

WINE News

*We're not just whistling Carménère
about the new wave wines from
Argentina and Chile.*



SEPTEMBER 12, 2016 FEATURES

- 2 High-Altitude Zorzal; Something "Otra" at Gen de Alma
- 3 Groundbreaking De Martino Breaks New Ground
- 4 Picture-Perfect at Chile's Montsecano

Terroir-Driven in South America

By Joe Manekin

Argentina and Chile—especially Chile—are back! While these two countries continue to be important exporters of wine on the world stage, they have had to surmount the inevitable slump following their boom years of the '00s. Anecdotally speaking, at least from our standpoint, 2016 has been a breakthrough year for Chilean and Argentinian wines. Sure, we continue to find solid Malbecs at value prices, as well as some of our tried-and-true, Bordeaux-inspired blends for the cellar, at the higher end. However, in case you missed it, our best-selling (by number of bottles) Cabernet of 2016 did not come from Sonoma or Napa, but, in fact, from Chile—Haras de Pirque Cab, anyone? As importantly, Chile and Argentina are competing not just in the press, but where it really counts: with us and other “gatekeepers.”

Working in wine retail, we taste a lot. Handmade, original, personal wines are often what we love the most, but given the difficulty and inherent cost of following this path, many wines we taste are neither handmade nor personal. That said, an increasing number of wines coming from Chile and Argentina are what I would call absolutely handmade and indeed very personal wines. When it comes to small-volume, terroir-driven, cutting-edge production, whether it's great Pinot Noir or dry-farmed 60-year-old Carignane, cement egg-aged Malbec or an amphora-aged field blend, Argentina and Chile have gained serious creative ground in the past several years. Let's start with some tasty values before we progress to some of the more serious stuff.

2015 Domaine Bousquet Cabernet Sauvignon

Tupungato Valley (\$9.99)

This is a delicious, red-fruited and honest Cab that shows terrific balance. 91 points W&S: “Another great value from the Bousquet family, this is made from organic grapes grown in the chalky and stony soils of Gualtallary.”



2015 Arboleda Chardonnay Aconcagua Costa (\$15.99)

Bright, mineral-driven Chard with impeccably balanced oak. 93 points JS: “A Chardonnay that shows sliced apple and pear aromas with hints of stone and mineral. Medium to full body, lively and very intense with bright acidity and lemon rind.”



2013 Tapiz “Alta Collection” Malbec Mendoza (\$13.99)

Tasty, fresh, juicy red plum-fruited Malbec. 95 points JS: “A soft and silky red with violet, berry and dark fruits on the nose and palate. Full body, fine tannins and a flavorful finish. Extremely well craft with elegance and style.”



Único in Uco: The High-Altitude Wines of Zorzal

By Heather Gowen

Tucked away in the highest elevation area of Argentina's Uco Valley, brothers Matias and Juan Pablo Michelini are growing and making some of the most serious and interesting wines represented in our Argentinian selections. Their philosophy is simple: a belief in the unique terroir of Gualtallary, and a desire to translate the incredible potential of this fruit into wine in a very non-invasive, careful manner. The soils in which their vineyards are planted are heavy with chalk, and the climate is cool and continental, producing wines both structured, serious and elegant.

One of the advantages of farming in this high-elevation, cooler climate is the brothers' ability to grow Pinot Noir. Harvesting their grapes earlier than most, with higher acidity and lighter fruit, the Michelini brothers produce a very serious, age-worthy Pinot with Old World character. The current **2014 Zorzal "Terroir Único" Pinot Noir Tupungato Valley (\$14.99)** far out-rides its price. The aromas are refined, with more earth and spice than fruit, though on the palate the characteristic wild strawberry and mushroom is evident. Without the influence of oak, the wine feels clean, delicate and expressive of its roots in Gualtallary. 90 points RP.



But Matias and Juan Pablo aren't just Burgundophiles, producing Burgundian wines in a new climate. They also craft some of the best Malbec from the valley. Their **2013 Zorzal "Gran Terroir" Malbec Gualtallary (\$19.99)** is one of the more interesting but fun Malbecs from the area. The aromas here are very heady, with deep, blackberry fruit and intense spice notes, but on the palate the wine shows a fairly soft body with very subtle structure lent to it from the old oak barrels it rested in. Driving the wine is a persistent mineral note and elegant acidity, giving the finish great length and vigor. 93 points RP.

One of the best wines the brothers produce is the **2014 Zorzal "Eggo" Tinto de Tiza Mendoza Tupungato (\$29.99)**. The winemaking and preparation for this Malbec-based blend is very careful and produces some of the most generous yet intriguing results in the portfolio. In this case, the Malbec, blended with small amounts of Cabernet Franc and Cabernet Sauvignon, is fermented in concrete egg-shaped containers, which keep the wine in constant, gentle motion. This maximizes the lees contact throughout the wine, creating a richer, more voluminous mouthfeel, without the aid of oak or other agents. This method also allows for a very clean and pure translation of the fruit into wine, preserving the terroir of this high-elevation area of the Uco Valley. 96 points DC, 94 points RP.

Gen del Alma: The Future of Argentinian Wine

By Ivan Diaz

When you think about the wines of Argentina, what's the first thing that comes to mind? Is it Malbec? I'll bet it's Malbec. And not just Malbec, but a specific style of ripe, robust Malbec that contrasts deeply with the traditional French incarnation of the grape (more commonly called Côt in its homeland). That's no accident. Argentina has been working hard to make Malbec synonymous with Argentinian wine in an attempt to clarify its niche in the world of wine.

Unfortunately, this has occasionally lead to a lack of diversity in flavor and style among these wines. Enter Gen del Alma. Gerardo Michelini (of Zorzal fame) and his wife, Andrea Mufatto, started this winery in 2012 in order to showcase Gualtallary, a small appellation within the Uco Valley, a high elevation sub-region of Mendoza that produces some of its best wine. The goal here is to produce freshly fruited, acid and mineral-driven offerings that reflect the calcareous soil of the region with little interference. Gerardo and Andrea use ancient barriques, concrete eggs and large, homemade clay amphorae for aging, and sometimes carbonic maceration (a technique commonly used for Beaujolais nouveau) to preserve freshness.

If Gen del Alma represents a taste of the future for this still-burgeoning region, then count me in for the long haul.

Their **2014 Gen del Alma "Otra Piel" Red Blend Gualtallary (\$34.99)** is a blend (the name is Spanish for "another skin") of Cabernet Franc, Cabernet Sauvignon and Pinot Noir which, despite the inclusion of the first two grapes, is medium-bodied, remarkably fleet-footed and bright. Showing brambly raspberry and strawberry, subtle peppery nuances and a sweet tobacco note, it is unlike anything I've ever tried from Argentina. 91 points RP, 95 points JS, 96 points DC.

The second bottling, **2015 Gen del Alma "Ji Ji Ji" Malbec-Pinot Noir Gualtallary (\$16.99)**, is a highly intriguing blend of Pinot Noir and Malbec made using carbonic maceration. There is admittedly little traditional Malbec character here due to the alternate winemaking style, as this wine shows mostly crunchy red berries, pretty floral aromatics, slaty minerality and mouthwatering acidity that more closely resembles Gamay. 95 points DC.





De Martino's radical transformation includes plowing by horse.

What's Old is New Again at Groundbreaking De Martino

By Joe Manekin

Originally founded by Italian immigrants in Chile's Isla de Maipo in 1934, De Martino has grown over the years to become one of the more important family-owned wineries in Chile. Among their many accomplishments is exporting the first bottling of varietal Carménère nearly 20 years ago.

De Martino has arguably undergone one of the more radical transformations the wine world has seen in the past five years. The second-largest owner of organic vineyards in Chile, with 740 acres in production, De Martino is stepping up to the plate in other ways as well: the winery is 100% carbon neutral, and beginning in 2011 they have stopped purchasing new oak barrels. That year they purchased 140 *tinajas*, the traditional Chilean clay vessels that resemble amphorae, in varying shapes and sizes. The winery still scours the Chilean countryside for representative examples of these most traditional vessels.

Other traditional Chilean barrels include those made from "Raulí," or the local Chilean oak. In addition, the winery has stainless steel and concrete tanks, used barrels, and 50-hectoliter foudres made by the boutique Austrian cooperage Stockinger—these are highly sought-after all over the world, with a wait list to prove it!

At its core, this major change has been initiated to produce wines that are expressive of their origins, that show bright fruit and that represent the full potential of the terroir in Chile.

2013 De Martino "Estate" Organic Carménère Maipo Valley (\$12.99) Produced from organic vines, De Martino's Carménère is a fresh, crisply red-fruited take on this grape variety, with the requisite herbal snap we all expect.



2015 De Martino Sauvignon Blanc Maipo Valley (\$10.99) Delicious Sauvignon Blanc—bright and citric, yet fully ripe and without the pungent, green pepper or pickled notes sometimes present in Chilean SB. This is delicious and thirst-quenching!

2014 De Martino "Legado" Chardonnay Limarí (\$17.99) True to their concept of producing wines from a diverse range of Chilean terroirs, both long established and more recently discovered, De Martino sources this fantastic Chardonnay from the sandy, limestone-rich, coastal area known as Limarí. While its Pacific influence means plenty of cooling fog and brings to mind California's Sonoma Coast, the vineyards also happen to be not so far from the Atacama Desert, the driest place on earth! Water is understandably scarce, but the potential for great Chardonnay here has proven to be sufficiently enticing. Rich, yellow-fruited aromas and flavors show a clean, striking minerality, which combines with the rich flavors and ripe phenolics to produce a terrific example of Chardonnay for a fair price.



2013 De Martino "Legado" Cabernet Sauvignon-Malbec Maipo Valley (\$19.99) Malbec in Chile tends to show a slightly sterner, somewhat woody quality compared to the softer, more plummy versions across the Andes in Argentina. Here it combines with an equal amount of Cab to add some richness and darker fruit, creating a slightly savory, well-structured red that will work nicely with grilled sausages, burgers or skirt steak.

2011 De Martino "Las Cruces" Single Vineyard Cachapoal Valley (\$39.99) 92 points RP: "This wine has a fresh note of red fruits, violets, a hint of raspberry leaf and some yummy notes of cooked meat with the complexity of old vines that have slowly developed over time. The fruit is bright and shiny, with a high-toned mix of ripe peaches and flowers, something I have seen in other wines from Cachapoal. The palate is vibrant with fine tannins, and supple with a strong imprint from the soil rather than the fruit, finishing with a high-toned licorice note. A great terroir-driven red."



2011 De Martino "Limávida Old Vines" Red Blend Maule Valley (\$39.99) This cuvée comes from a parcel that is planted primarily to Malbec (85%) with some Carignane and Cabernet as well. It was first planted in the 1940s and has always been dry farmed. Delicious flavors, with gorgeous fruit showing discreet green and savory undertones and a refreshing, drinkable style. The wine is well structured, aging wonderfully, and yet drinks beautifully right now. This is one of my favorite Chilean wines I have tasted in the past few years—a revelation. 93 points RP, 92 points JS.

Picture Perfect: The Organic Wines of Montsecano

By Joe Manekin



Julio Donoso is an artist, a photojournalist and a bon vivant who lived for a number of years in France while plying his trade. He has interesting art hanging from the wall, as well as a well-worn, James Baldwin-signed copy of a Richard Avedon photography book with text by Mr. Baldwin (“James and I had lunch together one afternoon, and knowing he would be there, I brought the book for him to sign”). You will rarely find Julio without a glass and/or camera in hand. Yes, Julio Donoso is an interesting man.

Mr. Donoso is also a native Chilean who divides his time between Santiago and his charming, hilly property in the Casablanca Valley. Here he organically cultivates Pinot Noir in red clay and granite soil. His partner in making the wines is none other than André Ostertag, well known for his tasty, organic Alsatian wines. According to Julio, André brings a northern French sense of discipline and order to the operation, while he will always be the more spur-of-the-moment, happy-go-lucky Latin guy. As mentioned, the vineyards are worked organically, and the winemaking is incredibly simple. Says Donoso, “André arrives close to harvest time each year. He will taste the grapes and let us know when we need to pick. Then he helps us to throw the bunches in concrete eggs, leaves and comes back the following year.”

2015 Montsecano “Refugio” Pinot Noir Casablanca Valley (\$24.99) Lovely Pinot Noir, with bright, fresh red fruits, a decidedly crunch/savory side from the whole clusters and flavors that are sweetly earthy. 93 points JS: “Cedar, strawberry, flower, light iodine, and oyster shell. Medium to full body, silk tannins and a juicy finish. Shows soul.”

2015 Montsecano Pinot Noir Casablanca Valley (\$39.99) Whereas the Refugio contains fruit from a relative’s property, the Montsecano is all the estate vineyard. Richer and more darkly fruited, it still shows surprising freshness given how seriously structured the wine is. This reminds me of a bowlful of tangy cherries and plums—pits, skins and flesh. 96 points JS: “A Pinot with superb depth and texture with beautiful depth of fruit and ripe tannins. Full body, complex depth of fruit and length. Stone, blueberry, blackberry and intensity.”



Left: Julio Donoso inspects his organically farmed vines.

K&L REDWOOD CITY

3005 El Camino Real, Redwood City, CA 94061
P (650) 364-8544 **F** (650) 364-4687
HOURS Mon-Fri 10-7, Sat 9-7, Sun 10-6
LOCKERS Mon-Sat 10-6, Sun 11-5

KLWINES.COM

Toll Free (877) KLWINES (877) 559-4637
Email: Wines@KLWines.com

K&L HOLLYWOOD

1400 Vine Street, Hollywood, CA 90028
P (323) 464-WINE (9463) **F** (323) 836-0853
HOURS Mon-Thurs 11-8, Fri-Sat 10-8, Sun 11-6

K&L EVENTS & TASTINGS

We host regular evening and Saturday tastings at each K&L store as well as many special events throughout the year. For the complete calendar go to KLWines.com/Local-Events.

K&L SAN FRANCISCO

855 Harrison Street, San Francisco, CA 94107
P (415) 896-1734 **F** (415) 896-1739
HOURS Mon-Fri 10-7, Sat 9-6, Sun 11-6

We accept American Express, Discover, Visa and Mastercard.

For Order Inquiries, Shipping Information, Local Events, Policies and Up-to-the-Minute Inventory, visit KLWines.com

FOLLOW OUR BLOGS UNCORKED AND SPIRITS JOURNAL FOR THE LATEST UPDATES FROM K&L STAFF