

A Grape in Exile: Argentinian Malbec

Malbec originated in France where it is one of the five main red grapes allowed to be blended when making red Bordeaux. It's susceptible to frost and not the best grape to grow in the region. It is still found in red Bordeaux. And in Cahors, in the southwest of France, it's used to make a varietal wine, often labeled by the grape's original name, "cot."

Despite it being native to France, chances are what you think of when you think "malbec" is Argentinian. That's because 70% of the world's malbec is produced in Argentina. Wait . . . what's a French grape—and one used in beloved Bordeaux no less—doing in Argentina? It's living in exile. Okay. It's not that dramatic.

In the mid 1800's malbec was brought to Argentina and it has been rockin' the Argentinian wine scene since. It flourishes in high altitudes and sun. Argentina has plenty of those conditions. This is why Argentine winemakers use malbec more to produce varietal wines than blends.

The grape absolutely flourishes in Argentina's climate making wine that is low acid, plush, fruit forward with plum being a common note along with incredible spice and earth as it ages. You can thank the alluvial soil and clay for the incredible feel of Argentinian malbec, too.

Back in France...

In addition to being blended in Bordeaux, malbec is found as a single varietal in Cahors, France. This region, in the southwest of the country, produces an edgier version of malbec, with serious tannins. Limestone makes the roots really work, imparting a completely different taste despite coming from the same grape. It will smack you in the mouth with blackberry while young, but as it ages the complexity is off the charts. Meat, tobacco, coffee... definitely age your malbec from Cahors!