

Alberto Antonini & Alejandro Bulgheroni Family Vineyards

Alberto Antonini is one of the world's best-known and most respected winemakers. He is based at his own winery, Poggiotondo, in Tuscany, but his winemaking has a truly global reach. In Australia his influence on the vineyards and wines of Pizzini and Greenstone has been significant, but here we focus on his work for Argentinian entrepreneur Alejandro Bulgheroni.

Alberto was introduced to Alejandro Bulgheroni in 2006 by Carlos Pulenta, a famed figure of Argentinian wine.

The first focus was on Uruguay, where Bulgheroni owned a 2,200 hectare property in Garzón.

Wine production in Uruguay is concentrated around, and west of, the capital city Montevideo, facing the very wide mouth of the Rio de la Plata. <http://www.winesofuruguay.com/> Garzón is a village 170 km east of Montevideo, only about 17 km from the Atlantic Ocean. Alejandro Bulgheroni is clearly not someone who just dabbles. On the advice of Alberto Antonini he planted 200 hectares of vines in 2008, and later began construction of a winery and tourist facility. Bodega Garzón <http://bodegagarzon.com/en/> is now fully in production, having celebrated its first vintage in 2014.

While we were tasting the wines, Alberto imparted to us some of his winemaking philosophies.

"Should we make wine for a market, or find a market for the wine?" he began. "I prefer the latter. Think of music. A lot of wine is like Britney Spears' songs - bland, made to a formula - but very popular. Then you look at Coltrane or Hendrix. They didn't know what the market was. Who would you rather listen to?"

He also has revolutionary views on fermentation vessels, preferring concrete to stainless steel. "I don't like stainless steel. Concrete becomes a very live environment for natural yeast. We've built piping into the concrete, through which we pump water. It's a more gentle form of cooling than stainless steel provides."

The Antonini approach of letting the vineyard speak is reflected by two wines from Bodega Garzón.

2015 Bodega Garzón Albariño This is an impressive expression of the variety most closely associated with the Rias Baixas region of Spain. Rias Baixas is influenced by a strongly maritime climate, just like Garzón. The nose is redolent of apricot, with nuances of pink grapefruit and jasmine, introducing a long, dry, flavour-packed palate. A delightful wine. (\$32.00) ★★★★★

2014 Bodega Garzón Tannat Tannat, the red variety of Madiran in south-west France, and the red grape of choice in Uruguay, has a well earned reputation for producing very firm, sturdy wines. This one is a revelation. It's very fresh, showing aromas of red fruits and Christmas cake. The palate is invitingly succulent and fine. (\$32.00) ★★★★★

<http://exclusivevines.com.au/>

Being Argentinian, it's not surprising that Alejandro Bulgheroni has a strong winemaking presence in his own country. Two properties, Bodega Argento <http://bodegaargento.com/en/> and Bodega Vistalba <http://www.bodegavistalba.com/en/> feature strongly in his portfolio.

The Argento estate in the Mendoza region consists of five vineyards.

Vineyard	Size (ha)	Height above sea level (m)	Grape Varieties
Agrelo	240	980-1070	Malbec, syrah, petit verdot, cabernet franc, semillon
Altamira	22.5	1090	Malbec
Cruz de Piedra	33	870	Cabernet sauvignon, malbec
Pedemonte	130	760	Bonarda, cabernet sauvignon, chardonnay, malbec
Ugarteche	27	980	Cabernet franc

2015 Argento Malbec What an utterly delicious red this is. The vibrant summer berry nose is backed up by a “juicy”, fine palate. Irresistible. (\$18.00) ★★★★★☆

“We need to sell less malbec – more Argentina. Pushing the varietal concept is superficial. We should be selling place rather than grape variety.” Alberto Antonini

2014 Argento Reserva Cabernet Franc The impressively varietal nose goes past the raspberry stage towards blackcurrant, with a faint hint of mint. The finest of tannins feature on a long palate. This wine has the wow factor. (\$25.00 – due in October, 2016) ★★★★★☆

<http://buywine.robertoatley.com.au/>

Bodega Vistalba, also located in the Mendoza region isn't just a wine estate. It's an enotourism destination, and was established by Carlos Pulenta.

2015 Tomera Torrentés If you've never tried Torrentés, think muscat blanc. It's very perfumed and grapey, suggesting that the wine may be sweet, but it's bone dry. This is a vibrant, excellent example of the variety. (\$26.00) ★★★★★ Due in Australia shortly. Contact Exclusive Wines.

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The Bulgheroni empire found a home in Italy at Dievole near Castelnuovo Berardenga in Tuscany. Undoubtedly Alberto feels very much at home there.



Alberto Antonini

2014 Dievole Chianti Classico Made from 90% sangiovese, 6% canaiolo and 4% colorino, this wine was fermented in old oak vats and aged for 16 months in 30 hl botti. The nose is very appealing, showing red fruits with sotto bosco (forest floor) notes. This is a very good drink, being fresh and medium bodied with fine, savoury tannins. (\$65.00)

★★★★ Available from Exclusive Wines by the end of this month.

Bulgheroni Family Vineyards doesn't end there. Renwood Vineyards, California and Château Suau, Bordeaux are also part of the group. From next year wine will be produced at the Australian arm of BFV, a 40 hectare property at Greenock in the Barossa Valley of which twelve are under vine. A 180 tonne winery and luxury accommodation are planned.

Alberto Antonini and Bulgheroni Family Vineyards make a formidable team. All the wines I tasted were high on quality and very low on artifact. I look forward to trying the red wines from the Barossa venture. You may be assured they will not be over-ripe and loaded up with new oak.

Lester Jesberg

The Great Australian Beer Guide

If you're seeking a guide to real beer in Australia, look no further than the Great Australian Beer Guide, a well presented and illustrated book. It covers a lot of territory, and I was pleased to note that six of my favourite small brewers, Wig & Pen (Canberra), Bent Spoke (Canberra), Newstead Brewing Co (Brisbane), Bridge Road Brewers (Beechworth), Moo Brew (Hobart) and Hargreaves Hill (Lilydale) are all featured. Sections on How Beer is Made and Serving and Enjoying Beer are both brief and informative.

The book is due for release next month, and would make an ideal gift for beer-loving friends. Perhaps it could also be handy for converting acquaintances who drink industrial beer to disciples of flavour and quality.

Author: James Smith Hardie Grant hardback 247 pages \$29.99

Lester Jesberg

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