

WINE News

In South America, the New World's oldest wine cultures are making exciting new wines. News to you? Come and explore with us.



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Chile and Argentina Inspire a Renewed Sense of Discovery

By Joe Manekin

Joined by a common Spanish colonial past yet separated by an extensive mountain range, two South American nations vie for our attention in the increasingly wide and competitive world of wine: Chile and Argentina. Having enjoyed great success in the recent past, they are currently preoccupied with retaining their foothold in the U.S. market. I will be in both countries in early 2015. It's not merely taking in these beautiful wine countries or professional curiosity that is the motivation for my first trip to South America—it is an investment in what I believe is these countries' potential. Diverse soil types, widely ranging

elevations, abundant sunshine, strong agricultural traditions—these are just some of the reasons that I believe will bolster Argentina and Chile's powerful resurgence on the international wine scene. With this newsletter, we hope to not only highlight the great values these countries continue to produce, but also the increased diversity and site specificity of these wine landscapes that are well worth exploring.

As always, please feel free to contact me with any questions, and if you are interested in joining my personal email list, please contact me at JoeManekin@KLWines.com.

2011 El Libre Malbec Mendoza (\$9.99)

Produced from fruit grown in the Las Compuertas section of Lujan de Cuyo, this is delicious Malbec for a very affordable price. Fresh red plum flavors and a juicy, forward texture suggest balance resulting from some thoughtful wine-making; fermentation and aging in concrete tanks. Delicious (and gluggable) Malbec!

2011 Catena Malbec Mendoza (\$15.99)

91 points RP: "This is very dark cherry-colored and has strong aromas of ripe plums, peach and apricot with some notes of orange rind. Medium-bodied with velvety, silky tannins, it is a good representation of Malbec in Mendoza."

2012 Merino Syrah Limarí Valley (\$14.99)

Shows lovely mixed berry fruits, with hints of

red fruits and Syrah's tell-tale, ever-so-slightly smoky pungency that to me brings to mind fresh cardamom. 91 points *W&S*.

2010 Luca "Laborde Double Select" Syrah

Mendoza (\$19.99) 92 points RP: "The 2010 Syrah Laborde Double Select was sourced from 48-year-old ungrafted vines and aged for 14 months in 50% new French barriques before bottling without fining or filtration. It sports an expressive perfume of smoke, bacon, game, leather, pepper and blueberry."

2012 Achaval Ferrer Cabernet Sauvignon

Mendoza (\$29.99) This is a very elegant Cabernet Sauvignon with persistence and nice length. For anyone after a refined and elegantly styled Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon, I

would be very tempted to re-route them south to Lujan de Cuyo (Mendoza) to try this tasty Cabernet.

2010 Susana Balbo "Brioso" Mendoza (\$29.99)

95 points JS: "This is a very serious blended red with tension, structure and richness yet shows reserve and tension. Full body, with silky tannins and a long finish. Reserved and beautiful." The blend is 45% Cabernet Sauvignon, 20% Merlot, 15% Malbec, 10% Cabernet Franc and 10% Petit Verdot.





Explore Argentina's Wine Regions

By Joe Manekin

Can I be frank? I think we have been doing Argentine wine a disservice. To be fair, so have most other people in the trade, including many wineries and other stakeholders. We know the country and its wines in broad brush strokes: Malbec is *the* red grape; try Torrontés if you also enjoy white wine. Mendoza, located south of Buenos Aires, is the wine country. And the grass fed beef is delicious. While these statements are all true, we need to fill in some details. Let's begin with some interesting facts: Argentina covers an area four times the size of France. While the climate is dry and continental, the elevations allow for extreme differentials in daytime and nighttime temperatures. Soils are mainly alluvial, there is abundant clay, some seriously stony sites, and even areas containing calcium carbonate (the building block of terroir seekers' coveted limestone). With abundant sunshine and pure Andes snowmelt for irrigation, the conditions for producing great wines are present.

While it is true that many wineries blend fruit from within sub-zones and even different regions, as is the case mostly everywhere in the wine world, it is worth noting the differences in regions and sub-zones, and how they impact the growing conditions and the resulting flavors in the wines. Here is a quick listing of key Argentine wine regions from north to south: Salta-Cafayate, La Rioja, San Juan, Mendoza, Lujan de Cuyo, Maipú, Uco Valley, Patagonia-Neuquén and Rio Negro. In Lujan de Cuyo, the sub-zones from north to

south are Las Compuertas, Vistalba, Perdriel, Agrelo and Ugarteche. Within Uco Valley, the sub-zones are Tupungato, Gualtallary, Tunuyán, Vista Flores, San Carlos, La Consulta and Altamira. There is not sufficient space to name wines from each of these locales, but from here I will go into detail about some of our current favorite wineries representing at least several of these areas.

Cafayate Valley

Way up in the Cafayate Valley, approximately 600 miles from Mendoza, Colomé is a pioneer in high altitude viticulture. Vineyards here lie between 5,500 to 8,000-plus feet in elevation. Produced from biodynamically farmed grapes, the **2013 Bodegas Colomé Torrontés Valle Calchaquí Salta (\$11.99)** shows very floral aromas with juicy yellow plums and white peaches, leading to a lovely, slightly spicy, yet refreshing palate. 91 points ST. From some of the highest elevation vines anywhere in the world, the biodynamically farmed **2011 Bodegas Colomé "Estate" Malbec Valle Calchaquí Salta (\$24.99)** has dark fruit flavors with hints of scruffy, savory herbs as well as a very solid overall structure, with tannins lending grip to the intensely flavored fruit and persistent finish. Malbec with some Tannat.

Lujan de Cuyo (Agrelo)

One of our go-to under-\$15 Malbecs is the **2012 Belasco de Baquedano "Llama" Malbec Mendoza (\$11.99)**. The owners here are actually Spanish, from Navarra, and consistently produce a full-bodied, supple, darkly fruited Malbec from vines as old as 100 years. Vines such as these are surprisingly common in Lujan de Cuyo, the historical center of viticulture and home base of many Argentine wineries. This is a wine that consistently over-delivers for the price.

Maipú

2010 Hand of God "Stolen Horse Vineyard" Old Vine Malbec Mendoza (\$59.99) This is a new project spearheaded by Santiago Achaval. As such, it definitely has a few of his personal trademarks: carefully sourced fruit (in this case Malbec planted in the 1920s), lots of color, fresh aromatics and a high degree of extraction, while maintaining a bright, fresh character as well as fruit purity that seems to belie how rich and extracted the wine is. If you are a fan of Achaval Ferrer's single vineyard bottlings, I would definitely check this out as well, particularly as it's very fairly priced in comparison. Impressive stuff!

Uco Valley (La Consulta)

Finca Abril owns about 20 hectares of vines, primarily Malbec, with some planted as early as 1922, all in the area around La Consulta (Uco Valley). The **2012 Finca Abril "Alhambra" Malbec Reserva Uco Valley (\$14.99)** is richly fruited, with darker berry flavors that create a lush mouthful of wine that still feels honest and balanced.

There is a brightness to the blue and mixed berry fruits that, to me, is typical across Uco Valley sub-zones.

2010 Achaval Ferrer "Finca Mirador" Malbec Mendoza (\$89.99) 95 points RP: "The nose is more expressive than the Finca Bella Vista with cassis and blueberry aromas imbued with a sorbet like freshness and vivacity... It draws you in to its complexity and its precise, delineated finish of black currant pastille, sea salt and crushed stone that lingers long in the mouth. This is an outstanding Argentinean Malbec."



Chilean Wine from the Coast to the Mountains

By Joe Manekin

Chile could not be more different from Argentina—ask a native Chilean or Argentine and they will certainly tell you as much! If the story in Argentina is high altitude vineyards, a continental climate and a marquee grape variety in Malbec, in Chile there is the influence of the Pacific and a wider variety of grape varieties cultivated. I have heard on several occasions, from both Chileans and Californians, that Chilean wine country has the look and feel of Northern California. And if you have even a passing familiarity with California wines, the Chilean wine landscape should come as no surprise: the closer you get to the coast (in California, the true Sonoma Coast or Santa Maria Valley, for example; in Chile, the Casablanca, Leyda or Limarí valleys) is where you will find the best Pinot Noir and Chardonnay. The warmer valleys further inland (Napa and Sonoma in California, Maipo and Colchagua in Chile) are where great Cabernet-family varieties are grown. Here are some of the Chilean D.O. (Denominación de Origen) regions, listed from north to south, whose wines we most commonly carry:

Elqui and Limarí valleys Many vineyards here lie as close to the Pacific as several kilometers. Soils have high limestone content. Despite the latitude and semi-desert conditions, this is still cool climate viticulture and the proof is in the freshness and detail of the wines.

Aconcagua Recently fashionable for Carmenere and vineyards located *entre cordilleras*, or between coastal and Andes mountain ranges.

Casablanca Chile's original cool coastal region: lots of Pinot Noir, Chardonnay and Sauvignon Blanc are produced here; Riesling as well.

Valle Central A large region encompassing the following D.O.s: Maipo, Rapel, Curico and Maule Valleys.

Maipo Due south of Santiago, Cousiño Macul and other historic producers grow and source Cabernet Sauvignon here.

Rapel Comprised of the Colchagua and Cachapoal valleys.

Maule Some of Chile's oldest vineyards are here. Lots of dry-farmed vineyard land. Wonderful Carignane.

2012 Kingston “Cariblanco” Sauvignon Blanc Casablanca Valley (\$14.99) Kingston Family Vineyards is one of our favorite projects in South America, owing in no small part to Portola Valley's own Courtney Kingston and her family's approach to winemaking in the cooler climate Casablanca Valley. This approach emphasizes communication among all the actors involved in this labor of love: Chilean and American family members, vineyard workers and traveling viticultural specialists (Ridge's Dave Gates still travels here twice a year to help out), winemakers and Courtney. As a result, the wines continue to come into their own as some of the most consistently well made, delicious wines that Chile has to offer. Their Sauvignon Blanc is aged on its lees for around eight months and bottled much later than most Sauvignon Blanc—from Chile or elsewhere, for that matter. The resulting wine has terrific bright citrus flavors and just a hint of Sauvignon Blanc's pleasant greenish snap, as well as a mouthfeel and texture that speaks to the quality of the fruit and thoughtful winemaking. This is always one of our favorite SBs in the store! 91 points *WE*.

2011 Kingston Family Vineyards “Tobiano” Pinot Noir Casablanca Valley (\$21.99) The Tobiano is a blend of different parcels within the greater Kingston vineyard, those that meet their standards but aren't used for their top bottling, Alazan. According to Courtney Kingston, her wines show a *gout de Casablanca*, a distinctly smoky and mineral-tinged quality which she believes mark her red wines. We would tend to agree with that description. If you're looking for Chilean Pinot with a wonderful balance between fruit, mineral and savory flavors, then look no further.

2011 Calcu Cabernet Franc Colchagua Valley (\$11.99) Savory, spicy dark cherry fruit aromas lead to a snappy Cab Franc palate, showing a well-balanced combination of just-ripened red stone fruits, subtle herbaceous tones and a tasty, dry finish. My notes read: “Chilean French bistro wine.” There is not much more that one could ask for in a Cab Franc that is priced for regular drinking such as this one.

2011 Valle Secreto “First Edition” Cabernet Sauvignon Valle de Cachapoal (\$19.99) Valle Secreto is making lovely wines in the Cachapoal Valley. Theirs is a Cab showing wonderful fruit purity and restraint, with aromatics of mixed red and black currants, perhaps even a bit of kirsch as well, leading to a palate of fruit that is generous and rich, yet so much more restrained and elegant than many other Cabs at this price point.

2011 Valle Secreto “First Edition” Carmenere Valle de Cachapoal (\$19.99) An impressive Carmenere, Valle Secreto coaxes out very fresh cherry fruit, with an extremely subtle green note that only adds complexity and intrigue, without detracting at all from the wine's impressive cut and fruit purity.

2010 Viña Falernia Syrah Elqui Valley (\$12.99) This is very strong, convincing cooler climate Syrah! Perhaps our best under-\$15, classically styled Syrah in our current inventory, the Viña Falernia boasts juicy blueberry and dark skinned fruit aromas, which lead to a very tasty palate, with darker fruits, betraying a gentle smoky sweetness, a suggestion of cardamom and lovely texture. Truly tops for all the Syrah fans out there looking for a bargain.



At Kingston: Courtney Kingston Pflaum, Byron Kosuge and Evelyn Vidal

CASAS PATRONALES *The Flavor of Change in the Maule Valley*

Casas Patronales, a new winery with a firm dedication to the traditions and styles of the past, is a shining example of the renaissance of quality and sophistication that the Chilean industry is undergoing. They are grape growers in the Maule Valley, an appellation that used to be dominated by commercial viticulture and was more known for its quantity than its quality of grapes. Through the efforts of newer producers like Patronales, its potential for world class wines is finally being recognized.

The coastal climate (and 5,000 foot elevation) gives Maule the capacity to produce elegant and balanced wines, and Casas Patronales takes full advantage of this potential. Their wines are bright, complex, and very affordable—a perfect combination of price and quality! The **2011 Casas Patronales “Mauchó” Malbec (\$14.99)** will surprise you. It’s got the classic lavender and ripe plum you would expect from a South American Malbec, but is lifted by bright raspberry, edgy tannin and slight toasty oak that grips the palate more than other Malbecs at this price. The very

affordable **2011 Casas Patronales Carmenere (\$10.99)** is the winery’s tribute to Chilean heritage. This grape, almost entirely wiped out in Europe by phylloxera, is now an indelible part of Chilean national wine identity. The wine has a light peppery/herbaceous quality, indicative of the grape’s shared ancestry with Merlot, and it is filled with dark boysenberry and fig flavors, with light, American oak aromas of vanilla and dill.

Patronales looked north to the cool vineyards of the Limarí Valley to source the grapes for their Chardonnay, the only wine from grapes they don’t grow themselves. Their **2012 Casas Patronales Chardonnay (\$14.99)** is a must buy for any fans of classic Chardonnay. It’s aged for 13 months in new French oak, but the oak influence doesn’t overpower the wine. This is a fresh, bright, and beautiful Chardonnay that dances on the palate with lychee, pear and light almond flavors.

—Michael Barber

ALL WE ARE SAYING, *Is Give País a Chance...*

Patience and humility are admirable virtues in this “fame it or flame it” world, especially if you’ve been quietly planting your roots without ever achieving the international success and adoration of your nobler relatives. We’re talking grapevines—specifically the unpretentious País, better known in California as Mission, a variety brought to the New World by conquistadors in the mid-16th century and planted widely in Chile until the influx of more fashionable French vines in the 19th. País became an all but forsaken grape, still cultivated but relegated to jug and bulk wine.

Now for a bit of irony. It took a young Frenchman, Louis-Antoine Luyt, to take on the task of redefining the exuberant personality of País for the wine world. Yearning to create something other than the safe, international style of so many Chilean wines, and deeply inspired by the Morgon winemaker Marcel Lapierre and his son Mathieu, devotees of natural winemaking, Luyt’s quest for lost vines took him to the historic Maule Valley in southern Chile, home to venerable but neglected parcels of País, Cinsault, Carmenere and Carignan. He contracted the astonished local growers to supply him with fruit from these ungrafted bush vines and vinified his first wine in 2007. Each wine in his portfolio is named for a specific terroir, some tongue-twistingly hard to pronounce, but all memorably profound. The delightfully spry **2011 Louis-Antoine Luyt “País de Quenehuao” Maule Valley (\$19.99)** prickles the tongue. Grown from 300-year-old rootstock that’s re-grafted every 30 years, the grapes are fermented by carbonic

maceration, a technique often employed in Beaujolais to brighten the color and heighten the aromatic compounds. Early harvesting assured the freshness and acidity of this lightly-textured, rustic, plum and kirsch-scented wine, an attractive match with spit-grilled lamb or charcuterie.

The **2012 Louis-Antoine Luyt Carignan “Trequelemu” Maule Valley (\$19.99)** introduced me to the wines of this visionary, nomadic winemaker. Carignan is sometimes maligned for its unforgiving tannins and brooding character, but for those who appreciate the rare opportunity to taste horse-plowed, hand-harvested, unirrigated, 70-year-old organic bush vine wine (whew!), this bottle can be a soulful revelation. Carbonic maceration tames the tannins, allowing the velvety, fresh fruit to dominate with flavors of blackberry, wildflowers and dark chocolate, followed by a fine streak of minerality. This wine is simply impossible to ignore once opened.

And please do not ignore Louie-Antoine Luyt’s other label, the **2011 Clos Ouvert Carmenere Maule Valley (\$19.99)**, fashioned from excellently sourced fruit grown with the same viticultural methods as those above, also undergoing carbonic maceration. Aged for eight months in old oak barrels, this evocative, cherry-fruited wine has plenty of savory herbaceous qualities with hints of earth, mocha and soy sauce, balanced by well-made tannins. Each of these unique wines will reshape your mind about Chilean viticulture. Enjoy!

—John Majeski

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