



March 2014

Grapevine

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Celebrating the Wines of Argentina



A vineyard on the eastern slopes of the Andes Mountain's in Mendoza's Uco Valley.

Located in southern South America on the east side of the Andes Mountains and four times larger than Texas, Argentina is home to extraordinary geographic diversity — from mountains, plains and deserts to forests and waterfalls. This diversity is reflected in the character of its wines, depending on whether they come from the valleys at the base of the Andes, the extreme northern altitudes or the southern oases and fertile plains.

Using the snow melt from the Andes Mountains and a network of dykes and canals to channel the water to specific areas, winemakers rely on natural irrigation. With Argentina's plentiful daytime sunlight and cool evening temperatures, nature and nurtured vines make beautiful wines.

Argentine winemaking goes back nearly five centuries, but winemakers continually strive toward modern techniques. A 19th century wave of Italian and Spanish immigrants brought with it cuttings of European vines and experienced winemaking. On April 17, 1853, the first school of agriculture — the Quintal Normal — was created in Mendoza, led by a Frenchman.

Producing both indigenous wine varieties like Torrontes and European imports such as Malbec in a land of vast climactic differences, it is indeed a place of contradictions; yet these contrasts make up the Argentine identity and are the reason for such welcome variability in their wines. While they grow many varieties, their largest wine production comes from three grapes: Malbec, Bonarda and Torrontes.

MALBEC

The extremes of temperature are well suited to Malbec's wild nature and propensity to thrive on adversity. Originally a Bordeaux varietal, it was a casualty of the phylloxera outbreak in France at the end of the 19th century. While Bordeaux still produces some Malbec, like an orphan who found a home with its adopted family, the grape shines in Argentine soil. Frequently, Malbec is described as rough or rustic,

with characteristics such as barnyard, earth and minerals. But it also has intense color, fruity aromas and in some cases, a velvety mouthfeel. Malbec is perfect with beef.

To honor the date of the opening of the Quinta Normal, April 17 was chosen as Malbec World Day. Try a few Malbecs so that you can celebrate the grape with family and friends.

The **2012 Maibe Reserve Malbec** has delicious, complex notes of fig, spice and strawberry, with velvety tannins **\$12.99** (reg \$14.99).

TORRONTES

Beautifully pale yellow and sometimes with golden and greenish hues, Torrontes is fragrant with floral scents of roses and jasmine. It has a soft palate and good acidity.

Native to Argentina, Torrontes is the offspring of the genetic crossing between uva negra and Muscat — or uva de Italia. It grew wild in fields designated for other varieties. Today, it is Argentina's chief white wine grape, mirroring its homeland's contradictory nature: perfumed, soft aromas and flavors; wild, stubborn genesis and persistence.

A terrific complement to spicy Asian dishes. Consider the **2012 Bodega Ruca Malen 'Yauquen' Torrontes**, with intense aromas of roses and pineapple and fresh, clean acidity **\$9.49** (reg \$10.99). See Bill's pick on page 2.

BONARDA

Believed to have originated in the Savoie region of France as Corbeau, then to Italy's Piedmont region as Bonarda Piemontese and on to California as Charbono, Bonarda is at home in Argentina. The country's second most cultivated red varietal, Bonarda is characterized by its depth of color and luxuriously ripe palate of orchard fruit and soft tannins.

The grape is also extremely hearty and vigorous with dense growth, which made it attractive to winemakers when quantity was prized over quality. For a time, it was ignored like the wheel with no squeak, left to survive underneath unpruned foliage, producing wines weak in color and flavor. Now, thanks to more attentive pruning, Bonarda expresses its exceptional body and color, seductive raspberry aroma and subtle licorice flavor. While a delight on its own, it also lends complexity when blended with Malbec or Syrah.

A food friendly wine, try the **2012 Colonia Las Liebres**, with appealing notes of clay, licorice and raspberries **\$8.49** (reg \$9.99). You won't be disappointed by any of these Argentine gems. ♦

Did you know...

Grape ripening begins with the growth period known as *veraison*, when the fruit hanging on the vines transforms from small, green, hard berries into what we recognize as grapes.

Incredible Savings!
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Wine Tastings Fri, 4-7 & Sat, 2-5

Fri 3/7: Staff Picks: A taste of what the Wine & Spirits of Slingerlands staff likes to drink (See Staff Picks below.)

Sat 3/8, 3/15, 3/22 & 3/29: New Arrivals: We'll pour a stellar line-up of our latest, greatest discoveries.

Fri 3/14: Wines from Argentina: Our feature tasting this month...celebrating the beautiful wines from Argentina (see p1).

Fri 3/21: Wines for Spring: Beautiful wines, both reds and whites, to celebrate the arrival of Spring.

Fri 3/28: Chocolate & Wine: Two of life's greatest gifts come together in this special pairing of chocolate and wine.

News & Our Latest Goings-on



Joe and Sheila enjoying the Winemaker's Dinner.

Last month, Sheila and some of her staff attended the **Benziger Winemaker's Dinner** at The Epicurean Bistro & Wine Bar in Latham. What an incredible evening of food and wine!

We tasted Benziger's 2012 Sauvignon Blanc with linguine and baby clams, the 2011 Chardonnay with an arugula and goat cheese salad, the 2010 Signaterra Cabernet Sauvignon with a blissful dijon crusted rack of lamb and the 2010

Merlot with a heavenly layered chocolate mousse and nut crumble. To experience the expert matching of courses to wines is a privilege and an eye — and palate — opener. Thank you to, Benziger, The Epicurean and, of course, Sheila for a fantastic evening.

That's Entertaining! On a recent trip to Florida, Sheila struck up a poolside conversation with another vacationer, **Tim Laird**, who just happens to be the CEO — *Chief Entertaining Officer* — and brand spokesman for Brown-Forman, a major producer of fine wines and spirits, including Jack Daniels, Sonoma Cutrer and Woodford Reserve, to name just a few. A gourmet chef and wine and cocktail connoisseur, Tim has published two books on entertaining — **That's Entertaining!** Both books are now sold at Wine & Spirits of Slingerlands. Featured this month are one food and two cocktail recipes to celebrate his and Sheila's fortuitous meeting. Check them out!

Thyme-Tini —

In a shaker with ice, add:

1 oz favorite Vodka
4 thyme sprigs, bruised with fingertips, plus 2 more for garnish
3 oz lemonade

Shake and strain into a martini glass. Garnish with a thyme sprig.



Mango Mojito — Adapted from *That's Entertaining!*

In a tall glass with ice, add:

2 oz Finlandia Mango Vodka
3 oz mint simple syrup (see below)
1/2 oz fresh lime juice
2 oz club soda, chilled

Stir and garnish with a mint sprig sprig.

Mint simple syrup: Combine equal parts sugar and water in a sauce pan over medium heat for five minutes. Add mint leaves, steep for 20 minutes and strain, pressing on leaves to extract flavor.



Mango Mojo Scallops

12 large sea scallops
2 tsp unsalted butter
2 tsp olive oil
Kosher salt and black pepper
mango sauce (recipe follows)
mint leaves for garnish



Pat scallops dry with paper towels, season with salt and pepper. Put butter and oil in pan over high heat, sear scallops on each side for two minutes. Place on serving spoons or a platter and top with mango sauce and mint. Serve with chilled glasses of Torrontes (see Bill's pick below) or Mango Mojitos (left).

Mango sauce

1 ripe mango, peeled, pitted, coarsely chopped
1/4 cup Finlandia Mango Vodka
1/4 cup orange juice
1/4 cup habanero pepper, seeds removed

Puree mango, vodka, juice and pepper until smooth.

Sign up for our email club and receive a free bottle of select wine anytime during your birthday month!

March 2014 Staff Wine Picks

Sheila: 2011 Stone Street 'Broken Road' Chardonnay (Alexander Valley) \$28.69 (reg \$33.99) 93 Pts (ST) Rich, ripe flavors of tropical fruit, peaches, apples and honey, elegant and dry, with minerality and acidity.

Ted: 2010 Cune Rioja Crianza (Rioja) \$10.29 (reg \$11.99) 90 Pts (WA) Extremely aromatic, with clean raspberry aromas, it is complex with dried roses and sweet spice notes. The palate is velvety.

Joe: 2012 Smith & Hook Cabernet Sauvignon (Central Coast) \$16.99 (reg \$19.99) Bold aromas of blackberries and black cherry cola, supported by hints of spicy clove. A rich texture supported by supple tannins.

Bill: 2012 Bodega Ruca Malen 'Yauquen' Torrontes (Argentina) \$9.49 (reg \$10.99) Intense aromas of roses and pineapple, it has excellent freshness and balanced acidity with floral undertones and a clean finish.

Graham: 2012 Tenuta delle Terre Nere Etna Rosso (Sicily) \$15.39 (reg \$17.99) 90 Pts (WS) Made from the Nerello grape, there is ripe crushed cherry and wild strawberry, with chewy tannins and a touch of herbs.

Damian: 2011 Murphy-Goode Pinot Noir (California) \$11.49 (reg \$13.49) Aged in French and American oak, this Pinot has zesty black cherry and intriguing notes of black peppercorn, dried sage and vanilla.

Jared: 2012 Lurra Garnacha (Navarra) \$8.49 (reg \$9.99) 86 Pts (WS) Fresh and fruit-driven, featuring flavors of raspberry coulis and black cherry, with licorice and light herb notes. Offers a lightly dusty finish.