

SOUTHERN STARS 南方之星

Just when you thought you knew everything about Chilean wines, this 4,200 plus-kilometre country shows it has still a few surprises to come.

與Bruno Prats談及他的新葡萄酒冒險之旅，在位於智利南部的一片大部份未經開墾之地，位於Malleco Valley的Vina Aquitania°

by Thomas Lim



The Four Musketeers

During a recent visit to Hong Kong to introduce his new wine venture in Chile, the inimitable Bruno Prats conducted a tasting of his Vina Aquitania wines at the Riedel Room@Q88 in the JW Marriott Hotel.

Vina Aquitania is a result of the combined efforts of Paul Pontallier, the winemaker behind Grand Cru First Growth Chateau Margaux; Bruno Prats, the former owner of Clos d'Estourel; Ghislain de Montgolfier, owner of Bollinger Champagne and the great Chilean oenologist Felipe de Solminihac - otherwise referred to as the Four Musketeers.

As Bruno explained in a private interview with Bar Talk, "My first viticultural challenge was in Chile with Vina Aquitania in 1990 while I was still at Cos d'Estourel. I was intrigued that the southern hemisphere with its inverted seasons enabled me to make wine twice a year."

While many existing vineyards were located on rich and flat soils, the partners chose to plant their vineyard from scratch on a poor and sloping land in the Quebrada de Macul. Historically, this is the heart of the Maipo Valley vineyards, on the footsteps of the Andean Cordillera, near the city of Santiago and it benefits from the cool nights typical of this terroir. Today, it is planted with Cabernet Sauvignon to make Vina Aquitania Reserva Cabernet Sauvignon, the Agapanto that is only available in China and the top of the range in classic Bordeaux style - Lazuli Cabernet Sauvignon. Syrah is also grown there.

"Although the Maipo Valley is perfectly suited to Cabernet Sauvignon, it is too hot to grow Burgundian varieties. Hence, we decided to search for additional growing terroirs south of Chile at latitude comparable to New Zealand's North Island, which produces top quality wines. We discovered a remarkable terroir in Traiguén in the Malleco Valley, 650 km south of Santiago. Located at 38° latitude south, equivalent to New Zealand's Northern Island - it presents climatic conditions favourable to high quality vine-growing and to Burgundy grape varieties in particular.

"The summers in this region are rather dry and hot allowing for full maturity and richness of structure while the winters are cold. The long growing season combined with cool summer nights also help to produce grapes of high natural acidity together with vibrant and elegant fruit."

"The vineyard of Sol de Sol is the most southerly vineyard in Chile; and under the driving force of Felipe de Solminihac the "Malleco-Traiguén" was officially recognised by the Chilean government as an Appellation in 2002. During harvest time, we gather the grapes and transport them by



Maipo vineyard in winter

trucks during the cool of the night in an 8-hour drive all the way to our state-of-the-art winery in Maipo.

"From our first vintage, in 2000, our Sol de Sol Chardonnay was acclaimed 'best white wine of Chile' and we now have great hopes for our Pinot Noir planted in 2005." The Pinot Noir will be released in late 2009.

The latest vintage to be released, the 2006 has aromas of lemon, grilled hazelnut and tobacco. On the palate it has intense varietal fruit (grapefruit) with a long finish of mineral and fruity notes. It has the acidity of a Chablis, the body of a Meursault and the fuller attributes of a luscious Montrachet.

Its subtle fruitiness combined to its minerality and elegance has made Sol de Sol a benchmark for the white wines of Chile. The name Sol de Sol is a play on words as "sol" means "land" in French, "sun" in Spanish and is short for de Solminihac! And the excellent wines have the same degree of uniqueness and individuality.

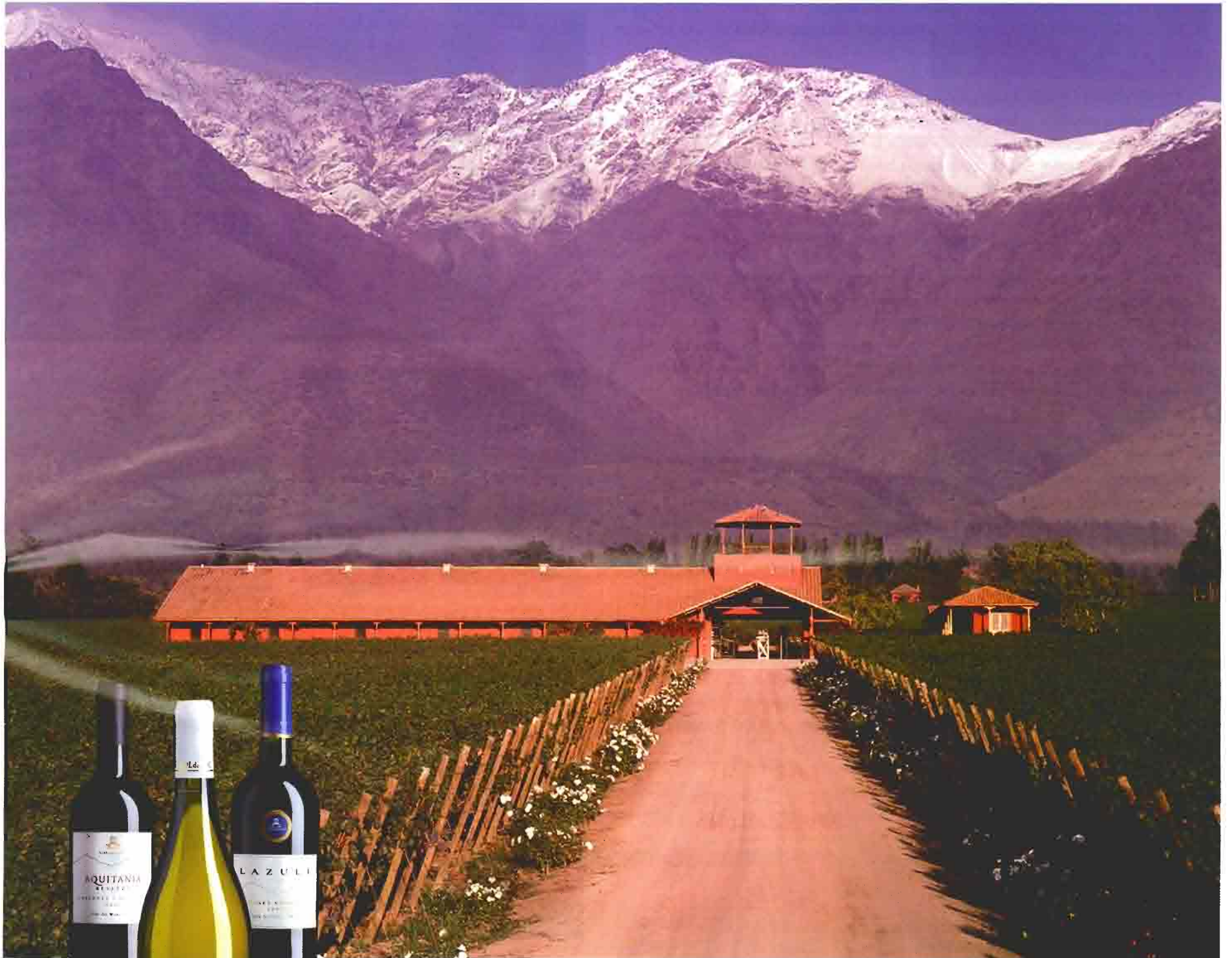
One intriguing question remained unanswered 'why have the French not brought back any of the original pre-phyloxera rootstock from Chile to France?'

Vina Aquitania wines are available through ASC Fine Wines.





VIÑA AQUITANIA
CHILE



WHEN FRENCH ELEGANCE MEETS CHILEAN EXUBERANCE

The "Musketeers":

GHISLAIN DE MONTGOLFIER
PAUL PONTALLIER
BRUNO PRATS
FELIPE DE SOLMINIHAC