

Gimenez Mendez Tannat Rosé (Las Brujas, Uruguay) 2008: An electric colour here; a vibrant, deep, blood-red sunset-pink hue. The nose is all cherries, canned strawberries, vanilla and cream. On the palate it seems full and weighty, with nice acidity, a fleshy depth, with some good grip and even a little tannin at the back. It has rather sweet fruit, although overall it possesses a dry and nicely composed if rather firm and matronly style. There's even a little extract with that tannin. Certainly no shortage of flavour here, this is a decent, forcefully composed rosé. 15/20 

Gimenez Mendez Syrah Rosé (Las Brujas, Uruguay) 2008: Another vibrant pink hue, with a confectioned nose of bubblegum, boiled sweets and canned strawberries, with a peppery, leafy edge. A touch metallic - tinned boiled sweets I suppose - with more strawberries and cream on the palate, with a firm, leafy, zippy acidity and a soft, rounded texture. It is slightly fleshy, with an understated slightly green finish. 13/20 

Gimenez Mendez Alta Reserva Tannat (Las Brujas, Uruguay) 2007: A rich, dark, glossy hue here, with a youthful, purple-blue rim. A nose of caramel toffee, with dark, chocolatey fruit, immediately evident as the bottle is opened, and persisting in the glass together with some

sweet cola-tinged fruit. A soft and ripe palate, fleshy, with ripe tannins and very soft acidity. This has an overly ripe, chocolatey, heavily oaked style, with lots of extract and texture, and a firmer, slightly bitter finish, although later on it showed in a less blowsy fashion, firmer, with less oak evident, but more dark chocolate fruit. A very sweetly composed and modern style. 14/20 🔍

Gimenez Mendez Premium Tannat (Las Brujas, Uruguay) 2006: A deep and almost inky hue, a dark purple-black. The nose is somewhat surprising, showing a really lively raft of fruit, although it is very much in the blueberry and blackberry vein, spiced with ground coffee, and also notes of intensely concentrated caramel and dark chocolate, although these two elements are not dominating as they are in the Reserva. A fresher entry to the palate, although with plenty of super-ripe fruit, extract, tannin and chocolatey depth. Lots of substance here, and although ripe and fleshy enough to drink now, provided the full-on style appeals, it also has the substance for the cellar. 16+/20 🔍

Gimenez Mendez Super-Premium Tannat (Las Brujas, Uruguay) 2006: A dark and concentrated colour, with a deep, rich, fruity nose, showing svelte blueberry fruit mixed with new oak. Very toasty in style, very rich, with a dark, slightly charcoaly edge, redolent of hot and smoking embers - I suspect much of this character comes from the oak. Rich, almost silky, delicious, creamy, but with substance. A great depth of ripe tannins, and a fine length too. This is very modern in style, but packed with substance, and it has a creamy but stylish composition, with a broad, impressive, deliciously savoury finish. A good length too. This is certainly the cream of this particular portfolio. Excellent potential. 17.5+/20 🔍