

Argentina Country Brief

Circa 1549, Captain Bartolomé de Terrazas¹ planted the first *vitis vinifera* vines to be found in South America in Cuzco, Peru. Shortly thereafter, Argentine viticulture took root as Spanish settlers brought vines over from Chile and Peru as early as 1557. From these colonial beginnings, full-bodied red wine has become an integral part of Argentine culture, taking a revered place alongside world-class, pasture-fed Pampas beef.

Tracing back Argentina's immigration history explains much of the wine industry's development. Two major waves of immigration - following independence from Spain in 1816, and again at the turn of the century - brought French, Spanish and Italian immigrants, along with their love for wine, technical skills in winemaking (following the labor displacement caused by Europe's vineyard plague - phylloxera), and raw materials, including European varieties such as French Malbec, Spanish Torrontés and Tempranillo, and Italian Sangiovese, Dolcetto and Barbera.

In 1852 Michel Pouget, Argentina's founding father of winemaking, laid the foundation for Argentina's modern wine industry by developing vineyards with French varieties, evangelizing grafting methods, and promoting European winemaking practices to achieve initial quality standards. Pouget also won the first international award for an Argentine wine (blend) in Paris during the same period.

By 1884, in a desert-like region which at one point featured the government post "*Mayor of Water*" to regulate water supply, the arid Mendoza province built an extensive network of dams and channels that would eventually direct Andes Mountain snowmelt to Mendoza's high elevation valleys and terraces. This important infrastructure investment transformed barren lands into oases and paved the way for future viticulture.

During the 1960s local Argentine wine consumption reached a peak of 88 liters per capita, and in the 1970s widespread quality improvements were implemented, forming the base for today's world-class export wines. Perhaps the main protagonist of the high quality varietal movement was Raúl de la Mota, recently named the top Argentine enologist of the 20th Century in Bordeaux by the World Association of Wine Journalists and Writers (father of Terrazas' own Chief Winemaker, Roberto de la Mota). A champion for varietal wines, especially Malbec and Syrah, Raúl de la Mota was also a defender of quality investment and consistency, effectively laying the foundation for the growing international success of Argentine wines today.

Today's consumption of wine in Argentina has shifted increasingly towards quality (while lowering to some 36 liters per capita), and the Argentine wine industry has begun to define its own particular expression of local terroir - based largely on the renaissance and local expression of the French varietal - Malbec, and prominent wines that display characteristic fruit intensity. Investments by the world's top chateaus, wine houses and winemakers, such as Moët Hennessy Louis Vuitton, Lafite Rothschild, Paul Hobbs, and Michel Rolland, have paid dividends through upgrades in infrastructure and incremental improvements in wine quality. In a relatively short history of exportation, Argentina has been received by international critics as the newest sensation for quality New World Wines, ranking #5 in total world production, and #9 in world shipments (40% varieties), with export growth over the past five years nearing 1000%.

¹ Unrelated to Terrazas de los Andes winery, which is named due to the natural advantage that Argentina has in its "terraced," high elevation vineyards at the foothills of the Andes Mountain Range.

Argentine Wine: A Global Success Story

Along with natural advantages presented by the world's highest elevation vineyards, Argentina is the most experienced and largest "New World" wine producing country in the Southern Hemisphere, tracing its beginnings to 1557.

- 1.) "By the year 2015, the greatness of Argentinean wines made from the Malbec grape will be understood as a given." - *Robert Parker Jr, 2005*
- 2.) "Much of Argentina's viticulture looks very much like Napa and Sonoma did 30 years ago, when high - quality wine production was becoming the norm in California" - *Robb Report, Worth 2005*
- 3.) "Can Argentina fulfill its potential and produce world-class wines? The answer is an emphatic yes." - *James Molesworth 2003*
- 4.) "Covering all the bases—from value wines through the prestige-level cuvée—is a bold approach for a country striving to earn its international stripes, but the bet here is that Argentina has what it takes to achieve greater prominence in the global marketplace. - *Michael Schachner, Wine Enthusiast 2001*
- 5.) "Anybody with an open mind and a decent palate must conclude that Argentine Malbec has become one of the world's greatest wines." - *Michael Franz, Washington Post 2001*

Malbec – Argentina's Noble Wine

- 1.) "Malbec will make it big ... This French varietal, which failed so miserably on its home soil in Bordeaux, has reached startling heights of quality in Argentina. Both inexpensive, delicious Malbecs and majestic, profoundly complex ones from high-elevation vineyards are already being produced, and by 2015 this long - ignored grape's place in the pantheon of noble wines will be guaranteed." - *Robert Parker Jr, 2005*
- 2.) "Malbec is clearly Argentina's strong suit and, dollar for dollar, the country's bottlings of this variety comprise one of the world's most distinctive groups of wines." - *James Molesworth, Wine Spectator 2003*
- 3.) "Argentina's ruby-colored jewel is the pungent malbec grape --a variety originally grown in Bordeaux, but one that wine critics agree takes best to Mendoza's dry, high -desert terrain." - *James Molesworth 2002*
- 4.) "While good terroir and imported talent are advantages, nothing is more important to Argentina than the fact that it has one wine in particular that its wineries make better than anybody else in the world. That wine is Malbec, a rich and juicy Bordeaux variety that the French brought to Argentina more than a century ago." - *Michael Schachner, Wine Enthusiast 2001*

Terrazas de los Andes: The Art of High Elevation Winemaking

- 1.) "In addition to being made from the same varietal, a trio of Terrazas Malbecs have another thing in common - the author says they're all excellent" - *Wine News 2005 (Gerald D. Boyd)*
- 1.) "If you haven't discovered the exciting wines coming out of Argentina, begin with the wines of Bodega Terrazas de los Andes. Under the direction of French pioneers who saw great potential in Argentina's Mendoza area, Bodega Terrazas offers remarkable quality at good prices. But with their latest vintage, the winery has outdone itself. These wines compete favorably with any wines in the world, regardless of price. " - *South Florida Sun-Sentinel 2004*
- 2.) At around \$15 a bottle, the Reserva line of Cabernet, Malbec, and Chardonnay made by Chandon-owned Terrazas de los Andes offers some of the best values on the market. It also carries the cachet of coming from some of the highest-elevation vineyards in the world, 3,500 feet above sea level. - *Businessweek 2002*