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By James Suckling
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TOP 100 WINES OF ARGENTINA



The quality of the best wines in Argentina has been on such a steep improvement curve over the past several years, we always look forward to our visits here. Yes, there are always bad wines from those producers who pump out low-quality, low-priced product in order to sell. We get it – this is a business after all. But it results in wines that do very little to raise the reputation of the country as a whole. This year we tasted some wines that were undrinkable.

But at the other end of the spectrum, Argentina's best wines are stupendous. That's what makes this country such an exciting place to explore. We tasted 1,800 wines over two weeks in Mendoza in early 2019, and we scored more than 700 of them 92 points or above. More than 1,300 scored 90 points or above, our benchmark score for outstanding wines, showing that while the gap between the best and worst is growing, some of that winemaking know-how is starting to trickle down from the major names to smaller wineries too.

Chardonnay was a particular highlight this year, and the key producers such as Catena, Trapiche, LVMH (Cheval des Andes, Terrasses), Zuccardi and others proved their worth with outstanding wines that were fresh and evermore precise – this year we really got a sense of how the top winemakers are looking to create wines in their vineyards, to communicate the qualities of their unique landscape, rather than in their blending rooms or marketing offices.

RECENT VINTAGES BOUNCE BACK

The bulk of our tastings this year came from the 2017 and 2018 vintages, which proved to be a welcome return to form for many producers after the tough three vintages prior. While you can still find great wines from 2014-2016, the 2017 and 2018 bottles we think will be of higher quality in general.

Our Argentine Wine of the Year for 2019 is the Catena Zapata Malbec Mendoza Adrianna Vineyard River Stones 2017 (100 points), probably one of the greatest malbecs ever made, showing incredible depth and structure with a perfection in fruit, acid and tannin balance.

Our number two wine is the Cheval des Andes Mendoza 2016 (99 points), which has great harmony and strength and an array of flavors and sensations, and finally, we think, shows that it can hold its own against its sister wine in Bordeaux, the great growth of Cheval Blanc.

And our third-ranked wine is the Terrazas de los Andes Malbec Gualtallary Valle de Uco El Espinillo Parcel N 1E 2016 (99 points), from a new parcel at 1,630 meters showing loads of dried fruit, salt and iron.



CHARDONNAY AND TERROIR

Places four, five and six are all taken by chardonnay wines, which proved to be another highlight this year. The Catena Zapata Chardonnay Mendoza Adrianna Vineyard White Bones 2017 (99 points) is full-bodied yet vivid; the Bodega Chacra Chardonnay Patagonia 2018 (98 points) is dense but agile; and the El Enemigo Chardonnay Mendoza 2017 (98 points) is tight, layered and refined. They are great examples of chardonnay's unique energy here, with minerally and salty undertones that remind us of white Burgundy, but with a bolder and brighter fruitiness.

As you scroll down our Top 100 Wines of Argentina list, you will see wines that express Argentina's new mission for place-driven winemaking as well as new and original wines that interpret and communicate locations and micro-climates.

This capability to produce exciting, world-class wines seems limitless. We already look forward to next year's tastings.

99 BODEGAS CARO MENDOZA 2016

Country	Argentina
Region	Mendoza
Vintage	2016

Score
94

Already quite open, this is a cool and slightly shy wine with ripe plum, delicate herb and toasty aromas. The rather sleek palate and fresh acidity carry the long, clean, rather stony finish. For the first time, this is dominated by 90 per cent cabernet sauvignon. Drink or hold.