



Tim's Wine Market

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By Carl Bond

Our two featured wines this month present us with an interesting opportunity to compare and contrast two styles of winemaking in the Southern Hemisphere. Yes, they are both red wines from the same wine growing region in Argentina, and both grown at high elevation, but that's about where broad similarities end. Just as two children raised in the same house can turn out so differently, such is the case with these two young wines. One is not more virtuous than the other, just different. One is an example of a traditional style, the other more modern.

Argentina has become a huge player in the global wine marketplace, now the fifth largest wine-producing country in the world. To lay a groundwork for you on where the features this month were nurtured, much of Argentina's topography, climate and soils are great assets if you want to make world-class wine. Many vineyards are at sufficient elevation to allow for warm days and cool nights with intense sunshine, all leading to even ripening and the ability to retain natural acidity. There is enough rainfall that growers are able to control vine stress and yields. Soils are mostly pest-free as well, thanks to the low humidity and high altitudes. Soil types are sometimes rocky, but are predominately loamy, which is a nearly equal mix of silt, clay and sand. Both types drain well so that sufficient air can reach the roots, and too much water is never an issue. As you read about region-specific characteristics below and explore the wines in the glass for yourself, you will see how the fundamentals can be optimized and produce differently natured children, or rather wine.

2019 Chaman Petit Verdot (\$17)

The Reginato family has been growing grapes in the now popular Uco Valley for over 60 years. Second generation winemaker Luis Reginato brings Argentine winemaking to the next level with original varietal wines that speak to the future of Mendoza. You might guess this new generation winemaker bringing new varietals to the table would be a more modern wine child. The winery name, Chaman, or "Shaman" in English, means bringing guidance to the present by accessing knowledge of the past; sometimes mysterious & magical, and to inspire. This wine pays homage to the inspiration handed down by Luis' mentor, father, and vineyard shaman, José Reginato. Luis has challenged the scene in Mendoza, experimenting with and perfecting less common varietals such as Petit Verdot and Cabernet Franc, making Chaman stand out in an often Malbec-dominated category.

The province of Mendoza produces the majority of wine from Argentina. For this wine, the grapes are grown in the Delfina Vineyard in La Consulta, a sub-zone of the Valle de Uco. This is a high-elevation vineyard at over 3,000 feet above sea level, with alluvial shallow silt loam soil and subsoil formed by limestone. The soil is a big factor in producing a more modern style represented here. Loam is very fertile, making for a vineyard site that produces vigorous growth. Because of the vigor, yields are higher than in rocky soils. The grapes will be more ripe at harvest, higher in sugar, lower in acidity and also with great flavor. As is the case with almost all regions, the trend is toward richer, darker and more concentrated wines. In the Valle de Uco, this is really the only style of wine they can produce thanks to the combination of climate and soil.

For this bottling, the Petit Verdot and Malbec grapes are hand-harvested and co-fermented in concrete tanks. They are aged for 12 months in 20% new and 80% second- and third-use French oak barrels. On the nose, you will find mulberry, wildflower, cherry, forest floor and cold charcoal. The dark, meaty palate has notes of minerality and wild spices driven by silky tannins. Try with pork spare ribs, barbecue steak or aged cheeses. Only 500 cases of this delicious wine were imported - enjoy a rare treat from the Mendoza!

2017 Luca Malbec Paraje (\$25)

This wine represents the more traditional child in our lineup. Luca is named after winemaker Laura Catena's first son, and it symbolizes her love for her family (the family crest that appears on the label belongs to her husband Dan McDermott's family). Luca was born out of Laura's vision of creating a new breed of Argentine wines: small quantities, artisan quality and true to their individual terroirs. In this sense, she is a bit of a pioneer as well, as many producers in the area are higher volume producers, with wines lacking the finesse and complexity found here. She works closely with small growers to harvest very high-quality grapes from some of Argentina's best old vine, low-yield, high-elevation vineyards.

The Uco Valley has a reputation for producing high-quality fruit and has the highest vineyards in Mendoza. This 100% Malbec is from the newly designated sub-appellation Paraje Altamira. It is the first Geographical Indication in Argentina to be based on soils studies, rather than political boundaries. The wine retain nice freshness, or acidity, as the vineyards benefit from the effects of cool nights during the growing season. The vineyards in Altamira are composed of shallow, rocky, alluvial soils that are irrigated by the Andes snowmelt. This is important, as it creates desirable vine stress mentioned earlier. This stress naturally lowers yield, as the vines and fruit compete for water and nutrients, creating fewer but higher quality grapes. The resulting grapes are generally less ripe at harvest, lower in sugar, higher in acidity, but also bursting with intense flavor. This traditional approach to harvest can be viewed as producing an elegant style of wine, favored by many old world wine growing regions of the world.

The grapes are hand-harvested and aged 12 months in 30% new French barrels and 70% second-use French barrels. Aromatically, you will find notes of black cherry and blackberry with hints of violet, vanilla and mocha. It is deep and dense on the palate with round tannins. This is great expression of Malbec from the sunny days and cold nights of Altamira. This wine pairs well with steak, pork dishes and chicken in rich sauces. This wine is typically found only at restaurants and wine bars, but we were able to score some of this finely crafted wine for our club members' enjoyment. Salud!

Albóndigas (Spanish Meatballs)

When looking for a recipe for this month, I wanted to find one that works well with the modern style of the Chaman and the classic nature of the Luca. Both are relatively big wines, so whatever dish I selected would have to have strong flavors and some fat to buffer the tannins. Albóndigas is a classic tapas recipe, but this version works equally well as an entree if you want to serve over rice or mashed potatoes.

Picada

¼ cup slivered almonds

**1 slice hearty white sandwich bread
torn into 1-inch pieces**

2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil

3 tablespoons minced fresh parsley

2 garlic cloves, minced

Meatballs

**1 slice hearty white sandwich bread
torn into 1-inch pieces**

1 large egg

2 tablespoons water

2 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley, divided

2 garlic cloves, minced

1 teaspoon table salt

½ teaspoon pepper

1 pound ground pork

1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil

½ cup finely chopped onion

½ teaspoon paprika

1 cup chicken broth

½ cup dry white wine

¼ teaspoon saffron threads, crumbled

1 teaspoon sherry vinegar

For the picada: Process almonds in food processor until finely ground, about 20 seconds. Add bread and process until bread is finely ground, about 15 seconds. Transfer almond-bread mixture to 12-inch nonstick skillet. Add oil and cook over medium heat, stirring often, until mixture is golden brown, 3 to 5 minutes. Transfer to bowl. Stir in parsley and garlic and set aside. Wipe skillet clean with paper towels.

For the meatballs: Process bread in now-empty processor until finely ground, about 15 seconds. Add egg, water, 1 tablespoon parsley, garlic, salt, and pepper and process until smooth paste forms, about 20 seconds, scraping down sides of bowl as necessary. Add pork and pulse until combined, about 5 pulses.

Remove processor blade. Using your moistened hands, form generous 1 _stablespoon pork mixture into 1-inch round meatball and transfer to plate; repeat with remaining pork mixture to form about 24 meatballs.

Heat oil in now-empty skillet over medium heat until shimmering. Add onion and cook, stirring occasionally, until softened, 4 to 6 minutes. Add paprika and cook until fragrant, about 30 seconds. Add broth and wine and bring to simmer. Stir in saffron. Add meatballs and adjust heat to maintain simmer. Cover and cook until meatballs register 160 degrees, 6 to 8 minutes, flipping meatballs once.

Stir in picada and continue to cook, uncovered, until sauce has thickened slightly, 1 to 2 minutes longer. Off heat, stir in vinegar. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Transfer to platter, sprinkle with remaining 1 tablespoon parsley, and serve.