

**Tasting Notes
Feb 2021 Pick-up
Wines of Argentina**



Welcome to your February 2021 Smart Wine Club pickup. The theme this quarter is Argentina, which is the fifth largest producer of wine in the world.

The main wine-producing regions run north to south along the western half of the country, basically along the foothills of the Andes Mountains. In general, these regions have relatively high altitudes and low humidity, making Argentina a great country for grape growing. All the problems that typically plague a wine grower, such as fungus, mold and insect issues, are much rarer. Because of this, it has been easier for organic viticulture to proliferate, which is lovely.

The three most well-known grapes of the region are of course Malbec and also Bonarda, another red. The third is Torrontés, an aromatic white. You will be trying all of those and more in your tote.

Please share your wines with your wine-loving friends and introduce them to the Smart Wine Club. If you introduce a friend who then decides to join, you'll BOTH receive 10% off your next tote. Please let me know if you have recommended a new member!

Don't forget, you can always return your wine club red bags to the store when you come in to pick up. We are happy to re-use them and reduce waste!

- **2020 La Yunta Torrontés** – This white is a 100% Torrontés from the region of La Rioja, an area known for producing especially fine versions of this grape, with good balance and on the drier side compared to other regions. You will enjoy aromas of honeydew and peach, with balanced citrus flavors and a crisp finish. Tasty with or without food.
Reg retail: \$12 Smart price: \$11

Pairing: Try this with Thai green curry for a great match. It pairs well with herbaceous flavors and is bold enough to stand up to the richness of the coconut milk.

- **2018 Bodega Calle “Dharma Orange”** – This is a blend of 40% Semillon, 30% Torrontés and 30% Chardonnay. The fruit is sourced from a single vineyard in the Mendoza region. It is organically farmed and uses only native yeasts for vinification. The juice is fermented with the skins for 8 months, resulting in the “orange wine” style which offers bolder flavors and more tannin than your typical white. If you haven't tried an orange wine before, I'll be curious to see what you think! Reg retail: \$21 Smart price: \$19

Pairing: Orange wines can be paired with bolder flavors and darker meats than your typical white. I'm thinking Indian food like lamb biryani or Middle Eastern food such as kebabs with baba ghanoush would both be great!

- **2018 Durigutti Bonarda Classico** – The Bonarda grape is Argentina’s second most popular red grape. It can be a little confusing because there is a grape of the same name grown in Italy, but they are not the same. This Argentine Bonarda is actually the same as a little-known French grape called Douce Noir. The Durigutti is typical of the varietal, with bold, ripe fruit aromas; flavors of cherry, plum, chocolate and mint; and a smooth finish with low tannins. Reg retail: \$18 Smart price: \$16

Pairing: This wine has a juicy acidity that makes it easy to pair with everything from chicken and salmon up to pork and beef. It is known for pairing well with sweet-and-sour flavors and also tomato-based dishes. I recommend salmon teriyaki or your favorite red sauce pizza.

- **2017 Don Rodolfo “Arte de los Andes” Tannat** – Tannat is a French red grape that has become the primary wine grape of Uruguay, interestingly, but is also popular in Argentina. The name suggests its historical reputation for being almost undrinkably high in tannins. However, a relatively recent wine technology called micro-oxygenation has allowed Tannat to be made into a tasty wine. Basically, a controlled amount of oxygen is introduced to the wine during production such that it simulates the effect of extensive barrel aging. Pretty cool! This particular bottle showcases ripe blackberry and blueberry flavors with hints of black tea and a full-bodied finish. Reg retail: \$12 Smart price: \$11

Pairing: Back in France, the classic pairing for a Tannat was a rich cassoulet. Now that it’s not as tannic, you can pair it more easily with a variety of foods, but a rich, flavorful stew or braise is still a great pairing. It also goes well with a strongly flavored cheese, such as Roquefort.

- **2018 Altos Las Hormigas Malbec Classico** – Lastly, we have two classic Malbecs for you to compare and contrast. The first displays aromas of plum and strawberry with flavors of juicy fruits and pepper. It is very silky and intense and the flavors linger in your mouth. This is the 2018 vintage, which was considered an excellent vintage in Mendoza, one of the best in years. Compared with the 2nd Malbec, this one was aged 100% in stainless, no oak whatsoever. Reg retail: \$13 Smart price: \$11

Pairing: Malbec is surprisingly versatile! It generally tastes great with grilled foods and dishes that offer bold, bright flavors, such as a marinated skirt or flank steak with a chimichurri sauce. However, it also pairs nicely with earthy flavors and creamy dishes – a rich mushroom cream sauce over pork chops would be yummy.

- **2017 Corazón del Sol Valle de Uco Malbec** – Our second Malbec is from a boutique winery in the Uco Valley region of Mendoza. This winery happens to be a sister winery of one here in the Willamette Valley called Alexana – I’ve never been there but after checking out their website, I’m planning to try it! You’ll enjoy aromas of black raspberry, violets and earth with flavors of fresh berries and elegant tannins. In contrast with our first, this Malbec has been aged for 12 months in French oak (50% neutral and 50% 2nd/3rd use). Reg retail: \$25 Smart price: \$22

Pairing: Thinking again of cheese pairings, Malbec pairs perfectly with sharp aged cheeses such as a bold cheddar, manchego or aged gouda.