



# The International Wine Review

## Double Issue

### Report # 26: The Diverse Wines of Argentina

## Introduction



Argentina is world famous for its Malbec. Six years ago we wrote about Malbec in Report # 5 *Argentina's Magnificent Malbec* and predicted great things. Since that time, Malbec has been the engine behind an unparalleled 300 percent

growth in wine exports. It remains Argentina's most important grape, with 13 percent of total premium varietal plantings. And Mendoza remains the country's most important wine region with 69.5 percent of total grape production. More importantly, it is by far the most important region in terms of premium wines, representing 91.5 percent of all bottled wine and 94.1 percent of all wine exported to the US.

However, Argentina produces many more varieties than just Malbec, and good quality wine is produced in many more provinces than Mendoza. In this report, we update our assessment of Malbec and Mendoza but, also, explore the diverse wines and wine regions found in other parts of the country. As part of this exploration, we traveled to Patagonia to meet the winemakers of Neuquén and Río Negro, as well as to Mendoza, and we tasted the wines of San Juan, Salta, and La Rioja, too. Altogether, we tasted almost 600 wines; our evaluations of those wines are in the Tasting Notes and Ratings section at the end of this report.

What we discovered was a country of diverse terroir and diverse wines. It includes some of the world's southernmost vineyards in Patagonia, some of the world's highest vineyards in Salta, irrigation canals first constructed by the Incas, the strong, dry Zondo wind that comes out of the Andes, a 450 year old wine-growing tradition that began with the monks who accompanied the Spanish conquest of South America and world class winemakers descended from the Italian and Spanish immigrants of the 19th century. In the 20th century, Raúl de la Mota and Nicolás Catena lead the way, but Susana Balbo, Daniel Pi, Andrea Marchiori, José Galante, José Luis Mounier, Roberto de la Mota and others followed in their footsteps. They were aided in this journey by some of the world's best international consulting winemakers—Michel Rolland, Alberto Antonini, and Paul Hobbs.

The grapes are equally diverse, ranging from Malbec and Bonarda, two European red varieties that flourish in Argentina's hospitable climate to Torrontés, a *vitis vinifera* grape unique to

## In this Issue

Introduction .....	1
History of Wine and Winemaking in Argentina .....	3
The Revolución Vitivinícola .....	3
Modern Pioneers.....	3
Today's Winemakers and Consultants.....	4
Argentina's Major Wine Regions .....	5
Climate, Soils and Production .....	5
The Regions.....	7
The Grapes and Wines of Argentina.....	9
Malbec.....	9
Bonarda.....	10
Torrontés.....	11
Other Varietals .....	12
The Market for Argentina's Diverse Wines.....	12
Tasting Notes and Ratings.....	15
Annexes .....	48
Top Rated Wines by Price Category.....	48
Technical Note on Malbec .....	52

Argentina, and including a wide range of the wine world's most popular wine grapes today, including Chardonnay, Cabernet Sauvignon, Syrah, and Pinot Noir. While Malbec remains Argentina's most important red grape by far, Torrontés has become its main premium white varietal.

Argentina is also diverse when it comes to the wine market. While many countries enter the global market by producing inexpensive wines, Argentina did so by producing medium-priced Malbecs. Today it competes across the board, from inexpensive, entry-level wines to pricey, luxury cuvées. Its inexpensive wines are often incredible values, while its luxury cuvées compete with the best wines of the world. The top rated Malbecs in each price category are listed in Annex 1 to this report.

# Introduction

*Continued from page 1*

In this report, we start by exploring the history of wine and winemaking in Argentina up to the present day. We then examine the principal winemaking regions, from Salta in the north to Patagonia in the south, and take a close look at Argentina's successful unique varieties—Malbec, Bonarda, and Torrontés. Next, we examine the market for Argentine wine and the challenges the country faces in continuing to increase both the quantity and quality of exports. Finally, we present our evaluations of the best Argentine wines in the Tasting Notes and Ratings at the end of the report, and we list the top Malbec and Torrontés wines. We encourage readers with a special interest in how Malbec is grown and vinified to consult the technical Annex to this report.

## Information on Subscriptions to the International Wine Review [IWR]

The **IWR** is published by the International Wine Review, LLC. Our office is located at 6625 Old Chesterbrook Road, McLean, Virginia 22101.

Our email is: [info@i-winereview.com](mailto:info@i-winereview.com).

Rates for one-year subscriptions are \$50 for the online edition and \$60 for the print edition. Combined online and print subscriptions are \$80 for 1 year. Subscriptions include exclusive access to all online resources of [i-winereview.com](http://i-winereview.com). Special group rates are available to wine clubs and wine schools. Contact us about eligibility and rates. Subscriptions may be purchased online at [www.i-winereview.com](http://www.i-winereview.com).  
Reproduction of the material contained herein, including copying, without written permission is prohibited by law. Media, wine importers, distributors and retailers may use brief portions of this material in its original form if attributed to the International Wine Review.

**Acknowledgements.** Many people contributed to this report. Indeed, the number is so large that we simply cannot acknowledge all of them by name. However, we do want to start off by thanking Wines of Argentine, and in particular, Magdalena Pesce, Soledad Juncosa, Raquel Correa, and Nora Favelukas for their outstanding support of our work. We also owe a great deal of gratitude to Amadeo Darío Ciscar of the Consejo Federal de Inversiones (CFI) who accompanied us on our travel to wineries around the country. His assistance was invaluable. During our work in Argentina we met with many proprietors, winemakers, and publicists, some old friends, and many new friends. To all of them, we wish to extend "mil gracias" for their warm hospitality, friendship, and sharing of knowledge. We also wish to thank the numerous importers and distributors of Argentine wine in the US who helped us with our tastings. We hope that all who contributed to this report will also be enriched by it and use it to promote more awareness and appreciation of the spectacular wines being produced in Argentina today.

Mike Potashnik, Publisher  
Don Winkler, Editor

## **Previous Wine Reports**

- Issue 1** California Petite Sirah (September 2005)
- Issue 2** Red Table Wines of Portugal (January 2006)
- Issue 3** Grenache Wines (May 2006)
- Issue 4** Syrah (September 2006)
- Issue 5** Malbec: Argentina's Magnificent Malbec (December 2006)
- Issue 6** The Wines of Southern Italy: From Quantity to Quality (March 2007)
- Special Report** Portugal: The Douro Boys and Barca Velha (June 2007)
- Issue 7** New Zealand's Exciting Pinot Noirs (July 2007)
- Issue 8** The Wines of Ribera del Duero (September 2007)
- Issue 9** Champagne (December 2007)
- Issue 10** Unoaked Chardonnay: It's More Than Wood (February 2008)
- Issue 11** 2005 Bordeaux Crus Bourgeois (April 2008)
- Issue 12** California Petite Sirah - Syrah Update (June 2008)
- Issue 13** The Wines of Rioja: Classical and New Wave (August 2008)
- Special Report** Introduction to Sherry (November 2008)
- Issue 14** The World of Sparkling Wines and Champagne (December 2008)
- Issue 15** The Wines of Chianti Classico (February 2009)
- Issue 16** Oregon Pinot Noir (April 2009)
- Issue 17** Sauvignon of the Loire (June 2009)
- Issue 18** Wines of Navarra (August 2009)
- Issue 19** Wines of Greece: Assyrτικο and Santorini (October 2009)
- Issue 20** The Santa Lucia Highlands (November 2009)
- Issue 21** The Chilean Wine Revolution (February 2010)
- Issue 22** Grapes and Wines of the Western Loire (June 2010)
- Issue 23** Ribera del Duero Revisited (August 2010)
- Issue 24** The New Wines of Portugal (October 2010) Double Issue
- Issue 25** The Wines of Austria (January 2011)
- Issue 26** The Diverse Wines of Argentina (April 2011) Double Issue
- Issue 27** Sweet and Dessert Wines of the World (forthcoming)

***These reports are available online at [www.iwinereview.com](http://www.iwinereview.com)***