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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 varietals 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 varietals that flourish in Argentina's hospitable climate to Torrontés, a *vitis vinifera* grape unique to 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.

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Introduction

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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 varietals—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**.

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. 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**.
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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

History of Wine and Winemaking in Argentina

The vine first arrived in Argentina in the mid-16th century via Chile and Alto Peru, not long after the Spanish conquered the Incas and created the Viceroyalty of Peru in Lima. The priests who accompanied the Spanish colonization carried vines—at first Moscatel and Uva Negra—wherever they went, beginning in Santiago del Estero but quickly moving to Salta, San Juan, and Mendoza. The ubiquitous Uva Negra took on the name País in Chile, Criolla in Argentina and Misión in California. Although it produces a rustic, undistinguished wine, it is a highly productive vine, makes a wine that can be drunk young and served as the backbone of Argentine wine for three hundred years[1].

For most of its history, Argentina's most important wine province Mendoza was more closely linked to Santiago than to Buenos Aires. For the first 225 years of its existence it was in fact part of the Capitania General de Chile, until in 1783 it joined the Viceroy of Río de la Plata. Even after Argentina declared its independence from Spain in 1816, Mendoza retained close commercial ties to Chile. Only with the arrival of the railway from Buenos Aires in 1885 did Mendoza become fully integrated into the nation.

After the arrival of the vine, the next important date in wine history was 1853 when the Frenchman Michel Aimé Pouget, then resident in Chile, was asked to lead the newly established Quinta Normal de Agricultura de Mendoza. Pouget accepted and brought with him cuttings of European varietals from Chile. Later he imported cuttings direct from France[2]. While the Quinta had a short life, it was succeeded by the Escuela Nacional de Agricultura in 1872.

The arrival of Pouget and of European varietals, including Malbec; the creation of wine schools in Mendoza, San Juan and elsewhere; the introduction of Guyot training in the vineyards, which tripled yields per hectare; and the 1884 Ley de Aguas that provided the legal basis for expanding irrigation were the impetus for the transformation to a modern wine industry. The March 20, 1861, earthquake that destroyed much of the city of Mendoza and killed half its population only temporarily impeded progress on the road to modernity.

The *Revolución Vitivinícola*

European varietals and French consultants provided the basis for better wines, but it was the arrival of Italian and Spanish immigrants in the latter half of the 19th century combined with construction of the railroad from Buenos Aires to Mendoza in 1885 that were the catalyst for the creation of a modern industry, a period popularly known as the *revolución vitivinícola*. It is no accident that many of today's important commercial wineries were born in the late 19th century. In Mendoza, this includes Norton, created by Edmundo James Palmer Norton, a British engineer who helped construct the railroad from Mendoza to Santiago, Chile, and then decided to remain in Argentina to make wine. Trapiche was founded in 1883 by Tiburcio Benegas. Bodegas Escorihuela was established in 1884 by the Spanish immigrant Miguel Escorihuela Gascón. Don Felipe Rutini founded the La Rural winery in Maipú in 1889. Pascual Toso founded his eponymous winery in 1890. And in the early 20th century, Leoncio Arizu founded Luigi Bosca, and Nicolá Catena planted his first Malbec vineyard in 1902.

Similar stories unfolded elsewhere in Argentina. In Río Negro, shortly after the railroad arrived from the Atlantic coast, the hydraulic engineer Humberto Canale, who worked developing the region's canal system, stayed on to found his winery over a hundred years ago. Juan Graffigna started his San Juan winery in 1869, while in Salta, Argentina's oldest functioning winery Bodega Colomé was established in 1831, and Malbec and Cabernet Sauvignon were planted there in 1854. Vineyards of Torrontés were planted at Bodega Etchart in Cafayete as early as 1850. Other pioneers include Félix Lavaque (1870) in Salta and Augusto Pulenta in San Juan (1912).

The total number of hectares planted to the vine increased rapidly in this period, from an estimated 20 thousand in 1893 to 45 thousand in 1900 and 64 thousand in 1910. The new wineries required winemakers, of course, and in 1899 the Salesian Order of Don Bosco established the Escuela de Vitivinicultura Don Bosco in Maipú[3]. About the same time, in 1896, the Escuela Nacional de Vitivinicultura was founded, replacing the old Quinta Normal and Escuela Nacional de Agricultura of Mendoza.

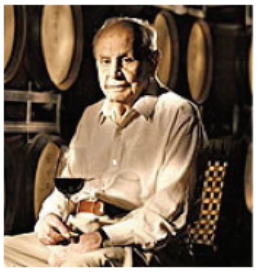
Modern Pioneers

The hyperactivity at the end of the 19th century gave way to a century of growth and consolidation and continued orientation to the domestic market. Plantings increased rapidly, reaching 351 thousand hectares in 1977, much of it planted to the productive but low quality Criolla grape. About this time, soft drinks and beer

[1]Lacoste, Pablo et.al (2010). "Variedades de Uva en Chile y Argentina (1550-1850)", Mundo Agrario, Vol. 10, No. 20.
[2]Beezley, William H. (2005) "La Senda del Malbec: La Cepa Emblemática de Argentina," Revista Universum No 20, Vol 2.
[3]Fresia, Ivan Ariel (2005) Religión, Educación, y Vida Cotidiana en Rodeo del Medio, Siglo XX. Editorial Dunken, Buenos Aires.

started replacing wine in the Argentine diet, leading to a precipitous decline in per capita wine consumption. Numerous wineries became bankrupt, and in the decade 1982-1992, it's estimated that 36 percent of all vines were ripped out. By 1990 only 210 thousand hectares of vines remained.

Most public attention has focused on the pioneers of the recent past, but their success is built on the foundation created by others. Foremost among these 20th century pioneers is the winemaker Raúl de la Mota (pictured here), who began bottling single varietal wines for Finca Flichman in 1956, including the prestigious Caballero de la Cepa. In 1976 the Brazilian Bernardo Weinert invited him to make wines at Bodegas Weinert. While there he made Argentina's first modern wines to win international acclaim, including accolades from Robert Parker. Our recent tasting of his 1977 Weinert Malbec Estrella confirms his ranking in Argentina's all time winemaking elite. Having spent 18 years in French oak, this wine is a classic in every sense of the word (see full review in the Tasting Notes).



Another pioneer of the 20th century is Nicolás Catena, who trained as an economist but in the 1980s ended up taking over the family winery where he applied his research training to identify the best clones and terroir for growing Malbec. Along the way he built one of Argentina's most successful family wineries, Bodega Catena Zapata, and invested in numerous others such as Alamos, La Rural, Bodega Escorihuela, and Tilia. However, his most important legacy is daughter Laura Catena who manages all Catena winemaking operations, including her own winery Luca and her brother Ernesto's winery Tikal. She is also author of one of Argentina's most informative books on wine, *Vino Argentino*.

Today's Winemakers and Consultants

The list of today's outstanding winemakers is a long one. It includes both Argentines and foreigners, most having themselves invested in Argentina, both financially and personally. It also includes both consulting winemakers and those who are affiliated with just one winery.

Today's outstanding winemakers include: Susana Balbo, the first female graduate of Don Bosco, formerly with Catena and now owner and enologist of her eponymous winery; Daniel Pi, chief winemaker at Trapiche and also a graduate of Don Bosco; Andrea Marchiori, formerly with Norton and now at Viña Cobos; Roberto Cipresso of Achával Ferrer; Hans Vinding-Diers, who makes wine at Noemia and Chacra in Río Negro; José Galante, formerly with Catena and now with Salentein; Valeria Antolin of Piattelli Vineyards; and many others.

Another group of today's outstanding winemakers are the winemaking consultants who guide the making of wine at multiple wineries. Four of the most important are Alberto Antonini, Roberto de la Mota, Paul Hobbs, and Michel Rolland. Brief biographies of these influential winemakers follow:

- **Alberto Antonini** became involved in Argentina in 1995 when he founded Altos Las Hormigas with other investors and became its winemaker. He studied at the University of Florence as well as at the University of Bordeaux and at UC, Davis. Antonini has been involved as consultant and/or investor in at least a dozen Argentine wineries including Nieto Senetiner, Renacer, Bodega Melipal, Ave, Chakana, Filus and Trivento.

- **Roberto de la Mota** is one of Argentina's finest winemakers. He is a partner in Mendel Wines with Anabelle Sielecki, where he crafts some of Argentina's finest wines. He also provides technical advice to wineries like Piatelli and NQN. Son of legendary Raúl de la Mota, Roberto has been in the wine business since 1979 when he was a 19-year old apprentice to his father at Bodegas Weinert. He also worked in Bordeaux where he knew the legendary enologist Émil Peynaud. In Argentina, Roberto established his reputation as winemaker with Terrazas de los Andes and creator of Cheval de los Andes.

- **Paul Hobbs** is perhaps the most accomplished consulting winemaker in Argentina along with Michel Rolland. His first major engagement as a consulting enologist in Argentina was in 1989 when at the invitation of Nicolás Catena he took charge of a new project making Argentina's first world-class Chardonnay. In 1998 he joined forces with Andrea Machiori and Luis Barraud in establishing Viña Cobos, producing some of the most refined and elegant Malbecs in Argentina. As a consulting enologist, he has contributed to winemaking at *inter alia* Pascual Toso, NQN, Riglos, Rutini, Finca 8, Familia Schroeder, and Pulenta Estate. Paul began his winemaking

career at Robert Mondavi and later joined the Opus One team as Head Enologist in 1981. He now has his own winery and and importing firm, which brings unique wines from Argentina to the US.

- **Michel Rolland** has had a long and influential involvement in Argentina both as a consulting enologist and investor. He began work in Argentina in 1988 with Bodegas Etchart and, after the sale of Etchart to Pernod Ricard, invested and continued working with Arnaldo Etchart in making San Pedro de Yacochuya. Michel and his wife Dany, who is also a trained enologist, have been the driving force behind the imaginative project known as Clos de los Siete where the Rollands make their own wines, Val de Flores and Miraflor, as well as those for the other partners in the project. In addition to his involvement in Argentina, Michel Rolland consults with over 100 client wineries worldwide.

Argentina's Major Wine Regions

Grapes for wine are grown from about Latitude 25° in the Valle de Cachaquíes, Salta Province, to 42° in Hoyo de Epuyén in Chubut Province (Weinert's Patagonian Wines) south of Río Negro. This compares with Chile's wine growing region that extends from Latitude 29° in Elqui Valley to 38° in the Malleco Valley south of the Bío Bío. Vineyards are planted throughout Argentina, with new plantings near the Atlantic, in La Pampa, and elsewhere. But the best wines come from just a few provinces, from North to South—Salta, La Rioja, San Juan, Mendoza, Neuquén, and Río Negro, and it is those provinces which are the focus of this section.

Climate, Soils, and Production

There are variations within and across provinces in terms of altitude, rainfall, average and diurnal variations in temperatures, and the length of growing seasons. However, Argentina's wine-growing regions also share much in common. Most of them are located in the high desert east of the Andes where there is little rain (less than 10 inches annually). Historically, these lands have been cultivable only via an extensive system of canals, originally developed by the indigenous inhabitants of the region, which channel snow and glacial melt from the Andes. The advent of drip irrigation and deep wells has permitted growers to plant new vineyards in locations that the traditional canals do not reach and to use irrigation strategically to manage their vineyards.

Compared to Europe, year to year weather variations are relatively minor, although late spring frosts and hotter than normal summers can affect both production and quality. For example, over the last decade, grape production in Mendoza has varied between 1.3 and 2.0 billion kilograms. Spring frosts and summer hail are often localized events that affect only some vineyards. Some growers use nets for protection from hail, while others use nets to shade grapes from excessive exposure to the high altitude sunlight. The accompanying table gives a brief overview of recent vintages in Mendoza. Conditions in specific departments and vineyards may vary.

Recent Vintages in Mendoza

Vintage	
2011	***Still being evaluated.*** A relatively cool vintage, with spring frosts that severely affected some vineyards. Harvest about two weeks later than normal.
2010	***Excellent.*** Despite some late spring frosts and heat spikes in January, overall growing conditions were good with excellent phenolic ripeness at harvest.
2009	***Outstanding.*** Heavy hail storms in December reduced yields, but from February onwards growing conditions were ideal. It turned out to be a warm dry year with fruit forward wines and balanced tannins.
2008	***Very Good.*** A wet spring followed a cold winter. The climate was moderately warm for most of the season and rains around harvest did not dilute grape quality. The reds were aromatic with good expression.
2007	***Fair to Good.*** Heat spikes in December and January and intermittent rains during harvest made for less than ideal conditions. Fruit expression moderate with firm tannins. .
2006	***Outstanding.*** One of the best vintages of the decade. Excellent conditions resulted in slow maturation, healthy fruit, and phenolic ripeness. Extraordinary balance in reds and beautiful tannins.

Average summer temperatures are high, but they are lower at higher altitudes, and most vineyards enjoy 300+ days of sunshine a year. Most vineyard locations have large differences between day and evening temperatures, which helps preserve the acidity and fresh flavors of wines. The climate is dry, so insects and fungus are not a problem, but humidity is higher in vineyards located near rivers. Phylloxera is present but in an anemic form that does so poorly in the sandy soils that most vines grow on ungrafted rootstock. Nematodes have traditionally been kept in check by flood irrigation.

Soils are predominantly alluvial sand and gravel with varying amounts of clay from eroded mountains and glacial tailings. Soils near the Andes are relatively young and sandy with good drainage and 0.5 to 1.5 m deep. The bedrock is often basaltic.

Production. With 213 thousand hectares of wine grapes, Argentina has long been among the world's largest wine producers. But over half (54%) of all vineyards are planted to low quality grapes like Criolla Grande, Cereza, and Pedro Gimenez[4]. Surprisingly, the amazing international success of Malbec over the past decade has had little impact in terms of new plantings. Compared to the year 2000, total hectares planted to grapes had grown by only 13 percent, or 27 thousand hectares, by 2009. Despite the growing reputation of other winegrowing regions in Argentina, three-quarters of all new plantings have been in Mendoza.

As shown in the table, total grape production (including low quality varietals) is highly concentrated in just two provinces—Mendoza and San Juan—which together account for 95 percent of all grapes produced for making wine. Over half of San Juan's wines are low quality grapes, so while it has 25 percent of all vines planted in Argentina, it accounts for less than 2 percent of bottled exports to the US. However, it provides almost all the bulk wine shipments Argentina makes to the US. On the other hand, three provinces—Salta, Neuquén, and Río Negro—have relatively few vineyards but bottle and export high percentages of their wines at relatively high average export prices. Mendoza has 94 percent of all bottled exports to the US and, also, has a high percentage of the best wines and wineries in Argentina, but its average export price suggests it also produces large amounts of mediocre wine.

Grape Production and Bottled Exports to the US by Province

Province	Percent of Total Grape Production	Percent of all Bottled Wine	Percent Bottled Export to US	Average US Export Price per Liter
Salta	0.9	2.2	1.3	4.51
Neuquén	0.5	1.0	0.9	4.09
Río Negro	*	0.2	0.3	5.81
La Rioja	3.2	2.1	1.7	3.58
San Juan	24.8	3.0	1.7	3.58
Mendoza	69.5	91.5	94.1	3.63

* Río Negro has less than 0.1 percent of total grape production.

Distribution of Vines by Age and Trellis System

First time visitors to Argentine wine country are surprised to see that the dominant form of trellising vines is a two meter high pergola called *el parral.* According to Laura Catena, the parral replaced the Guyot system in the early 20th century after it was introduced by the Italian immigrant winemaker Egisto Pini. The parral often produces high yields, but well-managed older vines produce good quality fruit. The system is especially advantageous for grapes like Torrontés that are subject to sunburn. The percent of vines using the parral method varies from under 1 percent in Neuquén to 48 percent in Mendoza, 61 percent in Salta, and 86 percent in San Juan. Within Mendoza it's most commonly found in the warmer, eastern areas. (photo courtesy of Bodegas Crotta)

[4]Martinéz, Liliana et.al. (2003) "Evaluation of diversity among Argentine grapevine (Vitis vinifera L.) varieties using morphological data and AFLP markers," Electronic Journal of Biotechnology. The class of Criolla wines are morphologically distinct from European varietals. Most Criolla varietals produce inferior table wines, The Argentine Pedro Giménez, the single most important white wine varietal in Argentina, is distinct from that of Spain and is used mostly for the production of fortified wines.

Excepting Torrontés, few new vineyards are planted today using the parral method; most are planted using the more modern vertical shoot position method (VSP). The transition to VSP is being driven by lower production costs and potentially better fruit quality.

Despite the uprooting of vines that occurred in the 1980s, Argentina still has relatively old vines with 48 percent over 25 years of age. Neuquén, of course, has almost no vines over age 25, but Mendoza has 50 percent, San Juan has 40 percent, and Salta has 43 percent. Eastern Mendoza has the oldest vineyards within Mendoza, while Tunuyán has the youngest.

The Regions

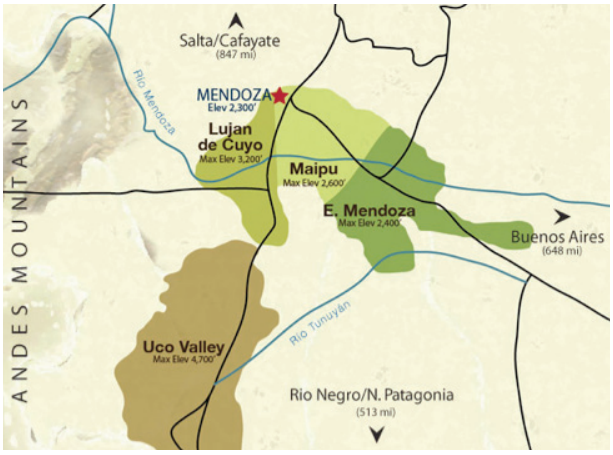
Salta. The winegrowing region of Salta is centered around the town of Cafayete, which is south of the capital city of the province. It's located in the picturesque and historic Valles Calchaquíes, which extend into the adjacent province of Catamarca. These are high altitude vineyards, mostly from 1500 to 2000 meters high, very dry and cool with moderate peak summer temperatures and diurnal temperature variations of 20° C or more. The micro climate is ideal for growing grapes: sunny days, low humidity and a large day-to-night temperature fluctuation. There is some threat of frost during the winter when temperatures can drop as low as -6°C. Salta is home to some of Argentina's highest vineyards at Bodega Colomé where vineyard altitudes are 1600 to 2600 meters, and San Pedro de Yacochuya at 2000 meters. A new Colomé vineyard, Altura Máxima, is 3000 meters high.

With just 2300 hectares of vineyards, Salta produces less than one percent of all wine in Argentina, but it is home to several highly regarded wineries, including Colomé, El Porvenir de los Andes, Bodega Mounier, Tukma, and San Pedro de Yacochuya. The French enologist Michel Rolland's first venture in Argentina was Yacochuya. Salta produces a wide variety of wines but is most famous for producing the best Torrontés in Argentina and is thus gaining in prestige and attracting foreign investment.

San Juan. With 37 thousand hectares of vineyards at about 31° latitude, San Juan is Argentina's second largest wine-producing province. San Juan is famous for its Zonda wind. At high altitudes this wind precipitates the snow that provides the water for irrigation in hot summer months. At lower altitudes it is warm and dry, contributing to thick grape skins but posing the risk of poor fruit set and coulure.

Much of San Juan's production is destined for bulk wines and fortified sweet wines. Premium wines are grown in several areas, especially the 700 m high Valle de Tulúm, where the Graffigna, Callia, and Bodega Augusto Pulenta wineries are located. With its rocky limestone soils, the 1340 m high Valle Pedernal near the Mendoza border is a promising area for the future of quality wine in San Juan. Here deep wells provide water for the drip irrigation of vineyards of French varietals. The huge Peñaflor Group, owner of Trapiche in Mendoza and Michel Torino in Salta, has created a 100 hectare vineyard in Pedernal with wines sold under the Finca Las Moras label. Estancia el Durazno produces a wine in Pedernal called Teorema. Bodegas Callia, owned by the Salentein winery of Mendoza, also has 350 hectares in Pedernal. The Syrah varietal shows special promise in San Juan. Some producers make a pleasant, easy drinking white from the San Juan version of Torrontes, called Torrontes Sanjuanino.

Mendoza. With 159 thousand hectares of vines at about 33° latitude, Mendoza is by far Argentina's largest and most important wine-producing province. This is the home of Malbec, the varietal that has conquered the world wine markets, although a large number of other varietals—Cabernet Sauvignon, Bonarda, Chardonnay, Torrontes, and, of course, the ubiquitous Criolla varieties—are also grown.



As shown in the map[56], Mendoza includes within it several distinct winegrowing areas. Eastern Mendoza is relatively low in altitude and warm with deeper soils than other regions. In general, this is an area of high yielding vineyards producing grapes for domestically-consumed wines. Bonarda does especially well in this area.

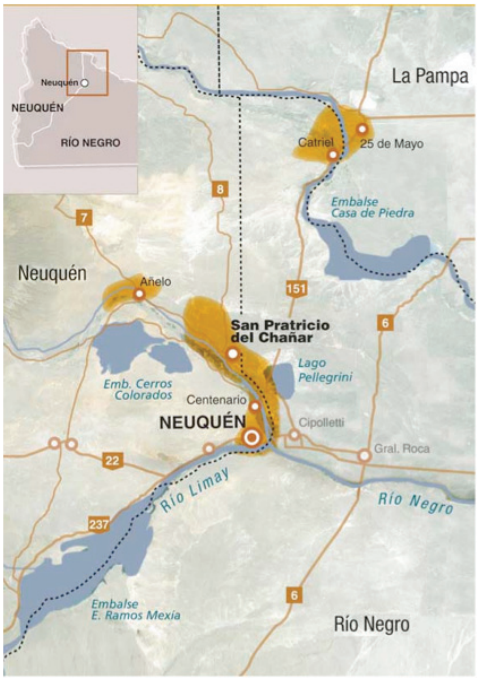
To the west, Maipú is a Department that includes within it some famous wine-growing districts, including Lunlunta, Barrancas, and Coquimbito. Still further west and higher in altitude is Luján de Cuyo, which is another Department, but it is also the name of the DOC that comprises several famous wine-growing districts, the most famous being Vistalba, Las Compuertas, Perdriel and Agrelo. Finally, the high altitude Valle de Uco, which includes parts of the Departments of Tunuyán, Tupungato, and San Carlos, is considered one of Mendoza's finest wine growing regions. Among the famous districts of the Valle de Uco are Gualtallary and La Arboleda in Tupungato, La Consulta in San Carlos, and Vista Flores in Tunuyán. Malbec grown in Uco often shows violets on the nose and black fruit flavors. The pre-cordillera foothills disappear in the Valle de Uco, directly exposing vineyards to the cold winds that blow off the snow-covered Andes.

As with other regions, the vineyards of Mendoza are dependent on irrigation, mostly by flooding from the canals that were expanded by the region's Italian settlers in the mid-1800s. The location of vineyards has historically been constrained by proximity to the canals, which helps explain why most old vine Malbec is located at lower altitudes near water sources. The advent of deep water well drilling and

[6]Map courtesy of Vine Connections.

drip irrigation have relaxed this constraint, allowing growers to locate new vineyards at high altitudes like the Valle de Uco with limited access to canal water.

Patagonia. The Argentine Patagonia includes four wine-producing provinces—Neuquén, Rio Negro, La Pampa, and Chubut—with a total of 4500 hectares of vines, less than 2 percent of the country's total. While not important in terms of the quantity of wine produced, it does include some special vineyards and world famous wines. Had potential investments by important producers—Chandon and Catena—not slipped through its fingers for mostly political reasons, the Patagonia wine industry might be much larger and more visible today.



Two provinces, Neuquén and Río Negro, with adjacent, small wine-making regions at about latitude 40° produce the best wine in Patagonia. The area is low in altitude (200 – 300 m) and arid with well-drained alluvial soils, some with limestone. The region is subject to strong winds that create an inhospitable environment for pests, and rows of álamos (poplars) are planted on the borders of vineyards to reduce its impact on the vines. Summer days are long, with about 40 minutes more sun than Mendoza. Temperatures are cooler than Mendoza, resulting in wines with good levels of natural acidity.

Neuquén has 1632 hectares of vineyards and 11 wineries. Most are new, created as a turn-key operation by developer Julio Viola. [see box] Neuquén's wineries, especially Fin del Mundo, NQN, and Familia Schroeder, are well-managed commercial operations that have contracted some of the country's best wine consultants. The vineyards are low in altitude (about 200 m) with alluvial soils and some limestone. Among red grapes, Merlot and Malbec are the most successful, while Chardonnay stands out among the whites.

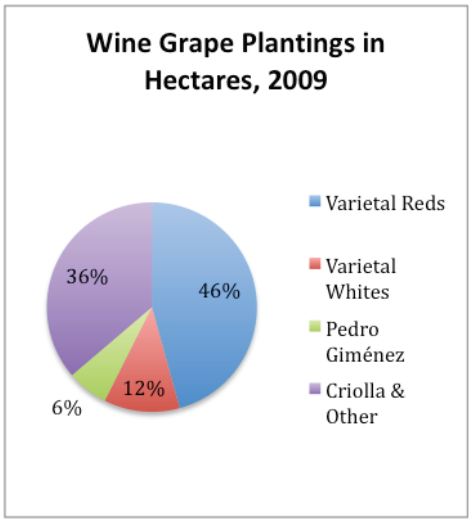
Turnkey Vineyards in Neuquén. In 1996 Julio Viola applied the principles of real estate development to wine. He purchased 3200 hectares of virgin land in San Patricio del Chañar; invested in infrastructure improvements—a 20 km irrigation canal to bring water from the Río Neuquén, seven pumping stations, and irrigation pipes; and laid out and planted vineyards with a mix of varietal cuttings obtained from INTA, which had already experimented to see which grapes fared best in the area. Then with the collaboration of the provincial government, which was flush with oil and gas revenues and seeking ways to diversify the economy, generous financial assistance was offered to investors on the condition that each build a new winery. Six investors purchased 1200 hectares, leaving 2000 for Viola's own winery, Bodega del Fin del Mundo.

Río Negro is a much older wine-producing region than Neuquén with vineyards dating from the time engineer Humberto Canale planted his vineyards in General Roca not long after the infamous Campaña del Desierto that decimated the indigenous population. The canal that he helped build created a fertile oasis 110 km long and 8 km wide, bordered on one side by the Río Negro and on the other by the canal. That oasis is better know for its fruit orchards than its vineyards, but two of its 34 vineyards are among Argentina's most unique—Noemia and Chacra—and have brought fame to the region. These are old vineyards planted to Malbec and Pinot Noir, respectively, with deep clay soils watered by flood irrigation.

While Río Negro is a small producer of wines today, for much of the 20th century it was the third largest producer in the country, after Mendoza and San Juan. The depression that hit the industry in the 1980s and the completion of Ruta 40 to Mendoza, allowing for the low cost transport of higher quality Mendoza wine to Río Negro, forced more than a hundred wineries to abandon their vines.

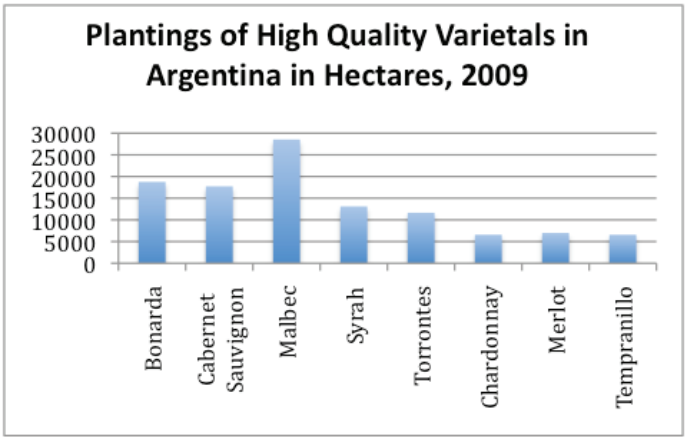
In addition to Neuquén and Rio Negro, the La Pampa and Chubut provinces also have small winemaking operations. In the area around Veinticinco de Mayo, near the border with Neuquén, there are about 271 ha and 14 wineries in La Pampa, the most famous of which is Bodega del Desierto. Chubut is known for its volcanic soils.

The Grapes and Wines of Argentina



With 213 thousand hectares of grapes planted for wine production, Argentina is one of the world's largest wine producers. However, as shown in the chart, almost half of total vineyard land is planted to grapes—Pedro Giménez, Criolla and others—which produce low-priced, generic wine for domestic consumption only[7]. High quality varietal reds and varietal whites comprise 58 percent of all plantings.

A high percentage (86%) of high quality varietals in Argentina are for red wine, and Malbec is by far the single most important grape, although Bonarda was the most planted red wine grape just twenty years ago. Among high quality white wine grapes, Torrontés and Chardonnay are by far the most important.

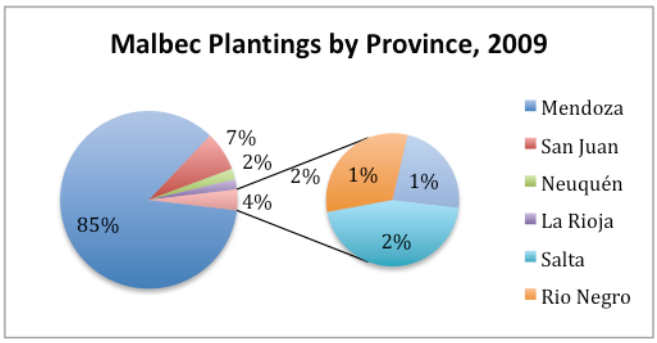


Argentina produces many varietals well, but three grapes do better here than any other country. These three—Malbec, Bonarda, and Torrontés—are discussed below. In addition, as shown in the chart, Argentina has significant plantings of Cabernet Sauvignon, Syrah, and Chardonnay. As we found in our tastings, and as shown in the Tasting Notes at the end of this report, excellent albeit limited examples of each of these grapes can be found in Argentina.

[7]Pedro Giménez is bottled as a single varietal by the winery Familia Giaquinta and is the main grape in Vasco Viejo, made by Bodegas López; it also is the basis for many of the sherry-like wines made in Argentina.

Malbec.

In his classic 19th century work *Cépages et Vignobles de France,* Pierre Galet described a grape varietal called côt or malbeck as grown in several areas of France including Bordeaux, Cahors, and the Loire[8]. This same varietal was imported to Chile prior to the arrival of phylloxera in Bordeaux and made its way to Argentina in the mid-19th century. Malbec proved to be extremely well-suited to the climatic conditions of the Andean foothills and today is the single most important Argentine varietal in terms of production, this despite the uprooting of about 30% of Malbec acreage in the 1980s. On the other hand, with its tendency to *coulure*—the loss of fruit resulting from cold and rain during flowering—Malbec proved less well-suited to Bordeaux and was not widely replanted after phylloxera devastated that region's vineyards in the mid-19th century.



With its small berries and small, tight bunches the Malbec of Argentina today is very different from the Malbec of Cahors. Recent imports to Argentina of Malbec cuttings from Cahors produced large, thin-skinned grapes and were quickly uprooted. The reason may be that the pre-phylloxera Malbec originally imported to Chile was a different clone from the modern Cahors Malbec, or it may be that over time growers in Argentina selected for reproduction those vines best-suited to the climate and after 150 years ended up with a very different plant ideally matched to its terroir.

Styles. Argentine Malbec has an intense purple-violet color, flavors of sweet dark fruits, and lush, enveloping tannins. Descriptors most often used to describe its bouquet include: wild cherry, black cherry, red berries, mulberries, violets, and anise. Malbec that has seen oak aging contains notes of tropical spices--nutmeg, vanilla, and cinnamon. There are, however, noticeable variations in Argentine Malbec depending especially on vine age, yield, and altitude of the vineyard. Malbec has ample anthocyanins and color but remarkably soft tannins. Perhaps its greatest virtue is that in the right hands Malbec can make good to outstanding wines regardless of price and in a variety of styles.

There are four main styles of Malbec produced in Argentina. The first is a basic, easy-drinking style that combines fresh aromas of plum and black cherry, a juicy palate with nuances of toasted oak, and soft tannins. This is a wine for immediate consumption. Most producers offer this style, which at a US price of $9 to $15 retail is very popular. Catena's Los Alamos alone sold 365 thousand cases of entry level Malbec in 2010. Argento and Doña Paula, among

[8]See Annex 2 for an extensive technical note on the Malbec grape.

others, make excellent wines in this price category. A complete listing of the best entry-level Malbecs can be found in the Annex 1 to this report, and complete tasting notes are available on-line at iwinereview.com.

A second style shows greater complexity and richness than the basic style. It's usually highly aromatic showing plum, black cherry, and oak spice, and the palate is well-balanced with a velvet-like texture and round tannins. Selling for $16 to $25 retail, these are some of the best value wines in the marketplace today. Excellent examples of this style are Trapiche's Broquel, Clos de los Siete, and Susana Balbo's Malbec. Again, a complete listing of Malbecs in this category is given in Annex 1.

A third style shows a combination of power and elegance with violets, minerals and French oak aromas and a palate of exceptional purity of dark fruit. These wines are lush, full-bodied and have outstanding balance and flavor. The vast majority of these wines are produced from the high altitude vineyards in Lujan de Cuyo and the Valle de Uco. In some cases they are selections from single vineyards or special parcels that have unique terroir. The wines usually spend 12 to 18 months in French barriques and require one or more years of bottle aging before being ready to drink. Priced at $25 to $50, Luigi Bosca Gala I, Belasco de Baquedano Swinto, and the Andeluna Grand Reserve are examples of this style. A listing of top-rated Malbecs in this category is provided in Annex 1.

A fourth and final Malbec style is the icon wine. These are the very best wines Argentina has to offer and are in a class by themselves in terms of quality and price. These wines are often produced from rare vineyard parcels of old Malbec vines offering expressions of terroir, earth, and minerals with layers of flavor. The fruit is carefully selected, often microvinified and can spend a minimum of 24 months in French oak and 12 months in the bottle before release. These wines have polished tannins but usually require cellaring time. Some of these wines are also blended with other varietals to give them more body and structure for long-term aging. Examples in this illustrious category include Achaval Ferrer's Finca Bella Vista, Catena Zapata's Nicasia, Viña Cobos' Marchiori, Mendel's Finca Remota Altamira, and Noemia. A complete listing is provided in Annex 1.

Malbec Blends

Argentine producers also craft a wide variety of Malbec blends. The most common include Bordeaux varietals like Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Cabernet Franc, and Petit Verdot as well as Bonarda, Tannat, Tempranillo and Syrah. In these blends, Malbec provides a lush texture and juicy fruit, while other varietals contribute body and structure. The result can be wines with an enticing combination of elegance, power, and complexity, provided winemakers are careful in their blending, These are some of our favorite wines.

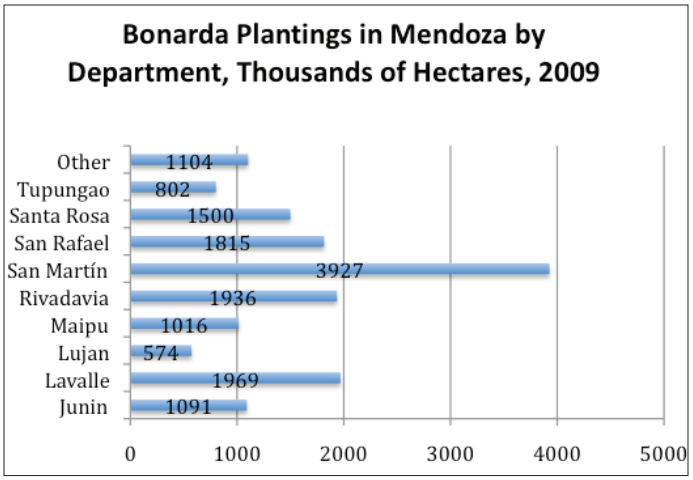
Each varietal contributes something different to the Malbec blend. Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc and Petit Verdot contribute good tannic structure and flavor. Cabernet Sauvignon is the most common grape blended with Malbec and is found in Bodegas CARO's Amancaya and Caro, the Lurton Chacayes, Diamandes, Riglos Gran Corte, Piattelli Trinitã, and many other blends (called cortes in Argentina). The Montequieto Quieto Reserva contains Cabernet Franc, and the Cheval des Andes blend includes Petit Verdot.

Tannat, Syrah and Merlot contribute color and depth. Tannat is part of the blend in Etchart Privado Arnaldo B and Luigi Bosca Gala I. Syrah is in the Doña Paula Malbec-Syrah. Merlot is in the Navarro Correas Structura Ultra, the NQN Colección, the Trapiche Iscay, the Weinert Carrascal, and the Rutini Encuentro Malbec-Merlot.

Bonarda and Tempranillo generally add more complexity of fruit and aroma. Bonarda is in the Tikal Patriota and Alma Negra Ministerio One, Tempranillo is prominent in the O. Fournier Alfa Crux and Zuccardi Zeta.

Not being a single varietal, the Malbec Blend can pose a marketing challenge, especially in the US market where consumers associate single varietal bottlings with quality and are familiar with the names of the most popular varietals. But the qualitative success of the Malbec Blend augurs well for its success in the market.

Bonarda.



Bonarda is Argentina's second most cultivated red variety. As of 2009 there were 19 thousand hectares of Bonarda planted of which Mendoza had 15 thousand and San Juan 2 thousand. As shown in the graph, Bonarda is planted all over Mendoza with some concentration in the eastern region departments of San Martín, Santa Rosa, San Rafael, Lavalle and Rivadavia. There are also sizeable plantings in Tupungato and Maipú, which are not generally recognized for their Bonarda.

Origins. There is still much confusion about the origin of Argentine Bonarda. For many years, experts weren't sure whether this grape was actually Bonarda Piedmontese, which comes from the Piedmont region in Italy, or whether it was Bonarda Novarese also from Piedmont and known as Uva Rara. Still others claimed it was Oltrepo Pavese, also know as Croatina in the Veneto or the "dulce nero" Dolcetto. Recent research by French and Argentine ampelographers suggests Argentine Bonarda is most likely the rare French grape Corbeau from Savoie and may be related to California's Charbono.

Bonarda arrived in Argentina in the late 19th century, most likely by Italian immigrants from the Italian Alps. Like Malbec, it flourished in Argentina's favorable growing conditions. As noted above, most Bonarda is currently planted in vineyards in the eastern region of Mendoza. This region has a dry, warm and sunny climate, relatively deep alluvial soils, and abundant water for flood irrigation. Bonarda grows vigorously under these conditions, and careful vineyard management is required to avoid over cropping and dilute, low quality fruit. Bonarda is thin skinned, has tight clusters, and is susceptible to rot, so the dry dessert-like conditions in eastern Mendoza help maintain healthy fruit.

Styles. For a large part of its history, Bonarda was used as a blending grape, or to make pink wines. Today it is also being produced as a single varietal in a variety of styles. The most common style is one that is easy-drinking and juicy, offering aromas and flavors of black cherry, raspberry and plum. Wines in this style are generally dark in color with a velvet texture and round tannins; they are usually sourced from high yielding vineyards, fermented in stainless steel with little or no oak and are offered in a "joven" or young style, at prices ranging from $9 to $15.

Bonarda is also being produced in a somewhat more interesting format with more complexity and nuance. These wines are sourced from old Bonarda vines, different vineyards, and are often aged in oak. The Trapiche Broquel Bonarda, for example, is a blend of grapes from old vineyards of the Valle de Uco, Ugarteche and Santa Rosa and spends 9 months in barrel. Others of interest include the Altos Las Hormigas Colonia las Liebres, the Ksana Bonarda, Zuccardi and the Bonardas of Valle de la Puerta in La Rioja and Nieto Senetiner . To our knowledge, there are no super premium single varietal Bonarda being produced in Argentina today, but there are some high quality blends.

Bonarda performs extremely well as a blending grape, providing color and flavor to red blends. It is commonly co-fermented with Cabernet Sauvignon, Syrah and Malbec. The Tikal Patriota is one of the more successful blends; it is composed of 60% Bonarda and 40% Malbec aged in oak with fruit from Rivadavia and Altamira. Bodega Vistalba and Kaiken combine Bonarda with Malbec, and either Cabernet Sauvignon or Petit Verdot. Both Susana Balbo and Tikal produce Syrah-Bonarda blends.

The Future. There is a spirited debate about the future of Bonarda, the question being, will it play a significant role in the diversification of Argentina's wine production. Most producers we consulted believe Bonarda will have an increasingly important role in the future as both a single varietal and in blending. However, they do not believe Bonarda will ever join the ranks of the top tier varietals. This is because it is not age worthy (at least for now), lacks acidity, and is high yielding in the vineyard. However, many believe that more research on Bonarda will lead to improvements in the quality of the grape and that there is "great" Bonarda in the future. For now, perhaps wine writer Oz Clark is right in noting that, "Bonarda could easily be Argentina's Beaujolais, and Bonarda Reserva could easily do the job of Beaujolais' top 'Cru' villages." Needless to say, there is a lot of Bonarda available to do the job and the price per ton or kilo is one quarter the price of Malbec, which translates into very affordable prices on the store shelf.

Torrontés

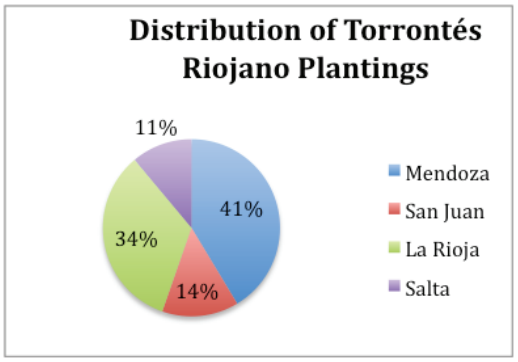
Torrontés is a floral, fragrant, crisp white *vitis vinifera* unique to Argentina. There are in fact four Torrontés in Argentina, three of which are different, spontaneous crossings of Muscat of Alexandria with Criolla[9]. Both of these varietals were brought to Argentina by Spanish missionaries in the mid-16th century.

The three Torrontés crossings are the Torrontés Riojano, Torrontés Sanjuanino (also, called Moscatel Romano), and Torontel (also, sometimes called Moscatel Amarillo). Of the three, the Torrontés Riojano is widely acknowledged to be the superior grape, especially in terms of aromatics. A fourth Torrontés, the Torrontés Mendocino, is a crossing of Muscat of Alexandria with an unknown, other varietal. This grape lacks the floral, Muscat-like aromas of the other Torrontés grapes.

There is widespread consensus that only one of these varieties—Torrontés Riojano—produces quality wines, and most of the highest quality wines are today made in the province of Salta and, in particular, the Valley of Cafayete. However, as shown in our tasting notes, we've tasted very good wines from Mendoza, La Rioja, and San Juan, too. José Luis Mounier is generally recognized as the master crafter of Torrontés in Salta. A listing of top-rated Torrontés can be found in Annex 1.

Torrontés Riojano. Torrontés Riojano is a prolific, early-ripening grape with large, loose bunches of conically shaped grapes. The best fruit comes from older vines grown at higher altitudes in sandy clay soil (franco-arenoso) and with good air movement. The high altitude (1500 – 2000 meters) that one finds in Cafayete produces the wide diurnal temperature variations that enhances and preserves the delicate aromas and flavors of the grape. Older vines give more concentrated fruit that yields greater complexity and balance in the wine. As shown in the graph, Torrontés Riojano is most widely planted in the province of Mendoza, although the best quality comes from Salta.

The skin of the Torrontés burns easily, and the fruit needs a balance of light and shade so the fruit matures without burning. A well-pruned, pergola-trained vine that provides speckled sunlight is ideal in the strong sun, especially at higher altitudes. The vineyards are often not densely planted; Mounier's vines are spaced about 2.5 x 2.5 meters, with 2000 vines per hectare. The traditional flood irrigation works well for Torrontés, but new vineyards are often drip-



[9]C. Agüero, et.al. (2003) Identity and Parentage of Torrontés Cultivars in Argentina. American Journal of Enology and Viticulture.

irrigated to conserve water. Torrontés can produce good quality wines even with yields as high as 18-20 tons/hectare, but quality improves when yields are reduced through pruning, deleting buds, and green harvesting. Good quality fruit produces little of the bitter aftertaste that Torrontés is famous for.

The time of the harvest is critical to the quality of the fruit. Fortunately, the stable climate of most wine grow ing regions in Argentina makes it relatively easy in most years to determine the best picking time. Picking too early gives very fresh, jasmine and herbal aromas and high acidity, while picking too late leads to rustic, high alcohol wines with a strong Muscat character and some bitterness. Still, some producers (e.g., Trapiche, Doña Paula) intentionally pick at different times to give greater flavor complexity, much as is often done with Sauvignon Blanc. The optimal harvest time is usually about mid-March, often yielding mango and white peach flavors.

José L Mounier of Salta Province is widely recognized in Argentina as the Master of Torrontés. He produces wine under his own label, Bodega Jose L Mounier and also serves as consulting winemaker for Tukma, Zuccardi and Las Arcas. José Luis was born in Mendoza where his father and grandfather were growers. After working as enologist at Echart, he realized his dream of owning his own winery when in 1995 he purchased 25 hectares of land, which later became Finca Las Nubes. His fame as a producer of Torrontés is well justified in light of the delicacy and complexity he achieves with the varietal. He is a graduate of the prestigious Don Bosco winemaking program in Mendoza. We thank him for his technical input to this report.

Styles. Torrontés comes in many styles depending on vineyard site and the price point of the wine. The best wines have a lifting, floral bouquet, often with white peach fruit notes; a nicely weighted palate showing good fruit and balancing acidity; and a fruit and mineral finish that often has slight bitter note. Gentle pressing contributes to delicacy and the avoidance of bitterness. Some winemakers go further in their efforts to counteract any bitterness in the wine, often at the expense of balance and elegance. Torrontés table wine is almost never wooded, although Piattelli ages about 20 percent of its wine in French oak, and El Porvenir makes a rich late harvest wine that see four months in French oak.

Other Promising Varietals

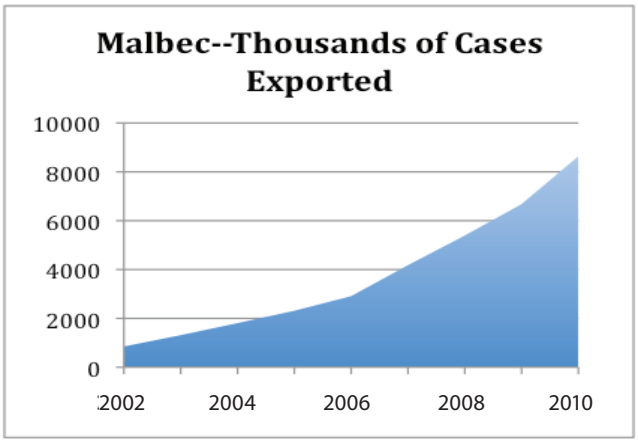
In addition to Malbec, Bonarda, and Torrontés, Argentina produces a number of other varietals with considerable success. Among red varietals, one can find outstanding examples (single varietal producers in parentheses) of Merlot (Familia Schroeder, Fin del Mundo, Humberto Canale), Syrah (Bressia, Michel Torino, Pascual Toso, Trivento, Vistalba Tomero), Cabernet Franc (Pulenta Estate, Doña Paula), Tannat (Michel Torino, El Porvenir, Fin del Mundo), Pinot Noir (Chacra, Familia Schroeder, Humberto Canale, Luca, Mariflor) and Petit Verdot (Casa Montes, Finca La Anita, Vistalba Tomero). In addition, there are too many producers of Cabernet Sauvignon and Chardonnay to list here.

As shown in the graph earlier, Argentina has large plantings of Cabernet Sauvignon. We found some delicious examples, but in general most the wines we tasted lacked the varietal character most customers have come to expect from California, Chile, and elsewhere. In our opinion, Argentine Cabernet Sauvignon is at its best in a red blend. Other varietals—especially, Cabernet Franc and Merlot—have considerable promise as single varietals. Pinot Noir is still a work in progress, with several good bottlings in Patagonia but just one, Chacra, that is world class.

Among white varietals, Chardonnay is, of course, well-established with good value offerings, especially at lower price levels. The Catena Alta Chardonnay is world class. In addition, one can find good examples of Viognier (Doña Paula), Pinot Grigio (Argento, Callia, Pulenta Estate) and Semillon (Mendel). Several producers now make Sauvignon Blanc for the domestic market, and Mariflor makes an exceptional one, but it's not clear Argentina has a comparative advantage relative to countries like Chile, South Africa, and New Zealand.

The Market for Argentina's Diverse Wines

Three factors have strongly affected the market for the wines of Argentina. The first is domestic consumption, which has decreased from 90 liters per capita in 1970 to 55 in 1991 and 30 today. The reduction in domestic demand for inexpensive, low quality wine has forced producers to improve quality and seek export markets for their products.
The second factor is Argentina's notoriously bad management of its economy. One result is fluctuating exchange rates, from an over-valued currency to under-valued and back again. Pegged to the US dollar from 1995 to 2001, the over-valued peso made Argentine wines expensive



abroad, and wine exports stagnated. Argentina's sovereign debt default in 2002 led to a dramatic devaluation that suddenly turned the tables, with the results shown in the graph. Today the Argentine peso is once again strong, putting the squeeze on producers and ultimately leading to increased export prices.

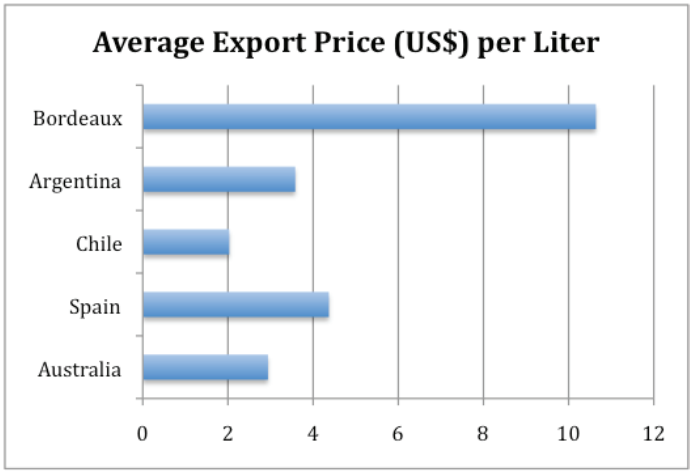
The third factor is, of course, Malbec, As shown in the graph, exports of Malbec have increased over 900 percent since 2002 and almost 300 percent since our 2005 report, Argentina's Magnificent Malbec. Furthermore, the growth in exports of Malbec is not letting up. The increase in Malbec exports in 2010 was almost two million cases, more than total Malbec exports just six years ago. This 29 percent growth in export sales took place despite an increase in the average export price of Malbec.

In addition to the continued growth in Malbec exports, the year 2010 was a miiestone for Argentine wines. It was the year that the value of Argentine wine exports ($220 million) to the US exceeded Chilean wine exports ($210 million) to the US. The increase in exports to the US, up 12 percent from 2009, moved Argentina into fourth place, behind Italy, France, and Australia, as a supplier of wine to the US[10]. In global terms. Argentina exports increased 12 percent in 2009, and it is now the 5th largest producer of wine and the 9th largest exporter, with total exports of $860 million.

Foreign investment has both contributed to and resulted from the spectacular success of Malbec. Investors (selected Argentine properties in parentheses) come from Chile (Trivento, Doña Paula, Finca El Orígen, Kaiken), France (Graffigna, François Lurton, Etchart, Clos de los Siete, Terrazas de los Andes), Spain (O. Fournier, Belasco de Baquedano, Séptima), and elsewhere in Europe and North America (Colomé, Salentein, Altos Las Hormigas). Some of the world's largest wine companies are present in Argentina, including Diageo, Concha y Toro, VC Córpora Group, Moët & Chandon, Hess, and Sogrape. These giants of the industry all have strong distribution arms in the US, which only augurs for continued success.

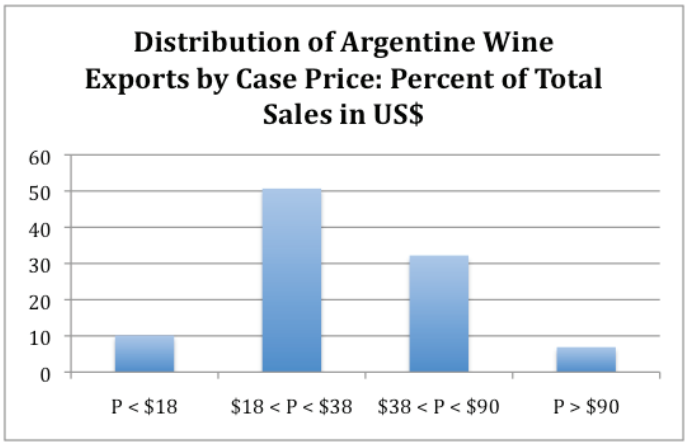
What is the future for Argentine wine exports? In what follows, we examine the strengths and weaknesses of Argentina's position in the global wine market.

Strengths. Argentina's strengths outweigh its weaknesses. Its average export price per liter is $3.58 FOB, higher than that for Chile or Australia. In addition, a healthy percentage of total export sales are for higher priced wines [see graph]. Furthermore, its sales of more expensive wines are increasing more rapidly than those of inexpensive wines. In 2010 sales of wines over $90 per case FOB [roughly equivalent to a $30 retail price per bottle] increased by 31 percent, while sales of wines under $18 per case FOB declined by 17 percent, an impressive accomplishment given the economic recession in Europe and the US.



Varietals other than Malbec are also increasing in terms of export sales. The most surprising is Torrontés, which experienced a 26 percent increase in sales in 2010, second only to Malbec. Red blends and Chardonnay also experienced significant growth. Also, sales to middle income countries like Brazil, China, Mexico, and Russia are increasing rapidly, and their low levels of per capita wine consumption offer plenty of room for continued growth.

Challenges. Argentine wine exports are heavily dependent on just one varietal. Malbec is 47 percent of total exports by value and 40 percent by volume, which raises the question of Argentina's possible vulnerability to a change in consumer taste, as has happened in the past to Merlot, Pouilly Fuisse, Shiraz and other wines. Also, the rapid growth in Malbec production, much of it from young vineyards and commercial wineries, runs the risk of damaging Argentina's most important wine asset, the high quality of its Malbec wine.



Argentina's exports are also heavily concentrated on just two countries, with 60 percent of exports going to Brazil and the US. This makes its exports vulnerable to changes in exchange rates, and Argentina's long history of abrupt changes in government macroeconomic policies suggests a high probability of future economic shocks. Argentina's trade policy is another weakness, as wine exports face higher tariffs than a country like Chile, which has aggressively pursued free trade agreements like NAFTA. And with the 2011 elimination of Brazil's 20 percent tariff on Chilean wine imports, Argentina no longer has a price advantage in that market. Finally, rising inflation and costs of production are increasingly squeezing the profit margins of wineries, adversely affecting their ability to make new investments and improvements. With large salary increases likely to be granted to vineyard and winery workers in 2011, profit margins will be tighter still.

Strategies for the Future. This report has focused on the diverse wines of Argentina, and this diversity is key to an industry strategy to increase worldwide exports. One element to this strategy is to diversify the markets for Argen-

[10]Other wine exporting countries also registered significant gains in sales in 2010. By volume, the increases over 2009 were: Spain 15.6%, Australia 3.6%, Chile 5.6%, and Argentina 9.6%. By total value of exports, the increases over 2009 were: Spain 10%, Australia -7%, Chile 12%, and Argentina 17.6%.

tine wine by increasing marketing efforts on the BRICs and other countries, especially in Asia, with a rapidly growing middle class. Marketing in these countries is likely to focus on the already established quality reputation of Malbec and should avoid the low price, bulk wine market that Australia is trapped in. Another element to a diversification strategy is to increase the variety of offerings in already established markets like the US. Recent market trends are consistent with our own assessment of wines where Argentina has a comparative advantage in terms of quality and value. Aside from Malbec, the greatest growth (in $) in exports in 2010 occurred with Torrontés (26.0%), Red Blends (19.6%), and Chardonnay (13.3%).

In Torrontés Argentina has a unique varietal that can be produced and sold at relatively low cost. It is a possible consumer substitute for Pinot Grigio, which is the second most important varietal imported to the US. Since most consumers don't yet know Torrontés, the challenge is to make them familiar with it. But once they do become familiar and like it, they have only one source for the wine—Argentina.

Chardonnay is the opposite of Torrontés. It is widely known, and most consumers aren't aware of the provenance of the Chardonnay wine that they purchase. It remains the number one import to the US by volume. The challenge for Argentina is to get good quality, well-priced Chardonnay into the marketplace. Our assessment of the quality and value of Argentine Chardonnay is highly positive.

Argentine Malbec-based Red Blends are a way to leverage the country's already strong reputation for quality red wine. However, for American consumers used to purchasing varietals, Red Blends are a hand sell, and successful marketing requires developing familiarity with the specific red blend sold by a specific winery. In other words, marketing and selling Red Blends is a job for the winery, not the industry.

The challenge for the small, independent Argentine winery wishing to export to the US is one of marketing. The three layer distribution system combined with large regional and national distributors makes it difficult to gain access to the market. A brief look at the Argentine wines most successfully sold in the US and the world confirms the importance of good distribution [see Table]. Each of the largest export brands has a superb national distributor. Alamos is made by Catena but marketed by Gallo, which also handles Don Gascon. Marcus James belongs to the Constellation family.

Leading Bottled Wine Argentine Export Brands to the US, 1st Qtr, 2010

Brand	USA Sales	$/Case
Alamos	5.5	31
Don Miguel Gascon	3.7	31
Marcus James	2.7	13
Catena	2.5	65
Norton	2.5	42

Tasting Notes and Ratings: Argentina

Mike Potashnik, Publisher, and Don Winkler, Editor, tasted more than 600 wines from all regions of Argentina for this report. This is the largest number of wines tasted by us for any single report. Our original intention was to focus on Argentina's mid-priced premium wines and top cuveés. However, we ended up tasting many exceptionally good wines at all price points from the entry level to super premium. In the Annex we list the top Malbecs in different price categories as well as the top Torrontés.

The wines for this report were tasted at our offices and during a visit to Argentina in February 2011. On that trip we were able to meet many of the country's top winemakers, taste through their portfolios, and discuss their wines with them. We are most appreciative of the hospitality they extended to us.

Argentine wineries produce an impressive variety of wines, most but not all of which are exported to the United States. In the tasting notes and ratings which follow, we include all the Argentine wines we tasted, even those not imported. Readers are informed when a wine is imported, along with its suggested retail price and the name and location of its importer. Wines not imported are listed without prices. Readers should keep in mind that importers do not import all the wines of a particular producer and may change the original names on the label for the US market. Most of the wines reviewed here are of vintages currently on the market and/or those which will reach the market next year.

The International Wine Review rates wines using the 100 point system. We do not write up wines that receive a rating below 85 points. The ratings are:

95+	A wine of distinction
91-94	A wine of outstanding or superior quality
89-90	A wine of very good to excellent quality
87-88	A wine of good quality
85-86	A wine of fair or acceptable quality
<85	Not recommended

Because of the large volume of wines tasted, we were unable to include tasting notes for each and every wine reviewed for the report. Thus, some tasting notes are listed with scores and prices under Wines Also Tasted, and the complete tasting notes are included in our Tasting Notes Archive at www.i-winereview.com. Subscribers may use the i-WineReview Search function to find all reviews of individual producers and their wines.

A-C

*****Achával-Ferrer**

Santiago Achával, co-owner and winemaker of Achával-Ferrer winery located in Luján de Cuyo is producing some of the finest wines in Argentina today. His old vines and single vineyard Malbecs are in great demand, despite their hefty price, and are rapidly gaining cult status among consumers in the know. All Achával-Ferrer wines are made from low-yielding vineyards meticulously managed that are producing as little as one ton per acre. Although harvested as much as 2-3 weeks before other producers, Achával-Ferrer wines exhibit ripe and complex fruit flavors, good acidity, and outstanding balance. Importer: TGIC, Woodland Hills, CA

Achával-Ferrer 2009 Malbec Mendoza ($28) 90+ The 2009 Malbec sports a dark ruby purple color and fragrant aromas of pure boysenberry and plum fruit. Fruit-forward in character, it is soft and elegant on the palate and shows ripe tannins with lingering plum flavors on the finish. This is a delicious wine, and its purity provides a good yardstick for single varietal Malbec in the mid-priced range. Sourced from old vines of varying ages from three vineyards in different regions. **Achával-Ferrer 2008 Finca Mirador Medrano Mendoza ($80) 93** Finca Mirador is sourced from 85 year-old vines with exceptionally low yields (less than one pound per plant). Aged for 15 months in new French oak, it exhibits wild berry red fruit, plum and oak on the attack and has an elegant palate with excellent acidity, round firm tannins, and a long finish. **Achával-Ferrer 2008 Quimera Mendoza ($50) 91** The Quimera is a blend of Malbec, Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Petit Verdot (for the first time) and Cabernet Franc sourced from vineyards all over Mendoza. It exhibits ripe red plum fruit, spice, and fine grained oak on the nose and has a soft attack of ripe concentrated red plum fruit flavors on the palate. It also has a soft lovely texture, gripping tannins and a long finish. **Achával-Ferrer 2008 Finca Altamira La Consulta Mendoza ($120) 95** Finca Altamira offers enticing aromas of dark plum, lavender, minerals, and toasted oak. Sourced from low-yielding 95-year-old vines, it has an elegant silky texture, yet is lush and concentrated with delicious plum fruit, licorice, and chocolate on the palate. It is a beautiful refined wine that is a pleasure to drink. **Achával-Ferrer 2008 Finca Bella Vista Mendoza ($120) 94** Achával Ferrer's 2008 Finca Bella Vista is a superb bottling offering an opaque ruby purple color and aromas of pure black cherry and oak on the nose. The wine has a velvet texture and layers of spicy red and black fruit, lavender, and dark chocolate flavors on the palate. The wine is beautifully balanced and has the stuffing to last another 5-7 years. Only 980 cases made of this superb, old vines Malbec.

***Alamos**

These are low-budget wines produced by the Catena family. They are easy drinking and available in all major varietals. The quality is quite good for the price and they are widely distributed in the US market through EJ Gallo's distribution network. Importer: EJ Gallo

Alamos 2009 Torrontés Salta ($8) 87+ This Torrontés exhibits a yellow gold color and a nose of fragrant tropical fruit. On the attack it reveals slightly tart fruit flavors followed by good acidity and a crisp finish. **Alamos 2009 Malbec Mendoza ($10) 86** The Malbec displays a medium ruby color and aromas of black cherry and plum. On the attack it reveals a dry mouth feel and light-bodied fruit on the palate with hard tannins on the finish. **Alamos 2008 Selección Malbec Mendoza ($15) 88** The 2008 Malbec Selección is a step up from the regular Malbec. It exhibits fragrant aromas of black cherry and plum and a hint of toast on the nose. The mouth feel has a velvet texture with moderate fruit concentration and round somewhat dry tannins on the finish. **Alamos 2009 Cabernet Sauvignon Mendoza ($10) 86** The Cabernet Sauvignon offers a dark ruby robe and aromas of black currants and light toast. On the palate, the wine is dry and tannic through to the finish.

***Alfredo Roca**

This family winery was founded in 1905 in the San Rafael department, southeast of Mendoza City. Today the fourth generation of descendents of founder Alfredo Roca manage the 114 ha estate. The wines reviewed are single varietals and of good value. Importer: Hand Picked Selections Warrenton, VA

Alfredo Roca 2010 Selección Sauvignon Blanc San Rafel Mendoza ($17) 88 This is a pleasant tasting Sauvignon Blanc offering aromas of tropical fruit and citrus. On the palate, it reveals notes of pineapple, vanilla and herbs with a light creamy mouth feel and a little lingering sweetness on the finish. **Alfredo Roca 2010 Chenin Blanc-Chardonnay San Rafael, Mendoza ($11) 87+** This yellow gold Chenin Blanc-Chardonnay blend offers ripe stone fruit aromas on the nose and fresh fruit flavors with good acidity on the palate. It is nicely balanced with a dry tart finish. **Alfredo Roca 2009 Malbec San Rafael, Mendoza ($11) 87+** This ruby purple Malbec is a fruit forward easy drinking wine that offers fresh fruit aromas and flavors. Straightforward and soft on the palate, it should provide good everyday drinking. **Alfredo Roca 2009 Malbec-Merlot San Rafael, Mendoza ($11) 88** The Malbec-Merlot blend has a medium ruby color with fragrant aromas of black cherry, plum and toast. It is a delicious wine with pure fruit flavors, good concentration and a long finish. Excellent value. **Alfredo Roca 2010 Pinot Noir San Rafael, Mendoza ($13) 87** This is a fruit forward Pinot Noir offering carbonic aromas and flavors of black cherry and raspberry with notes of cedar. It is soft on the attack with good red fruit concentration, accented with pepper and spice. **Alfredo Roca 2009 Cabernet Sauvignon San Rafael, Mendoza ($11) 86** This Cabernet Sauvignon exhibits a medium ruby garnet color and aromas of dried red plum, spice and herbs. While it doesn't have much varietal character, it is pleasant drinking.

***Alma Negra**

Alma Negra sparkling wines were first launched on the market in 2003 by Ernesto Catena, son of renown winemaker, Nicolas Catena. The grapes are sourced from estate vineyards in Valle de Uco and other sites. The wines are produced according to the champenoise method. Alma Negra wines are among the finest sparklers we have tasted in Latin America. The Ministerio One reviewed here is outstanding. Importer: Winebow Montvale, NJ

Alma Negra 2007 Ministerio One Mendoza ($35) 91 The Ministerio One is a harmonious blend of Malbec and Bonarda. Opaque ruby purple in color it offers ripe, clean toasted plum aromas that are mirrored on the palate with a touch of spice. It has an elegant texture and reveals concentrated red and blue fruit flavors. Malo is carried out in barrels. Very well done!! **Alma Negra 2009 Sparkling Chardonnay Mendoza ($20) 90** This is a delicious sparkler that is fresh and crispy on the palate with flavors of apple and pear and a slightly sweet dosage. It has a slightly buttery nose and is fresh and crisp on the palate with excellent acidity. Very well made in stainless steel with secondary fermentation in the bottle. Equal to the 2006 we tasted previously.

Other Wines Reviewed: Alma Negra 2009 Sparkling Malbec Mendoza ($20) 88.

***Alpamanta Estate**

Launched in 2005 by Austrian Andrej Razumovsky, this estate consists of 35 hectares of vineyards located in Ugarteche. The vineyards are cultivated organically, and yields are kept low (5 tons per hectare). The two wines tasted for this report show good promise for the future of this estate. The wines are made by one of Chile's foremost winemakers, Alvaro Espinoza. Importer: William Harrison Imports, Manassas, VA

Alpamanta 2008 Estate Malbec Mendoza ($24) 88 The dark ruby purple Alpamanta Malbec offers aromas of sweet black cherry and plum on the nose. On the palate, it has a silky smooth texture with concentrated dark red fruit, polished tannins, and a pleasantly long finish. **Alpamanta Estate 2008 Estate Cabernet Sauvignon Mendoza ($24) 88+** The Cabernet Sauvignon boasts earthy black cherry and mineral aromas followed by concentrated black currant fruit and spice on the palate. It is nicely structured with ripe black fruit and earth. Pleasant drinking.

*****Altocedro**

The winery and vineyards of Altocedro are located in the prime region of La Consulta, Valle de Uco. Winemaker and owner Karim Mussi Saffie uses sustainable growing practices to produce limited amounts of handcrafted terroir-driven wines of outstanding quality. Importer: Vino del Sol, Corralitos, CA

Altocedro 2009 Malbec Reserve Mendoza ($29) 90 Altocedro's 2009 Malbec Reserve offers lovely aromas of dark cherry, violets, mint and rich vanilla oak. It sports a nicely flavored palate with good density, soft mouth feel, and round tannins. Stylistically it appears to show more black fruit than red, with nice toasted oak on the palate and finishes with vanilla and black fruit notes. **Altocedro 2008 Malbec Grand Reserva La Consulta Mendoza ($50) 92** The Malbec Grand Reserva is a cut above the Reserve. More elegant and refined, it offers dark cherry fruit with rich toasted oak on the nose. Fermented and aged for 24 months in new French oak, it is soft on the attack and lush on the palate with dark cherry, chocolate, and some tobacco notes. It also finishes very, very long. An international style where the oak really defines the wine.

Wines also Reviewed: Altocedro 2010 Malbec Año Cero La Consulta Mendoza ($15) 90

*****Altos Las Hormigas**

Altos Las Hormigas was founded in 1995 by a group of Tuscan winemakers and businessmen. Included among them were famed enologist Alberto Antonini and Marc de Grazia, one of the top exporters of Italian fine wines. Their estate consists of some 200 ha situated at 800 m in Luján de Cuyo of which 40 ha are planted with Malbec. The Clássico is good value, and the Bonarda is interesting. The Malbec Reserva and Malbec Vista Flores are their best wines. Importer: Michael Skurnik Wines, Syosset, NY

Altos Las Hormigas 2010 Malbec Clássico Mendoza ($12) 89 The Clássico is a blend of grapes from different zones including their own estate. It offers black cherry fruit with toasted oak notes. It has good balance and freshness on the palate. Good value. **Altos Las Hormigas 2009 Bonarda Colonia Las Liebres Lujan de Cuyo ($10) 88+** One of the more interesting Bonardas tasted for this report, the 2009 Colonia Las Liebres is sourced from 80-year-old vines from a vineyard in Santa Rosa. It is a delicious, elegant wine with deep flavors of dark plum and earth. It is nicely balanced with round, albeit gripping, tannins in need of further bottle aging. **Altos Las Hormigas 2008 Malbec Reserva Mendoza ($30) 91** The Malbec Reserva is sourced from two high altitude vineyards in Valle de Uco. Aged for for18 months in new French oak, it boasts a dark ruby hue and aromas of fresh plum with blue fruit notes and spice. On the palate it is velvet smooth with ripe and concentrated fruit, earth, and spice. The wine is nicely structured with polished tannins and a long finish. **Altos Las Hormigas 2006 Malbec Vista Flores Valle de Uco Mendoza ($110) 93** This blockbuster of a wine is rich in black fruit, minerals and toasted oak. It is elegant on the palate and beautifully integrated. Sourced from a single low-yielding vineyard, it spends 36 months in barrel, including 200 percent in new French oak, and one year in the bottle. The wine has good structure and minerality, but needs at least two to three more years of cellaring to soften and integrate its tannins.

Other Wines Reviewed: Altos Las Hormigas 2009 Malbec Terroir Valle de Uco ($20) 88

*****Andeluna Cellars**

Andeluna Cellars is jointly owned by Ricardo Reina Rutini, a grandson of Felipe Ruitini, one of the pioneers of Argentina's wine industry, and Ward Lay, an international businessman. The wines at this estate are sourced from vineyards situated at an altitude of 4,400 ft and are produced by winemaker Silvio Alberto in collaboration with consulting winemaker Michel Rolland. The entry level wines are good value, and the premium wines are beautifully made in a style that offers lots of sweet ripe fruit and oak, a lush texture, and a big flavorful finish. Importer: San Francisco Wine Exchange, San Francisco, CA

Andeluna Cellars 2009 Cabernet Sauvignon Tupungato ($11) 88 This dark ruby Cabernet Sauvignon offers ripe black cherry, plum and chocolate aromas on the nose that are mirrored on the attack. Fermented in stainless steel, it reveals a dry palate, soft tannins, and a long finish. Good value. **Andeluna Cellars 2009 Malbec Tupungato ($11) 88** This Malbec is fresh and easy-drinking with red berry and plum fruit and toasted notes. It is soft on the palate with ripe round tannins, nicely balanced and a long finish. **Andeluna Cellars 2010 Unoaked Chardonnay Tupungato ($11) 88** This is a flavorful, unoaked Chardonnay offering aromas and flavors of ripe tropical fruit and melon. Medium-weight, it displays good acidity and balance with intensity of fruit flavors and a long finish. **Andeluna Cellars 2006 Malbec Grand Reserve Tupungato ($50) 93** The 2006 Malbec Grand Reserve exhibits a dark ruby color and aromas of black cherry fruit, lavender and coconut on the nose Aged in new French and American oak for 8 months, it offers light bodied yet concentrated dark plum fruit flavors on the palate with soft tannins and nicely integrated vanilla and fruit flavors on the finish. This Malbec is for those who appreciate lots of pure ripe fruit framed in rich sweet oak. **Andeluna Cellars 2005 Grand Reserve Pasionado Tupungato ($50) 92** The 2005 Pasionado is a rich blend of Malbec (34%), Merlot (36%), Cabernet Sauvignon (20%) and Cabernet Franc (%10). Aged for 18 months in new French and American oak, it offers sweet red cherry and plum fruit and oak aromas on the nose with highly concentrated ripe and lush compote-like fruit flavors and chocolate on the palate, soft and round tannins, and a long finish.

Wines also Reviewed: Andeluna Cellars 2006 Chardonnay Reserve Tupungato ($20) 88

***Añoro**

These two wines are the product of a joint venture between importer, Vine Connections, and Master Sommelier Ken Fredrickson and his wife, Licy. The grapes are sourced from independent growers, and the wine is made by winemaker Federico Sanchez. Importer: Vine Connections, Sausalito, CA

Añoro 2008 Malbec Alto Agrelo ($25) 87 The 2008 Añoro Malbec reveals a dark ruby purple color and aromas of dark plum and earth notes that are mirrored on the palate with spice and toasted oak. Overall, the wine is rustic in character and has lots of tannic grip and a persistent finish. **Añoro 2008 El Regalo Malbec Agrelo ($40) 90** El Regalo Malbec is a much better effort. It offers an attractive blend of dark cherry fruit and sweet oak with hints of coconut. Aged for14 months in French oak barrels, it is silky smooth on the palate with delicious black fruit flavors and spice. The wine shows excellent balance, light tannic grip and a long fruit rich finish.

Antucura 2006 Gran Vin Valle de Uco, Mendoza ($45) 91 This wine is from a young, highly promising wine-making project launched by Argentine businessman Gerardo Carellone and publisher Anne-Caroline Biancheri. It consists of a 130 ha vineyard and winery located in Vista Flores in Valle de Uco. Michel Rolland is assisting, and their first wines have been excellent. The Gran Vin is a lovely blend of Cabernet Sauvignon (80%), Malbec (15%) and Merlot (5%). It offers ripe red and black cherry aromas on the nose with accents of smoke and toast. Aged for 16 months in new French oak, it is nicely structured on the palate with layers of concentrated fruit and toasted oak. Well-made and certainly age worthy. Importer: Southern Starz Huntington Beach, California

***Argento**

This winery is producing some of the finest low budget wines in Argentina today. Established in 1998, its winemaking team has actively researched vaRíous microclimates and terroir best suited for the varieties they produce. Their winery is located in Rividavia where they are surrounded by 60-year-old vines of Bonarda. Sebastián San Martin and Silvia Corti make the wines with assistance from consultant winemaker Nick Goldschmidt. Importer: Lion Nathan , Overland Park, KS

Argento 2010 Pinot Grigio Cool Climate Valle de Uco ($10) 89+ This Pinot Grigio is medium yellow straw in color and offers effusive orchard fruit on the nose along with honey notes. It's full fruited and richly flavored of light peach and melon. There's nice brisk acidity on the finish. Quite delicious. **Argento 2009 Bonarda Mendoza ($10) 88+** This is certainly one Argentina's best low budget Bonardas. Dark ruby in color, it offers bright red plum aromas and boysenberry and plum flavors on the palate with herbal and game notes . It has big tannins on the finish but more complexity than one would expect at this price. **Argento 2009 Cabernet Sauvignon Valle de Uco ($10) 89** This Cabernet has ripe black berry aromas with notes of smoke. It has a soft attack, good structure, and fresh flavors of dark plum, spice and smoke. Finishes with firm tannins. **Argento 2009 Malbec ($10) 89** Dark ruby color, this Malbec offers nice dark red plum fruit on the nose and is soft and lush on the palate with an attractive velvet like mouth feel and finishing with fine tannins. Exceptionally nice at this price. **Argento 2009 Malbec Reserva Mendoza ($10) 91** The Malbec Reserva is even better. Dark ruby in color, it has smoky dark cherry aromas and is soft and lush on the attack with a velvet like mouth feel and flavors of dark cherry, tobacco, violets and shaved chocolate. Finishes with abundant fine tannins.

***Bodegas Atamisque**

Founded in 2002 Atamisque winery owns vineyards and buys fruit in Tupungato, La Consulta, Tunuyán and Luján de Cuyo. The wines are estate bottled in a gravity flow winery. Atamisque is the name of an aboriginal bush that grows naturally around the winery. The wines are excellent. The Assemblage is a stand out red blend. Importer: Davis Wine Imports, Davis, CA

Bodega Atamisque 2010 Catalpa Chardonnay Mendoza ($18) 89 The Catalpa Chardonnay has a medium yellow color and floral aromas on the nose. Fermented in stainless steel followed by 50% malo in new wood for 3 months, it has a creamy mouth feel with flavors of fresh pear, melon and toast. It is nicely balanced, flavorful and easy to drink. **Bodega Atamisque 2009 Catalpa Pinot Noir Tupungato, Mendoza ($18) 88** The Catalpa Pinot Noir reveals aromas of dark raspberry and cherry fruit and offers a soft attack with good intensity of red fruit flavors and toasted oak on the palate. Aged for 12 months in new French oak (30%) and stainless steel (70%), it has good structure and acidity and is long lasting on the palate. Sourced from high altitude vineyards in Tupungato growing Pinot Noir clone 777. Excellent price! **Atamisque Cabernet Sauvignon Mendoza ($30) 90+ This Cabernet Sauvignon boasts an impressive opaque ru**by purple color and has ripe blackberry fruit on the nose with notes of cassis. Fermented in stainless steel and aged in new French oak for 14 months, it is full-bodied with silky tannins, lush fruit flavors, and long lasting on the palate. One of the better Cabernet Sauvignons we tasted. **Bodega Atamisque 2007 Atamisque Assemblage Mendoza ($40) 91** The 2007 Atamisque Assemblage is an elegant blend of Malbec (50%), Cabernet Sauvignon (25%), and Merlot (25%). Dark ruby in color, it displays fragrant aromas of ripe blackberry fruit, cassis, and toast. Aged for 14 months in new French oak, it offers elegance and savory black fruit flavors with beautifully integrated oak, coffee, and a touch of garrigue. A beautiful wine with a long satisfying finish.

Other Wines Reviewed: Bodega Atamisque 2008 Catalpa Cabernet Sauvignon Mendoza ($18) 89+ Bodega Atamisque 2008 Catalpa Malbec Mendoza ($18) 89

***Bodega Ave**

This wine project was launched by two young Tuscans, MaRío Pardini and Iacopo di Bugno who were lured to Mendoza in 2004 and fell in love with life there. They acquired 40 hectares in Pedriel and hired Tuscan consulting winemaker Alberto Antonini to assist their young Argentine winemaker Mariano Vignoni. This winery is off to a good start. Importer: Banville & Jones, New York, NY

Ave 2009 Premium Torrontés Cafayete Salta ($15) 89 The Premium Torrontés offers lovely aromas of white flowers, citrus and passion fruit. It has a soft round mouth feel and a creamy palate rich with fruit flavor. Consulting wine maker Alberto Antonini and winemaker Mariano Vignoni have done a nice job on this wine. Great Value! **Ave 2007 Malbec Gran Reserva Mendoza ($30) 89** Ave's 2007 Malbec Gran Re serva reveals a medium ruby color and black fruit aromas and toast on the nose. Soft and elegant on the attack, it has a medium body palate with black savory fruit herbs, and toast. It has round tannins on the finish with notes of earth and ashes. **Ave 2007 Memento Mendoza ($79) 92** The dark ruby Memento is a blend of Malbec, Bonarda, Tempranillo, Cabernet Sauvignon and Cabernet Franc. It provides elegant red fruit, cedar and earth on the nose and palate. It is a delicious wine, both elegant and complex with a soft and lush mouth feel and a long and persistent finish.

Other Wines Reviewed: Ave 2009 Premium Malbec Mendoza ($15) 88

***Susana Balbo / Ben Marco/ Dominio del Plata Winery**

The wines of Susana Balbo and the Ben Marco wines of Pedro Marchevski are produced at the Dominio del Plata Winery located in Luján de Cuyo. Susana is a highly skilled winemaker and Pedro, an expert in managing vineyards. Their grapes are sourced from their own vineyards, operated following principles of sustainable agriculture, and from neighboring farms. The entry level Críos and premium wines are of outstanding quality and originality. Importer: Vine Connections, Sausalito, CA

Susana Balbo 2010 Críos de Susana Balbo Torrontés Salta ($15) 90 Long a benchmark for Argentine Torrontés, Susana Balbo's wine has good extract and balance. The nose shows ripe white peach and melon with lees and even a light menthol note. The body is full with ripe stone fruit and minerals showing prominently on a creamy palate. **Críos de Susana Balbo 2009 Cabernet Sauvignon Mendoza ($15) 89** The Críos 2009 Cabernet Sauvignon is fruit forward and fresh tasting with aromas and flavors of black currant fruit, plum, chocolate and sweet oak. Aged for 5 months in new French oak, it is nicely balanced, has good texture on the palate and nicely integrates fruit and oak. An easy drinking wine and great value to boot! **Críos de Susana Balbo 2009 Malbec Mendoza ($15) 89** This is a fresh tasting, fruit forward wine that offers aromas of plum and black cherry, with hints of spice and smoke. It has a soft texture, clean fruit flavors with good acidity and round tannins. The 10% Bonarda blended with the Malbec very likely contributes to this wine's fruity character. Easy drinking and great value; **Críos de Susana Balbo 2008 Syrah-Bonarda Mendoza ($15) 88+** This is a 50-50 blend of Syrah and Bonarda and it works well. The grapes were sourced from 42 year-old vines and the wine was aged for 9 months in 50% 1-year used French oak and 50% 1-year used American oak. The result is a wine with an opaque ruby purple color and aromas of black fruit, spice and toast. On the palate it is soft and lush with concentrated black fruit flavors and lots of spice. The wine has soft round tannins and a lingering dry finish of blackberry fruit, earth and chalk. **Susana Balbo 2008 Malbec Mendoza ($25) 91** The 2008 Malbec exhibits an opaque ruby color and aromas of black cherry and spice. It is soft and lush on the attack with a velvet texture, sweet fruit, bright acidity, and round tannins on the finish. **Susana Balbo 2007 Nosotros Agrelo Mendoza ($40) 92** Nosotros is a delicious Cabernet-Sauvignon-based blend with an opaque ruby color and savory aromas of black cherry, roasted meat and forest floor. It is highly concentrated on the palate, yet elegant with blue and black fruit, soft tannins and a long fruited finish. **Ben Marco 2007 Expresivo Mendoza ($35) 91** The Ben Marco Expresivo is a delicious blend of Malbec (50%), Bonarda (15%), Syrah (15%), Cabernet Sauvignon (10%), and Tannat (10%). Sourced from high altitude 40 year-old vines in Luján de Cuyo, it displays a dark ruby color with deep and richly concentrated aromas and flavors of black cherry, chocolate and oak spice. Aged for 14 months in French and American oak, it is beautifully balanced with polished tannins and a persistent finish.

Other Wines Reviewed: Susana Balbo 2006 Cabernet Sauvignon Mendoza ($25) 89, Susana Balbo 2009 Torrontés Late Harvest Mendoza 500 ml ($25) 91+, Susana Balbo 2008 Malbec Late Harvest Mendoza 500 ml ($29) 90+, Ben Marco 2009 Malbec Mendoza ($20) 90

***Belasco de Baquedano**

This winery is located in Agrelo, Luján de Cuyo. It has a state of the art, high tech, minimalist winery inspired by Mayan architecture. The owners are Spanish investors who own wineries in Navarra. The Llama Malbec and Swinto Malbec are noteworthy wines. Importer: Cabernet Corporation, Novato, CA and Kysela Pére et Fils, Winchester, VA

Belasco De Baquedano 2009 Llama Malbec Old Vine Mendoza ($15) 90 Sourced from 100 year-old vines, the Llama Malbec has a medium ruby hue and aromas of black cherry/plum, earth and pepper. On the palate it is soft and velvet smooth with lush black cherry fruit, plum, spice, and toast. Aged for 6 months in new French barriques, it is beautifully balanced and is long lasting on the palate with rich elegant flavors through to the finish. Outstanding value! **Belasco De Baquedano 2008 Swinto Old Vine Malbec Mendoza ($40) 93** The magnificent 2008 Swinto offers a medium dark ruby hue and aromas of dark blackberry fruit, toasted oak and spice. Sourced from low yielding,100-year-old vines yielding less than 1.5 tons per acre, it boasts richly flavored black

fruit and toasted oak on the palate. Aged for 15 months in new French barriques, it is soft and elegant, beautifully balanced, with round tannins and a long lush finish. **Ar Guentota Malbec Mendoza ($25) 89** The 2007 AR Guentota Malbec is sourced from old vineyards planted at 1,020 meters. It has a medium dark ruby hue with aromas of black cherry and plum. It reveals spicy red fruit on the attack with a soft texture but with some bitterness of the mid-palate and dry tannic grip on the finish.

Other Wines Reviewed: Belasco De Baquedano 2010 Rosa Mendoza 87, Belasco De Baquedano 2007 c Tiza Malbec Mendoza ($19) 87

*****Benvenuto de la Serna**
Launched in 1990, Benvenuto de la Serna is a 180 hectare estate, which has 40 has planted west of Vista Flores. It has two labels: Benvenuto de la Serna and Mil Piedras. The wines are of good quality. Importer: Cannon Wines Ltd. San Francisco, CA

Benvenuto de la Serna 2006 Trisagio ($26) 89 The 2006 Trisagio is this estate's best wine. It is composed of 1/3 each Malbec, Petit Verdot and Tannat. It reveals dark plum fruit aromas and flavors along with toasted oak and spice. Spending 18 months in new oak, it is soft and gentle on the palate and nicely balanced. While lacking acidity, it has firm tannins on the finish. **Benvenuto de la Serna 2007 Malbec ($18) 88** The 2007 Malbec offers red and black fruit flavors. Aged for 12 months in 80% French oak, it is very ripe and soft on the palate with mouth filling flavors. The wine shows good balance and acidity with round tannins and a lengthy finish.

*****Bodegas Valentin Bianchi**
Bodegas Valentin Bianchi is an old family winery founded in 1928 by an Italian immigrant, Valentin Bianchi. Located in the Department of San Rafael, it owns 3 vineyards totaling some 293 ha. Its wines are generally traditional in style with lots of extraction, oak and firm tannins. Importer: Quintessential Wines, Napa, VA

Valentin Bianchi 2008 Particular Malbec Elsa's Vineyard Mendoza ($30) 88 The Particular Malbec boasts a floral nose with red and black fruit and lightly toasted oak. Aged for 14 months in new French and American oak, it is lush and full on the palate with bright flavors. The tannins are gripping but ripe. **Valentin Bianchi 2007 Particular Cabernet Sauvignon Mendoza ($30) 89** The Bianchi Cabernet Sauvignon reveals aromas of ripe dark cherry with light notes of cacao and tobacco. Aged for 14 months in 100% new French oak, it offers a full palate of effusively flavored fruit, loam and spicy herbal notes. It has a very long finish but the tannins are very firm. **Valentin Bianchi 2007 Enzo Bianchi Mendoza ($50) 90** The 2007 Enzo Bianchi is a blend composed of 87% Cabernet Sauvignon and small amounts of Malbec, Merlot and Petit Verdot. Aged for 12 months in new French oak, it offers dark red fruit, light notes of cigar box and cedar spice. It is velvet like on the palate with flavors of violets, red plums, and a hint of licorice. It also reveals good structure and balance, although it has dry tannins on the finish.

Other Wines Reviewed: Valentin Bianchi 2008 Famiglia Bianchi Chardonnay Mendoza ($20) 88

*****Bodegas Bressia**
The Bressia Winery is a small family owned and operated winery in Luján de Cuyo established in 2003. Winemaker, Walter Bressia produces wines in very small quantities with limited distribution. The Malbec blends are noteworthy and the wines of this estate are excellent in quality. Importer: Kysela Pere et Fils, Ltd Winchester, VA

Bressia 2007 Lagrima Canela Mendoza ($50) 90 A blend of Chardonnay (70%) and Semillon (30%), the Lagrima Canela reveals a yellow gold color with dried tropical fruit on the nose. It has light tropical fruit flavors and coconut on the palate with good acidity and a long finish. A uniquely flavorful wine. **Bressia 2007 Monteagrelo Cabernet Sauvignon Mendoza ($28) 90** The Cabernet Sauvignon is a delicious wine. It is ripe and lush tasting with earth and red and black fruit flavors on the palate. It is soft, round and lush with a long savory finish. **Bressia 2007 Monteagrelo Syrah Mendoza ($27) 90** The 2007 Monteagrelo Syrah exhibits lovely ripe black and red fruit, spice and oak aromas. It has a soft attack of ripe blue and black fruit flavors. It's a delicious wine with good flavors. Drink up in the next couple of years. **Bressia 2006 Conjuro Mendoza ($120) 90** The 2006 Conjuro is a dark ruby blend of Malbec (50%), Cabernet Sauvignon (30%), and Merlot (20%). It offers aromas of red and black fruit and toast. Followed by black currant, graphite, and plum on the palate, it has an elegant mouth feel with a long dry finish.

Broadbent 2009 Malbec Mendoza ($14) 87
This wine was produced by Bartholomew Broadbent, importer of fine wine, in collaboration with partners in Argentina. The 2009 Malbec is a fruit-forward wine with a deep purple color and aromas of fresh plum and spice. Medium-bodied, it offers concentrated fruit flavors on the palate with a touch of earth and a dry finish. Importer: Broadbent Selections, San Francisco, CA

Callia/Portillo/Kilka
These three wines are labels produced by Bodega Salentein. Callia/Callia Alta are low budget wines produced in a state-of-the art winery in San Juan province. The grapes are sourced from vineyards in Valle de Tulúm and Valle Pedernal. The wines are good value for the price. Portillo wines are also low-budget and produced in the Valle de Uco; they are of average quality Kilka is a relatively new label and offered at a mid-price range. Kilka showed well in this review. Importer: Palm Bay Imports, Port Washington, NY

Callia 2010 Alta Pinot Grigio San Juan ($10) 88 This pale yellow-gold Pinot Grigio has a fragrant nose of orchard and citrus fruit. These are followed by a palate of fresh citrus fruit flavors, good balance and a long finish. Well done.

For early drinking. **Portillo 2009 Merlot Mendoza ($11) 87+** The medium ruby Merlot boasts ripe plum aromas on the nose and a soft velvet smooth attack of plum fruit and spice on the palate. It is nicely balanced with round tannins and a long finish. Delicious, easy-drinking, and a great value. **Portillo 2009 Pinot Noir Mendoza ($11) 86** The 2009 Pinot has a light ruby colored hue and aromas of red berries and spice. It is soft on the attack, offers red fruit flavors on the mid-palate and has a light dry tannic finish. **Portillo 2010 Sauvignon Blanc Mendoza ($11) 88** This is a very good Sauvignon Blanc with good varietal character, including a somewhat pungent green bean nose and a.fully flavored palate of citrus and grapefruit with good acidity and a long, crisp finish. Very good. **Killka 2008 Malbec Mendoza ($14) 88** This is a pleasant easy drinking wine produced by Bodegas Salentein. It has a dark ruby color, aromas of plum fruit, and a soft attack with clean fruit flavors on the palate. It is nicely balanced with firm tannins on the finish. Simple but pleasant drinking.

Camino del Inca 2005 Quipu Blend Salta ($50) 92
Camino del Inca is a new Salta-based project based of Bodega El Porvenir in partnership with Vino el Sol, importer of fine wines from Argentina. The Quipu Blend consists of 50% Malbec, 30% Cabernet Sauvignon and 20% of Tannat and Syrah. On the nose it reveals earth, leather, cedar, and meat. It boasts a lovely lush palate with interesting flavors of tobacco, earth, and fresh and dried red fruit. It finishes long and very flavorful, like a Gran Reserva from Ríoja. Importer: Vino del Sol, Corralitos, CA

*****Bodegas CARO**
Bodegas CARO is a partnership between Nicolas Catena and Domaines Barons de Rothschild (Lafite) that emerged after Eric de Rothschild visited Mendoza in 1999 and tasted Nicolas Catena's wines. The CARO wines, which are sourced from old vines Malbec and Cabernet Sauvignon, are crafted by the talented winemaker Estela Perinetti in a new winemaking facility. Both Caro and Amancaya appear to have greatly improved in quality since we started tasting them a few years ago. Importer: Pasternak Wine Imports, Harrison, NY

Bodegas CARO 2009 Amancaya ($22) 90 Amancaya is a proprietary blend of Malbec (70%) and Cabernet Sauvignon (30%). It has a dark ruby color and aromas of black cherry, violets, and lightly toasted oak. On the palate it offers ripe blackberry and cassis fruit, spice, and oak. It is nicely balanced with round, young tannins and a long finish. An additional year in bottle is needed to bring out all the flavor of this delicious wine. **Bodegas CARO 2007 Caro Mendoza ($50) 92** The 2007 Caro is the more profound wine of these two proprietary blends. Composed of Malbec (60%) and Cabernet Sauvignon (40%), it exhibits an opaque ruby robe and aromas of plum and sweet oak. It is a rich and elegant wine with lush dark fruit flavors, lovely oak spice, and a velvet smooth mouth feel. The wine is beautifully balanced with polished tannins and a finish that goes on and on. Superb!

*****Bodegas y Viñedos Casa Montes**
This estate was founded in 1992 by Francisco Montes, an immigrant from Andalucia. It currently owns 156 hectares of vines in the Valle de Tulúm in the province of San Juan. The winery is a state-of-the art facility producing wines under its Don Baltazar and Ampakana labels. Importer: South American Wine Importers, Addison, TX

Casa Montes 2008 Don Baltazar Cabernet Franc San Juan ($15) 88 The Cabernet Franc has a dark ruby purple hue and aromas of boysenberry and herbs. It is soft on the palate with concentrated dark fruit flavors, good balance and a long finish. **Casa Montes 2008 Don Baltazar Malbec San Juan ($15) 87+** The 2008 Don Baltazar Malbec is dark ruby with a nose of fragrant ripe black fruit. It is soft and velvet smooth on the palate with tart dry tannins and a short finish. This wine will show best with a crusty bife de chorizo. **Casa Montes 2008 Don Baltazar Petit Verdot San Juan ($15) 88+** The dark ruby, fruit forward Petit Verdot offers fragrant black fruit and toast aromas and a soft velvet palate of concentrated fruit flavors. It is nicely balanced with round tannins and a pleasant finish. **Casa Montes 2008 Don Baltazar Syrah San Juan ($15) 88** The Syrah offers fragrant aromas of blackberries and violets followed by a soft velvet palate of ripe black fruit, polished tannins and a long finish. **Casa Montes 2007 Alzamora Grand Reserve Malbec San Juan ($20) 88** This is a savory Old World wine offering a purple color and aromas of blackberries and plums with notes of toasted oak and vanilla. Aged for 12 months in French oak, it is nicely balanced with good concentration of fruit, pepper and chocolate on the palate and round tannins on the finish.

*****Bodegas Catena Zapata**
Bodegas Catena Zapata is one of Argentina's best known and respected family wineries. Over the past three decades, under Nicolás Catena and more recently under daughter Laura Catena, the winery has served as the undisputed leader in producing high quality wines for export at competitive prices. Bodega Catena Zapata owns 425 ha of vineyards in Luján de Cuyo, Tupungato and San Carlos and produces a wide variety of wines at different price levels. The Catena Alta and single vineyard Malbecs and blends are in class by themselves. Importer: Winebow, Montvale, NJ

Catena Zapata Catena Alta Chardonnay Mendoza ($35) 92
The Catena Alta Chardonnay is a refined and elegant wine exhibiting melon and tropical aromas with toasted notes that are mirrored on the palate. Aged for 12 months in oak, the wine is beautifully balanced and silky with a lovely mouth feel and sustained fruit flavors through to the finish. This Chardonnay is one of the best being crafted in South America today. **Catena Zapata 2007 Catena Alta Malbec Mendoza ($50) 92** The Catena Alta Malbec displays an opaque ruby purple color and reveals aromas of black cherry, plum and sweet oak. Soft and elegant on the attack, it is intensely flavored and spicy on the palate with pure red and

black fruit, perfect balance and structure, rounded tannins and a long finish. **Catena Zapata 2007 Catena Alta Cabernet Sauvignon Mendoza ($50) 92** This Cabernet Sauvignon is one of the best produced in Argentina. It offers an opaque ruby purple color with notes of graphite, black currant, toasted oak and spice on the nose. Beautifully crafted, soft and elegant on the palate, it is medium weight with polished tannins and a long finish. It has good varietal character. **Catena Zapata Malbec 2007 Nicasia Vineyard Mendoza ($120) 93** The Nicasia Vineyard in Altamira is the source for this beautiful 100% Malbec. Micro-fermented in new French oak, it displays a deep purple color and aromas of black and red fruit. Aged for 18 months in new French oak, the wine is soft, elegant and velvet smooth on the palate, with notes of violets, loam, licorice, and blackberry liqueur. The wine is perfectly crafted with soft round tannins and a very long finish. **Catena Zapata 2007 Malbec Adrianna Vineyard Mendoza ($120) 93** The Adrianna Vineyard Malbec is different in character from the Nicasia. Opaque ruby purple in color, it reveals somewhat more earth-like dark flavors and is much more muscular and concentrated up front than the Nicasia. It has notes of violets and is perfectly balanced with concentrated fruit and oak, soft round tannins and a long finish. **Catena Zapata 2007 Malbec Argentino Mendoza ($120) 95** This 100% Malbec is an extraordinary wine of great complexity and elegance. Dark ruby in color, it offers a combination of black fruit oak and earth. Aged for 24 months in new French oak, it is beautifully focused and concentrated with round tannins and intensity of fruit flavor. It is soft and elegant with blue fruit notes and spices on the finish. Magnificent but unfortunately made in small quantities. **Catena Zapata 2007 Nicolas Catena Zapata Mendoza ($120) 95** A truly gorgeous wine composed of 65% Cabernet Sauvignon and 35% Malbec. Opaque ruby purple in color, it boasts aromas of plum and black cherry, violets and spice. It's a magnificent wine with great elegance and balance, revealing black currant fruit with minerals and perfectly integrated oak and showing polished tannins on a long lasting finish.. A masterpiece!

Other Wines Reviewed: Catena Zapata 2008 Malbec Mendoza ($22) 88, Catena Zapata 2008 Cabernet Sauvignon Mendoza ($20) 88, Catena Zapata 2009 Chardonnay Mendoza ($20) 90

*****Bodega Chacra**

This boutique winery located in Alto Valle of Río Negro produces the finest Pinot Noir in Argentina. It is owned by Piero Incisa della Rocchetta (whose family owns Sassicaia) and by two American investors. Chacra's vineyards, which are cultivated biodynamically, are owned by Hans Viding Diers of neighboring Bodegas Noemia. Some parts of the vineyard were planted in 1932, others in 1955. The first vintage of Bodegas Chacra was in 2004. The wines are vinified with whole clusters in small open top fermenters at low temperature and are aged in new French oak. These wines are produced in very small quantities. Importer: Kobrand Corporation, New York, NY

Barda Pinot Noir Patagonia ($10) 88+ The Barda Pinot Noir is this estate's entry level wine. Sourced from its own estate as well as neighboring vineyards, the wine reveals aromas of plum, raspberry and spice. Medium weight, it is soft on the attack, offering light notes of red fruit, earth and spice with moderate complexity. A pleasant and interesting Pinot Noir offered at a terrific price. **Bodega Chacra 2009 Cincuenta y Cinco Pinot Noir Patagonia ($23) 92** Chacra's Cincuenta y Cinco Pinot Noir is sourced from a vineyard planted in 1955. The wine has a medium ruby color and aromas of spicy cherry with earth notes on the nose. Feminine in character, it has a soft lush attack with a round full palate and excellent intensity of cherry flavor. Quite a delicious well focused wine. **Bodega Chacra Treinta y Dos Patagonia ($120) 93** The top of the line Treinta y Dos, which is sourced from a vineyard planted in 1932, reveals beautiful intensity of cherry fruit. It is soft on the attack and has a velvet palate of red fruit, spice and earth notes. Less earthy than the Cincuenta y Cinco, the wine finishes with extract of cherry with raspberry notes and firm tannins. Liquid perfume might best describe this magnificent wine.

*****Clos de Chacras**

Founded in 1921, Clos de Chacras is a small winery situated in Luján de Cuyo with vineyards in Maipú, La Consulta and La Carrodilla. The winery was founded by Don Bautista Gargantini, the grandfather of the current owner. The wines produced by this estate are of excellent quality, especially the Gran Estirpe. Importer: Brazos Wine Imports, Charleston, SC

Clos de Chacras 2005 Gran Estirpe Blend Lanlunta, Mendoza ($48) 89 The 2005 Gran Estirpe Blend is composed of 50% Merlot, 30% Cabernet Sauvignon and 20% Malbec and exhibits an opaque ruby garnet color and aromas of graphite, ripe blackberry and pepper. Aged for 18 months in French oak, it is soft and lush on the palate but lightly flavored with dry tannins and a short finish. **Clos de Chacras 2007 Gran Estirpe Malbec Lunlunta Mendoza ($40) 91** Sourced from 100-year-old vines, the Gran Estirpe Malbec offers aromas of plum, violet and black cherry with notes of cedar. It is soft on the attack with a fleshy palate and medium depth. It is nicely flavored with black raspberry, toasted oak, and spice. It has ripe tannins and a pleasant finish. **Clos de Chacras 2008 Malbec Valley de Uco, Mendoza ($29) 90** The opaque ruby 2008 Malbec displays aromas of dark cherry, smoke and charred oak. Sourced from 80-year-old vines, it spends 12 months in French and American oak. Soft and lush on the attack, it is quite delicious and full on the palat,. but it needs time for its tannins to evolve and soften.

Other Wines Reviewed: Clos De Chacras 2008 Cabernet Sauvignon Uco Valley ($30) 88

Chakana 2009 Malbec Estate Selection Luján de Cuyo ($28) 91 The Chakana Malbec Estate Selection boasts an opaque ruby purple color and aromas of ripe dark plum, lavender, spice and toast. On the palate it reveals a velvet mouth feel, dense savory flavors of dark plum fruit, earth,

chocolate, and cedar and a soft and elegant finish. This is a beautiful wine. Chakana was established in 2002 by the Pelizzati family. It consists of a 150 hectare estate and modern winery in Alto Agrelo, Luján de Cuyo. Alberto Antonnini serves as consulting winemaker. Importer: Kysela Pere & Fils, Winchester, VA

Cheval des Andes 2006 Cheval des Andes ($75) 93 This wine is a joint venture between Pierre Lurton of Cheval Blanc and Terrazas de los Andes. The wine is sourced from Terrazas de los Andes' estate vineyard planted with pre-phylloxera Malbec vines. The 2006 Cheval des Andes is a blend of Malbec, Cabernet Sauvignon and Petit Verdot. It is dark ruby to the core and offers aromas of plum, black cherry, chocolate and toasted oak. On the palate it is very elegant and refined with a soft texture and layers of ripe plum fruit, spice and toast. Well structured with ripe tannins, good balance and a long finish. Will benefit from a few more years of cellaring. The wine is one of the most elegant Malbec blends we have tasted for this report. Importer: Moet Hennesy USA, New York, NY

*****Bodega Cicchitti**

Established in Luján de Cuyo in 1928, Bodega Cicchitti has grown into a large scale commercial winery with a 1.1 million liter capacity. Its vineyards are located in Luján de Cuyo and Valle de Uco and are partially farmed organically. The wines are well made and quality is good. Importer: The Artisan Collection, Brooklyn, NY

Bodega Cicchitti 2006 Malbec Mendoza ($22) 89 The 2006 Cicchitti Malbec is has a fragrant nose of spicy black cherry fruit and sweet oak. On the palate it reveals a soft texture and concentrated dark fruit flavors. It is nicely balanced with round tannins and a long finish. **Bodega Cicchitti 2006 Gran Reserva Mendoza ($26) 91** The Gran Reserva has a dark ruby color and savory aromas of red berry fruit, plum, and smoke with a touch of lavender. On the palate it reveals a supple texture, ripe and lush red berry fruit, sweet oak, soft polished tannins and a long finish.

Other Wines Reviewed: Bodega Cicchitti 2008 Primmo Mendoza ($16) 87

Clos de los Siete 2008 Mendoza ($18) 91
This wine is from the "vineyard of the seven" a project launched by Michel Rolland and a group of six investors from Bordeaux. The jointly owned property totals 850 hectares in the Valle de Uco of which about 430 hectares are currently planted. Each partner has their own winery but is obligated to give a minimum of 40% of their production to Clos de los Siete. The 2008 Clos de los Siete is a delicious blend of Malbec, Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon, Syrah and Petit Verdot. It exhibits an opaque ruby hue with aromas of cedar, dark red plum and raspberries. It offers lots of ripe plum fruit on the attack with notes of cedar, tobacco, and coffee. Aged for 12 months in French oak, it is beautifully balanced and integrated with fullness in the mouth and has a moderate cedar-fruit finish. The wine is offered at a great price too. Importer: Dourthe USA, Inc. Etters, PA

*****Colomé**

Bodega Colomé is owned and operated by the Hess Group which purchased the estate in 2001. The estate's vineyards are located in the Calchaquíes Valley at an elevation from 2200m to 3015m and offer all the attributes of high altitude vineyards for growing exceptional grapes. Thibaut Delmotte is winemaker, Randle Johnson, consulting winemaker. Colomé wines are beautifully made. The Malbec Reserve is truly outstanding. Importer: Hess Collection Winery, Napa, CA

Colomé 2010 Torrontés Valles Calchaquíes Salta ($15) 90 The grapes for this soft, lush Torrontés are sourced from Colomé's estate vineyards, which are 50 to 120 years old and situated at between 1,600 and 2,200 meters. The wine offers lovely ripe melon and rose petal aromas on the nose and is ripe and honeyed on the creamy palate, finishing with a tangerine spice note. **Colomé 2008 Malbec Estate Valles Calchaquíes Salta ($25) 91** Opaque ruby in color, the Colomé 2008 Malbec exhibits ripe dark plum fruit aromas on the nose followed by soft and lush fruit with flavors of plum, black cherry and toasted oak on the palate. It is nicely balanced with round tannins and a long finish. **Colomé 2007 Malbec Reserva Valles Calchaquíes Salta ($90) 94** The 2007 Malbec Reserve is a beautiful wine. Opaque ruby in color, it offers ripe sweet black fruit aromas and toast on the nose. It is beautifully balanced and elegant with good structure and concentrated black fruit flavors on the palate. It has soft round tannins and a persistent finish. One of the finest Malbecs in Argentina.

Other Wines Reviewed: Colomé 2009 Amalaya Valles Calchaquíes Salta ($17) 88

Correntoso 2009 Pinot Noir Patagonia ($13) 88 The 2009 Pinot Noir has a medium ruby color and red cherry fruit and cedar aromas. It has a soft velvet texture on the palate, good balance, soft tannins and a long fruity finish. Good value. Correntoso 2009 Pinot Noir Reserve Patagonia ($16) 87+ The Pinot Noir Reserve has a light red hue and red fruit and cedar aromas. It is delicate and easy drinking with moderate fruit intensity, a rather dry mid-palate, good acidity and balance and a long finish. Importer: Banville and Jones Wine Merchants , New York

Cuvelier Los Andes Collección 2006 Valle de Uco Mendoza ($35) 92 Cuvelier Los Andes is owned by Bertrand and Jean-Guy Cuvelier, part owners of Chateau Leoville-Poyferre in Saint-Julien. The estate is located in the Valle de Uco at the foothills of the Andes and encompasses 46 hectares. The 2006 Cuvelier Los Andes Coleccion is a blend of Malbec (60%), Cabernet Sauvignon (20%), Merlot (10%), and the balance Syrah and Petite Verdot. A wine of power and elegance, it is aged for 12 months in French oak. It reveals a dark ruby purple hue with aromas of plum and oak spice.

On the attack and in the mouth it offers ripe fruit, a velvet smooth texture, soft round tannins, and a long finish. An elegant wine produced by Adrián Machon with Michel Rolland serving as consulting winemaker. Importer: Slocum and Sons, North Haven, CT

Cueva de las Manos, 2009 Malbec Reserve Mendoza ($16) 89 This Malbec Reserve exhibits a dark ruby color and is fruit forward with red and black cherry fruit on the nose and on the palate. It is medium-weight and shows good fruit intensity, balance and a dry finish. Excellent value. This estate where it is situated in Luján de Cuyo takes its name from the Cave of the Hands, a Cave in the mountains of Argentine Patagonia which contains paintings of hands made by indigenous inhabitants from 9, 000-13,000 years ago. Importer: Kysela Pere et Fils, Winchester, VA

D-F

***Del Fin del Mundo**

Del Fin del Mundo is a large commercial winery established in Neuquén, Patagonia by entrepreneur Julio Viola. It consists of a 2,000 hectare estate of which 870 hectares are planted. The project was launched in 1996 and currently produces more than a million cases of high volume and premium wines. Chief winemaker is Marcelo Miras, a student of Raúl de la Motta. Marcelo personally guided us through the Del Fin del Mundo portfolio at the winery. Michel Rolland was recruited as a consultant in 2005. Today the wines are good and the 2007 Special Blend, produced with Michel Rolland's assistance, is excellent. Importer: Gaucho Imports, Albuquerque, NM

Del Fin del Mundo 2007 Cabernet Franc Patagonia ($38) 89 This is an attractive Cabernet Franc, a grape that is enjoying a surge in popularity in Argentina these days. The wine reveals ripeness and flavor with savory dried cherry herbal notes and cedar. Blended with Merlot (25%), it is aged for 12 to18 months in barrel and is full of richness and personality, although the tannins need some time to soften. **Del Fin del Mundo 2008 Malbec Patagonia ($38) 89** Opaque ruby and medium-weight, this Malbec offers dark red fruit on the nose and flavors of earth, mushroom, forest floor and dried fruit. The wine is delicious, round and juicy with good balance and flavor with more red fruit flavors than the Malbecs of Mendoza. It is medium weight with good oak nicely integrated and has soft tannins. Very drinkable. **Del Fin del Mundo Special Blend 2007 Patagonia ($45) 91** The Special Blend is composed of Malbec (40%), Cabernet Sauvignon (40%,) and Merlot (20%). Opaque ruby in color, it displays beautiful black cherry, mocha and coconut aromas. Its fruit flavors reveal elegance on the palate, and the wine overall is nicely balanced with ripe round tannins and a lingering finish. The wine is made from the best grapes from the best part of the vineyard and from selections made after fermentation. **Del Fin del Mundo 2007 Tannat Patagonia ($38) 88** This winery reputedly is the first to produce Tannat in Patagonia. Inky with good aromas and flavors of black currants and spice, it is earthy with persistent barrel notes. It is juicy and ripe and fairly approachable, although it needs time in the bottle to ripen harsh tannins.

Other Wines Reviewed: Del Fin del Mundo 2007 Merlot Patagonia 89

Bodega del Río Elorza Verum Patagonia 2009 Pinot Noir Río Negro ($17) 89 Bodega Del Río Elorza (Verum) is a new boutique, family winery with 45 acres of high-density vineyards in the Alto Valle de Río Negro, Patagonia. The winemakers are Alberto Antonini and Mariano Vignoni. Their experience and understanding of this unique Patagonian terroir, along with Marcelo Casazza's precise vineyard management, impart great personality to the wines. The 2009 Verum Patagonia Pinot Noir shows why Patagonia is developing a reputation for this varietal. Aged in French oak, it exhibits a medium ruby color and attractive spicy cherry aromas on the nose. On the palate, it shows good weight and velvet texture with cherry fruit, herbs and earth notes. The wine has fine tannins and finishes clean albeit with some astringency and acidity. Importer: Vino del Sol, Corralitos, CA

***DiamAndes**

This is an exciting new project launched in 2005 by Alfred-Alexandre Bonnie of Chateau Malartic-Lagraviere. It consists of 130 hectares located at 1,000 m and a magnificent award-winning winery in Valle de Uco. DiamAndes is part of the group of investors associated with Clos de los Siete. They had their first harvest in 2007 and produced a highly successful wine, which is reviewed below. Michel Rolland serves as their consulting enologist. Importer: Dourthe USA, Etters, PA

DiamAndes 2007 Gran Reserva Valle de Uco ($28) 91 Diamandes is a 70/30 blend of Cabernet Sauvignon and Malbec. Dark ruby in color, it offers aromas of plum and black fruit and sweet oak with notes of chocolate and earth. It is very lush and ripe on the palate albeit without a lot of definition and a touch of herbs. Tannins are smooth as silk, and the finish is beautiful, also. Drinkable now but has great aging potential. **DiamAndes 2008 Gran Reserva Valle de Uco ($35) 91** Just bottled, this wine won't be in the market for another year. The Gran Reserva is composed of 75% Malbec and 25% Cabernet Sauvignon. It is fruit forward and flavorful with a red fruited palate and notes of violet and toast. This wine has great potential.

***Dolium**

Dolium is a small winery with vineyards in Agrelo, Lunlunta, Perdriel and Chacras de Coria. It has well-equipped wine making facilities and a young winemaking team. We reviewed Dolium wines several years ago and gave the glowing reviews. The current vintages do not appear to quite match up.. Importer: Elite Wines, Lorton, VA

Dolium 2009 Malbec Mendoza ($12) 87 The 2009 Malbec has a medium ruby purple hue with fruity aromas of ripe plum. It reveals a medium-bodied palate of light fruit, oak, and spice. This is followed by gripping tannins and a dry finish. **Dolium 2007 Malbec Reserva Mendoza ($25) 88** The 2007 Malbec Reserva offers a dark ruby robe and aromas of dark plum and pronounced sweet oak. On the attack the wine reveals a soft lush texture with a heavy oak component that dominates the fruit, dusty tannins and a long finish.

Domiciano de Barrancas 2009 Chardonnay Mendoza ($15) 88 Light yellow gold in color, this unoaked Chardonnay offers aromas of ripe melon and pear followed by a creamy attack of ripe fruit and vanilla flavors, good acidity and balance, and a dry crisp finish. Well done! **Domiciano de Barrancas 2007 Malbec Mendoza ($17) 87** This is a fruit-forward, easy-drinking Malbec offering aromas of plum and vanilla. On the palate it reveals a pleasant fruitiness followed by gripping tannins and a dry finish. Importer: Handpicked Selections, Warrenton, VA

*****Don Manuel Vllafañe**

This winery, located in Maipú, was established in 2002, although the ancestors of one of the founders, Tomás Machado de Villefañe, arrived in Argentina in the 17th century and was one of the first to plant vineyards to provide wine to the Church. The winery produces a wide variety of wines; the two wines reviewed here are well made. Importer: William-Harrison Imports, Inc. Manassas, VA

Don Manuel Villafañe 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon Reserva Mendoza 88 The 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon Reserva displays a medium ruby hue with an attack of dried black cherry and plum fruit, herbs, and cedar. On the palate it has an elegant mouth feel, good structure and a long spicy finish. **Don Manuel Vllafañe 2008 Malbec Reserva Mendoza ($19) 88+** This Malbec Reserva offers a light ruby hue and fresh aromas of spicy dark cherry fruit. On the palate it is easy drinking with tasty red fruit flavors, good structure and acidity, round tannins and a long pleasant finish. A refreshingly, light-styled Malbec.

*****Don Miguel Gascón**

This winery was started in 1984 and purchased in 1992 by Catena. The winery has 300 acres in Agrelo and 180 acres in Altamira; this production is supplemented with purchased fruit. The wines reviewed here are two well made Malbecs. Importer: Gascon USA, Hayward, CA

Don Miguel Gascón 2009 Malbec Mendoza ($20) 88 The Malbec is dark ruby purple to the core and reveals pleasant aromas of plum fruit and cedar. On the palate it is medium weight and boasts ripe red plum and blackberry flavors, good balance and acidity and round tannins on the finish. **Don Miguel Gascón 2008 Malbec Reserva Mendoza ($25) 90+** This Malbec Reserva is a blend of 88% Malbec, with the balance Cabernet Franc, Petit Verdot, and Cabernet Sauvignon. It exhibits a dark ruby hue and has aromas of ripe black cherry plum and spice. Aged for 14 months in 60% new French and American oak it reveals a soft texture and concentrated dark fruit flavors and spices. It is nicely balanced with polished tannins and a long finish. Well done!

*****Doña Paula**

Dona Paula belongs to the Claro Group, a Chilean investment company that also owns several notable Chilean wineries such as Viña Santa Rita, Viña Carmen, Sur Andino and Los Vascos, the latter a joint venture with the Baron Eric de Rothschild of France. The Viña Dona Paula sources its grapes from Ugarteche in Luján de Cuyo. These are all excellent wines. We were especially impressed with the inexpensive Los Cardos line. Importer: Vineyard Brands, Birmingham, Al

Doña Paula 2010 Estate Torrontés Valle de Cafayate ($16) 90+ The 2010 Estate Torrontés is a magnificent wine, and it is only the second vintage for Doña Paula. Sourced from the Valle de Cafayate, the wine exhibits a delicate nose of white peach, acacia flower and topical fruit. It is soft on the attack with complex layers of white peach and mango, with excellent acidity and a very long finish. Certainly among the very best Torrontés produced in Argentina. **Doña Paula 2009 Estate Malbec Ugarteche Luján de Cuyo ($17) 91** The Estate Malbec is a blend of the best Malbecs from four vineyards in Valle de Uco and Luján de Cuyo. It offers aromas of black cherry, plum, toast and graphite on the nose. On the palate it boasts a velvet texture and lush mouth feel with a fruit forward character. The wine is beautifully balanced and integrated with soft round tannins and a long finish. Great value! **Doña Paula 2008 Malbec/Syrah Mendoza ($20) 91** This blend of 60/40, Malbec/Syrah has a very fresh, fruit-forward nose with herbal and tobacco accents. The palate is flavorful and nicely balanced with fresh, bright, red plum and dark cherry fruit with pomegranate and earth notes. Finishes with lingering red fruit notes and ripe but youthful tannins. **Doña Paula 2007 Malbec Selección de Bodega Mendoza ($50) 93** Opaque ruby in color, the Malbec Selección de Bodega offers aromas of dark cherry, violets, blackberry and plum. On the attack it reveals a velvet texture, flavors of smoke, loam, minerals, and black fruit. Aged in new French oak for 14-18 months, it has ripe tannins and a long persistent finish. Sourced from 40-60 year-old pie franco vines.

Wines also Reviewed: Doña Paula 2010 Los Cardos Sauvignon Blanc Mendoza ($12) 89; Doña Paula 2009 Los Cardos Chardonnay Mendoza ($12) 87; Doña Paula 2009 Los Cardos Malbec Mendoza ($10) 89; Doña Paula 2010 Estate Sauvignon Blanc Mendoza ($16) 89; Doña Paula 2009 Series Naked Pulp Viognier Mendoza ($25) 90+; Doña Paula 2006 Series Malbec Tannat Salix Vineyard Mendoza ($23) 91; Doña Paula 2009 Estate Cabernet Sauvignon Ugarteche Luján de Cuyo ($17) 88; Doña Paula 2008 Series Alluvia Cabernet Franc Gualtallary Tupungato ($30) 90.

***El Porvenir de los Andes**

This small family owned winery consists of 80 ha of vineyards in Cafayate at 2 thousand meters above sea level. The Romero-Marcuzzi family behind Porvenir is dedicated to crafting small quantities of exceptional wines. Winemakers Luis Asmet, renowned in Mendoza but located in Cafayate for 10 years now, and María Isabel Mijares, consulting winemaker from Spain, produce international-style wines. The winery produces wine under two main labels, Laborum, the winery's signature brand, and Amauta. Importer: Vos Selections, New York, NY, Bottled Poetry Brands, Addison, TX

El Porvenir de los Andes 2007 Laborum Tannat Cafayate 90+ The Laborum Tannat is one of the better ones tasted for this report. It has an opaque ruby purple color and rich aromas of dark red fruit with chocolate notes. It is full-bodied on the palate with highly concentrated fruit. Like many Tannats, this one reveals very firm tannins and has a long finish of huckleberry and light notes of toasted oak. Needs a couple more years in bottle for those tannins to soften. **El Porvenir de los Andes 2010 Laborum Torrontés Cafayate ($15) 90+** The Laborum Torrontés is hugely attractive. It has a clean bouquet showing minerals, yellow flowers and ginger notes. The palate is nicely balanced with brisk acidity, lemon-lime citrus and a note of tangerine zest. Made from 40 year-old, pergola trained vines located at 1750 meters altitude and yielding just 3 tons per acre, unusually low for this varietal. Only 2000 cases produced. Get it while you can! **El Porvenir de los Andes 2005 Porvenir Cafayate ($50) 91** The 2005 Porvenir is composed of 45% Malbec, 35% Cabernet Sauvignon, 12% Tannat and 8% Syrah. Aged in French and American oak, it offers savory aromas of red and black fruit, earth, leather, cedar, and meat. Soft on the attack and lush on the palate, it has refined flavors showing floral notes, dark red and black fruit, coconut, notes of forest floor and charred oak. Finishes long and very flavorful, like a Gran Reserva from Ríoja.

Other Wines Reviewed: El Porvenir de los Andes 2008 Amaunta Cafayate ($22) 88+; El Porvenir de los Andes 2008 Laborum Torrontés de Otoño Cafayate 92

***Etchart**

Bodega Etchart was founded in 1850 In Cafayate, Salta. Located at more than 1,750 meters above sea level, it is one of the highest vineyards in the world. In 1938 Arnaldo Etchart acquired the estate of only 65 hectares and began producing premium wine. The estate now consists of 360 ha. In 1996, the estate was sold to the French group, Pernod Ricard. Notwithstanding substantial investments in the vineyards and wineries, the wines tasted for this review are a work in progress. The Arnaldo B Malbec blend is a stand out. Importer: Pernod Ricard Purchase, NY

Etchart 2010 Gran Linaje Torrontés Salta ($20) 87+ The Gran Linaje is a substantial cut above the Reserve Torrontés. It shows stonefruit and a note of summer mint on the nose. The palate is nicely balanced with flavors of melon and white peach and a note of white pepper. It, too, finishes on a slightly sweet note. A very pleasant sipping wine but lacking the aromatic qualities we look for in Torrontés. **Etchart 2007 Arnaldo B. Salta ($25) 90+** Dark ruby Amaldo B. is a blend of 60% Malbec, 25% Cabernet Sauvignon, and 15% Tannat. It has a very ripe fruit forward nose of blackberries, loam and earth. It is sweet on the attack with an intensely fruity palate of black cherry with some toasted oak and earth notes. This is quite an attractive wine with lingering fruit flavors and good complexity.

Other Wines Reviewed: Etchart 2010 Torrontés Reserve Salta ($12) 86

***Fabre Montmayou**

Domaine Vistalba, producer of Fabre Montmayou, was established by Herve Joyaux Fabre of Bordeaux in 1992. Domaine Vistalba owns old vineyards in Las Compuertas in Luján de Cuyo and in Río Negro Valley in Patagonia. Herve Joyaux Fabre serves as winemaker. The wines are well made and of good value. Importer: Southern Wine Group

Fabre Montmayou 2009 Cabernet Sauvignon Barrel Selection Mendoza ($15) 88+ The Cabernet Sauvignon has a very fragrant nose of ripe black currant and notes of graphite. Some 60% of the wine is aged in French oak barrels for 12 months; it has a round mouth feel, good varietal character, and freshness on the long finish. **Fabre Montmayou 2009 Malbec Barrel Selection Patagonia ($15) 88** The grapes for this Malbec are sourced from 30+ year-old vines in Río Negro. It is elegant on the mouth with plum and violet notes and is perfectly ripe and elegant on the palate with soft tannins. **Fabre Montmayou-Domaine Vistalba 2008 Merlot Gran Reserva Patagonia ($18) 90** The 2008 Merlot Gran Reserva is a delicious wine sourced from a 40+ year-old vineyard. It offers ripe black and blue fruit aromas with notes of chocolate and is soft and silky on the attack with delicious, juicy flavors. Aged for 12 months in French oak, it is well balanced with soft tannins and a long finish.

***Familia Schroeder**

This estate was established in 2002 by the Schroeder family; it also farms fruit in the region. The estate covers 120 ha and includes an all gravity-flow wine making facility. The basement of the winery contains 75 million year-old dinosaur bones and eggs that were unearthed during the excavation of the property. Saurus is the brand used in Argentina whereas Apaltaco is the brand used abroad. The estate produces an entry level Apaltaco and a medium-priced Alpataco Reserve. There is strong interest here in Pinot Noir. The quality of the wines is excellent, and they offer good value. Winemaker is Leonardo Puppato; Paul Hobbs is consulting winemaker. Importer: Familia Schroeder

Familia Schroeder 2010 Alpataco Sauvignon Blanc Reserve Patagonia ($15) 89 This Sauvignon Blanc is sourced from low yielding vineyards (3.5 ton/ha). It exhibits light citrus on the nose with a light note of butterscotch. It is full-bodied on the palate with lovely texture and flavors—citrus and melon with excellent acidity. 30% of the wine spends 5 months in oak. **Familia Schroeder 2010 Alpataco Chardonnay Reserve Patagonia ($15) 90+** The Chardonnay Reserve is a delicious wine offering citrus and melon fruit on the nose with honeyed notes. It boasts a gorgeous palate—fresh and balanced, with lovely butterscotch notes and ripe melon flavors. Only 40% goes through malo and is aged in new French and American oak for 7 months. One of the best Chardonnays we tasted at this price. **Familia Schroeder 2007 Alpataco Pinot Noir Reserve Patagonia ($20) 90** The 2007 Pinot Noir Reserve has a medium dark ruby hue and aromas of red raspberries, dried cherry, cranberry and toast. Aged for 12 months in French and American oak, it reveals a rather dry mouth feel with light, somewhat tart fruit with notable tannic grip. **Familia Schroeder 2007 Alpataco Merlot Reserve Patagonia ($20) 89** The Merlot Reserve offers pure cherry flavors with notes of chocolate and coconut on the nose. It is soft on the attack with a velvet texture and is full of flavor on the palate. It's a nicely balanced wine that is international in style and very pleasant to drink. **Familia Schroeder 2005 Cabernet Sauvignon Patagonia ($50) 92** This Cabernet Sauvignon has a medium dark ruby color and aromas of graphite, wet earth and a hint of violets. Having spent 18 months in new French barriques, it is silky smooth on the palate, with soft, lush blackberry and cassis fruit, leather and toast. Beautifully balanced with ripe polished tannins and a long finish, it is a powerful yet elegant wine.

Other Wines Reviewed: Familia Schroeder 2007 Alpataco Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon Patagonia ($20) 87; Familia Schroeder 2007 Alpataco Reserve Malbec Patagonia ($20) 87+; Familia Schroeder 2007 Saurus Pinot Noir Barrel Fermented 89+; Familia Schroeder 2008 Saurus Pinot Noir Barrel Fermented 88; Familia Schroeder 2009 Deseado Torrontés Espumante Natural Neuquén Patagonia ($15) 88

*****Bodega & Viñedos Filus**

Filus was created in 1998 by Gustavo Capone and Ambrosio Di Lio, who joined forces in 2007 with Italian consultant winemaker Alberto Antonini. The Filus winery, acquired in 2000, is located in Lulunta, Maipú, 25km south of the city of Mendoza. Filus owns vineyards in Luján de Cuyo, Valle de Uco, and Salta. Carlos Baccaro serves as winemaker. Filus' best wines are its Torrontés and Malbec Reserve. The entire production of Filius is exported, mostly to the US. Importer: Bronco, Napa, CA

Filus 2009 Torrontés Cafayate Salta ($13) 89 This is a fresh, aromatic wine showing rose petals on the nose, a nicely concentrated mid-palate, and tropical fruit flavors with a lime citrus note. Mario Malatto is winemaker with the assistance of consultant Alberto Antonini. The fruit comes from 40 year-old, pergola-trained vines with yields of 4.8 tons/acre. **Filus 2009 La Boca Torrontés Salta ($10) 87** This is an easy drinking wine with citrus and rose petal aromas and a perfumed, soft palate of lychee and rosewater finishing with a bitter note that is characteristic of the varietal. **Filus 2009 Malbec Lujan de Cuyo ($13) 87+** This medium dark ruby wine spends 6 months half in new oak barrels and half in tank. It's medium weight and slightly dry on the palate. **Filus 2010 Medrano Estate Torrontés Cafayete Salta ($12) 86** Lightly fragrant of acacia and melon, this wine is also lightly flavored with a crisp, tart palate showing quite high acidity. **Filus 2008 Malbec Reserve Valle de Uco, Mendoza ($20) 89** The 2008 Malbec Reserve is sourced from a 78-year-old La Consulta vineyard, a four-hectare, high-density site. Dark ruby in color, the wine offers red and black fruit fragrances with notes of violets. Aged for 12 months in oak, it tastes ripe and full in the mouth with hints of toast, soft round tannins, and a pleasant finish.

***** Finca el Origen**

This young winery was launched in the late 1990s by Santa Carolina, one of Chile's largest commercial wineries. It currently has 240 hectares in Valle de Uco as well as short term contracts with growers in Cafayate. The General Manager and Chief winemaker is Gonzalo Bertelsen. Importer: Carolina Wine Brands USA

Finca el Origen 2010 Torrontés Reserva Valle de Cafayate ($10) 90 This is a delicious Torrontés. It exhibits a fragrant nose of acacia flowers, melon and tropical fruit. This is followed by a ripe peach and guava palate with excellent balance and fresh flavors. Medium-weight, the wine also shows elegance and richness with a pleasant finish that lingers. **Finca el Origen 2009 El Origen Malbec Gran Reserva Mendoza ($23) 91** The Malbec Gran Reserva exhibits a dark ruby hue and appealing aromas of earth, minerals, black cherry and plum. It is soft and lush on the attack with ripe black fruit flavors of graphite and licorice, and a velvet mouth feel. Aged for 12 months in 50% new oak, it is still quite young, showing tannic grip and a persistent spicy finish. **Finca el Origen 2009 Cabernet Sauvignon Mendoza ($12) 88** This youthful Cabernet Sauvignon reveals a medium ruby color and dark fruit aromas. On the palate it offers straightforward black fruit flavors, herbs and spice, with lots of tannic grip on the finish. This wine will benefit from a year of aging in bottle. **Finca el Origen 2009 Malbec Reserva Mendoza ($12) 89** The youthful dark ruby Malbec Reservas reveals plum, earth and spice on the nose. Soft on the attack with a velvet smooth mouth feel, it shows dark plum and blackberry flavors, a dry mid-palate, and hints of charred barrel. Would benefit from a year in bottle to soften and round out the tannins.

***** Finca La Anita**

Brothers Antonio and Manuel Mas created this boutique winery in Agrelo in the early 1990s. Their vineyards are organically farmed and yields are kept low. Susana Balbo has served as advisor. Their main labels include Tonada an entry level line and Finca La Anita. The quality of the wines is excellent. Importer: The San Francisco Wine Exchange, San Francisco, CA and Vos Selections, New York, NY

Finca La Anita 2010 Malbec Mendoza ($20) 90 The 2010 Malbec has an opaque ruby color and a nose of aromatic black berry and plum fruit. It reveals great intensity of flavor on the palate with spicy red and black fruit flavors that are beautifully integrated with oak. The wine is also nicely balanced with a long persistent finish. **Finca La Anita 2006 Petit Verdot Mendoza ($33) 89** The dark ruby Petit Verdot offers aromas of spicy red fruit, plum and lavender with toasted notes and herbs. It is soft on the attack and elegant on the palate with excellent black fruit concentration, balance and a long lasting finish. Very pleasant to drink.

Other Wines Reviewed: Finca La Anita 2010 Tonada Torrontés-Chardonnay ($15) 87

*****Bodega José L. Mounier**
This two-hectare rustic family estate is situated at more than 1,850 meters above sea level. It is owned by winemaker José Luis Mounier, who is acknowledged as Salta's finest producer of Torrontés. The vineyards are worked by hand and farmed organically. José Luis produces small quantities of stellar Torrontés and two red blends, a Reserva and another called Finca Las Nubes; we tasted the latter in Buenos Aires. His wines are not exported to the United States at the moment, although they should be in view of their quality. Importer: Bottled Poetry, Addison, TX

Bodega Jose L. Mounier 2010 Torrontés Cafayate 92 The best Torrontés we tasted in Argentina, some wise importer needs to bring this superb specimen to the US. The 1850 meter high Finca Las Nubes is the source of the fruit. Medium straw in color, the wine has a complex, effusive bouquet of ripe stone fruit with light notes of pineapple, rose petals and ginger. It's full and creamy on the palate with excellent balancing acidity, finishing with light stone fruit and ginger notes. Absolutely superb! **Bodega José L. Mounier 2007 Finca Las Nubes Cabernet Malbec Alto Valle de Cafayate 90** This 80/20 Cabernet and Malbec blend offers aromas of blackberry, earth and autumn leaves. It is soft and lush on the palate and intensely flavored with dark red fruit and notes of honeyed oak, earth, and minerals. Finishes with delicious fruit.

Fincas Patagónicas/Zolo
Zolo wines are sourced from estate vineyards in different key regions of Mendoza and Salta and are produced by Finca Patagónicas. Carlos Correas is vineyard manager, and Fabian Valenzuela is winemaker. Zolo produces low budget, fruit forward wines as well as more complex premium reserves. The wines are well made and offer terrific value. Importer: Vino del Sol, Los Corralitos, CA

Zolo 2010 Torrontés Valle de Famatima La Rioja ($11) 88 This is a fairly straightforward wine with a reserved nose of orchard flowers with herbal and mineral notes. The orchard theme carries through to the palate with a touch of green apple acidity on the finish. **Zolo 2005 Cabernet Sauvignon Reserve Mendoza ($11) 87** The Cabernet Sauvignon offers ripe plum, cedar, and dark berry aromas. It is soft on the attack with ripe plum, vanilla, and cedar flavors. It is quite astringent on the finish despite the fact it is six years after the vintage. Reasonably integrated flavors on the palate but astringent and dry on the mid-palate and the finish. **Zolo 2009 Malbec Mendoza ($11) 87** Dark ruby purple color with plum aromas. Aged for six months in French (90) and American (10) oak. There's spicy fruit on the attack with high acidity on the mid-palate and a moderate finish. Fermented in stainless steel using both estate and purchased fruit. **Zolo 2008 Malbec Reserve San Pablo ($20) 91** The Zolo Malbec Reserva displays an opaque inky color and aromas of plum, black cherry, violets and chocolate with mint notes. It boasts a deeply flavored palate with a velvet texture and a slightly chalky mouth feel. It finishes long and sweet with round tannins. Excellent!

Flecha de los Andes 2009 Gran Malbec Valle de Uco ($30) 92
Flecha de los Andes is a joint venture between Benjamin de Rothschild and Laurent Dassault of Chateau Dassault in Bordeaux. The winery was constructed in 2003 and has 105 ha in Vista Flores, Tunuyán, Mendoza. Michel Rolland serves as consulting winemaker. Dark ruby in color, this Gran Malbec offers pure black cherry aromas on the nose and palate with notes of violets, toast, and coffee. Aged for 12 months in new French oak, it reveals a velvet smooth texture, layers of excellent fruit, licorice, silky tannins and a long finish. A beautiful wine! Opici Wine Co. Glen Rock, NJ

G-K

Gauchezco
This estate, located in Barrancas-Maipú, is owned and operated by the Anesi family. The winery focuses on the production of Malbec. It also sources grapes from vineyards in Tupungato. The flagship wine Oro is their best wine. Importer: Cellarthief, Santa Rosa, CA

Gauchezco 2008 Malbec Mendoza ($15) 87 This is a fresh and easy drinking Malbec. It has aromas of black cherry and plum fruit and a light-bodied dry palate with tannic grip and a dry finish. Aged for a minimum of 4 months in 50% French and 50% American oak. **Gauchezco 2010 Malbec Rosé Mendoza ($14) 87** The Gauchezco Rosé is 100% Malbec. It has a pleasing ruby color and aromas of ripe red berry fruit. On the palate it is dry and tangy with flavors of pomegranate with good acidity and a crisp finish. **Gauchezco 2010 Torrontés Mendoza ($14) 87** This is a fairly straightforward wine with a reserved nose of orchard flowers with herbal and mineral notes. The orchard theme carries through to the palate with a touch of green apple acidity on the finish. **Gauchezco 2008 Oro Mendoza ($45) 90** This 100% Malbec is Gauchezco's flagship wine. It exhibits an opaque ruby color and aromas of plum, tobacco, herbs and toast. On the attack it is very smooth with ripe fruit and sweet oak, a moderate tannic grip and a long dry finish.

***Graffigna:**
This famous estate is one of the pioneers of the Argentine wine industry. It was established in 1870 by Italian immigrant Santiago Graffigna. Located in the province of San Juan where it has major vineyards in the Valle del Tulúm, the winery produces four different categories of wines: Gran Reserve, Centenario, Centenario Specialties (not exported) and Clássico. The winery is now owned by the Pernod Ricard Group in Argentina. The wines are currently of average quality. Importer: Pernod Ricard Purchase, NY

Graffigna 2007 Grand Reserve Malbec San Juan ($20) 88 The 2007 medium ruby Grand Reserve Malbec is a rustic wine that offers dark red berry fruit on the nose and moderate fruit flavors on the attack. It has a dry mid-palate and light tannic grip on the finish. **Graffigna 2008 Malbec Centenario Reserve San Juan ($15) 87+** This 2008 Malbec Reserve has a dark ruby color and reticent black fruit, oak and spice aromas on the nose. Aged for 12 months in barrel, it has a palate of dry tart fruit with an overlay of oak, hard tannins and a short finish. Time in bottle may help.

Wines also Reviewed: Graffigna 2010 Centenario Pinot Grigio Reserve San Juan ($15) 86; Graffigna 2006 Grand Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon San Juan ($20) 86

Graffito 2009 Malbec ($22) 89 Graffito is a delicious Malbec produced by Jimena Lopez from purchased grapes from the old low-yielding Cantella vineyard in Lujan de Cuyo. It boasts a dark ruby hue and aromas of black cherry and plum fruit with notes of sandalwood. It is soft on the attack and provides nicely concentrated plum fruit and spice on the palate. Most impressive is the balance and refinement revealed by this wine from start to finish. Excellent value.

***Hector Meli**
This winery located in Tupungato is nearing 100 years of continuous operation. Established in 1914, it produces attractive fruit forward wines for the price. Importer: Hand Picked Selections Warrenton, VA

Hector Meli 2010 Chardonnay Tupungato ($12) 88 This Chardonnay offers aromas of citrus, green apples and anise. It is bright and fresh tasting on the palate and is close in character to an un-oaked Chardonnay. It shows a fine balance between light fruit and acidity. **Hector Meli 2010 Bonarda Tupungato ($12) 87+** The light ruby Bonarda offers fragrant raspberry/cranberry aromas on the nose and a light-bodied palate with spicy red fruit flavors, round tannins and a firm finish. It's a pleasant pizza wine. **Hector Meli 2010 Cabernet Sauvignon Tupungato ($12) 88+** Medium ruby in color, this Cabernet Sauvignon exhibits lovely red cherry fruit aromas, spice and light toast. Medium weight, it is soft on the attack with a velvet texture and moderate fruit intensity on the palate. On the attack it is soft and silky smooth, with notes of raspberry and black cherry on the palate. It is nicely balanced with round tannins and a long finish.

***Huarpe Wines**
Huarpe is a relatively new company, established in 2002 by the family of Pascual Toso. The company owns some 110 acres in the district of Barrancas of which 45 are devoted to Malbec. Yields average 2.7 tons per acre. The winemaker is Carlos José Hernandez Toso, who is also the chief winemaker of Luigi Bosca. Importer: MIchael Skurnik Wines Syosset, NY

Huarpe 2008 Taymente Cabernet Sauvignon Mendoza ($14) 89 The 2008 Taymente Cabernet Sauvignon is a richly flavored offering of black currant, cedar, chocolate and a touch of mint. It is medium-weight and nicely structured with a velvet smooth mouth feel and a long finish. **Huarpe 2008 Winery Selection Mendoza ($18) 88+** The Huarpe Winery Selection is a blend of Malbec and Cabernet Sauvignon. It is dark ruby purple in color and exhibits aromas of blackcurrants, cedar, earth and pine needles. It has a velvety smooth palate of spicy black fruit and cedar with good structure and a long finish.

Other Wines Reviewed: Huarpe 2009 Taymente Malbec Mendoza ($14) 87+

***Bodega Humberto Canale**
This family estate was founded in 1909 by engineer Humberto Canale, a pioneer in the development of the wine industry in Río Negro, Patagonia. Today, the winery in managed by Guillermo Barzi and son Guillo Barzi, Humberto Canale's descendents. Winemaker is Horacio Biblioni. Susana Balbo and Pedro Marchevsky of Dominio del Plata are winemaking and viticultural consultants. The wines of this estate are excellent, especially the Gran Reservas. Importers: Vini Imports, CA, Vision Brands, NY, Patagonia Wines TX, and others around the country.

Humberto Canale 2008 Estate Malbec Patagonia ($12) 88 A very fresh style Malbec that is not widely found in Argentina, the result of light oak treatment (just 15%) and partial whole berry fermentation. It has a pure fruit nose of red and black berries with pomegranate notes. The palate is fresh, balanced, and clean with ripe tannins. A lovely, easy drinking wine. **Humberto Canale 2010 Estate Pinot Noir Patagonia ($12) 87+** This is a very fresh, clean light style Pinot Noir that is very easy to drink. It has light red berry and cherry aromas and flavors and finishes clean. A refreshing picnic wine. **Humberto Canale 2010 Estate Sauvignon Blanc Patagonia ($12) 87** This star bright, light straw colored wine reveals citrus, pear and floral aromas. Round and pleasant on the palate with good natural acidity and a clean, crisp finish. **Humberto Canale 2008 Pinot Noir Gran Reserva Patagonia ($25) 90+** Here is a beautiful, Burgundy type Pinot Noir showing cherry fruit, earth and nuts on the nose and palate. Made of the R8 clone, 20-year-old plants and aged 10 months in 2nd use barrels, the wine is elegant, well balanced, and shows excellent Pinot Noir typicity. **Humberto Canale 2008 Malbec Gran Reserva Patagonia ($25) 91** This fresh and refined Malbec is exceptionally good. It is redo-

lent of earth, violets, the pimienta roja of Patagonia, and dark cherry. Balanced, refined, and delicious. All aged in oak, about half French and the other half American and Hungarian. **Humberto Canale 2008 Merlot Gran Reserva Patagonia ($25) 91** This is an elegant Merlot, dark ruby red in color, with aromas of violets and forest floor. The palate is full, fresh and complex with both fruit and savory flavors. Finishes with firm, gripping tannins. About 15 percent is aged in oak.

*****Jean Bosquet**

This estate, founded by Jean Bosquet of southern France, was established in Tupungato in 1997. The winery owns 110 hectares of vineyards which are farmed organically. The wines are generally fruit forward and made for early drinking. The quality is good. Importer: Arborway Imports, Lexington, MA

Jean Bosquet 2009 Grand Reserve Barrel Fermented Chardonnay Mendoza ($25) 88 The Grand Reserve Barrel Fermented Chardonnay exhibits aromas of melon and pear with honey, smoke and hazelnut. Aged for 10 months in new French oak, it is soft and lush on the palate with lots of ripe apple fruit, oak and smoke. It has a long dry pleasant finish. **Jean Bosquet 2009 Malbec Reserva Mendoza ($18) 89** The Bosquet Malbec Reserva is composed of 85% Malbec and small amounts of Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and Shiraz. Aged for 10 months in French oak and 6 months in bottle it reveals a dark ruby color and spicy black pepper and black cherry aromas that carry over to the palate with some stems and green notes and toasted oak. There is good complexity here with a dry finish. **Jean Bosquet Malbec Gran Reserve Mendoza ($25) 90** This 100% Malbec exhibits dark red fruit and a fleshy complex palate with good fruit concentration, spice and a touch of oak. Aged for 12 months in new French oak with a high alcohol level (14.5%), the wine is rich and layered.

Other Wines Reviewed: Jean Bosquet 2009 Chardonnay Pinot Gris Mendoza ($17) 87 Jean Bosquet 2009 Pinot Noir Mendoza ($30) 89

*****Kaiken**

The Kaiken winery has been operating in Argentina since 2002. It is owned by Aurelio Montes, the proprietor and winemaker of Bodegas Montes, one of Chile's finest wineries. The name "Kaiken" in the Mapuche language refers to the wild Patagonian goose that lives on both sides of the Andes. Resident winemaker is Eduardo Alemparte. Kaiken wines are well made; the new Mai is very special. Importer: TGIC Woodland Hills, CA

Kaiken 2009 Malbec ($13) 88 This 2009 Malbec Reserva is sourced from high quality vineyards in Agrelo and Tupungato. It boasts fruit forward aromas of red and black fruit, wood spice, chocolate, almonds and mocha. Full and round on the palate; it is well-balanced with moderate chalky tannins and some heat on the finish (14.6% alc). **Kaiken 2008 Ultra Cabernet Sauvignon Mendoza ($22) 89** The dark ruby Ultra Cabernet Sauvignon displays aromas of dark cherry, light herbs and toasted oak on the nose. It is soft on the attack and quite lush on the palate with light flavors of cassis, earth, and wood spice. Finishes with dry tannins. **Kaiken 2008 Ultra Malbec Mendoza ($22) 89** The 2008 Ultra Malbec is 97% Malbec with 3% Cabernet Sauvignon. Dark ruby in color, it exhibits aromas of light vanilla, sandalwood and dark cherry aromas. It is soft on the attack with a lush palate of moderate complexity and fine grained firm tannins. It envelops the mouth and has a long finish but is quite hot (15.2% alc). **Kaiken 2009 Mai Mendoza ($70) 91** The top of the line Mai is 100% Malbec. It displays an opaque ruby color and offers aromas of spicy black fruit, notes of dark chocolate, violets and a floral note. It has a soft lush attack with greater mid-palate weight than what one finds in the Ultra. The flavors are predominantly black fruit with toasted oak, mocha and baking chocolate notes. The wines finishes long and elegant with fine accessible tannins.

Other Wines Reviewed: Kaiken 2008 Malbec Bonarda Petit Verdot ($16) 88

*****Bodegas Krontiras**

This family winery located in Luján de Cuyo is headed by Constantino Krontiras. It has 18 hectares of biodynamic vineyards in Maipú and vineyards elsewhere. The winery produces two biodynamic Malbec blends, but the Doña Silvina Reserva Malbec is tops. María Soledad Valdés is winemaker. Importer: Buena Vida Imports, Fairhaven, MA

Krontiras 2009 Doña Silvina Fresh Malbec Mendoza ($18) 88+ This is a fruit forward Malbec that displays fresh fruit flavors of plum and dark cherry. It reveals good complexity on the palate with added notes of loam and earth. It is well balanced with round tannins and a long finish. No wood. **Krontiras 2008 Doña Silvina Varietal Malbec Mendoza ($24) 89** This Malbec offers aromas of black cherry, black pepper and spice. It has a velvet texture on the attack with lots of black cherry fruit, chocolate notes, minerals and smoky oak on the palate. These are followed by firm tannins on the finish. Aged for 10 months in 100% used French oak. **Krontiras 2007 Doña Silvina Reserva Mendoza ($70) 92** The Reserva made of 100% Malbec is absolutely delicious. Opaque ruby in color, it displays aromas of black fruit, smoke, and savory herbs. It boasts a velvet-like lush palate with good density of fruit and layers of flavor--blue fruit, violets, dark cherry, and notes of vanilla bean. The wine finishes with uplifting acidity and ripe tannins. Sourced from old vines and aged in 100% new French oak for 18 months. Outstanding!

Wines also Reviewed: Krontiras 2009 Doña Silvina Rosado ($15) 87

***Ksana**

The Ksana wines are unfiltered; malolactic fermentation occurs in barrel; and indigenous yeasts are used to express the terroir. The vineyard is very densely planted (7,900 plants per hectare) with very low production per vine (0.6-1.1 kg); this adds to the wines' ultra-concentration. The Ksana winery and 90 year-old vineyard estate are located in Las Compuertas, Luján de Cuyo, Mendoza. The winemaker is Pablo Durigutti, and the vineyard manager is María de los Angeles Morchio Giol. We like the Malbec Reserve and Grand Reserve. Importer: Vino del Sol, Corralitos, CA

Ksana 2009 Bonarda Mendoza ($18) 89 This Bonarda displays a dark purple ruby color and a spicy black cherry and plum nose. It has sweet fruit on the attack with quite a fleshy palate of dense plum and boysenberry fruit and chalky tannins on the finish. Very tasty. **Ksana 2007 Malbec Reserve Las Compuertas Mendoza ($20) 90** The dark ruby Reserve Las Compuertas offers dark red berries on the nose with a touch of cedar. It boasts black fruit, loam earth, and chalky tannins. The finish is sweet with notes of licorice and fine grained tannins. **Ksana 2005 Malbec Grand Reserve Las Compuertas Mendoza ($48) 92** The Grand Reserve is opaque ruby and displays aromas of violets, dark chocolate, and dark cherry – a fantastic nose. Aged for 24 months in new French oak, it has a very full, fleshy palate of gorgeous fruit and layered flavors of chocolate toasted oak, dark loam. It also has a lengthy, chalky finish.

Lamadrid 2009 Cabernet Sauvignon Reserve Agrelo Mendoza ($17) 88+ The Cabernet Sauvignon Reserve exhibits aromas of cedar spice, dark cherry, and cassis on the nose. On the palate it offers sweet and flavorful dark red fruit and herbal notes and gripping tannins. The wine finishes long with dark cherry and sweet oak notes. The Lamadrid winery is owned by Guillermo García Lamadrid, and the manager and winemaker is Héctor Durigutti. Lamadrid sources its grapes from three vineyards in Agrelo. Their remodeled winery combines a mix of traditional and cutting-edge winemaking. Importer: Vino del Sol, Corralitos, CA

***La Posta**

La Posta is a custom crush winemaking project of wine importers Ed Lehrman and Nick Ramkowsky and is situated in Luján de Cuyo. La Posta wines are made by the talented Luis Reginato, who is also the winemaker at Luca and Tikal, and are produced from four main neighboring vineyards. Importer: Vine Connections, Sausalito, CA

La Posta 2008 Malbec Pizella Family Vineyard Mendoza ($18) 87 The Malbec Pizella offers spicy plum, black cherry, and violets on the nose that are mirrored on the palate. Aged for 12 months in French oak, the wine shows hints of sweet oak and ripe fruit, soft tannins and a firmly tannic finish. **La Posta 2008 Malbec Angel Paulucci Vineyard Mendoza ($18) 88** The ruby red purple Malbec Angel Paulucci offers ripe plum fruit on the nose and on the palate. It has a velvet smooth mouth feel with nicely concentrated fruit flavors, earth notes, soft round tannins and a long finish. A very drinkable wine.

Other Wines Reviewed: La Posta 2008 Pinot Noir Glorieta Vineyard Mendoza ($17) 87; La Posta 2008 Cocina Blend Mendoza ($15) 88

Bodega Las Arcas de Tolombön 2010 Malbec Siete Vacas Valle Calchaquí Tucumán 88+ This is a relatively new and promising winery situated in Tucumán. It sources its grapes from three regional vineyards in the Valle Calchaquí. Jose Louis Mounier is the winemaker. Siete Vacas is a vino joven with a dark ruby color and aromas of bright plum and cherry. Aged in French and American oak, it is medium weight on the palate and shows good freshness and acidity in a light style. Very pleasant.

***Laurel Glen**

Patrick Campbell of Laurel Glen Winery in Sonoma, California, is passionate about Malbec and produces it in Argentina. Travelling there five times a year, he sources his grapes from low yielding old vine Malbec vineyards in Mendoza and vinifies them in the US with the help of co-winemaker Ray Kaufman. He makes interesting wines including the Terra Rosa Malbec, not reviewed here.

Laurel Glen 2008 Terra Divina Old Vine Malbec Valle de Uco ($15) 88 This wine is intended to be an expression of the Valle de Uco. It is medium ruby in color and offers red fruit aromas and flavors in an easy drinking style with tannic grip on the finish. Rather different than previous vintages which were more concentrated, earthy and dark fruited. **Laurel Glen 2007 Valle La Pena Malbec Mendoza 90** This is a single vineyard wine produced from 60+ year-old vines grown at 1050 meters in southern Mendoza. The wine is aged in new French Taransaud barrels for 18 months. Dark ruby in color, it offers aromas of black fruit, earth and minerals on the nose with feral notes that extend to the palate. It is soft on the attack with ripe concentrated black fruit flavors and a long finish. Only 500 cases made.

*** Luca**

Luca is made by Laura Catena, daughter of Argentina's famed winemaker, Nicolás Catena, and the talented winemaker, Luis Reginato. Luca produces high quality ultra premium wines that are New World in style. Laura works with small growers to produce very attractive artisanal wines. One of Argentina's top performers. The winery is named after Laura's son. Importer: Vine Connections, Sausalito, CA

Luca 2008 Chardonnay Tupungato-Gualtallary ($32) 92 This yellow straw Chardonnay offers aromas of melon and pear with a hint of oak. On the attack it provides a soft elegant mouth feel followed by a ripe and creamy texture on the palate. This is simply delicious, beautifully balanced with a long finish and without the over the top oak and va-

nilla flavors often found in New World Chardonnays. **Luca 2008 Pinot Noir Uco Valley ($32) 91** This ruby garnet Pinot Noir is sourced from the 15-year-old vines of Catena's Adrianna Vineyard located at 4,710 ft. in the Gualtallary region of Tupungato. Red fruited on the nose, the wine is full-bodied on the palate, exhibiting ripe concentrated cherry and light toast flavors. Aged in 70% used barrels, it has round tannins, relatively high alcohol (14.5%), and is light and elegant. One of the better tasting Pinot Noirs in Argentina today! **Luca 2007 Beso de Dante Mendoza ($41) 90** Beso de Dante is a flavorful blend of Malbec (55%) and Cabernet Sauvignon (45%). It is a spicy, dark-fruited wine with ripe and concentrated flavors of blackberry, chocolate and herbs. Aged for 12 months in 70% new French oak, it displays good structure and balanc, but is highly tannic at this stage and showing its alcohol. **Luca 2008 Malbec Valle de Uco ($32) 90** The 2008 Luca Malbec is a dark and spicy wine with pure black cherry and dark chocolate aromas. Aged for 12 months in 60% new and 40% second-use French oak, the wine offers a lush palate with ripe and highly concentrated fruit flavors. The wine is well structured with round tannins good depth and a long finish. **Luca 2006 Nico Mendoza ($125) 93** This is a very elegant Malbec exhibiting lots of red berry fruit and nicely integrated oak. Aged for 18 months in new French oak, it is Burgundian in character, very soft on the attack with a velvet texture, concentrated red fruit flavors, and silky tannins. The grapes are sourced from old vines from two growers in different districts: Altamira (Paganotto Vineyard and La Consulta (Rosas Vineyard). Only 4 barrels produced.

*****Luigi Bosca**

Luigi Bosca is one of Argentina's oldest and most successful family wineries. Founded in the early 1900s by Leoncio Arizu, a Basque immigrant, the winery is today one Argentina's largest wine exporters. The winery is located in Luján de Cuyo and is owned and operated by Leonicio Arizu's descendents. Luigi Bosca has a very large portfolio of wines of excellent quality. Gala I and Gala II, and Finca Los Nobles are truly outstanding reds. Importer: Testa Wines of the World, Oyster Bay, NY

Luigi Bosca 2008 Malbec Single Vineyard DOC Luján de Cuyo Mendoza ($25) 90 This Malbec offers lovely aromas of violets, dark cherry, and oak spice. Aged for 14 months in oak, it reveals excellent extraction and length on the palate with an elegant texture and mouth feel. Sourced from 70-year-old vines. **Luigi Bosca 2008 De Sangre Mendoza ($25) 90** This is a new bottling for Luigi Bosca. It is a blend of Cabernet Sauvignon (70%), Merlot (15%) and Syrah (15%) sourced from 90-year-old vines and their best vineyard parcels. It displays a dark ruby color and aromas of red and black fruit aromas. It is soft and elegant on the palate with plush and concentrated black fruit flavors, soft round tannins and a long finish. Not yet imported to the US. **Luigi Bosca 2008 Gala I Mendoza ($35) 92** Luigi Bosca's Gala I is a highly successful top of the line blend of Malbec (85%) Petit Verdot (10%) and Tannat (5%). Dark ruby in color, it offers aromas of red and black fruit with notes of menthol. On the palate it reveals ripe and richly concentrated flavors of red berries, plum, coffee, and mocha. Aged for 14 months in oak, it is nicely balanced with round tannins and a long finish. An elegant wine. **Luigi Bosca 2007 Gala II Mendoza ($35) 92+** Gala II is a blend of Cabernet Sauvignon (85%), Cabernet Franc (10%), and Merlot (5%) from selected vineyard parcels in Vistalba, Carrodilla, and Las Compuertas. It's unfiltered and aged 14 months in French oak. A very expressive and beautifully blended wine with a soft attack of ripe red fruit and pain grillé. The intensely flavored palate carries through to a long, long finish. **Luigi Bosca 2009 Gala III Mendoza ($32) 91** The Gala III is a tasty blend of 50% Viognier, 40% Chardonnay and 10% Riesling. It offers a melange of ripe fruit flavors and toasted oak on the nose. On the palate it is medium weight with nicely delineated flavors of stone fruit with faint petroleum and cedar accents. The Chardonnay is fermented in new French oak for six months, and the Viognier and Riesling are fermented in tank. A rich wine of some elegance.

Other Wines Reviewed: Luigi Bosca 2010 Sauvignon Blanc Reserva ($18) 88; Luigi Bosca 2007 Malbec Reserva ($17) 88; Luigi Bosca 2008 Pinot Noir Reserva ($17) 88; Luigi Bosca 2006 Cabernet Bouchet Field Blend Finca Los Nobles 93

Bodega Lurton

The Lurton brothers have been operating in Argentina since 1992, initially working in partnership with Bodega Catena Zapata, then going on to establish their own winery in 1996 in the Valle de Uco. Bodega Lurton owns two important vineyards: the 136 ha Chacayes estate at an altitude of 1,100 meters and the Finca Barrancas, a densely planted low yielding 64 hectare vineyard in Maipú. Lurton is an outstanding and innovative winery, pioneering varieties like Pinot Gris and Friulano, producing quality wines at affordable prices, and turning out magnificent wines like Chacayes. Importer: Vintus Pleasantville, NY

Bodega Lurton 2010 Pinot Gris Reserva Mendoza ($12) 88 This was the first Pinot Gris produced in Argentina and is highly successful. It offers fresh pear and apple aromas on the nose and tart apple flavors and a touch of minerals on the palate. It has good acidity with a crisp dry finish. Great value. **Bodega Lurton 2009 Corte Friulano Mendoza ($27) 91** Corte Friulano is a blend of the Italian grape, Friulano (Tocai Friulano) (75%), Pinot Gris (20%), and small amounts of Chardonnay, Torrontés, and even Viognier. Barrel fermented, it offers a lovely nose of oak and fresh melon followed by a richly textured palate. It has attractive flavors of fresh fruit and oak, good acidity and a crisp finish. More European than New World in style. **Bodega Lurton 2007 Gran Lurton Cabernet Sauvignon Mendoza ($35) 89+** The 2007 Gran Lurton Cabernet Sauvignon offers aromas and flavors of black cherry and cassis. It has a soft velvet attack with good fruit concentration on the mid palate, round tannins, and a persistent finish. One of the more elegant bottles of Cabernet Sauvignon we've tasted from Mendoza. **Bodega Lurton 2007 Piedra Negra Mendoza ($40) 92** Lur-

ton's 2007 single vineyard Piedra Negra Malbec exhibits a lovely medium ruby hue and aromas of black cherry fruit, spice and toasted oak. Aged for 18 months in new French barriques, it is soft on the attack and has a savory palate of layered black cherry fruit, roasted meat and cedar with a note of lavender and spice. It is beautifully balanced and has a persistent finish. Well done! **Bodega Lurton 2007 Chacayes Mendoza ($75) 93** The Chacayes is a magnificent wine sourced from a high altitude vineyard (1,100 meters) in Tunuyán, just south of Mendoza. The soil is composed of gravel, sand and volcanic rock and is low yielding. Aged in barriques for 18 months, the wine reveals sweet ripe black fruit and oak on the nose. This is followed by a medium weight palate of savory black fruit, nicely integrated oak, polished tannins and a persistent finish.

Other Wines Reviewed: Bodega Lurton 2009 Malbec Reserva Mendoza ($15) 87; Bodega Lurton 2008 Gran Lurton Cabernet Sauvignon Mendoza ($35) 87

*****Manos Negras**
This small winery uses the unique skills of three immigrants to Argentina—New Zealand winemakers and American wine educator Jeff Mausbach—as well as the renowned Argentine viticulturist Alejandro Sejanovich to craft exciting, terroir-based wines. Importer: Vino del Sol, Corralitos, CA

Manos Negras 2010 Torrontés San Juan ($16) 90 This is a very good Torrontés showing a somewhat reserved nose of acacia, herbs, and orchard fruit. It's round in the mouth where it erupts with sweet pear flavors with garden herb notes and green apple acidity. Finishes clean with a mineral note. **Manos Negras 2008 Malbec Valle de Uco ($16) 88** The 2008 Malbec offers dark cherry fruit, vanilla and toasted oak aromas on the nose. On the palate it is nicely textured with quite firm, fine tannins. A tad astringent on the finish, but flavorful and good value. **Manos Negras 2008 Pinot Noir Neuquén Valley ($16) 88+** This medium light ruby Pinot Noir offers up light red cherry fruit, a touch of earth and lots of vanilla on the nose. Aged for 12 months in French oak, 20% new, it exhibits red berry fruit with prominent vanilla notes and elegance on the palate.

Mapema 2007 PZ Malbec, Mendoza ($70) 92
This is a very refined and elegant Malbec produced by two outstanding winemakers, Pepe Galante, formerly head winemaker at Catena Zapata and now at Salentein, and Mariano Di Paola, head winemaker at Bodega La Rural. The grapes are sourced from 80 year-old vines of vineyards in Tupungato and La Consulta. The wine has a lovely dark ruby color and aromas of plum, black cherry and earth. Aged for 12 months in new French oak, the wine is silky smooth and beautifully balanced on the palate, revealing a red berry fruit character, sweetness of oak and polished tannins. You are in good company when drinking this wine.

*****Mariflor**
This label is the newest of the wines produced by Dany and Michel Rolland in Argentina; the others being Val de Flores and Yacochuya. The grapes are sourced from their vineyard in Val de Flores and are being vinified in a new Bodega Rolland winery with gravity processing, small concrete tanks and high quality French barriques for malo and aging. The director of Mariflor is Vodolfo Ballebella. The wines are beautifully made and lighter in style than the wines usually identified with Michel Rolland. Importer: Montesquieu, San Diego, CA

Mariflor 2009 Sauvignon Blanc Mendoza ($25) 90 This Sauvignon Blanc offers lovely aromas of pink grapefruit and lime citrus. It is easy drinking with moderate acidity, freshness and a crisp finish. Possibly Argentina's most successful Sauvignon Blanc. **Mariflor 2008 Pinot Noir Mendoza ($35) 89** The Pinot Noir reveals light raspberry aromas on the nose that are mirrored on the palate. Aged for up to 15 months in barriques, it reveals good acidity, intensity of flavor on the mid-palate, and freshness on the finish. This is the fourth vintage of this promising Pinot Noir. **Mariflor 2009 Malbec Mendoza ($35) 90+** The 2009 Mariflor Malbec is sourced from old vines from the vineyards of Clos de los Siete. It is medium dark ruby in color and offers aromas of ripe earthy black fruit and spices that are mirrored on the palate followed by soft tannins and a lasting finish. Very fresh and easy drinking. **Mariflor 2007 Camille Valle de Uco ($75) 93** The Camille is a special Malbec bottling commemorating the birth of Michael Rolland's first grandchild. It is an elegant, high toned wine with tremendous depth and complexity. Sourced from the ten best barrels of old vines of Vista Flores and microvinified. Only 3,000 bottles made. A wine you can drink now but will be even better after cellaring several years.

Masi Tupungato 2009 Passo Doble Malbec-Corvina Mendoza ($17) 88+
Passo Doble offers a fresh fruit forward nose of dark cherry and toast followed by a soft palate of more tasty ripe dark cherry fruit and oak. It is nicely balanced with soft tannins and a long finish. Well made. Easy drinking and delicious. Importer: Folio Fine Wine Partners Napa, CA

*****Mendel Winery**
Mendel is a partnership of Roberto de la Mota, one of Argentina's most respected and experienced winemakers, and owner Anabelle Sielecki. Their winery produces small quantities of high quality, hand-crafted wines produced with careful attention to detail from careful bunch sorting to fermentation in small tanks to aging in the finest French oak. They produce only five wines: a Semillon, three different Malbecs. and Unus, a blend of Malbec and Cabernet Sauvignon. The wines are of outstanding quality. Importer: Vine Connections, Sausalito, CA

Mendel 2010 Semillon Valle de Uco Mendoza ($29) 90+ Mendel's Semillon is a substantial and very expressive wine showing complexity and fullness on a superbly balanced palate. It reveals dried herbs, tarragon, pear, and almond on the nose and palate with brisk acidity and mineral notes. Finishes long with lingering herbal tea notes. Made from 60-year-old vines in the Altamira-La Consulta part of the Uco Valley at about 1,100 meters altitude. About 15 percent of the wine is fermented in oak. **Mendel 2008 Malbec Luján de Cuyo Mendoza ($30) 91** The 2008 Malbec is sourced from low yielding old vines planted in 1928. Aged in French oak for 12 months, it is a very elegant wine with an opaque ruby color and aromas of spicy raspberry, blackberry and a note of tobacco. The palate is soft and lush with nuances of minerals and a long finish. Absolutely gorgeous and pure! **Mendel 2006 Unus Pedriel Mendoza ($40) 92** Unus displays an opaque red color and rich aromas of dark cherry with bitter chocolate and light resinous notes. Composed of 70% Malbec and 30% Cabernet Sauvignon, it is aged for 16 months in 100% new French oak. Produced from very small selected lots of grapes, it is lush on the attack and has a rich velvet-like palate with concentrated fruit flavors, firm ripe tannins, and a long persistent finish. **Mendel Finca Remota 2008 Altamira -Valle de Uco ($110) 93** Another first-rate Malbec crafted by this estate is from the 60-year-old single vineyard, Frinca Remota. It is a very complex wine, fat, persistent, layered, smooth and concentrated. Aged in 150% new oak for 20 months, it reveals loam, tobacco, minerals and dense dark fruit on the nose. It is unctuous on the palate with very firm tannins and liqueur like black fruit on the finish.

Other Wines Reviewed: Mendel 2009 Lunta Lujan de Cuyo, Medoza ($20) 89

*****Bodega Mi Terruño**

Mi Terruño is a family winery located in Maipú. It sources its fruit from its own vineyards located in Santa Rosa and Maipú and from growers in Valle de Uco, Maipú and Luján de Cuyo. Its wines are of good quality. Mayacaba Malbec is by far its best wine. Importers: Copa Fina Wine Imports, San Francisco, CA; Kern Importers, Chicago, IL; and others.

Mi Terruño 2007 Mayacaba Malbec Mendoza ($50) 90 The dark ruby Mayacaba Malbec is an elegant full-bodied wine sourced from 100 year-old vines. It combines earth and leather aromas and flavors with black cherry and dark plum fruit and toasted oak. It has a silky texture and is beautifully balanced with dark concentrated fruit flavors, notes of espresso, soft polished tannins and a long finish. This is a big flavorful wine. **Mi Terruño 2008 Limited Reserve Malbec/ Cabernet Sauvignon Mendoza ($22) 88** This is a blend of Malbec (55%) and Cabernet Sauvignon (45%) with a dark ruby purple hue and aromas of black cherry and cedar. It is full-bodied on the palate with lush ripe black cherry/plum fruit, spice, light tannins and a long finish.

Wines also Tasted: Mi Terruño 2009 Mi Terruño Reserve Malbec Mendoza ($17) 87+; Mi Terruño 2009 Mi Terruño Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon Perdriel ($17) 87; Mi Terruño 2009 Chardonnay Reserve Mendoza ($17) 87

*****Michel Torino**

Known as Bodega El Esteco, the Michel Torino winery was founded in 1892 by French brothers David and Salvador Torino. The winery owns 400 hectares of high altitude vineyards in Cafayate and produces good to excellent quality premium wines. The Don David wines are the most noteworthy. Importer: Frederick Wildman and Sons New York, NY

Michel Torino 2010 Don David Torrontés Salta ($16) 88 This pale straw wine has a fresh, intensely fruity bouquet of peach and yellow flowers. The palate is soft and pretty with good acidity and pleasing flavors of white peach and guava. A very good straightforward wine. **Michel Torino 2008 Cabernet Sauvignon Salta ($17) 89+** This Cabernet Sauvignon is one of the better ones we tasted from Salta. It combines ripe black fruit and sweet oak in a beautifully balanced and elegant framework. It is polished and shows the benefits of high altitude grape growing. A ripe, lush and flavorful wine. **Michel Torino 2009 Don David Syrah Reserve Salta ($17) 90** The dark ruby Don David 2009 Syrah Reserve boasts aromas of ripe black fruit and sweet oak. On the palate it is soft, lush and velvet smooth with concentrated black fruit, sweet oak flavors, and notes of chocolate. International in style, it is pleasant drinking with polished tannins and a long finish. Well done! **Michel Torino 2009 Tannat Reserve Salta ($17) 91** Opaque inky purple, this 2009 Tannat Reserve offers a ripe fragrant blackberry fruited nose with touches of licorice and sweet oak. On the attack it has a lush mouth feel followed by ripe concentrated black fruit flavors, sweet oak, round soft tannins, and a long finish. Well done.

*****Montepio** is a joint project of importer Dan Kravitz, Hand Picked Selections, and the duo of Daniel Gonzalez and Sergio Yanadi. The grapes are sourced from independent growers. **Montepio 2010 SyBo Mendoza ($13) 87** SyBo is a 50-50 blend of Syrah and Bonarda. Dark ruby and spicy with refreshing aromas and flavors of red and black fruit. These are followed by a dry mid-palate of light fruit and tannic grip on the finish. **Montepio 2010 Pinot Gris San Juan ($13) 88** This is a nice aromatic and ripe tasting Pinot Gris offering flavors of lemon, apple and citrus and revealing good acidity and a crisp dry long- lasting finish. **Montepio 2010 Torrontés La Ríoja ($13) 87** A refreshing Torrontés offering aromas of rose petals and passion fruit that are mirrored on the palate, with good acidity, tartness and a dry crisp finish.

***Montequieto

This winery was established in 2001 by owner Matilde Pareda. Her first vineyard was planted in Agrelo; she now has other vineyards in Ugarteche and Valle de Uco and her own winemaking facility. The wines are all blends and of very good quality. Noteworthy is her Quieto Reserva, a blend of Cabernet Franc, Malbec and Cabernet Sauvignon.

Montequieto 2009 Quieto 3 Malbec Mendoza ($16) 89 This is a fresh, fruit forward, red blend fermented and aged for 12 months in tank. Soft and easy drinking, it boasts fresh raspberry and red plum aromas. It has simple but fresh and vivid flavors with a nice long fruity finish. Great Value! **Montequieto 2006 Quieto Mendoza ($18) 89** The 2006 Quieto is a blend of Cabernet Franc, Malbec, and Cabernet Sauvignon sourced from the winery's three vineyards. Medium ruby in colo,r it offers red plum and forest floor aromas on the nose. It is soft and lush on the attack showing red plum fruit, mushrooms, and herbs. It has ripe tannins and a long clean finish. Newer vintages use Syrah instead of Cabernet Sauvignon. **Montequieto 2006 Quieto Reserva Mendoza ($29) 91** The 2006 Reserva is a blend of three vineyards. It is composed of Malbec, Cabernet Franc and Cabernet Sauvignon and spends 12 months in oak. It offers aromas of dark red fruit and earth with hints of spicy dark fruit, dark chocolate and loam. Soft and lush on the attack, it reveals good integration of flavors and fine tannins. Quite delicious!

***Monteviejo

Bodega Monteviejo is the first of seven wineries of the Clos de los Siete, an imaginative joint venture in the Valle de Uco launched in 1998 by Michel Rolland and the late Jean-Michel Arcaute, along with other French investors. The Clos de los Siete jointly owns an 847 ha estate, Vista Flores, that is planted with Malbec and other vinifera varietals. Their goal is to produce high quality fruit with low yields (40 hl/ha), less than 3 tons per acre. Monteviejo is owned by Catherine Pere-Verge, who is also the owner of two vineyards in Pomerol. Her winemaker is Marcello Pelleriti. The wines are of good to excellent quality.

Monteviejo 2009 Lindaflor Chardonnay Mendoza ($20) 89 The Lindafor Chardonnay is fresh and fruit forward on the palate with tropical aromas and flavors and a touch of minerality and smoke. It is produced with natural yeasts and 60% malolatic fermentation. It has good fruit flavors and presence on the mid-palate with good structure and acidity on the finish but a tad too much oak. **Monteviejo 2007 Lindaflor Malbec Mendoza ($25) 90** The Lindaflor Malbec has an opaque black ruby color and boasts red and black fruit, violets and licorice aromas on the nose that are mirrored on the palate. Aged for 18 months in oak, it also reveals bitter chocolate, black fruit and a heavy veneer of oak and big tannins. Elegant with nice weight, good flavors, and balance.

Other Wines Reviewed: Monteviejo 2010 Festivo Malbec Valle de Uco Mendoza ($13) 87; Monteviejo 2008 Lindaflor Petite Fleur Mendoza ($22) 88; Monteviejo 2006 Malbec Reserve Mendoza ($25) 88

***Muñoz de Toro Winery - Valle Perdido del Desierto

This project was launched by Buenos Aires lawyer Fernando Munoz de Toro and his wife. The winery is located about one hour northwest of the city of Neuquén. The project includes a comfortable five-star hotel in front of the winery. The company took over 180 ha of vineyard and a partly built winery in 2004. The winemaking facility is set up as two separate wineries, one for commercial wines where must is pumped and the other working entirely by gravity flow. The wines are a work in progress. Importer: Cannon Wines, San Francisco, CA

Muñoz de Toro 2009 Chardonnay Late Harvest Patagonia ($15) 89 This light amber colored late harvest wine has a nose of light apricot, honey and spice with light caramel, nuts, and dried apricots showing on the palate. Has 40 g/l sugar and very good natural acidity. Well balanced and delicious. **Muñoz de Toro 2006 Vale Perdido Reserva Malbec Patagonia 88** The 2006 Reserva Malbec exhibits an almost opaque ruby color and aromas of black fruit, chocolate, mocha and oak. On the palate it offers lush ripe black cherry, plum and chocolate flavors. Aged for 14 months in new oak, it has moderate tannins and a long finish of earth and fruit.

Other Wines Reviewed: Muñoz de Toro 2010 Argie Torrontés La Ríoja 87; Muñoz de Toro 2009 Pinot Noir Patagonia 86; Muñoz de Toro 2007 Valle Perdido Cabernet Sauvignon Patagonia 86

Ñandú 2009 Malbec Mendoza ($15) 88 This wine is produced by Bernard Portet of Clos du Val in Napa and Domaine Nizas in France. It was first released in 2003. Ñandú Malbec comes from hillside vineyards in Mendoza. The Portets named this new wine Ñandú after the large, flightless bird native to Mendoza. The Ñandú Malbec exhibits a dark ruby hue with aromas of black cherry, plum, earth, pepper and spice. On the palate it is soft and velvet-like with lush black fruit, gripping round tannins and a long finish. Young and promising. Importer: Folio Fine Wine Partners Napa, CA

***Navarro Correas

Navarro Correas is one of Argentina's oldest wineries. It was founded in 1798 by Don Juan de Dios, a visionary committed to producing high quality elegant wines. Since 1996 the winery has belonged to Diageo, an international beverage company. The wines at this large winery are made under senior winemaker Gaspar Roby, who showed us the Navrro Correas portfolio at the winery. The Alegoria Gran Reservas and the Structura Ultra are their best wines. Importer: Diageo Chateau & Estate, New York, NY

Navarro Correas 2009 San Telmo Esencia Torrontés Mendoza ($8) 86+ The San Telmo Esencia Torrontés has an attractive, spicy jasmine nose, but the palate is unexpectedly light. An easy drinking wine that should be served well chilled. **Navarro Correas 2009 Colección Privada Mendoza ($13) 88** This Malbec exhibits a medium dark ruby color and a nose of cherry and vanilla. It is soft on the attack and quite attractive on the palate – clean, good cherry flavors, nice tannins and good finish. **Navarro Correas 2007 Alegoria Cabernet Sauvignon Gran Reserva Mendoza ($22) 89+** The Cabernet Sauvignon Gran Reserva offers aromas of dark cherry and toasted coconut. Aged in 85% French oak, it is soft on the attack and quite flavorful with firm ripe tannins and a long finish of cherry, vanilla and coconut. **Navarro Correas 2008 Alegoria Malbec Gran Reserva Mendoza ($22) 91** The Malbec Gran Reserva exhibits an opaque ruby color and aromas of dark berry fruit, chocolate and coconut. On the attack and palate, it reveals good concentration of black fruit flavors, sweet oak, ripe tannins and a long finish. **Navarro Correas 2006 Structura Ultra Mendoza ($45) 92** Navarro Correas' Structura Ultra is composed of 52% Malbec, 30% Cabernet Sauvignon and 18% Merlot. It has an opaque ruby color and aromas of black fruit, earth and tobacco. Full bodied and ripe on the palate, it offers up a savory combination of violets, black fruit, herbs and bitter chocolate.

***Nieto Senetiner

Bodegas Nieto Senetiner is located in Luján de Cuyo where it owns 300 ha of vineyards and sources grapes from independent growers. It was established in 1888 by Italian immigrants and purchased by the Nieto Senetiner family in 1969. Since 1998 the winery has been owned and operated by the Perez Companc Family Group, an Argentine corporation. Perez Gonzales is winemaker. Cadus is far and above their best wine. Importer: Winebow Montvale, NJ

Nieto Senentiner 2010 Torrontés Reserva Mendoza ($11) 88 This extremely well-priced Torrontés shows rose petals and just a whiff of raspberry on the nose and has a ripe, round mouth feel. It finishes dry and crisp. **Nieto Senentiner 2008 Bonarda Reserva Partida Limitada Mendoza ($28) 88+** This is one of the better Bonardas tasted for this report. It has an opaque ruby color and nicely concentrated ripe plum aromas with toasted sweet oak. Fruit forward on the palate, it reveals a ripe round mouth feel with dry tannins on the finish. **Nieto Senentiner 2008 Don Nicanor Malbec Mendoza ($18) 88** Don Nicanor offers aromas of red and blackberry fruit which are mirrored on the palate with notes of spice and toasted oak. It has a soft attack, round mouth feel and ripe tannins with good fruit concentration on the finish. **Nieto Senentiner 2006 Cadus Malbec Mendoza ($46) 92** The 2006 Cadus is a Malbec sourced from very low-yields (1.7t/ha) of a single vineyard. It spends 24 months in oak and two years in the bottle before release. Like the Don Nicanor, it reveals an opaque ruby purple color and aromas and flavors of herbs, cedar graphite and plum. It is highly stylized, beautifully balanced and elegant with soft round tannins and a long finish.

Other Wines Reviewed: Nieto Senentiner 2009 Malbec Reserva ($11) 88

***Noemia

This winery is among the finest boutique wineries in Argentina. Located in Río Negro, Patagonia, it was created by Danish winemaker, Hans Vinding-Diers and the famed Italian wine producer, Countess Noemi Cinzano. Hans is Danish by birth, raised in Bordeaux and is a cousin to Peter Sisseck whom we know from Pingus in Ribera del Duero. Noemi is Italian from Cinzano and of the prestigious Agnelli family. Their estate includes vineyards in Manique and Valle Azul,. both of which are biodynamically farmed and Demeter certified. The winery itself only makes three wines, and they are all outstanding. Hans also makes the wines at Chacra. Importer: Vias Imports, New York, NY

Noemia 2009 A Lisa Malbec Alto Valle de Río Negro ($27) 89 The A Lisa is composed of 90% Malbec and 10% Merlot sourced from Noemia's Valle Azul Vineyard and purchased from neighboring old vineyards (50 years). The wine ages for 10 months in used French oak. Fresh blackberry with light mocha and earth notes emerge on the nose and palate. The wine is soft and lush with firm, ripe tannins and has a long, flavorful finish with forest floor notes. **Noemia 2009 J. Alberto Malbec Alto Valle de Río Negro ($54) 91** J. Alberto is a superb Malbec sourced from 60 year old vines. It has a dark ruby color and aromas of red and black berries and violets on the nose. Aged in 70% used oak, it is soft and lush on the attack with a gorgeous palate, layered with fresh fruit, notes of earth and minerals, and ripe, firm tannins. What an elegant wine! Most impressive is it has only 13.8% alcohol. **Noemia 2008 Malbec Alto Valle de Río Negro ($128) 95** The jewel in the crown of this estate is the 2008 Malbec. This phenomenal wine is sourced from 78 year-old low yielding vines (3.5k/ha). It exhibits an opaque ruby color and displays a gorgeous nose of cassis, blackberry, and baking chocolate. Velvet like on the palate, it offers dense fruit, layers of integrated minerals, bitter chocolate, and blueberry on the palate and boasts a long persistent finish.

***Notro**

These are wines produced with Argentine partners by importer Dan Kravitz of Hand Picked Selections. They consist of single varieties and blends and are offered at very attractive low-budget prices. Importer: Hand Picked Selections, Warrenton, VA

Notro 2005 Malbec Barrica Mendoza ($14) 87 This Malbec reveals a medium dark ruby hue and spicy aromas of black cherry fruit and plum. It has a medium-bodied palate with fruity plum flavors, light oak, and a tart finish. **Notro 2009 Sangiovese-Bonarda Mendoza ($9) 86** This is an unusual blend of 50-50 Sangiovese and Bonarda. On the nose it offers aromas of dried cherry fruit and a touch of cedar. On the mid-palate it is light-bodied with dry tannins and a short finish. **Notro 2010 Torrontés Mendoza ($9) 87** This Torrontés is light in color with a fragrant nose of rose petals and passion fruit. On the palate it reveals a light body, moderate fruit intensity and a tart finish. **Notro 2010 Tinto Fundación Mendoza ($16) 87+** The Notro Tinto Fundación is a blend of Bonarda, Malbec and Cabernet Sauvignon. It is fresh tasting and easy drinking with up front aromas and flavors of strawberries, plum, and blackberry.

Novus Ordo Vineyards and Winery 2008 Novus Ordo Malbec Mendoza ($17) 87

This Malbec is produced by a new winery located in Tupungato in the Uco Valley from 20 year-old vines grown at 950 meters in Lujan de Cuyo. This young wine offers spicy red and black fruit aromas with moderately concentrated black fruit flavors on the palate. It is fermented in stainless steel and partially aged in oak for 9 months. Some tannic grip and astringency on the finish. The winery owner is R. Cary Capparelli, a Chicago businessman. Importer: Two Americas USA, LLC

***NQN**

The NQN consists of a 1,100 ha estate of which 162 ha of vineyards are planted. It is the project of Lucas Nemesio and his family. They planted Malbec, Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon, Pinot Noir, Chardonnay and Sauvignon Blanc starting in 2001 and had their first vintage in 2004. The consulting winemaker is Roberto de la Mota of Mendel. The winery is built for large commercial scale winemaking, and the quality of the wines is very good to excellent. Importer: Kysela Pere et Fils, Winchester, VA

NQN 2009 Nemesio Pinot Noir Patagonia ($17) 88 The NQN Nemesio Pinot Noir has a medium ruby color and aromas of ripe and earthy dark cherry. On the palate it has a soft texture with medium weight and dark, spicy ripe fruit flavors. This is a pleasant tasting Pinot Noir from an up and coming region of Argentina. **NQN 2009 Nemesio Proprietor's Reserve Blend Patagonia ($23) 89+** This blend of Malbec (60%) and Cabernet Sauvignon (40%) offers earth and red and black fruit with cedar and spice on the nose. Aged for 15 months in French barriques, it is soft on the palate revealing earth and dark fruit flavors, lightly gripping tannins, and a firm finish. Needs time in the bottle to evolve and integrate its components. **NQN 2006 Colección Patagonia ($24) 90** This opaque-ruby blend of Malbec (60%), Merlot (30%), and Cabernet Sauvignon (10%) is aged in French oak for 15 months. French oak shows on the nose with smoke, coconut and forest floor aromas. It also has a soft attack and a lush, full-flavored palate. **NQN 2007 Coleccion Malbec Patagonia ($24) 91** The nose shows coconut, chocolate, and blackberry syrup. Has a soft, lush attack with very rich, dense fruit with coconut and chocolate notes on the finish along with dry, present tannins. Rich, opulent, full and round in the mouth and delicious. Very, very good, and an excellent value! Aged in 100 percent new and used French oak for 15 months.

Wines also Reviewed: NQN 2010 Picada Patagonia ($15) 88; NQN 2007 Malma Malbec Reserva de Familia Patagonia ($20) 90; NQN 2009 Malbec Reserve Patagonia ($17) 89; NQN 2009 Nemesio Cabernet Sauvignon Reserve Patagonia ($17) 89

***Nuna**

Nuna wines are produced in Luján de Cuyo by the Pelizzatti family. The grapes are sourced from vineyards in Agrelo and elsewhere. The wines are crafted by the young winemaker Liliana Pelizzatti, and consultant Alberto Antonini. In Quechua, the language of the Incas, "Nuna" means soul. The quality of the wines is very good. Importer: Kysela Pere et Fils, Winchester, VA

Nuna 2010 Torrontés Reserve Luján de Cuyo Mendoza ($17) 90 The Nuna Torrontés is made from 45 year-old vines located in Agrelo and Luján de Cuyo. It shows yellow fruit and dried herbs on the nose. The palate is full and round with good flavor complexity, bright framing acidity, and a long flavorful finish. Excellent. **Nuna 2009 Malbec Reserve Luján de Cuyo Mendoza ($17) 89** The Nuna 2009 Malbec Reserve exhibits a beautiful deep ruby purple hue and lovely ripe aromas of black cherry and plum and nicely integrated oak. On the palate it is soft and velvet smooth with ripe fruit flavors, soft round tannins and a long finish.

Wines also Reviewed: Nuna Bonarda Reserve Luján de Cuyo Mendoza ($17) 87

***O. Fournier**

The Bodegas y Viñedos O. Fournier was founded in 2000 by the Spanish family Ortega Gil-Fournier; it also owns vineyards and wineries in Chile and Ribera del Duero, Spain. Jose Manuel Ortega is the moving force behind this enterprise. O. Fournier has three high altitude estates in the Valle de Uco planted with high density, low yielding vines. However, it also currently sources grapes from local producers. O. Fournier produces fine Malbecs and some exciting Malbec and Tempranillo blends. Importer: Tempranillo, Inc., New Rochelle, NY

O. Fournier 2010 Urban Uco Blend (Malbec-Tempranillo) Mendoza ($15) 89 Urban Uco is a 50-50 blend of Malbec and Tempranillo. It has a medium ruby hue and aromas of black cherry, plum and licorice. On the attack it reveals a soft and fleshy texture with pepper spice, red and black fruit, round tannins and a long finish. A pleasant easy-drinking food friendly wine. **O. Fournier 2010 Urban Uco Chardonnay Mendoza ($13) 89** Jose Ortega's Urban Uco Chardonnay is a clean crisp wine offering a fragrant nose of tropical fruit and citrus. On the palate, it offers ripe aromatic fruit, excellent acidity and balance and a long satisfying finish with a little tartness. Fermented in stainless steel with three months in barriques. **O. Fournier 2007 Alfa Crux Malbec Mendoza ($47) 92** The O. Fournier 2007 Alfa Crux Malbec displays a dark ruby robe and aromas of sweet black cherry, spice, earth, herbs, and charred oak. Sourced from 60 and 80 year-old vines, it is fermented in French oak and aged for 18 months in French oak (80%) and American (20%). It reveals bold dark sweet fruit flavors on the attack with earth, minerals and fine-grained tannins. These are followed by a long lasting, lush finish with a violet note. **O. Fournier 2005 Alfa Crux Red Wine Mendoza ($45) 94** The 2005 Alfa Crux displays an opaque ruby color and fragrant aromas of black cherry, graphite, licorice violets and earth. Aged for 17 months in new French (80%) and American (20%) oak, this proprietary blend of Tempranillo (60%), Malbec (30%) and Cabernet Sauvignon (10%) offers rich concentrated flavors of black fruit, leather, chocolate and loam. It is a lush full-bodied wine with tremendous extract obtained from ripe high altitude fruit A truly monumental wine that lasts forever on the palate. **O. Fournier 2006 B Crux Mendoza ($27) 91** The 2007 B Crux is a blend of Tempranillo (60%), Cabernet Sauvignon (15%), Shiraz (15%), and Malbec (10%). Aged for 4 months in new and used barrels, it boasts a dark ruby hue and aromas of ripe plum, blackberry, black pepper, licorice and cedar. On the palate it is velvety smooth and creamy and reveals bold black fruit and spice, round polished tannins and a firm finish.

Other Wines Reviewed: O. Fournier 2010 Crux Sauvignon Blanc Valle de Uco ($18) 88+

*****Pascual Toso**

This winery is one of the oldest and most prestigious in Argentina, dating back to the late 19th century when Pascual Toso, an émigré from the Piedmont, purchased vineyards in Las Barrancas in Maipú and began producing wine. Continuing its development, in 2001 the winery made major new investments and recruited consultant winemaker Paul Hobbs, who working along side winemaker Rolando Luppino, has helped make this winery one of the top producers in Argentina today. Importer: TGIC Woodland Hills, CA

Pascual Toso 2010 Torrontés Mendoza ($11) 88 This is a soft, feminine wine with a floral, perfumed nose and a nicely flavored palate showing melon, papaya and just a hint of tropical pineapple. The grapes come from the estate vineyards in Las Barrancas in Maipú. Excellent value! **Pascual Toso 2009 Estate Malbec Mendoza ($15) 89** This is young, easy drinking Malbec with a medium ruby color and a nose of red berry fruit and honeyed oak. It offers lots of fresh fruit on the palate and has a pleasant finish. Great value! **Pascual Toso 2008 Malbec Alta Reserve Mendoza ($35) 92** The Malbec Alta Reserve offers up aromas of black cherry, plum and chocolate with a note of coconut. It has a lovely attack of dark red and blue fruit with a violet note. Soft and lush on the palate, it is nicely balanced and integrated with fine tannins and a long elegant finish. **Pascual Toso 2006 Finca Pedregal Mendoza ($80) 91** Finca Pedregal is the rocky vineyard site of the grapes for this wine. It is composed of 80% Malbec and 20% Cabernet Sauvignon. The wine offers a fragrant nose of red fruit, smoke, chocolate, roasted meat and honeyed oak. On the palate it reveals spicy black cherry fruit, black currants, and sweet oak with considerable richness. The wine finishes long with stewed fruit notes. **Pascual Toso 2006 Magdalena Toso Mendoza ($115) 94** This magnificent wine is made of 70% Malbec and 30% Cabernet Sauvignon. The Malbec grapes come from 105 year-old vineyards; the Cabernet grapes from 103 year-old vineyards. Dark ruby red in color, the wine offers rich aromas of plum and cassis with cedar and hints of vanilla and coconut that are mirrored on the palate. Aged for 18 months in French oak, it is velvet-like on the attack; beautifully balanced and seamless on the palate with an outrageously long finish.

Other Wines Reviewed: Pascual Toso 2010 Estate Chardonnay Mendoza ($11) 88+; Pascual Toso 2008 Malbec Reserve Mendoza ($20) 90; Pascual Toso 2007 Syrah Alta Reserve Mendoza ($35) 90

*****Piatelli Vineyards**

Piatelli Vineyards is located in the Agrelo district in Luján de Cuyo. The winery owns two high altitude, organically farmed vineyards, one in Mendoza and the other in Cafayate (Salta) devoted to Torrontés, Tannat and other varietals. Piatelli's excellent wines are crafted by winemaker Valeria Antonín. Roberto de la Mota serves as consulting winemaker. The Grand Reserve Malbec and the Trinitã red blend are outstanding. Importer: Vinacopia, Richfield, MI and Kendal Jackson, Sonoma, CA

Piattelli Vineyards 2009 Grand Reserve Malbec Mendoza ($20) 90 The opaque ruby purple Piatelli 2008 Grand Reserve Malbec is a big step up in quality from the regular Malbec. It offers aromas of plum and blackberry fruit with a touch of menthol. Aged in oak for 12 months, it is soft and elegant on the palate and exhibits savory black fruit, earth, lavender, toast and herbs. It is beautifully balanced with a long finish. **Piattelli Vineyards 2009 Grand Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon Mendoza ($17) 88** The medium-ruby Cabernet Sauvignon reveals aromas of black currant, earth, chocolate, and black pepper. It has spicy black fruit flavors, cassis, toast and hints of forest floor. Aged for 13 months in French oak, it is nicely balanced with gripping tannins that need a year or more of aging in the bottle for maximum pleasure. **Piattelli Vineyards 2009 Trinitã Mendoza ($25) 92** The 2009 Trinitã is a savory blend of 49% Malbec, 40%

Cabernet Sauvignon and 11% Merlot sourced from 1000 meter high vineyards. Opaque ruby in color, it offers aromas of blackberry, lavender, and red plum fruit and sweet oak. Aged in oak for 13 months, it is rich and full-flavored on the palate with a soft texture, round tannins, good structure and a long finish. A wine of considerable purity and refinement.

Other Wines Reviewed: Piattelli Vineyards 2009 Torrontés Premium Salta ($15) 88; Piattelli Vineyards 2009 Malbec Premium Luján de Cuyo ($15) 87+

*****Pulenta Estate**

The Pulenta family has been a prominent and respected force in Argentine viticulture for three generations. Sons of well-known winegrower Antonio Pulenta and descendents of Italian immigrants, Eduardo and Hugo Pulenta founded Pulenta Estate in 2002. The vineyards are estate-owned and farmed for high quality and limited yields. Their extensive holdings in the Agrelo area of Luján de Cuyo have allowed them to create a broad portfolio in several tiers and even a late harvest red blend. Importer: Paul Hobbs Imports, Sebastopol, CA

Pulenta Estate 2009 Pinot Gris Mendoza ($16) 89 Lovely ripe aromas of pear and melon. Soft attack of crisp fresh fruit flavors, creamy round white peaches, dry, perfectly balanced with good acidity and a long finish with chalky notes **Pulenta Estate 2008 Gran Cabernet Franc Xl Luján de Cuyo ($40) 92** This is the finest Cabernet Franc produced in Argentina today. Dark ruby in color, it offers up ripe red and black fruit aromas with a touch of earth. It is soft on the attack with ripe plum fruit flavors, herbs and earth. It has round tannins and a long finish with hints of herbs and wet leaves. **Pulenta Estate 2008 Gran Malbec X Luján de Cuyo ($40) 90** The 2008 Gran Malbec is dark ruby in color and offers aromas of black cherry fruit, plum and wood spice. It has a medium bodied palate of silky plum fruit and toasted oak and is nicely structured with good balance and honed tannins on the finish. **Pulenta Estate 2007 Malbec I Mendoza ($29) 91** The 2007 Malbec I is more concentrated, lush and complex than the Gran Malbec. Dark ruby in color, it boasts aromas of plum, blackberry, earth and spice. It has rich and complex dark fruit flavors and is soft and velvet smooth on the palate with round tannins and a long finish. A wine of depth and elegance.

Other Wines Reviewed: Pulenta Estate 2008 La Flor Malbec Mendoza ($16) 88

*****Bodega Renacer**

Renacer was established in 2004 in Perdriel, Luján de Cuyo. It sources its grapes from 35 ha of vineyards, some of which are 50 years old and low yielding and purchases fruit from producers in Valle de Uco, Luján de Cuyo and Medrano. The winemaker is Pablo Profili; consulting winemaker is Alberto Antonini. The wines are well made. Importer: Winebow. Montvale, NJ

Renacer 2009 Punto Final Malbec Clássico Mendoza ($12) 87 The Punto Final Malbec Clássico is sourced from low yielding vineyards in Valle de Uco, Luján de Cuyo and Medrano. It is a blend of Malbec and Cabernet Franc aged for 10 months in stainless steel. It is medium ruby in color and has a nose of black cherry and plum. It is soft on the palate, although somewhat lightly concentrated, and has a dry finish with tannic grip. **Renacer 2007 Punto Final Malbec Reserva Mendoza ($20) 88+** Sourced from vineyards in Valle de Uco and Lujan de Cuyo, this is a step up in quality from the entry level Classico. Fermented in stainless steel, the wine spends 10 months in new French oak. It reveals good concentration of plum fruit with good acidity and freshness on the palate, despite its high alcohol content (14.5%). Dry tannins keep this wine from being scored higher. **Renacer 2007 Malbec Mendoza ($70) 90** The 2007 Malbec is sourced from very low yielding vineyards (2.2 tons per acre). It is fermented in new French oak barriques and aged for 24 months. The wine reveals dark plum fruit and toasted oak aromas on the nose. It is soft and elegant on the attack with rich, concentrated blackberry fruit, spice and coconut flavors with soft tannins. International in style. **Renacer 2008 Enamore Allegrini & Renacer Mendoza ($26) 90+** The Enamore Allegrini is comparable to an Italian Amarone. Like an Amarone, the grapes for this wine (Malbec, Cabernet Franc, Cabernet Sauvignon, Bonarda and Syrah) are dried outdoors for14 days. These grapes give the wine a beautifully concentrated, spicy plum and earth character with layers of rich flavor and gripping tannins on the finish. An absolutely delicious wine!

*****Bodegas Riglos**

Located in Tupungato, Alto Valle de Uco, Mendoza, Bodegas Riglos was launched in 2002 and produced its first wines for market in 2005 with the support of consulting enologist Paul Hobbs. Its vineyards consist of 72 hectares of rocky clay soils at 4,000' altitude (36 hectares are currently planted). Juan Carlos Rodriguez Villa, formerly of Flichman, is the enologist. All three of the wines produced by this winery are outstanding. Importer: Paul Hobbs Imports, Sebastapol, CA

Bodegas Riglos 2008 Cabernet Sauvignon Mendoza ($30) 91 The 2008 Cabernet Sauvignon boasts a dark ruby color and aromas of plum, herbs and violets. It has ripe fruit on the palate with focus and purity. It has a soft texture with lush mouth feel land intensity of flavor. These qualities plus soft round tannins and persistence on the finish, make this wine one of the best Cabernet Sauvignons tasted for this report. **Bodegas Riglos 2008 Malbec Mendoza ($30) 91** The 2008 Riglos Malbec displays an opaque ruby color and aromas of dark plum and toast. Aged for 20 months in new and second year French oak, it offers a velvet texture and good concentration of fruit on the palate. It is nicely balanced with round tannins and a persistent finish. **Bodegas Riglos 2008 Gran Corte Mendoza ($40) 93** The Gran Corte is 50% Malbec, 40% Cabernet Sauvignon and 10% Cabernet Franc. Opaque ruby, it boasts black cherry, plum, chocolate and black current fruit on the nose that is mirrored

on the palate. This beautifully crafted wine offers a lovely texture on the palate with elegance and balance. An easy winner.

Bodega Ruca Malen

This winery was founded in 1998 by Jean Pierre Thibaud (former President of Bodegas Chandon Argentina) and Jacques Louis de Motalembert (a viticulturalist from Burgundy). The winery has 27 hectares of vineyards in Agrelo and Vistalba. The Kinien wines, their high end offerings, are not reviewed here. Importer: Opici Import Company, Glen Rock, NJ

Bodega Ruca Malen 2009 Chardonnay Reserva Mendoza ($18) 87 Ruca Malen's 2009 Chardonnay Reserva displays a yellow-gold color and aromas of fresh melon, pear, citrus and toasted oak. On the palate it offers fresh fruit of medium intensity with more vanilla and oak flavors and finishes slightly dry. **Bodega Ruca Malen 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon Reserva Mendoza ($18) 88** This is an easy drinking fruit forward Cabernet Sauvignon offering aromas of black berry, graphite, and spice. It is soft and velvet smooth on the palate with lush, concentrated flavors of cassis and black currant. It is nicely balanced with ripe flavors, round firm tannins and a long finish. Well done! **Bodega Ruca Malen 2007 Malbec Reserva Mendoza ($18) 87+** This dark ruby purple Malbec Reserva displays aromas of dark fruit and loam. It is soft and smooth on the palate offering moderate plum flavors, with cedar and vanilla. It has round firm tannins and a long finish. The wine might benefit from more time in the bottle.

Rutini Wines

The La Rural Winery, home of Felipe Ruitini and Trumpeter wines, was constructed in the mid-1880s and operated as a family winery by Felipe Ruitini's descendents until about 6 years ago when Nicolas Catena became a partner of Felipe Rutini's grandson Rodolfo Reina Rutini. With Catena's guidance, La Rural has implemented a major modernization program and made many improvements in vineyard management. La Rural owns 4 vineyards in Mendoza province totaling 180 ha, including a prized 100 ha vineyard in Tupungato, at 1200 ft above sea level. Importer: Pasternak Wine Imports Harrison, NY

Rutini Wines 2008 Malbec Mendoza ($21) 88 The 2008 Malbec exhibits a medium ruby robe and a lovely fresh plum nose. It is soft and flavorful on the attack with ripe plum flavors on the palate. It is nicely balanced with round tannins and made in an easy-drinking style. **Rutini Wines 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon Mendoza ($21) 88+** This 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon has a dark ruby color and aromas of black currants, blackberries, herbs/tobacco and oak. It is soft on the attack followed by concentrated black fruit on the palate with a touch of forest floor. It is soft on the palate with hints of mocha and has a long satisfying finish. **Rutini Wines 2004 Apartado Mendoza ($70) 87** Rutini's flagship Apartado is a blend of Malbec (60%), Cabernet Sauvignon (30%), and Merlot (10%). It has an opaque inky purple hue and aromas of plum and oak on the nose. On the attack it is soft and velvet smooth and has rustic flavors of black currants, oak, and earth on a dry musty mid-palate. The tannins are smooth and the finish persistent. Time has taken its toll on this wine which we rated very highly five years ago.

Other Wines Reviewed: Rutini Wines 2009 Chardonnay Mendoza ($21) 87 Rutini Wines 2004 Encuentro Malbec-Merlot Mendoza ($35) 86; Rutini Wines 2006 Merlot Mendoza ($21) 85

*****Bodegas Salentein**

Bodegas Salentein is located in the Valle de Uco. Dutch entrepreneur Mijndert Pon has spared no expense in acquiring first class vineyards and building a state of the art winery on a grand scale. Salentein vineyards total 455 ha and are situated at different altitudes ranging from 1,050 to 1,700 feet. The winery produces two very good entry level labels, Callia and Portillo, a mid-priced wine, Kilka, and a full range of Salentein wines, including the top of the line Numina and Primum. (The Callia, Portillo, and Kilka are reviewed separately.) Winemaking is now directed by the talented José Galante, formerly of Catena Zapata. Expect wines to change for the better. Importer: Palm Bay International, Port Washington, NY

Salentein 2009 Reserve Malbec Mendoza ($19) 90+ The Reserve Malbec reveals a dark ruby color and aromas of ripe dark plum and red cherry with notes of toast and spice. These aromas are mirrored on the palate that is velvet in texture with some earth and mineral notes. The wine has good acidity, fine firm tannins and a long finish. Excellent value! **Salentein 2009 Reserve Pinot Noir Mendoza ($19) 89** This Pinot Noir has a medium light ruby color and aromas of red cherry and earth notes. It is smoothly textured on the palate with a moderate concentration of red berries, herbs, and toast. Aged for 9 months in new and used oak, the wine is well-balanced with good acidity and a long finish. **Salentein 2006 Numina Mendoza ($35) 91** The 2006 Numina is a blend of Malbec (65%) and Merlot (35%). Dark ruby in color, it has aromas of earth, tobacco, dark red cherry and plum. It is very rich and flavorful on the palate with a lush mouth feel and ripe red fruit flavors with earth notes. Aged for 12 months in barrel with six months on the lees, it is elegant and balanced with soft tannins. **Salentein 2006 Primum Mendoza ($40) 9**2 The 100% Malbec Primum offers red fruit aromas with notes of forest floor, vanilla and cigar box. It is soft and elegant on the attack with a velvet texture, dark red and black fruit on the palate with layers of minerals, sweet toasted oak, black cherry, chocolate, and savory herbs on the finish.

Wines also Tasted: Salentein 2010 Reserve Chardonnay Mendoza ($18) 89, Salentein 2009 Numina Mendoza (barrel sample) ($35) 92-3, Salentein 2007 Primum Pinot Noir San Pablo Mendoza ($60) 90+

San Pedro de Yacochuya
The year before Arnaldo Etchart sold his family's winery to Pernod-Richard in 1996 he and French consultant Michel Rolland began this Cafayate-based label, now established at its own winery. The wines of this estate are produced from a 16 ha vineyard of 100-year-old vines grown at 2000 meters. We were fortunate in being able to taste several vintages of this exciting wine. Importer: Stacole, Boca Raton, FL

San Pedro de Yacochuya 2006 Yacochuya Salta ($85) 93 The 2006 is the current release and it is a special wine. It reveals very ripe, wild black fruit aromas and violets on the nose with crisp minerality. On the palate it offers layers of concentrated black cherry, vanilla, chocolate, prune and lingering earth flavors. It has high acidity, round gripping tannins and excellent balance. It is the most approachable of recent releases, even with its 16% alcohol. **San Pedro de Yacochuya 2005 Yacochuya Salta ($75) 91** The 2005 Yacochuya offers blackberry fruit and earth aromas that are mirrored on the palate. The fruit is rich tasting, almost sweet and smoky with minerals and concentrated black berry fruit and vanilla. Powerful yet elegant, the tannins are round and approachable and the finish is long lasting. **San Pedro de Yacochuya 2004 Yacochuya Salta ($55) 90** The 2004 Yacochuya is opaque ruby in color and exhibits great depth and intensity of red fruit flavors, cassis, violet and earth. It offers sweet lush concentrated fruit and earth on the palate and has sweet tannins and a long-lasting complex finish.

Other Wines Reviewed: San Pedro de Yacochuya 2008 Yacochuya Salta ($20) 88

*****Bodega Santa Ana**
Santa Ana is a highly successful export-oriented commercial winery owned by the Peñaflor Group, one of the world's largest wine producers which includes, inter alia, Trapiche and Michel Torino. Santa Ana has a large and diverse portfolio sourcing grapes from Mendoza and San Juan. Rodolfo "Opi" Sadler is winemaker. Most of the wine is low priced and of good quality. Importer: The Wine Group, Livermore, CA

Bodega Santa Ana 2010 Homage Chardonnay Pinot Grigio Mendoza ($7) 87 This unique blend of 75% Chardonnay and 25% of Pinot Grigio displays a bright yellow color with greenish tints. It offers up tropical fruit and citrus aromas with lively flavors of ripe fruits and minerals. Very clean. **Bodega Santa Ana 2008 La Mascota Malbec San Juan ($13) 87** This Malbec shows an intense purple red color with ruby hues. On the nose it reveals aromas of black and red fruits, jam and vanilla, with a subtle licorice touch. It has a sweet attack, is round and ripe on the palate, and finishes soft with nice ripe tannins. **Bodega Santa Ana 2008 Reserve Malbec-Shiraz San Juan ($13) 86** The Malbec-Shiraz Reserve has an intense deep red color with hints of violet. Sweet aromas of blackberries, oak and plums are combined with a subtle vanilla note. The wine has good structure and velvet texture, with sweet tannins and a long aftertaste. **Bodega Santa Ana 2006 Unánime San Carlos, Uco Valley ($20) 90** The Unánime is composed of 60% Cabernet Sauvignon, 25% Malbec and 15% Cabernet Franc. It offers a red cherry color and aromas of red berry fruit, cedar, chocolate, smoke, herbs and earth. It boasts complex flavors on the palate, round tannins with excellent acidity and a long finish.

Other Wines Reviewed: Bodega Santa Ana 2010 Sierra Pie de Palo Sauvignon Blanc-Torrontés San Juan 89

***** Bodega Séptima**
This winery founded in 1999 is owned by Codorníu, the famed cava producer. The winery produces entry level varietal wines and the Gran Reserva, a well-made premium, Malbec-based blend. The sources for its wines are from vineyards in Luján de Cuyo and Valle de Uco. The Winemaker is Rubén Calvo, a native of Mendoza. Importer: Aveníu Brands, Baltimore, MD

Bodega Séptima 2010 Chardonnay Mendoza ($12) 88 This Chardonnay exhibits pleasant aromas and flavors of tropical fruit with notes of vanilla. Aged for six months in oak, it is well balanced, easy drinking and has a nice dry finish. **Bodega Séptima 2009 Malbec Mendoza ($12) 88** The 2009 Séptima Malbec offers fresh red and black fruit aromas that are mirrored on the palate. Aged for 6 months in French and American oak, it reveals a good deal of flavor and has a pleasant finish. Good value. **Bodega Séptima 2007 Gran Reserva Mendoza ($25) 88** The 2007 Gran Reserva is 50% Malbec, 40% Cabernet Sauvignon and 10% Tannat. The wine displays a ruby purple color and aromas of red and black fruit, violets and toast. Aged for 11 months in new and one-year oak, it reveals a medium-weight palate of dark plum fruit with good volume and complexity. It has soft tannins and is dry on the finish

*****Finca Sophenia**
Finca Sophenia began operations in 2002. Its founder and main shareholder is Roberto Luka. The winery and its vineyards are located in Tupungato. The winemaker is Matías Michellini, and Michel Rolland has served as winemaking consultant. The wines are well made; the Reserve Malbec and Synthesis The Blend are outstanding. Importers: Bacchus Imports, Longview, TX and other importers.

Finca Sophenia 2010 Reserve Viognier Mendoza ($30) 88 The Reserve Viognier displays a pale yellow color and aromas of flowers and white orchard fruit on the nose. On the palate it reveals flavors of white peach and citrus with good acidity and a dry finish. Straightforward and flavorful. **Finca Sophenia S.A. 2009 Reserve Malbec Tupungato Mendoza ($30) 90** The Reserve Malbec has an inky nose of black fruit with a forest floor note and baking spices. Aged in French oak for 8 months, it is soft and fleshy with an impressive velvet texture on the palate and good black fruit concentration with charred oak flavors. The wine finishes dry with firm tannins. **Finca Sophenia 2008 Synthesis The Blend Tupungato Mendoza ($40) 93** The Synthesis The

Blend is made of 70% Malbec 25% Cabernet Sauvignon, and 5% Merlot. It has a deep ruby color and aromas of blackberry, minerals and cracked black pepper, and violets that are mirrored on the palate. Aged in new French oak for 14 months, the wine is elegant with a persistent finish offering chocolate, loam and tobacco. Only released after 9 months in bottle. Impressive.

Other Wines Reviewed: Finca Sophenia 2010 Synthesis Sauvignon Blanc Tupungato Mendoza ($17) 87+; Finca Sophenia S.A. 2010 Altosur Malbec Rosé Mendoza ($10) 88+

*****Bodega Tamari**

Established by the Southern Sun Wine Group, this estate has been operating in Tupungato, Mendoza since 2002. The wines are made by winemaker Sebastian Ruíz, originally from Santiago, Chile. The winery produces entry level and excellent premium wines such as the AR Malbec. Tamari is one of the wineries in the Viña San Pedro Tarapaca stable. Importer: Terlato Wines International, Lake Bluff, IL

Bodega Tamari 2010 Torrontés Reserva Valle de Famatima La Rioja ($10) 88+ The winemakers at Tamari have crafted one of Argentina's best Torrontés values. The fruit comes from a 1,000 meter high vineyard in La Famatima Valley in the province of La Rioja. This wine is intensely perfumed of chirimoya and jasmine and shows nice minerality on the palate with bright acidity and light pear flavors. **Bodega Tamari 2020 Malbec Reserva Famatina Valley La Rioja ($10) 88+** Very aromatic with dark cherry and a toasted oak note. Soft on the attack and lush on the palate with good intensity of dark cherry fruit. Light notes of tobacco and earth. Nicely balanced, long finish. **Bodega Tamari 2007 AR Malbec ($18) 91** The AR Malbec offers pure ripe blackberry fruit and violets on the nose with elegant French oak nuances. Aged for 12 months in French oak barrels, it reveals lush and abundant fruit on the palate, fine grained tannins and a persistent finish. One of the very best values in Argentine wine today! **Bodega Tamari 2007 Zhik Malbec Single Vineyard Valle de Uco ($25) 91** The Zhik Malbec reveals beautiful dark cherry aromas on the nose with light coconut and chocolate notes. It has a refined palate with a velvet texture, flavors of fruit and oak, and quite firm tannins on the finish with a bit of astringency. It handles its 14.8% alcohol well.

Other Wines Reviewed: Bodega Tamari 2009 Cabernet Sauvignon Reserva Valle de Uco ($10) 88

Tercos 2007 Malbec Mendoza ($12) 87
Tercos has a medium ruby hue and light back cherry fruit on the nose with a touch of black pepper. On the attack it offers ripe cherry flavors with a soft texture, round tannins and a long finish. A tasty wine that is easy to drink. Importer: Global Vineyard Importers Berkeley, CA.

*****Terrazas de los Andes**

Owned by Moët Hennessy, the famous Champagne house, Terrazas de los Andes was started in 1999 and is located in the heart of Pedriel, Luján de Cuyo, in front of the imposing Andean mountain range. Roberto de la Mota helped this winery in the early days but then departed to launch his own winery. In addition to its own line of wines, Las Terrazas also produces a top of the line Bordeaux blend called Cheval des Andes, in a joint venture with Chateau Cheval Blanc, one of the premier wineries of St Emilion. Afincado and Cheval des Andes are this estate's top wines. Importer: Moet Hennessy USA, New York, NY

Terrazas de los Andes 2008 Malbec Reserva Mendoza ($17) 89 The Malbec Reserva exhibits a dark ruby hue and aromas of plum and black cherry. It is smooth on the attack with lush mouth feel and pure fruit flavors accompanied by vanilla and black pepper. It has soft, polished tannins and a firm red fruit finish. **Terrazas de los Andes 2008 Cabernet Sauvignon Mendoza ($17) 87** The opaque ruby purple Cabernet Sauvignon offers aromas of graphite, tobacco, and herbs with a chocolate note. It is soft on the palate with moderate black fruit flavors, youthful tannins and a dry finish. **Terrazas de los Andes 2007 Afincado Single vineyard Malbec Mendoza ($45) 90** Afincado is a 100% Malbec sourced from the Las Compuertas vineyard in Vistalba. The wine exhibits an opaque ruby purple color and has ripe blackberry fruit on the nose. On the palate it is soft with a velvet texture revealing very ripe plum flavors and a tart dry mid-palate and a dry finish.

*****Bodega Tierras Altas**

This winery is owned and operated by the Vargas Arizu family. It was established in 1999 in Luján de Cuyo. Its wines are sourced from Finca Tierras Altas and Finca La Linda. Importer: Specialty Cellars, Santa Fe Springs, CA

Bodega Tierras Altas 2008 Malbec Grand Reserva Mendoza ($45) 88 The Malbec Grand Reserva is sourced from a 70-year-old parcel of Bodega Tierras Altas' Finca La Linda vineyard. Dark ruby in color it offers plum and boysenberry aromas on the nose. Medium-bodied, the wine provides ripe plum fruit and chocolate flavors on the palate and firm tannins on the finish. Aged for two years in new French oak. **Bodega Tierras Altas 2007 Malbec Reserve Mendoza ($20) 87** This is a light and fruity style Malbec exhibiting oak barrel and dark cherry aromas. It is a small step up in quality from the basic Malbec and shows pleasant red cherry and berry fruit flavors on the palate but has a green oak note and slightly astringent tannins on the finish. This is a simple but enjoyable wine that is marred by raw oak aromas and flavors.

***Tierra de Antes

This is a brand of Finca Flichman, which is now owned by Portugal's Sogrape winery. In 1947 Sami Flichman hired the estimable enologist Raúl de la Mota, who proceeded to make El Caballero de la Cepa one of Argentina's all time classic wines. Importer: Broadbent Selections, San Francisco, CA.

Tierra de Antes 2010 Malbec Mendoza ($10) 86+ This is an easy drinking, light-bodied wine with pleasant aromas of fresh black cherry fruit. On the palate, it offers clean flavors of medium intensity with round tannins and a dry fruity finish. **Tierra de Antes 2010 Cabernet Sauvignon Mendoza ($10) 86+** Like the 2010 Malbec, this Tierra de Antes Cabernet Sauvignon is a light-bodied easy-drinking wine. It offers aromas of dark berries and plum followed by fresh tasting fruit flavors on the palate and round tannins on the finish.

Other Wines Reviewed: Tierra de Antes 2010 Chardonnay Mendoza ($10) 88

***Tikal

Tikal is owned by Ernesto Catena , a man of many talents including being a great horseman, industrial designer, software developer, contemporary photographer and gallery owner. The winery is named after Ernesto's son. These wines, made by winemaker Luís Reginato, are outstanding. Importer: Vine Connections, Sausalito, CA

Tikal 2008 Patriota Mendoza ($20) 89 The Patriota is a blend of 60% Bonarda and 40% Malbec sourced from Rivadavia, Altamira, and Vista Flores, Tikal's own vineyard. The wine is fragrant with plum and spice character. Aged in 70% new French oak, it retains a fruit forward character and a finish that is round and gentle. **Tikal 2008 Amorio Mendoza ($33) 91** The 100% Malbec Amorio is sourced from the 42-year-old Altamira and Gualtallary vineyards in Valle de Uco. The wine exhibits a dark ruby color and fragrant aromas of red berry and plum fruit with notes of toasted oak and smoke. It is soft and elegant on the attack with a lovely texture, nice balance and good tannic grip. The purity of the fruit is impressive. **Tikal 2007 Jubilo Mendoza ($45) 92** The 2007 Jubilo is a blend of 50% Cabernet Sauvignon and 50% Malbec which is aged in 70% new French oak for 12 months. It is a delicious blend of grapes from several vineyards, featuring aromas of black currant, spice, coffee and toast. On the palate it reveals a soft texture with an elegant mouth feel, concentrated fruit flavors, and good acidity. **Tikal 2005 Locura Mendoza ($200) 93** The very special Locura is composed of 85% Malbec, 10% Bonarda and 5% Torrontés. It is sourced from vineyards in Consulta, Rivadavia, and Cafayate. Aged for 18 months in new French oak, it reveals a dark ruby color with ripe and concentrated flavors of dark cherry and plum on a richly concentrated elegant palate. A pricey wine offering loads of pleasure.

*** Tilia

This is a new estate founded in 2006. The wines are made at Bodegas Esmeralda, a Catena family winery in the eastern region of Mendoza. These are low budget value wines that are fresh and easy drinking. They are fermented in stainless steel with limited oak influence. The quality is very good and the prices are hard to beat. Importer: Winebow, Montvale, NJ

Tilia 2009 Torrontés Cafayete Mendoza ($9) 87 The Tilia Torrontés has a fresh, floral rose petal and guava nose. It's fresh and easy drinking with modest weight on the mid-palate and a pleasantly dry finish. Made from pergola-trained, 45-year-old vines. **Tilia 2009 Chardonnay ($9) 88+** The Chardonnay offers lovely tropical fruit and smoky oak aromas on the nose. It has a creamy mouth feel with good balance and a pleasant finish. **Tilia 2009 Bonarda Mendoza ($9) 88** The 2009 Bonarda displays a dark ruby purple color, ripe fruit aromas and flavors with good acidity and big tannins on the finish. **Tilia 2009 Cabernet Sauvignon Mendoza ($9) 88+** The Cabernet Sauvignon is a delicious wine offering black currant and cassis aromas and ripe dark fruit flavors on the palate. The wine is full-bodied and nicely made with gritty tannins on the finish. **Tilia 2009 Malbec Mendoza ($9) 87+** The Malbec has nicely concentrated black cherry aromas and flavors with good balance and round tannins on the finish. **Tilia 2009 Malbec/Syrah Mendoza ($9) 88** This 50-50 blend has good depth of fruit and spice. It is soft on the attack with remarkable concentration and complexity. One of the stronger wines produced by this label. **Tilia 2009 Merlot Mendoza ($9) 87** The 2009 Merlot offers fresh plum and herbal aromas on the nose with a somewhat dry mid-palate and tannic grip on the finish.

***Trapiche

Bodegas Trapiche, Argentina's largest winery, produces terrific wines in all price categories. Especially noteworthy are its Broquel, Iscay and the wines in its Malbec single vineyard project, which began in 2003. Trapiche owns 11 estates in Luján de Cuyo and the Valle del Uco totaling 1,100 ha and also sources grapes from over 250 growers. Its chief winemaker is the talented Daniel Pi. Trapiche is part of the Peñaflor group. Importer: Frederick Wildman and Sons, New York, NY

Trapiche 2007 Iscay Mendoza ($40) 92 The 2007 Iscay is a blend of Malbec (65%), Merlot (30%) and Cabernet Franc (5%). It offers prune and ripe cherry aromas and is soft and lush on the palate with ripe fruit, lavender and blue fruit notes, and a touch of smoke. Aged for 18 months in French oak, it has ripe tannins and a long elegant finish. Delicious. **Trapiche 2007 Malbec Single Vineyard Viña Fausto Orellana de Escobar Mendoza ($50) 94** Fausto Orlllana de Escobar was selected by winemaker Daniel Pi for the second time as one of the year's best growers of Malbec. His 61-year-old vineyard is located in La Consulta, Valle de Uco, San Carlos. The wine exhibits pure blackberry aromas and toast. It is soft on the attack with a layered palate showing sweet blackberry, vanilla and coconut, with forest floor notes. It

is full-bodied and sweet on the mid-palate with a very long sweet vanilla oak and blackberry finish. Superb! **Trapiche 2007 Malbec Single Vineyard Viña Domingo Sarmiento Mendoza ($50) 92** Domingo Sarmiento's vineyard is also located in La Consulta. This bottling exhibits an opaque ruby color and aromas of dark chocolate, black pepper, black fruit, and a toasted oak note. It is soft and lush on the palate with loads of mocha, and dried black fruit. The wine has sweet tannins and a persistent finish. **Trapiche 2007 Malbec Single Vineyard Viña Adolfo Ahumada Mendoza ($50) 93** Viña Adolfo Ahumada also called "La Patria" (the nation) is located in Tupungato at 1,094 meters. The wine reveals spicy dark cherry and black fruit and toasted oak aromas on the nose. Aged for 18 months in new French oak, it is smooth and elegant yet intensely flavored. It is well balanced with firm round tannins. The wine is ready to drink now, but will be even better in a few years.

Other Wines Reviewed: Trapiche 2008 Broquel Malbec ($15) 88+; Trapiche 2010 Broquel Torrontés Cafayate ($15) 88; Trapiche 2010 Broquel Chardonnay ($15) 88; Trapiche 2009 Broquel Bonarda ($15) 88; Trapiche 2008 Broquel Cabernet Sauvignon ($15) 89; Trapiche Broquel Pinot Noir ($15) 89; Trapiche 2007 Finca Las Palmas Malbec ($21) 90

Trivento

Bodegas y Viñedos Trivento is owned by Concha y Toro, the large Chilean winemaking enterprise. Trivento sources its grapes from eight vineyards in Mendoza with a total of 1289 hectares. Federico Galdeano and the winemaking team at Trivento produce several labels of good to excellent quality at various price points. The Eola Malbec blend is outstanding. Importer: Banfi, Old Brookville, New York

Trivento 2009 Amado Sur Torrontés Mendoza ($15) 88 This medium straw color wine shows the stone fruit and honey aromas typical of Torrontés in a reserved rather than overtly floral style. The palate reveals peach and citrus flavors on a round, juicy palate. This is an easy drinking wine that should find a large audience at this price point. Blend of 75% Torrontés, 15% Viognier and 10% Chardonnay. **Trivento 2009 Golden Reserve Chardonnay Mendoza ($21) 88** This Chardonnay exhibits a medium-yellow hue and aromas of melon, pear and toasted oak. On the palate it offers ripe fruit and good balance with persistent fruit and oak flavors. It is well balanced and pleasant to drink. **Trivento 2008 Golden Reserve Malbec Mendoza ($20) 90** The Golden Reserve Malbec has a nose of rich, ripe dark red fruit and full body that exudes summer blackberries with notes of tar and tobacco. Finishes with firm tannins. The fruit for this big, bold wine is sourced from four different vineyards with an average age of 70 years. Aged in oak barriques, 60 percent new. **Trivento 2007 Golden Reserve Syrah Mendoza ($24) 90** The Golden Reserve Syrah has an inky robe and aromas of pure ripe black fruit ,pepper and sweet oak. On the attack it shows a lush texture and richly concentrated black and blueberry fruit flavors, chocolate, toast and spice. This is a rich tasting full-bodied wine that is a pleasure to drink. Sourced from vineyards in Tupungato. **Trivento 2006 Eolo Mendoza ($79) 93** The 2006 Eolo is 98% Malbec and 2% Syrah. It has an opaque ruby hue and aromas of pure ripe blackberry and plum fruit. On the palate it is very soft and lush with rich flavors of plum fruit, chocolate and oak. Aged for 16 months in new French oak, it is beautifully balanced despite its 15% alcohol and has a persistent finish. **Trivento 2009 Torrontés Reserve Mendoza ($11) 88** The Torrontés Reserve offers ripe melon, lychee and rose petals on the nose, but mostly nectarine stone fruit shows on the palate. It is fresh and crisp too. You can't ask for much more at this price.

Other Wines Reviewed: Trivento 2009 Torrontés Reserve Mendoza ($11) 88; Trivento 2009 Golden Reserve Chardonnay Mendoza ($21) 88; Trivento 2009 Cabernet Sauvignon Reserve Mendoza ($11) 89+; Trivento 2008 Malbec Reserve Mendoza ($11) 89

*****Bodegas Tukma**

Master local winemaker and Torrontés specialist José Luis Mounier crafts the wines at this young boutique winery. The vineyards include "Los Tolombones", situated in Tolombón at 1,700 meters above sea level, and "Los Angastacos", in Angastaco at 1,990 meters above sea level, which total 15 hectares of vineyards under production. Bodega Tukma also owns vineyard land in Colalao del Valle, Tucumán province, and in Huacalera, province of Jujuy, this latter at an incredible 2,700 meters above sea level, one of the highest altitude vineyards in Argentina. These wines are very well made and among the best expressions of Torrontés in Argentina. Importer: Uvabuena Wines & Spirits, Pacific Palisades, CA

Tukma 2009 Torrontés Reserva Cafayate ($12) 91 The grapes for this splendid wine come from two different sites in the Calchaquí Valley—39-year-old vines of the 1900 meter Finca Los Angastacos and 7-year-old vines of the 1600 meter Finca Los Tolombones. The wine reveals honey, rose petals, and light peach on the nose. It has a gorgeous, full and round palate of white peach with notes of honey on the palate. Has a clean, persistent finish. Absolutely delicious! **Tukma 2009 Gran Torrontés Salta ($20) 90** This wine is quite unique—a Torrontés aged in oak for six months. Medium straw in color, it has ripe aromas of honeyed apricots and rose petals with a menthol note. It has an exotically flavored palate of honey, roses, and ripe peach, finishing long and dry. The fruit comes from the Finca Los Angastacos near the village of Molinos. Very successful! **Tukma 2008 Malbec Reserva Cafayate ($17) 88** The 2008 Malbec displays aromas of dark cherry with oak and stem notes. Aged for 8 months in French and American oak, it is soft on the attack with herbal and lots of sweet, honeyed, toasted oak. The wine is flavorful with a long finish and a nice oak and fruit finish.

V-Z

*****Val de Flores**

This estate is a 14 ha property in Vista Flores, Valle de Uco belonging to Michel and Dany Rolland who acquired it in 2001. The site consists of 60-year-old Malbec vines organically farmed. The first vintage of Val de Flores was released in 2002. We tasted the 2003 Val de Flores earlier; here we report on three more reent vintages, all of which are superb. Importer: Domaine Select, New York, NY

Val de Flores 2007 Val de Flores Valle de Uco Mendoza 93 The 2007 Val de Flores is the most forward of the three wines under review. It exhibits lots of elegance with aromas of red fruits and violets, plum, spice and leather with notes of cigar box. It is full bodied on the palate and has layers of flavor including licorice, loam and charred oak. Benefits from microvinification. **Val de Flores 2006 Val de Flores Valle de Uco Mendoza 93** The 2006 is somewhat more muscular than the 2005, but has a floral nose with dark plum, blackberry and minerals on the nose. Overall, this Val de Flores it is somewhat tighter and less expressive than the 2005 at this state of development but looks to have a better future. Only time will tell. **Val de Flores 2005 Val de Flores Valle de Uco Mendoza ($55) 94** The 2005 Val de Flores displays an opaque ruby color and has aromas of dark fruit, violets, bitter chocolate and toasted oak accents. It is elegant and flavorful on the palate revealing concentrated spicy black fruit with some red fruit notes. The tannins are round and fine and the finish persistent. A superb wine.

*****Valle de la Puerta**

This winery and olive grove are located in Famatina Valley, La Rioja. The estate was founded in 1994 and consists of 4,000 ha. of which only 150 ha are planted with vineyards. The winery was constructed in 2002. The Alta and Reserve wines of this estate are well made and reasonably priced. Importer: Ecovalley Salisbury, North Carolina

Valle de la Puerta 2009 La Puerta Alta Bonarda Gran Reserva Valle de Famatina ($40) 89 The Bonarda Gran Reserva has an opaque ruby purple color with a spicy nose of black pepper and dark purple plums. It is lush on the palate with mocha, concentrated blackberry and huckleberry fruit. It finishes very, very long with a velvet texture. Delicious. **Valle de la Puerta 2007 La Puerta Gran Reserva Valle de Famatina ($40) 90** The Gran Reserva is a blend of Malbec and Bonarda. If offers spicy plum, cassis and blackberry fruit on the nose with a vanilla note. It is soft and lush on the palate with bright acidity. Very flavorful with a long finish, although itcould use more structure. **Valle de la Puerta 2009 La Puerta Bonarda Reserva Valle de Famatina ($15) 90** This is one of the better Bonardas we have tasted. Medium dark ruby in color it offers ripe plum fruit and vanilla on the nose followed by a soft attack of concentrated fruit flavors, herbs and earth. It is elegant and well balanced and has a long finish. Superb value!

Other Wines Reviewed: Valle de la Puerta 2010 La Puerta Alta Torrontés Valle de Famatina ($15) 89

*****Viña Alicia**

Vina Alicia is a small family-owned and operated winery founded in 1998 by Alicia Mateu Arizu (wife of Luigi Bosca winemaker Alberto Arizu) and son Rodrigo. The winery is located in Luján de Cuyo and has two high altitude vineyards. The 15 ha "Vina Alicia" vineyard at 1200 m is planted with 80- 90-year-old Malbec vines and other vinifera; the "San Alberto" vineyard is cropped for low yields of 30-35 hl/ha (2 tons per acre). Viña Alicia produces wines of good depth and texture. Importer: Southern Starz, Huntington Beach, California

Viña Alicia 2007 Malbec Las Compuertas Luján de Cuyo, Medoza ($30) 89 The 2007 Malbec is sourced from the Viña Alicia vineyard in Las Compuertas. Medium dark ruby in color, it exhibits aromas of dark plum, earth and spice. It is soft and elegant on the palate offering flavors of plum, dark berry fruit, and toasted oak. The wine is nicely balanced with round tannins and a delicious finish. **Viña Alicia 2007 Morena Luján de Cuyo ($30) 88** The 2007 Morena is composed of Cabernet Sauvignon (88%) and Cabernet Franc (12%) sourced from the San Alberto vineyard in Lunlunta. It displays aromas of plum and black pepper and is of medium weight with dry black fruit flavors on the palate, herbs, tannic grip, and a long finish. **Viña Alicia 2007 Paso de Piedra Malbec Luján de Cuyo ($18) 88** The 2007 Paso de Piedra Malbec exhibits a ruby purple robe and aromas of spicy red and black fruit that are mirrored on the palate. It has a soft attack with flavors of currants, plum, and roasted meat. It is nicely structured and elegant with moderate to dry tannins on the finish.

Wines also Reviewed: Viña Alicia 2007 Paso de Piedra Cabernet Sauvignon Luján de Cuyo, Medoza ($18) 88

*****Viña Cobos**

Vina Cobos is among the finest wineries in Argentina today. It is a joint venture involving the talented husband and wife team of Andrea Machiori and Luis Barraud and California winemaker extraordinare Paul Hobbs. The project which began in 1998 is based upon the 134-acre Marchiori Vineyard, one of the oldest in Mendoza, with Malbec vines that are 50 to 80+ years old. Virtually all the wines are first-class, and Cobos is in a class by itself. Importer: Paul Hobbs Imports, Sebastapol, CA

Viña Cobos 2007 Bramare Cabernet Sauvignon Luján de Cuyo Mendoza ($35) 91 The Bramare Cabernet Sauvignon is among the top bottlings of this varietal in Argentina. It exhibits ripe black currant fruit and toasted oak and has a touch of graphite on the nose. On the palate it reveals more pure black fruit, licorice, cassis, and spice with toasted oak. It shows good intensity of flavor, excellent balance, round tannins and a fruit rich finish. **Viña Cobos 2007 Bramare Malbec Marchiori Vineyard Mendoza ($80) 92** A wine of-

fering aromas of pure red berry/plum fruit, toasted oak and spice. Soft and elegant on the palate with nicely balanced and concentrated fruit flavors, dark toasted oak and acidity all in balance. Finishes long and fruit rich. **Viña Cobos 2007 Cobos Malbec Marchiori Vineyard Mendoza ($175) 95** A wine of great elegance, purity, and power. It offers gorgeous red berry fruit on the nose followed by a soft and velvet smooth palate of concentrated red and black fruit flavors. With soft, round tannins, the wine lingers on the palate.

Other Wines Reviewed: Viña Cobos 2009 Felino Malbec Mendoza ($19) 89; Viña Cobos 2009 Felino Cabernet Sauvignon Mendoza ($19) 89

*****Bodega Vistalba/Tomero**

This family winery was constructed in the Vistalba district of Luján de Cuyo in 2002 by Carlos Pulenta. The wines are crafted in a modern gravity fed facility. Bodega Vistalba has two labels, Vistalba and Tomero and sources its grapes from its Vistalba estate and Finca Los Álamos (400 ha) in the Valle de Uco. The Corte series are very well made. Importer: The San Francisco Wine Exchange, San Francisco, CA

Bodega Vistalba 2010 Tomero Torrontés Cafayete Salta ($13) 88 This is a pleasant, perfumed Torrontés with a light honeyed mouth feel and ripe tropical fruit. It is also easy drinking with simple fruit flavors and is slightly dry and tart on the finish. **Bodega Vistalba 2007 Corte B Mendoza ($25) 89** The Corte B is a blend of Malbec (63%), Cabernet Sauvignon (22%) and Bonarda (15%). It has a dark ruby hue and aromas of black fruit, leather and earth. Aged for 12 months in French oak, it is medium-bodied, soft on the palate with layers of black fruit, spice, roasted meat, toasted oak and earth. It has round and polished tannins with a long meaty finish. **Bodega Vistalba 2007 Corte A Mendoza ($50) 91** Corte A is by far the best of the Corte trio. It is a beautifully crafted wine revealing lovely pure dark fruit aromas and fine grained oak. A blend of Malbec (87%), Cabernet Sauvignon (5%), and Bonarda (8%) and aged in new French oak for 18 months, it is full-bodied with ripe concentrated black cherry fruit and toasted oak on the palate. It is beautifully balanced (although high in alcohol at 14.9%) with silky round tannins and a long, long finish. **Bodega Vistalba 2008 Tomero Petit Verdot Reserve Mendoza ($22) 89** The Petite Verdot Reserve is a cut above the regular Tomero in quality. It offers dark plum and blackberry fruit with refined oak and smoke aromas. Aged for 15 months in French oak, it is soft and elegant on the palate with a velvet smooth mouth feel, beautiful balance, ripe fruit flavors and polished tannins on the finish. Delicious. **Bodega Vistalba 2008 Tomero Syrah Reserva Mendoza ($22) 90** The dark ruby Syrah Reserva offers ripe black fruit with notes of smoke and black pepper. It is soft on the attack with lush black fruit flavors and fine oak on the palate. It is beautifully balanced with ripe tannins and a long persistent finish. Well done.

Other Wines Reviewed: Vistalba 2009 Corte C Mendoza ($15) 87; Bodega Vistalba 2006 Tomero Gran Reserva Malbec Mendoza ($22) 85; Bodega Vistalba Tomero 2009 Malbec Mendoza ($15) 86; Bodega Vistalba Cabernet Sauvignon ($15) 86

*****Bodega y Cavas de Weinert**

One of Argentina's first premium wineries, Bodegas y Cava de Weinert was founded in 1975 by Don Bernardo C. Weinert, a German-Brazilian entrepreneur. After extensive study, Weinert determined that Luján de Cuyo was the ideal site for his project. The Weinert portfolio features New and Old World wines that are generally well made. The top of the line wines are pretty exciting and the 1977 Estrella is one of a kind. Importer: Broadbent Selections, San Francisco, CA

Weinert 2002 Cavas de Weinert Gran Vino Mendoza ($28) 91 Cavas de Weinert is a delicious wine and is more youthful than expected. A blend of Malbec, Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot, it offers ripe dark fruit aromas with a touch of wood spice and earth. On the palate it offers a velvet texture and dark fruit flavors that include leather, chocolate, and earth. The wine is beautifully balanced and still has its youthful tannins. A wonderful wine. **Weinert 2005 Malbec Mendoza ($25) 91** The 2005 Malbec exhibits a dark ruby color and aromas of ripe dark cherry fruit and earth. Soft on the attack, it has an elegant mouth feel with concentrated red berry fruit flavors, leather and toast. The wine is nicely balanced with savory flavors and a long lasting finish. An atypical Malbec. **Weinert 1977 Malbec Estrella ($225) 94** This is a magnificent wine and among the earliest wines produced by this estate. A classic of old Argentine winemaking, it offers incredible freshness for its age, which included18 years in French oak casks. It has a nose of red berries, smoke, and earth. On the palate it is beautifully balanced with layers of savory fruit, complex barrel scents, smoke and other secondary notes. The wine has soft round tannins with good acidity and persistence on the finish. Superb, and one of a kind!

Wines also Reviewed: Weinert 2009 Carrascal (blanco) Mendoza ($17) 88; Weinert 2006 Merlot Mendoza ($25) 87; Weinert 2006 Carrascal Mendoza ($17) 89

***** Familia Zuccardi**

The Familia Zuccardi winery is a family owned and operated winery founded in Maipú in the early1960s by Alberto Zuccardi. It has two vineyards totaling 650 ha and since 1998 has been converting to organic farming. The winery has a very large and diversified portfolio of wines produced under the direction of Rodolfo Montenegro. The wines are very well made and reasonably priced. Zeta is the top of the line and outstanding. Importer: Winesellers Ltd, Niles, IL

Zuccardi 2009 Serie A Torrontés Salta ($16) 90 This Torrontés from Zuccardi's Serie A sports a yellow-green color and offers delicate aromas of white flowers, passion fruit and tangerine. It is well structured with lively acidity, a light fruity

mid-palate, and a delicate finish. This is an easy to drink wine and quite delicious. Shows the hand of the master craftsman of Torrontés, Jose L. Mounier. **Zuccardi 2009 Q Malbec Mendoza ($20) 90** Zuccardi's Q Malbec is a well-made wine showing a dark ruby color and aromas of ripe plum fruit and sweet oak. A blend of three different vineyard sites, (La Consulta, Agrelo and Vista Flores) it offers intense red and black fruit flavors, spicy violet and chocolate notes, and a lush velvet mouth feel with a firm tannic finish. It is a crowd pleaser. **Zuccardi 2009 Emma Zuccardi Bonarda, Mendoza ($15) 89.** The opaque ruby purple Bonarda is a fruit forward bottling offering aromas of blackberries and black cherries. On the palate it reveals ripe and concentrated fruit flavors with a silky texture, soft and round tannins and a long finish. One of the better Bonardas in its price range. **Zuccardi 2007 Zeta Mendoza ($45) 91** The 2007 Zeta is a blend of Malbec (64%) and Tempranillo (36%). It exhibits a deep and lively violet color with a perfumed nose of spicy black and red fruit aromas. On the palate it reveals flavors of plums and blueberries with hints of black pepper, tobacco, and chocolate. It is well-balanced and fills the palate with flavorful fruit and oak, sweet tannins and a long finish.

Wines also Reviewed: Zuccardi 2008 Q Tempranillo Mendoza ($20) 88; Zuccardi 2007 Q Cabernet Sauvignon Mendoza ($20) 89

Annex 1: Top Rated Wines by Price Category

Top Rated Malbec ($9- $15)

Producer	Vintage	Name of Wine	Price	Rating
Alamos	2008	Seleccion Malbec	$15.00	88
Alfredo Roca	2009	Malbec-Merlot	$11.00	88
Altocedro	2010	Malbec Año Cero	$15.00	90
Altos Las Hormigas	2010	Malbec Classico	$12.00	89
Andeluna	2009	Malbec	$11.00	88
Argento	2009	Malbec Reserva	$10.00	91
AVE	2009	Premium Malbec	$15.00	88
Crios de Susana Balbo	2009	Malbec	$15.00	89
Belasco de Baquedano	2009	Llama Malbec Old Vine	$15.00	90
Doña Paula	2009	Los Cardos	$10.00	89
Fabre Montmayou	2009	Malbec Barrel Selection	$15.00	88
Finca del Origen	2009	Malbec Reserva	$12.00	89
Huarpe	2009	Taymente Malbec	$14.00	88
Humberto Canale	2009	Estate Malbec	$12.00	88
Kaiken	2009	Malbec	$13.00	88
Kilka	2009	Malbec	$14.00	88
Laurel Glen	2008	Terra Divina	$15.00	88
Nandú	2009	Malbec	$15.00	88
Navarro Correas	2009	Coleccion Privada	$13.00	88
Septima	2009	Malbec	$12.00	88
Tilia	2009	Malbec/Syrah	$9.00	88
Trapiche	2008	Broquel Malbec	$15.00	88+
Trivento	2008	Malbec	$11.00	89

Top Rated Malbec ($16-$25)

Producer	Vintage	Name of Wine	Price	Rating
Atamisque	2008	Catalpa Malbec	$18.00	89
Susana Balbo	2008	Malbec	$25.00	91
Clos de la Siete	2008	Clos de la Siete	$18.00	91
Colomé	2008	Malbec Estate	$25.00	91
Cueva de las Manos	2009	Malbec Reserve	$16.00	89
Doña Paula	2009	Estate Malbec	$17.00	91
Finca La Anita	2010	Malbec	$20.00	90
Humberto Canale	2008	Malbec Gran Reserva	$25.00	91
Nuna	2009	Malbec Reserve	$17.00	89
Pascual Toso	2008	Malbec Reserve	$20.00	90
Piattelli	2009	Grand Reserve Malbec	$20.00	90
Tamari	2007	AR Malbec	$18.00	91
Trapiche	2007	Finca Las Palmas	$21.00	90
Trivento	2008	Golden Reserve Malbec	$20.00	90
Viña Cobos	2009	Felino Malbec	$19.00	89
Weinert	2005	Malbec	$25.00	91
Zuccardi	2009	Q Malbec	$20.00	90

Top Rated Malbec ($25-$50)

Producer	Vintage	Name of Wine	Price	Rating
Achaval-Ferrer	2008	Quimera	$50.00	91
Andeluna	2006	Malbec Grand Reserve	$50.00	93
Belasco de Baquedano	2008	Swinto Old Vine Malbec	$40.00	93
Catena Zapata	2007	Catena Alta Malbec	$50.00	92
Chakana	2009	Malbec Estate	$28.00	91
Clos de Chacras	2007	Gran Estirpe Malbec	$40.00	91
Cuvalier Los Andes	2006	Collection	$35.00	92
Doña Paula	2007	Malbec Selección de Bodega	$50.00	93
Flecha de los Andes	2009	Gran Malbec	$30.00	92
Ksana	2005	Gran Reserve	$48.00	92
Luigi Bosca	2008	Gala I	$35.00	92
Bodega Lurton	2007	Piedra Negra	$40.00	92
Mendel	2008	Malbec	$30.00	91
Nieto Senentiner	2006	Cadus Malbec	$46.00	92
Pascual Toso	2008	Malbec Alta Reserve	$35.00	92
Pulenta Estate	2007	Malbec I	$29.00	91
Riglos	2008	Malbec	$30.00	91
Terrazas de los Andes	2007	Afincado	$45.00	90
Tamari	2007	Zhik Malbec	$25.00	91
Tikal	2008	Amorio	$33.00	91
Trapiche	2007	Iscay	$40.00	92
Trapiche	2007	Viña Fausto	$50.00	94
Trapiche	2007	Viña Domingo Sarmiento	$50.00	92
Trapiche	2007	Viña Adolfo Ahumada	$50.00	93
Valle de la Puerta	2007	La Puerta Gran Reserva	$40.00	90
Vistalba	2007	Corte A	$50.00	91
Weinert	2002	Cavas de Weinert Gran Vino	$28.00	91
Zuccardi	2007	Zeta	$45.00	91

Malbec Icon Wines
($50+)

Producer	Vintage	Name of Wine	Price	Rating
Achaval-Ferrer	2008	Finca Altamira	$120.00	95
Achával-Ferrer	2008	Finca Mirador	$80.00	93
Achaval-Ferrer	2008	Finca Bella Vista	$120.00	94
Altos Las Hormigas	2006	Malbec Vista Flores	$120.00	94
Catena Zapata	2007	Nicasia Vineyard	$110.00	93
Catena Zapata	2007	Malbec Argentino	$120.00	93
Cheval des Andes	2006	Cheval des Andes	$75.00	93
Colomé	2007	Malbec Reserva	$90.00	94
Kaiken	2009	Mai	$70.00	91
Kronttiras	2007	Doña Silvina Reserva	$70.00	92
Luca	2008	Nico	$125.00	93
Mapema	2007	PZ Malbec	$70.00	92
Mariflor	2007	Camille	$75.00	93
Mendel	2008	Finca Remota	$110.00	93
Noemia	2008	Malbec	$128.00	`95
Noemia	2009	J. Alberto Malbec	$54.00	91
Pascual Toso	2006	Finca Pedregal	$80.00	91
Pascual Toso	2006	Magdalena	$115.00	94
S Pedro de Yacochyuya	2006	Yacochuya	$85.00	93
Tikal	2005	Locura	$200.00	93
Trivento	2006	Eolo	$79.00	93
Val de Flores	2005	Val de Flores	$55.00	94
Viña Cobos	2007	Bramare	$80.00	92
Viña Cobos	2007	Cobos	$175.00	95
Weinert	1977	Estrella	$225.00	94

Top Rated Torrontés

Producer	Vintage	Name of Wine	Price	Rating
AVE	2009	Premium Torrontés	$15.00	89
Susana Balbo	2010	Torrontés	$15.00	90
Susana Balbo	2009	Torrontés Late Harvest	$25.00	91
Colomé	2010	Torrontés	$15.00	90
Doña Paula	2010	Estate Torrontés	$16.00	90+
El Porvenir de los Andes	2010	Laborum Torrontés	$15.00	90+
Filus	2001	Torrontés	$13.00	89
Finca del Origen	2010	Torrontés Reserva	$10.00	90
Jose L. Mounier	2010	Torrontés	Not imported	92
Zolo	2010	Torrontés	$11.00	88
Manos Negras	2010	Torrontés	$16.00	90
Michel Torino	2010	Don David Torrontés	$16.00	88
Nieto Senentiner	2010	Torrentés Reserva	$11.00	88
Nuna	2010	Torrontés Reserve	$17.00	90
Pascual Toso	2010	Torrontés	$11.00	88
Tamari	2010	Torrontés	$10.00	88+
Trapiche	2010	Broquel Torrontés	$15.00	88
Trivento	2009	Amado Sur Torrontés	$15.00	88
Trivento	2009	Torrontés Reserve	$11.00	88
Tukma	2009	Torrontes Reserve	$12.00	91
Tukma	2009	Gran Torrontés	$20.00	90
Valle de la Puerta	2010	La Puerta Alta Torrentés	$15.00	89
Vistalba	2010	Tomero Torrontés	$13.00	88
Zuccardi	2009	Serie A Torrontés	$16.00	90

Annex 2: Technical Note on Malbec

Malbec was an important grape variety in Bordeaux prior to phylloxera striking France in the late 19th century. At one point it was the predominant grape in the blend at Chateau Latour. Its most important attributes were, and still are, color and tannin, but with its susceptibility to coulure (the loss of fruit resulting from cold and rain during flowering), Malbec eventually proved to be less well suited to Bordeaux. Although it is capable of producing great wine in the Medoc, Malbec failed to be a consistent and reliable grape due to the cool, wet conditions that regularly occur in Bordeaux. Malbec is extremely well-suited to Mendoza's climate as it needs lots of heat, sunlight and dry growing conditions to produce high-quality fruit. Since Malbec is inherently vigorous, vineyards with older vines and thinner soils produce lower yields and better quality fruit.

The Malbec found in Argentina today bears little resemblance to the Malbec found in France. Argentine Malbec has small berries and tight clusters. Malbec cuttings imported by Nicolas Catena from Cahors produced bigger, thinner-skinned berries, and larger bunches that made wines with quite different flavor profiles. The pre-phylloxera Malbec, originally exported to South America, apparently mutated and adapted to the climate and soil in Argentina. Over the last century and a half, growers have selected vines that performed best in the vineyard. Through 160 years of field selections, Argentine Malbec evolved into a vine ideally suited to Argentina's terroir. As a result, the composition, structure, and flavor of this grape changed as well. There are noticeable variations in Argentine Malbec depending on vine age, soil type, yield, field or massale selection, irrigation regimes, trellising methods, and the altitude of the vineyard.

Malbec has ample anthocyanins and color, but remarkably soft tannins. Its lush texture and fruit make it a versatile blending partner for a range of wine styles. Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot from Argentina can often be herbal when under ripe, and jammy when overripe. Argentine Malbec, however, seems to handle the heat and arid conditions without taking on cooked flavors. It retains its characteristic spicy fruit when grown in a number of different sites. Notwithstanding the extraordinary charm and soft tannins it has when young, Malbec does have the capacity for aging.

Malbec: Growing Conditions in Mendoza

The vineyards in and around Mendoza are characterized by hot, low-humidity summer days and cool nights, with the day to night temperature difference, or diurnal variation, (i.e., thermal amplitude) being especially large in high-altitude vineyards[1]. There are on average over 300 days of sunshine per year, and droughts of several months are not uncommon. Temperatures are somewhat lower and humidity higher in vineyards located near rivers, at higher altitudes, and in southern locations where the pre-cordillera foothills disappear, directly exposing vineyards to the cold winds that blow off the snow-covered Andes.

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Soils at the base of the Andes tend to be relatively young and alluvial with a high proportion of sand and loam. This fine-grained sandy loam is underlain with river rock soil at 0.5 to 1.5 meters of depth, offering good drainage. Phylloxera is virtually nonexistent as a result of the soil structure, which otherwise would kill the Malbec grown on its own root stock (phylloxera struggles in sandy, or fine-grained soils).

Irrigation. The old trench canals of Mendoza were originally developed by the region's indigenous population and later expanded by Italian settlers in the 1800s. The location of most of the older vineyards had been constrained by proximity to these canals, which helps explain why most old vine Malbec is located at lower altitudes, near water sources. Flood irrigation has a bad reputation as it is commonly used to maximize grape yields. This encourages undesirable vegetative growth, and dilutes the fruit character in the grapes.

Despite this, many producers firmly believe that trench irrigation offers some significant advantages, and that it is not as harmful to quality as conventional wisdom would have us believe. With an average rainfall of only 8-11 inches, flood irrigation allows rapid application of water during periods of excessive heat and severe drought conditions (vines in Mendoza need between 45-50 inches of water per year.). Many of the old vine vineyards have been irrigated with trench water so long that growers are actually afraid to alter this regime. Without some form of irrigation in Argentina, Malbec would be impossible to grow on a commercial level. Limiting the amount of water the plants receive, while avoiding undue stress on the vine, is essential to producing top quality Malbec. Wineries such as Catena and Salentein now use high tech satellite imaging to determine the timing of irrigation, helping to ensure even ripening at harvest[2]. In addition, many producers feel that flood irrigation has played a role in keeping phylloxera under control.

The development of deep-water wells and new water lines have enabled growers to plant new vineyards in locations that had been previously limited by access to water. Many producers are installing drip irrigation systems, which allow the vineyard manager to better control the amount of water given to the vines. This limits yields, concentrates the fruit, and improves the flavors.

One unique aspect of Argentine Malbec is its amazing capacity for holding water. Paul Hobbs compares Malbec to a camel, as "both the vine and the grapes can retain large

[1]Day to night temperature differences of at least 15 degrees, which are especially common in Mendoza's high altitude vineyards, have been shown to result in increased thickness of the grape skin, which contributes to the color and complexity of the resulting wine. In the Valle de Uco thermal amplitude can be above 25°.

[2]For example, Bodega Catena Zapata uses infrared satellite imagery to measure individual vine vigor levels in each vineyard lot. Armed with these maps and geographic positioning devices (GPS), the vineyard team enters each vineyard lot and

amounts of water." This unique characteristic further demonstrates how Malbec has adapted to dry growing conditions in Argentina.

Altitude. Another unique factor contributing to the quality of the Malbec in Argentina is the vineyard altitude. In Argentina, Malbec is grown at elevations ranging from 450 to 1600 meters, and some 600 miles north in the province of Salta it is grown at even higher elevations at the Colomé estate in Calchaquí Valley. The average temperature drops 1° C, for every 100 meter increase in altitude. Going from an altitude of 800 meters to 1100 meters has a significant impact on the average temperatures during the growing season.

Higher altitudes offer a number of advantages for growing Malbec: cooler temperatures, more intense sunlight, lower disease pressures, and thinner soils with less fertility. These conditions result in thicker skins, more tannins, higher levels of phenolics, and longer hang time on the vine, leading to better aromas and flavors[3]. Growers in Mendoza frequently get 150-170 days of hang time. The long growing season can lead to good sugar levels accompanied by ideal phenolic ripeness.

However, higher altitude vineyards are not without risks. The strong Zonda winds of the Andes can increase with altitude, and high winds can cause the vines stomata to close, shutting down all photosynthesis. There is an increased chance that the fruit may not fully ripen in certain years, and an increased risk of frost damage.

Malbec grown at higher altitudes has much higher levels of polyphenolics. The intense sunlight at high altitudes stimulates the vine to produce phytolexins, which result in thicker skinned grapes. Malbec grown at 1500 meters can have skins that are three times thicker than that found at 800 meters. Thicker skins mean higher levels of polyphenolics, tannin, color, and resveratrol. Higher levels of polyphenolics and resveratrol are thought to have considerable health benefits. Malbec is also unique in that it produces a flavor compound called betaionona, which is responsible for the dark fruit, and violet-like aromatics found in many Malbecs.

Pests and Diseases. Monty Waldin, author of *The Wines of South America*, points out that the growing conditions in Mendoza, Tupangato, and the Valley de Uco have several advantages. First, the arid, desert-like conditions of the eastern benchlands of the Andes help minimize the need for fungal sprays. Fungal diseases, such as downy and powdery mildew, are only a minor problem. Second, the high altitude of Mendoza and the surrounding areas help limit the need for pesticides to control insects such as sharp-shooters and leaf hoppers, as they live at altitudes of 500m or less. Pests such as leafhoppers can damage the fruit directly, and act as carriers for numerous vine diseases.

In the coming years, organically grown grapes will become a more important selling point to the consumer, not in terms of wine quality necessarily, but in terms of the reduced imprint that this form of viticulture has on the environment. Organic, biodynamic, and sustainable grape growing will increasingly appeal to the ecological conscience of the consuming public. Argentina possesses some of the most ideal conditions for organic viticulture found anywhere in the world.

Hail. The single biggest threat during the growing season is hail. It is the scourge of Mendoza, causing an average loss of 15% of each year's crop. It will strike a vineyard on the average of 3 times a decade. Hail the size of softballs has been known to kill horses, cattle, and humans. This is especially true during December, January, and February, when warm and cool air flows can collide. This results in hail, which, accompanied by high winds, can destroy the current year's crop, and the following years' crop, as well[4]. Hail storms are highly localized, however: while one vineyard can be completely destroyed, an adjoining vineyard will be untouched.

Wineries deal with hail problems by sourcing their fruit from widely dispersed vineyards, so if one vineyard is hit by hail, they are unlikely to suffer serious losses overall. Another way is by using hail netting as a precaution. Although hail nets can partially shade the fruit, causing lower temperatures and creating more humid conditions within the canopy, they are effective in protecting the grapes. Shading can delay ripening, but not significantly. Several of the more elite vineyards (e.g., Catena, Viña Cobos, Salentein) use netting extensively.

Plant Selection and Trellising

Very little is known regarding the genetic differences within the Malbec planted in Argentina. This is due to the lack of records and documentation regarding the sourcing of Malbec as it has been propagated over the years. Traditionally, when a site was to be planted, or replanted, the vines were sourced using two ancient methods: mass selection, or layering. Both approaches are common place in Argentina. (see box below). As a result of over 160 years of mass selection and layering, Malbec has adapted to the Argentine terroir, resulting in a great deal of genetic diversity. This has played an important role in shaping the unique characteristics of the Malbec found in Argentina.

[3]High altitude berries have thicker skin and are more concentrated. Malbec grapes thicken their skins to protect themselves against increased sunlight. The increase in skin cells means an increase in anthocyanins. Anthocyanins are the main component of color in wine. In addition, the vine produces more phytolexins to protect the grape seeds from the increased sunlight intensity. These are important anti-oxidant components which include resveratrol. Medical studies indicate the resveratrol may have important health benefits. Laura Catena, Head of Bodega Catena Zapata's research department, is the first to characterize the biochemical composition of Argentine Malbec at different altitudes and the high resveratrol content of Argentine Malbec.

[4]Hail can also be dangerous. An exceptionally violent storm in February 2005 resulted in hailstones up to four inches in diameter, killing two people, including oenologist Juan Gualberto Gabrielli Populin, and destroying 5,000 acres of vineyards..

Research on the various clones of Malbec found in Argentina has only begun within the last decade, but will soon begin to have an impact on the grape quality[5]. Not surprisingly, it is Nicolás Catena, often referred to as the "Robert Mondavi of Argentina", who has led the way in identifying and understanding the clonal differences. Alejandro Sejanovich, of Catena began researching Malbec clones over 10 years ago. Catena researchers identified 145 different clones, eventually selecting six as yielding the best quality fruit. However, Sejanovich is quick to note that "there is no super clone of Malbec." While there are noticeable differences between these clones, it appears the soil type, vine age and altitude are just as important in determining fruit quality.

Massale Selection. With mass selection (what the French call selection massale), a number of cuttings are taken, often randomly, from an existing vineyard and propagated for replanting. While this method is cost effective, practical, and allows the retention of some of the positive attributes of existing vines, it can also introduce unknown diseases and viruses to the vineyard. Until recently, mass selection had been the primary method to obtain plant material for planting new vineyards in Argentina.

Layering. Layering is a more primitive, yet practical technique to plant new vines. The long cane of an existing vine is simply planted into the ground with the tip of the cane positioned upward. The end of the planted cane will sprout roots and eventually form a new vine and the two vines can be separated later. The French call this technique marcottage. It is a simple way to replace dead vines, or expand the perimeter of a vineyard.

Self-Rooted Malbec. Since phylloxera is not a serious problem in Argentina, most Malbec is self rooted. Phylloxera is a root louse that attacks the vines roots and over a few years time kills the vine. In most wine producing countries of the world, vines have to be grafted on to phylloxera-resistant rootstock in order to survive. While many maintain that self rooted vines produce better quality grapes than grafted vines, there is little empirical evidence to support this argument.

There are some plantings of grafted vines, not to prevent phylloxera damage, but to control vigor and offset the problems with nematodes (roundworms that feed on the roots of the vine causing extreme stress). Root knot nematodes are more problematic in sandy soils where drip irrigation is employed. The drip water actually attracts the nematodes to the vines roots. In addition, nematodes can also play a role in spreading viral diseases such as leaf roll. .

Trellising and Vine Density. Another important factor affecting Malbec quality concerns trellising methods. Traditional parral, pergola, or overhead trellising is slowly giving way to the more modern vertical shoot positioning method (VSP)/.

Parral trellising results in a high canopy that spreads out horizontally over the vineyard. This form of trellising reduces the exposure of the grapes to the sun, while also reducing temperatures and increasing humidity. This can be an advantage in the Zone Este, or eastern part of Mendoza where the growing conditions can be extremely hot. Parral positions the buds nearly 6 feet above the ground, which can also help prevent frost damage; but, fruit from parral vines ripen slower, and flavor development is reduced. .

Some winemakers claim that the parral trellising results in a different and more aromatic flavor profile that can contribute to wine complexity, but, in fact, very few new Malbec vineyards today are being planted using parral. Overhead trellising systems such as parral were originally introduced to increase yields. This trellising method also requires hand harvesting. The transition to VSP trellising is being driven by lower production costs, and potentially better fruit quality.

Decisions about vine density and pruning can directly impact quality as well. The trend today is for increased vine density. Producers like Viña Alicia have adopted densities of over 5,000 plants per hectare. Growers seeking quality will severely reduce the number of vertical shoots, cut back the foliage, and green harvest, or drop fruit in order to reduce the number of bunches.

Vine Age. Most wineries contract with small growers for most of their grapes. Chief considerations regarding fruit to be purchased include vine age, location of the vineyard, and, of course, cost. Vine age is as important for the quality of Malbec as it is for other grapes such as Zinfandel, Petite Sirah, Syrah, and Grenache (see Report #3 for a discussion of Vine Age in Grenache). Old vine Malbec (50+ years) naturally produces low yields (<2 tons/hectare) and more assertive flavors of greater depth. Most of the older vineyards were originally planted on smaller blocks of only 5 hectares, as that was what a single family could farm effectively. A superb example of an old Malbec vineyard is the 80-year-old Marchiori vineyard, used to source the fruit that produces the Viña Cobos Malbec.

[5]Catena has mounted a major research program into Malbec clones looking for quality based characteristics such as low yield, small clusters, small berries, high polyphenols, plant balance, and fruit concentration.. This research evaluated no less than 145 clones of Malbec and resulted in the selection of 6 top clones: 105, 120, 104, 10 80, 26. These clones have been planted in experimental plots, but it will still be some time before the results can be fully evaluated.

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