

# SOUTH AMERICA WITH THE SOMMELIER

Long Room Wine and Food Society members George and Maureen Swinburne were part of an RACV Club tour of South American wine regions earlier this year with the RACV sommelier paving the way for an unforgettable taste of the continent's finest wine and food. George kept extensive notes and they are reproduced here for the interest of those who one day might follow in his footsteps...



During the last week of February and the first week of March we had the privilege of being part of a group of 17 undertaking a 15-night Wine and Food tour of Chile, Argentina and Uruguay which was under the auspices of the RACV Club Tours in Melbourne.

The actual tour was packaged by an English firm Arblaster and Clark Wine Tours who provided an affable Spanish-speaking English tour guide, Fay Johnston. Fay had previously escorted a similar tour and ensured the smooth running of our tour and was a fountain of knowledge when called upon. Arblaster and Clark organise wine tours in Europe, South America and USA and their professionalism was evidenced by the fact that most of our group had been on a previous tour to France and were eager to sample the South American offerings.

Apart from the five-star accommodation and luxury buses (which might normally transport 40-plus passengers), we also enjoyed premium wines and a number of epicurean lunches and dinners and a daily buffet breakfast. The "icing on the cake" was that the RACV Club Sommelier Christian Maier (originally from France) also escorted our tour and he had undertaken extensive research on the wineries we would visit, their signature wines and the varieties of wine we would experience and we jotted down or received extensive wine notes.

At the wineries we were generally greeted by owners or senior executives, chief winemakers and highly trained guides. Christian related to all of them and I am sure that as a result of his questions, knowledge and enthusiasm they generally went "the extra mile" to make our visit memorable. We actually flew into Santiago four nights before the tour commenced and stayed at the Plaza El Bosque Ebro Hotel in Santiago which we found convenient to the subway, buses and the hop-on hop-off bus with a stop around the corner.

Santiago is a clean and interesting city for a tourist and we easily filled in our time before our tour commenced. There are good Art Galleries, Museums, Cathedrals and a wide array of cafés, bars and restaurants, markets and other tourist attractions. A highlight was the Changing of the Guard with the Carabineros' Band and the new Guard at Plaza de la Constitución. Plaza El Bosque Ebro Hotel was the hotel where the tour commenced and we enjoyed the buffet breakfasts and some meals at the Penthouse Restaurant, as well as dining at other various restaurants close by the hotel.

On the first evening of our tour the group walked to and dined at Kilometre 0 Restaurant. It was quite spectacular being located in an atrium with wine bottles lining all walls for a height of at least 40 feet. The menu was a set menu and we had an excellent fish as our main and a good selection of wines. Our first visit on the Monday was to the boutique Antiyal Wine Estate of Vina Acquitana in Maipo where winemaker Alvaro Espinoza was passionate about his bio-dynamic and organic grape growing and we tasted their premium wines. All grapes were hand harvested and, interestingly, bottles were being hand labelled and wrapped in tissue paper.

After inspecting the vines and winery, the wines tasted included the Sparkling Brut Nature de Sol de Sol comprising 40% Chardonnay and 60% Pinot Noir aged initially in French Oak and then two years in bottles. An excellent start followed by

the Sol de Sol 2015 Sauvignon Blanc with a magnificent aroma of many fruits and an excellent dry finish.

Chardonnay and Pinot Noir don't generally appeal to me but the Sol de Sol 2011 Chardonnay and the 2011 Sol de Sol Pinot Noir both appealed and the Pinot Noir was excellent, as was the "top of the line" 2011 Lazuli Cabernet Sauvignon, a dark red cherry and plum wine and the 2015 Aquitania Reserve Syrah. We then consumed more of these over a leisurely lunch in the garden before being transported on to Santa Cruz where we spent the night at the Santa Cruz Plaza Hotel.

This was just a start!! It was apparent next morning that I would be writing a book if I were to go into detail on all the wines as we commenced with the tasting of nine wines at Vina Montes huge new Apalta Estate in the Colchagua Valley. Montes is a vast operation and has a number of vineyards in Chile. Montes wines have been available in Australia for more than 20 years.

Save to say that after an extensive tour of the winery, we had a memorable tasting under the eye of winemaker Aurelio Montes. We tasted the 2015 Limited Selection Sauvignon Blanc from Leyda Valley, the excellent 2015 Outer Limits Sauvignon Blanc from Aconcagua Valley, the 2014 Limited Selection Pinot Noir and the 2014 Alpha Pinot Noir from Aconcagua Valley. I was disappointed in the 2012 Alpha Dry Farmed Merlot from the Colchagua Valley, but the 2013 Alpha Dry Farmed Cabernet Sauvignon and the 2013 Alpha Dry Farmed Syrah from the Colchagua Valley were both excellent.

The 2013 Purple Angel Carmenere was excellent and the 2012 Montes Folly (which I rated a 10/10 "pick of the crop") were again both from the Colchagua Valley. As was the case with most of our extensive wine tastings, the tables were a mass of glasses, water jugs and wine spittoons. In common with Europe, most wineries in South America still use corks, however the wines exported by Montes to Australia have screw caps.



**George and Maureen at a structured tasting at Montes Wine Estate.**

Following our tasting, we were transported in vans high on the hill to a BBQ entertaining area with stunning views of the vineyard where we experienced a delicious BBQ, while consuming a further selection of Montes wines. Fortunately, we had the afternoon and evening at leisure in Santa Cruz where we enjoyed snacks around the pool and an early night.

Carmenere has become a flagship varietal wine of Chile. It originated from France, and was widely used in Bordeaux during the early 19th century, but was eradicated from Europe during the phylloxera plague of 1860. Chilean wine production from the end of the 1800s was initially made up entirely from plant cuttings of the six main varieties from France. However, in the early 1970s it was discovered that the original Cabernet cutting and plantings had been mixed with another varietal, thought to be Merlot. Subsequently, in the early 1990s a French wine connoisseur identified that a large percentage of what was believed to be Merlot was in fact another not yet known grape variety. This grape was finally identified as the missing Bordeaux Carmenere varietal which has good resistance to pests and disease.

On Wednesday we checked out of our hotel early for a morning visit to Cono Sur winery, owned by the Chilean giant, Concha y Toro. This winery is a separate operation which commenced in 1993 and has focused on organic methods as well as integrated pest management. It is in the Cachapoal Valley and has two separate wineries with one dedicated solely to the production of Pinot Noir. It was the first winery in Chile to use screw caps for the export market and, having at least 20 wine estates, it sources grapes from all over Chile – from the Elqui Valley in the north to the Bio Bio Valley in the south.

Our tasting commenced with a fresh and acidic Cono Sur Sparkling Brut from Valle del Bio Bio being 95% Chardonnay and 5% Pinot Noir. The 2015 Cono Sur Reserva Especial Sauvignon Blanc from Valle de Casablanca had a fruit taste with a crisp mineral palate. It was not sweet, but while nice would not be my selection. The 2015 Cono Sur Bicicleta Viognier was from Valle de Colchagua and had apricot, peach and orange aromas and a stone fruit palate and would pair well with Asian foods. Crisper than the Sauvignon Blanc but again while nice, would not be my selection. The 2014 Cono Sur Organic Pinot Noir from Valle de Colchagua has a huge production with 4.5 million litres from 6.5 million kilograms of grapes. The 2014 Cono Sur Bicicleta being 85% Carmenere and 15% other varieties, including Malbec, was matured in oak staves and was velvety with berry and mocha aromas and was an excellent wine and would complement all meats.

The bicycle is a signature trademark of this winery and, apart from appearing on a range of their labels, they had a large bicycle in the middle of the vineyard. Many of our group toured the vineyard on bicycles and all the workers travel around

the vineyard on bicycles. This winery was large and modern and its low carbon and organic production is a feature of not only this but many South American vineyards which have huge productions. Barbecues, with a wide range of meats of various cuts, are a feature of South America. The quality wines and the quality food complement each other and our BBQ lunch at this estate was a great feature of our visit. All of the salads were grown on the estate and we toured the garden.

In the afternoon we travelled to the Private Wine Estate Vina Tarapaca in Isla de Maipo where we were to stay for three days. This is a stunning property dating back to 1874 when Don Francisco de Rojo y Salamanca began planting vines. It is an estate of 2600 hectares surrounded by the Maipo River as well as the Andes and coastal range mountains which gives it a specific micro climate. The Manor in which we were all accommodated was magnificent and all our meals, other than our final breakfast, were on the terrace with afternoon tea in the extensive garden. We inspected the winery itself, which is vast with extensive wine storage in steel and oak vats with an extensive cellar with thousands of French and American oak barrels. There is also a very interesting museum detailing the development of wines in Chile and the estate, which improved our education no end.

Following arrival we settled into our bedrooms and then enjoyed their sparkling wine from the Casablanca Valley and a variety of their wines over dinner. As with all our days, the weather was very warm during the day and warm at night. What a setting looking out over the garden and vineyard. There were lights and activity at the winery each night as they were receiving grapes from many of their estates, but this was barely noticeable and added to the atmosphere



### **Inspecting the vineyard and luncheon in the garden at Cono Sur Winery in the Cachapole Valley.**

It was described as having “notes of ocean breeze with elegant fragrances of slightly candied citrus, rhubarb and pink grapefruits and hints of green peppers, in which the minerality is a highlight”. It literally exploded in the mouth and had a refreshing and elegant, long finish. It has won a litany of awards including the best Sauvignon Blanc in the World by Concours Mondial du Sauvignon and was available at \$US36 at the cellar door. Alas the length of our tour and the weight of our luggage prevented us stocking up a few bottles.

The 2015 Sauvignon Gris from the Estero Vineyard was right up there with it and the awards it had won were also numerous. The 2015 Riesling from the Mirimar Vineyard had a delicate dry balance, crisp natural acidity and again minerality which derives from a soil that centuries ago was under water. Following were the Gewurztraminer from the Casona Vineyard, the 2010 Pinot Noir from the Lo Abaraca Hills Vineyard, the 2013 Pinot Noir from the Litoral Vineyard and the 2010 Syrah from the Mirimar Vineyard. What a magnificent treat these were.

We then had another memorable luncheon at the estate – an appetizer of Leche de tigre (a classical Peruvian meal of cold soft cream with shrimp and yellow pepper, Ensalada del Litoral, Filete de salmon sobre barro marino (salmon on cream with shrimp pilpil and mashed beans) and finishing with a Lucuma meringue cake with ice cream and berries. All dishes were complemented with the Casa Marin award winning premium wines and we reluctantly left for Vina Tarapaca for another fine dinner with wines.

We were ready for our day at leisure on the Friday but before lunch Christian Maier organised a Master Class of Chilean, Argentinean and Uruguayan wines, in case we developed withdrawal symptoms. Not all felt up to attending, but those of

After a leisurely breakfast we travelled to Casa Marin Estate in the San Antonio Valley which has 50 hectares of vines with 40 hectares producing and which is the closest vineyard to the Pacific Ocean in South America. Winemaker Maria Luz Marin had determined that this area and its soils were ideal for grapes. She fought the government (which had it set aside for forestry) for several years and even began operations to show what quality was achievable before she could get a permit to commence operations.

The result has been a succession of Chilean and International awards and a ranking in Wine & Spirits World Top 100 wineries of the year. As with all the wineries we visited they displayed innovative architecture and were spotless. Casa Marin does not have its own bottling plant and on our inspection of the winery we witnessed the mobile bottling plant in operation. We then embarked on the wine tasting of Casa Marin wines and our first wine I would rank as the best wine I have ever experienced (well maybe the ice wine I had in 1986 at Weingut Michael Schafer in Berg Layen in the Nahe Valley in Germany was right up there) and was a 2014 Sauvignon Blanc from the Cipreses Vineyard on the hillside facing the ocean.

us who did learn of the introduction of wines into South America in the 1500s by the Franciscan Monks. The hardy Criolla, Mission and Pais wines dominated until mainly French and continental varieties were introduced in the 1800s. While there were a number of varieties introduced by Italians, Swiss and Spaniards, it is Malbec, Cabernet Sauvignon, Pinot Noir and Carmenere that have enabled some exceptional wines to be produced. As we witnessed, since the 1990s there has been vast investment made in Chile and Argentina by France, Italy, Chile and USA. Argentina is now the world's 5th largest wine producer, followed by Chile 6th and Australia is 7th.

Our first wine in the Master Class was an Estelado Torres Pais which was very dry with a medium body and a nice crisp peach taste. Next was a Sparkling Pais which had a strong aftertaste. Pais, Carignan and Cinsault are now making a comeback in Chile. Next we tasted a 2012 Cousino Macul Chardonnay which was 70% Chardonnay, 25% Riesling and 5% Viogner. This was from the oldest single-owned vineyard in Chile, established in 1879 in Valle de Maipo and still in the hands of the original family. It was ripe and rich but a bit syrupy and although it improved with cheese, was not for me.

Our third wine was a 2013 Para Family Project experimental wine comprising Carignan, Pais and Cinsault. Carignan is a workhorse of France (and Spain) and a cheap workers wine. It was nice with cheese. Our fourth wine was a 2011 Antiyal (see above) from Valle de Maipo Antiyal which produces fewer than 400 cases a year and bottles are hand numbered. Ours was 3605. It was 56% Carmenere, 31% Cabernet Sauvignon and 13% Syrah. Nice wine, but not my style. Another fine lunch with wines was followed by carriage rides, horse riding, swimming, inspecting the museum and relaxing before an excellent dinner and wines and early to bed.

Saturday was another highlight. After breakfast at 6am we travelled on a luxury coach across the Andes to Mendoza. This bus was like flying business class without wings. The road ascending the Andes had several dozen winding bends before we arrived at the spectacular setting on the veranda of the Portillo Hotel situated at 2880m. Here we had Pisco Sours before lunch and more wines before continuing on to the border with Argentina. I am not sure what they do at the border but buses are usually held up for more than two hours and we sampled a few more wines before being admitted to Argentina and our descent to Mendoza. The Andes are worth a trip on their own and, as with all our days, the weather was perfect. The trip was 13 ½ hours but it was never boring.

Our first day in Mendoza took us to the small Cassone Wine Estate which is at an altitude of 600m and has 90- year-old vines. The vineyard, like most of those we visited, is operated on organic lines, free of chemicals and pests. Vines are irrigated and blessed with endless sunshine. Their Malbec is a pinnacle of the variety and winemaker Federico Cassone and his wife Connie are passionate about their wines. They produce 500,000 bottles and export 80% of production and do not advertise. They let the quality speak for itself. We began with their Finca La Forencia range, a delicious 2015 Torrontes which was a fresh, dry, bright yellow, well balanced wine with a good finish. Our second wine was a 2013 Edicion Especial blend of 65% Malbec and 35% Syrah which was smooth and fruity without being at all sweet.

Then we tasted wines from the Obra Prima range, all of which had been aged in French oak barrels. First, the 2012 Malbec Reserva made for long lasting, but a delight to drink now. Deep red with spiciness and ripe tannins and intense flavour, then the 2013 Corte Reserva being a blend of Malbec, Cabernet Sauvignon and Cabernet Franc and full of flavour and, finally, the 2011 Maximus Gran Reserva Familiar being a blend of 35% Malbec, 47% Cabernet Franc, 11% Cabernet Sauvignon and 7% Shiraz. This wine was young and fresh, full bodied with intense colour but generally soft. It was heartbreaking to leave and we returned to Mendoza for a light lunch, before a 5pm departure for Familia Zuccardi, a large prestigious estate whose labels include Viejo Suro, Santa Julia and their premium "Q" single varieties only made in exceptional vintages.

We began in the tasting room where we tasted the 2015 Zuccardi serie A Torrontes grown at 2500m and handpicked and stored in fine lees for six months. An excellent wine which is apparently available in Dan Murphy's. Next was the 2011 Zuc-



**Ascending the Andes en route to the Hotel Portillo at Los Andes, Chile.**

cardi Zeta, a blend of 83% Malbec and 17% Cabernet Sauvignon. Grown at 1100m – 1200m, it had a high alcohol content of 15%. Initially fermented in tanks, it was finished in French oak barrels for 12 months. An intense red violet colour, full of flavours and mature tannins and a long finish, one million bottles are produced.

The 2014 Zuccardi serie A Bonarda was made from 100% Bonada grapes, had a deep and intense red colour with intense aromas and soft and long finish. The 2011 Zuccardi Q Tempranillo was grown at an altitude of 620m and handpicked. The grapes were 100% Tempranillo. The grapes underwent a complex vinification and were matured in French and American medium toasted oak barrels for one year and then stored in bottles for one year. The wine had an intense red ruby colour with fruits and spicy aromas. The wine was perfectly balanced, soft and had a long finish. The 2013 Zuccardi Q Malbec was grown at 1100 m and manually harvested. It has an alcohol content of 14.8%. Again, complex vinification matured in French toasted oak barrels for 12 months and six months more in the bottle before release. A deep purple colour with intense red and black fruit aromas and soft balanced wine with a long finish.

We then adjourned to The Garden for a seven- course banquet matched with Zuccardi wines. First were snacks of basil, cherry tomatoes, garlic, fennel, blue cheese and pear, which we enjoyed with the 2012 Alma 4 Pinot (70%) Chardonnay (30%) which was fermented in the bottle. We then had the 2014 Zuccardi Q Chardonnay with a salad from their garden with basil sorbet. Then breads and Zuccardi olive oil, green and a red wine beetroot olive oil, together with corn cake, trout and avocado salad with cold tomato water was matched with the 2014 Zuccardi serie A Chardonnay Viognier.

Next was the Rabbit 10 pure, vegetables, watermelon granite and lemon thyme matched with the 2013 Zuccardi serie A Syrah. Following was the lamb, vacuum packed and slow cooked, chard blinis, stuffed onions and leek which was matched with the 2011 Zuccardi Q Tempranillo. Following was a zucchini sorbet with its salad and melon, lemongrass and lemon verbena, then basil rocks and its frozen foam, watermelon and caramelised cherry tomatoes along with teas and a Malcardo Malbec. What an amazing evening and we arrived back at our hotel after midnight.

One might have thought we would be flagging at this point (and some may have been), but after a hearty breakfast we set off on a two-hour drive to Bodegas Catena Zapata located south of Mendoza. This was the first of three amazing wineries. The Catena family are one of the most powerful influences within the Argentinean wine trade. They have three wineries and their wines range from those aimed at the domestic market to their world-class stunningly complex Chardonnay. The winery we visited was very new and designed in the style of a Mayan pyramid and very impressive. Growing wines for over 100 years, Nicholas Zapata took Argentinean wine to a new level when he planted Malbec vines at an unprecedented altitude and developed wines that stand with the best in the world.

We began with a tasting on the upper levels of the winery and our first two wines were the 2010 White Stones and 2011 White Bones both 100% Chardonnay grown at 1500m at the Adrianna vineyard which demonstrated the variation in the wines from the same vineyard, but grown in different soils. Excellent wines. We then tasted four Adrianna vineyard project wines grown in 2014 and 2015 which again demonstrated the different result from the different soils and although all were heavy and intense wines, they were smooth with a light finish. These were Malbecs grown at an altitude of 1500m. Next was the 2013 Historic Rows Malbec which was a blend from four different Vineyards which while smooth, lacked body. We also tasted a very good Cabernet Blend, and a 2011 Nicholas Catena Zapata which had 24 months in oak and six months in the bottle which was 75% Cabernet Sauvignon and 25% Malbec and which had a good aroma, was full bodied and intense and a huge finish.

We then moved to the dining room for a formal lunch with the chief winemaker overseeing the wines. The first course was Creole tomato with fresh burrata, black olive powder and basil oil. This was matched with the 2013 Catena Alta Historic Rows Chardonnay grapes sourced as to 20% from the Adrianna vineyard and 80% from the Domingo vineyard which had aged for 12-14 months in oak but was very balanced. The main course was Ribeye with chimichurri, potato mosaic and grilled vegetables matched with a 2011 Malbec with grapes grown at altitude and matured for 22-24 months in oak which was a heavy and intense wine, but smooth and soft with a great finish.

The dessert was a Pavlova with strawberries, crème fraiche and passion fruit and honey syrup. We had a young winemaker also present and she must have been impressed by our enthusiasm for the wine and food and she produced and explained in detail three further experimental wines – a 2010 DV Catena Syrah which was a good smooth soft wine, a 2014 Nebiolo which came from a planting of five rows and a 2015 Bonarda. Home for a rest, we could not venture out for more than a light dinner.

Like battle hardened soldiers, we travelled on Tuesday morning to visit O.Fournier in the Uco Valley. Another gigantic family run estate, the company has its origins in Spain and has recently been expanding into Chile and Argentina. The amazing winery we visited is gravity fed and as well as its own vast vineyards, uses long-term contracts with local growers who own older vineyards and they are producing an award winning range of wines. The winery began in 2002 with the first vintage in 2007.

Our tasting began with the 2014 Urban Uco Malbec grown at 1100m. This is an entry-level wine, quite acidic with a good finish and a minimal ageing in the bottle of three months. The second was a 2014 Urban Uco Malbec from the O.Fournier

Mendoza Vineyard, also at 1100 m, and had a beautiful nose, was smooth and while lacking a finish, was very nice. The 2011 PB Crux was 40% Tempranillo, 40% Malbec, 10% Merlot and 10% Syrah. It was matured in oak barrel tanks for 12 months, and 24 months in 80% French and 20% American oak barrels. An excellent wine with a great finish. The 2007 Alpha Crux was 60% Tempranillo, 25% Malbec and 15% Cabernet Sauvignon and was matured for 20 months in 80% French and 20% American oak barriques. An excellent wine with a fair finish. The barrel room of O.Fournier has over 3000 barrels being 80% French and 20% American and is the largest in South America.

That was half a day and we travelled to Bodegas Salentein for a memorable luncheon which commenced at 1.30pm and finished at 3.40pm. At lunch we enjoyed the 2015 Salentein Reserve Chardonnay grown in the Valle de Uco from grapes grown between 1100m and 1300m and with an alcohol content of 13.5%. If only all Chardonnay was like this. This was complemented by the 2014 Salentein Malbec Reserve grown at the same altitude with an alcohol content of 14%. Suitably replete, and after a tour of the winery and cellar, we began the tasting of another seven wines at 4.30pm.

These were a 2015 Salentein Reserve Chardonnay (which I think was different from the one at lunch), a 2013 Primus Chardonnay Torres Vineyard which was an aromatic soft wine with a nice finish, a 2013 Pinot Noir Single Vineyard Plot one which was smooth and light with a good intense finish, a 2013 Merlot which had been matured 12 months in oak tanks and 18 months in 70% French and 30% American oak which was soft with a light finish and a 2013 blend of 60% Malbec plus Cabernet Sauvignon, Petit Verdot and Merlot which had a huge aroma and a long finish and was quite sweet. Every year is a different blend, so the wine is unique and has won an award for the best wine from Mendoza and a double gold and trophy against all Argentina.

The 2013 Malbec from grapes grown at 1300m was matured in 7000 litre vats and then in oak for 18 months. It had an intense dark red colour, a soft light finish and was very elegant. Finally the Primus Malbec blend grown at high altitude was fermented in oak vats and French oak for up to two years. It had a good aroma and was a deep dark blackberry red and a soft finish. We had a free evening in Mendoza but could only manage a snack. Some managed to visit a top restaurant, but I don't know how!

After an early breakfast on Wednesday, we flew to Buenos Aires. Being an internal domestic flight we were restricted to 15kg of luggage. Fortunately, with one exception excess baggage charges were waived for the group. We arrived early at the Melia Recoleta Plaza Hotel and as a consolation they provided us with lunch and wines and we later attended a dinner and Tango Show where the Vino Tinto was not up to our "high standard". Thursday was a day at leisure and apart from the few tourist visits, we visited the Recoleta Cemetery and that evening dined at an Argentinean Steak Restaurant with good wines.

After another early breakfast, we took the morning ferry from Buenos Aires to Colonia del Sacramento in Uruguay where we had a guided tour and enjoyed our own pleasant lunch at an outside café under the trees in the centre of town. Though quite warm, we had a refreshing cool breeze while checking our emails. We then travelled the two hours to the Sheraton Montevideo and in the evening our coach took us to the Juanico Wine Estate which dates back to 1755. After a tour of the vineyard and the winery, had an excellent dinner in the cellar accompanied by their quality wines, which their chief wine-maker detailed to us.

First was the Castellar Brut Reserve which was a good crisp sparkling wine. The 2014 Chardonnay Atlantico Sur which was matured in 80% French oak and the 2009 Preludo Special Reserve Blend comprising Cabernet Sauvignon, Tannat, Cabernet Franc, Merlot and Petite Verdot followed. This had been matured in 1600 barrels for 24-30 months which were turned over after six months, but less than 200 barrels "make the cut" and it is good for drinking for five to 15 years. It had a good aroma is fairly dense and a good finish. The 2009 Massimo Deicas Tannat was dark red, soft, had a good structure and a light finish. Some do not like Tannat, but I do. We finished with a 2013 Licor de Tannat which had a 21% alcohol content. The night was topped off with a Tango Show and we all went home very satisfied with our evening, but ready for a long sleep.

After breakfast on Saturday morning, we travelled to the Bodegas Bouza Estate not far north of Montevideo. We inspected the winery where the harvest was being received and crushed and the cellar. They had 300 oak barrels and raised their eyes upward when I mentioned the 3000+ barrels at O.Fournier. We tasted their wines over an excellent luncheon in their restaurant, where I might mention there was a shower of rain while we lunched and that was the only rain we experienced in our 42 days away. We moved from the 2015 Bouza Albarino, which was quite appealing, to the reds. A 2014 Bouza Merlot 89 which was grown in a granite soil and while light to view, had a good structure and body with an aftertaste that was quite earthy and clay.

The 2013 Monte Vide Eu was 55% Tannat, 35% Merlot and 10% Tempranillo and had an alcohol content of 15%. The 2013 Bouza Tannat B2 had an alcohol content of 15.5% and was dark, intense and full-bodied with a light finish. The 2014 Merlot Tannat was not at all to my liking and had a corked taste. We tasted another 2015 Albarino which had a 13.5% alcohol content and was excellent. Finally the 2013 Tannat, Merlot and Tempranillo completed our tasting and also had a 15% alcohol content but was not to my liking. The Bouza family had an interesting collection of 22 vintage cars and 17 motorbikes/scooters. We arrived back at the Sheraton in mid-afternoon and inspected the adjoining Shopping Centre and relaxed.

Interestingly, Albariño, produced by several Australian winemakers, has recently been discovered to be wrongly labelled after a French expert visiting Australia raised questions in 2008, and DNA testing confirmed the grapes were in fact French Savagnin and apparently almost all wine in Australia labelled as Albariño is Savagnin.

Sunday was a day at leisure and after breakfast our coach took us to visit a very large but poor flea market. We then visited the Port Food Market where the array of BBQ and steak restaurants was memorable and the steaks lived up to the best in South America. There were many other stalls at the market, but having no capacity for more luggage and having previously had two days in Montevideo, we merely browsed. There is a lot to see in Montevideo, but I do not think most of the group were of a mind to tour around the city and not a lot was open on the Sunday. That night we had our farewell dinner at Panini's Ristorante Italiano. The food was excellent and the wines were a 2008 Amat Uruguay Tannat from the Carrau Family which had been matured in 50% new oak barrels and which had a big body, good aroma and a big finish, a Pisano 2011 RPF Syrah which I found soft but too weak for me and a 2015 Bouza Albarino which was crisp and had a fresh finish and was excellent.

After breakfast on Monday we were taken to the ferry from Montevideo to Buenos Aires and on arrival our wine and food tour was at an end. What a memorable tour we had enjoyed. It was to wine and food aficionados what heli skiing in deep powder in the Canadian Rockies is to the expert skier or a VRC International Racing Tour visiting leading studs and attending classic thoroughbred horse racing is to the thoroughbred racehorse enthusiast. I don't know how many of these wine and food tours one could endure, but this one will never be forgotten.

We had six very enjoyable days in Buenos Aires, mainly sightseeing and a very exciting incident where we narrowly escaped being bashed and robbed. We stayed at Casa Sur Bellini in Palermo in an Executive room which I would highly recommend. It had a good gym and a very large pool which it shared with an adjoining apartment building. Highlight of our meals was dinner at the La Josefina Restaurant which was close to the hotel and we dined there three nights. Their Parilla is a feast for the meat lover and we enjoyed the 2015 Ruca Malen Yauquen Mendoza Cabernet Sauvignon after we had exhausted the 2014 Ruca Malen Yauquen Mendoza Malbec. We also attended the Palermo Race meeting with a card of 16 races!!

Luckily the weight of our luggage was not questioned when we flew from Buenos Aires to Santiago where we took a cruise from Valparaiso to Los Angeles which included some good food, but no wines worth mentioning. Two excellent wines in the Qantas First Lounge were a 2013 Penfolds Bin 2 Shiraz Mataro and a 2009 Centenary Hill Barossa Valley Shiraz. On our flight we enjoyed a 2013 Leogate Estate The Basin Shiraz (Hunter Valley), a 2013 The Basin Reserve Shiraz and a Leeuwin Estate Art Series 2012 Margaret River Cabernet Sauvignon. Both were excellent.