



March 2016

Grapevine

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Mad for Malbec...A Closer Look at this Fantastic Wine

Native to southwest France, and one of the six grapes permitted in a Bordeaux blend — along with Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Cabernet Franc, Petit Verdot and Carménère — Malbec thrives in Argentinian soil and climate and owes its modern popularity to its South American rebirth. Just because you were born in one place doesn't mean you ought to stay there to realize your alternative best potential.

Though of French origin, it is now an Argentinian citizen; and the two regions produce vastly different wines. In France, Malbec has structure, firm tannins, spice and earth, showing blackberry aromas and flavors early on, with tobacco and coffee coming later. In France's limestone soils, the calcium component aids the development of acidity. The acidity and tannins in French Malbec make it suitable to hold onto awhile. A Malbec from Argentina tends to be plush, fruity and less tannic with plummy notes and a velvety texture. Its fruit-forward character, softness and low tannins, make it deliciously drinkable right now.

Despite its centuries of inclusion amongst the other Bordeaux varietals, it had largely been relegated to a supporting grape because its sensitivity made it prey to harsh growing conditions. After the phylloxera epidemic that swept across Europe, its importance dropped further. Phylloxera was inadvertently



Malbec vineyards in Argentina's Uco Valley, at the foot of the Andes.

brought to Europe in 1863 and decimated vineyards there. Replanting after the epidemic required grafting vines on to American rootstock in order to resist the vine pest; but because Malbec doesn't take as well to grafting as other grapes, much less was replanted. This was the start of its decreased popularity in Europe.

A severe frost in 1956 required another round of replanting, so the grape fell into further disfavor in Bordeaux, due to its finicky nature. They needed to replant fast and to focus on varieties they knew would do well. It is still planted in the Loire Valley and Cahors, east of Bordeaux, where it reaps the benefits of the Atlantic's cool breezes and the warm Mediterranean sun. So, if the leaner French style is your preference, this is where to look.

Argentina is home to nearly 70% of Malbec vineyards worldwide. Cuttings brought

from southwest France to Argentina in the 1850s were spared the blight of the 1860s, making grafting on to American root stock unnecessary and therefore preserving the purity of its French roots. Thin skinned like Merlot, Malbec is sensitive to rot, frost and pests, making ideal growing conditions vital. Thanks to Argentinian soil's resistance to phylloxera, Malbec thrives there, basking in the bright sun at the foot of the Andes Mountains and digging deeply into the sandy-clay combination soil for nutrients. And because too much sun can result in flabby fruit bombs, the cooler temps due to Argentina's extreme elevation slow down ripening and allow the development of acidity to balance the fruit.

Recently, a couple of us sat down to experience a face-off between two Malbecs, the **2013 Clos La Coutale** from Cahors (\$12.99) and the **2013**

Trapiche Broquel from Mendoza (\$10.99). They were both delicious...but the differences were noticeable. The Clos La Coutale had the expected structure and acidity, but there was nothing harsh about it; rather, it was smooth with fine tannins and a lingering licorice note. The Trapiche also delivered as expected, but in a less in-your-face way. The plummy fruit was present and accounted for and the finish was soft and round, but it was no fruit bomb. Despite that respected wine critic, Jancis Robinson, declares that Argentina produces the best expression of Malbec and perhaps because we are Francophiles, though not distinguished wine critics, we preferred the edgier Cahors; but surely if there were more of us at the table, the competition would have been stiffer. Try it out: Grab some bottles and a few friends, line up the glasses and find out which you prefer. We have plenty of Malbecs waiting for you. *Salud!* ♦

Incredible Savings!
15% off all Wine —
Every Bottle,
Every Day!!!

Did you know... Rosé alert: Rosés are arriving weekly, and we will be featuring them at our weekly tastings. They are as much a sign of Spring as robins and flowers. Open your mind to Rosés!

Wine Tastings Fri, 4-7 & Sat, 2-5

Sat 3/19, 4/2 & 4/9: New Arrivals

Fri 3/11: Malbec & More: Mostly Malbec + a couple more.

Sat 3/12: Three-fer Wines: From our 3 for \$24.99 section.

Fri 3/18: March Staff Picks: Our hot new favorites!

Fri 3/25: Wines for Good Friday: Check out our pairings for Good Friday.

Sat 3/26: Wines for Easter Dinner: A beautiful lineup of wines to grace your Easter table.

Fri 4/1: Wines for Springtime! No fooling around, these are wines to celebrate the longer, warmer days ahead.

Sat 4/2: 90s Value Wines: Wines from our newest section!

Tasting Wine: Why We Love our Work

Sometimes you have to do it. You must drag yourself to an outstanding restaurant to taste beautiful food and wine pairings, all in the name of work. Last month, Sheila and some of her staff attended a wine pairing dinner at Saratoga National, featuring wines from **Cakebread Cellars**: Sauvignon Blanc, Chardonnay, Pinot Noir and Cabernet Sauvignon.

Founded in 1973 by Jack and Dolores Cakebread, the winery is now run by sons, Dennis and Bruce, ensuring the same quality that made the winery a success. If you've never experienced Cakebread wines, consider a splurge for Easter dinner, and you won't be disappointed!

Grilled Beef Tenderloin

Adapted from Martha Stewart Living

1 beef tenderloin (4 lb), trimmed and tied
Extra-virgin olive oil, for rubbing
Coarse salt and freshly ground pepper
1/2 cup Mint-Chive Butter



Let beef stand at room temperature for 30 minutes. Heat a charcoal grill to medium-high, and set up direct and indirect heat zones. Rub beef with oil; season generously with salt and pepper. Sear on all sides over direct heat until caramelized, about 5 minutes per side.

Transfer beef to indirect heat, and grill, covered, turning occasionally, until a thermometer inserted into the center registers 125 degrees for medium-rare, 20 to 30 minutes. (Grilling time will vary depending on thickness of tenderloin.) Remove beef from grill, and brush with mint-chive butter. Let stand for 15 minutes before serving; untie. Serve with your favorite Malbec and toast to nicer grilling weather.

Mint Chive Butter. Cream together 1/2 stick softened unsalted butter, 1/2 cup packed, chopped fresh mint, 1/3 cup finely chopped chives, finely grated zest of 1 lemon and 1/2 tsp coarse salt.

Deep Eddy Bloody Mary

There are many occasions for a Bloody Mary, though you don't need an excuse. And there is no better concoction for a Sunday brunch. Try this delicious Texas take on the classic Bloody Mary



INGREDIENTS

2 oz Deep Eddy Vodka
2 oz beef broth
4 oz Bloody XXX Bloody Mary Mix
Dash of The Bitter Truth Celery Bitters
Pickled green bean for garnish

DIRECTIONS

Shake first four ingredients in a cocktail shaker with ice.

Pour into a chilled Collins glass with ice, garnish with a pickled green bean and raise a glass to the coming of Spring.

March 2016 Staff Wine Picks

Sheila: 2014 Paul Hobbs Crossbarn Chardonnay (Sonoma Coast) \$19.99 (reg \$25.99) 92 RP An aromatic mélange of stone fruit with lemon zest and juicy gala apple, nectarine, and apricot. *Seared sea scallops

Max: 2015 Sheldrake Point Dry Rosé (Finger Lakes) \$10.99 (reg \$12.99) Made from 100% Cabernet Franc, it has a beautiful bouquet of roses and lilacs with ripe strawberry flavors. *White pizza with mushrooms and fontina

Ian: 2012 Casa Santos Lima Confidencial Reserva Tinto Red (Portugal) \$10.19 (reg \$11.99) 92 WE This structured wine is fruity and richly textured while keeping its elegance. *Fried potatoes and spicy linguica

Carol: 2013 Primarius Pinot Noir (Oregon) \$12.99 (reg \$14.99) Silky with layers of fruit that unfold on the palate, it leads with fresh raspberries that evolve to cranberries, herbs and vanilla. *Cedar plank grilled salmon

Damian: 2013 Napa Cellars Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley) \$18.99 (reg \$24.99) Aged in French oak, it has ripe blackberries, herbs and cocoa on the palate with plush tannins and a velvety finish. *Grilled ribeye steak

Karen: 2013 Jasci & Marchesani Montepulciano d'Abruzzo (Tuscany) \$10.99 (reg \$12.99) 91 LM Scented with black plums and a whisper of spice, it has reigned-in acidity with soft tannins. *Spaghetti Bolognese