

Tasting Monterey

A WINE ENTHUSIAST'S MONTHLY JOURNEY THROUGH MONTEREY'S WINE COUNTRY

STORE HOURS



A Taste of Monterey
Cannery Row
Sun-Thu 11am-7pm*
Fri-Sat 11am-8pm*

Food service begins at
11:30am daily

*No new member tastings
after 6pm

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The Allure of Malbec

Non-traditional varietal wines are kind of "in" these days...as you've probably noticed. Shelves are stocked with not just Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Pinot Noir, or red blends, but with varietals many people are not so familiar with. This includes varietals such as Mourvedre, Tempranillo, Cabernet Franc, Grenache, and...Malbec.



In its homeland of France, one would never see Malbec as a varietal wine. Sacrebleu! Quelle horreur of a thought! But here in California (including Monterey County) and Argentina, Malbec varietal wines are more than proving themselves. In fact, whereas just a few years ago Malbec was a lesser known varietal, it is quickly growing in popularity and now stands amongst its Bordeaux brothers of Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot.



Malbec's fruit is thin-skinned, robust in tannins, colored inky dark, sun-loving, and fragile to grow...quite a combination in the viticultural world. Wines produced from Malbec are dark and rich with boldly purple hues. Malbec wines typically have intense aromas of dark berries, cherries, and plums.

As for the grape's origins, a popularly held belief is that the Malbec grape originated in the northern Burgundy region of France and that it was originally named Côt. However, the grape found its traditional home southwest of Burgundy in the Bordeaux region, where it is commonly blended primarily with famed Bordeaux red varietals Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot, and with lesser-known Cabernet Franc, Petit Verdot, or Carmenère.

The year 1956 was fateful for the Malbec grape as it was the year that France suffered from a particularly nasty growing season laced with killer frost that decimated 75% of the notoriously frost-sensitive Malbec crop...75%! This proved to be detrimental to Malbec's sustained popularity in Bordeaux's vineyards; however, in the Cahors region, slightly southeast of Bordeaux, the grape was replanted with a fury and it continues to be the dominant varietal of the region. In fact, Cahors is the only AOC (roughly our equivalent of AVA) requiring Malbec in its red wines—70% minimum. Cahors' Malbecs are often blended with Merlot or Tannat in order to round out the region's infamously robust wines.

Malbec continues to be grown and blended into succulent Bordeaux blends, however less so as in decades past. But Malbec was not content to rest in Europe and like a curious traveler the grape made its way across the Atlantic and landed in both North and South American vineyards. Argentina has arguably become Malbec's truest home (no disrespect to la France!). The grape literally thrives there and it's quite possible that the grape found its favorite terroir in Argentina. While Malbec has lost fame

and acreage in France in the last fifty years, it has experienced the opposite in Argentina, where it is the most widely-planted red grape varietal and has become something of a national grape.

Closer to home, Malbec is gaining in popularity in California's wine growing regions, Monterey included. Since



Continued Inside

MONTHLY WINE SELECTIONS

MARIN'S - 2014 *Malbec*



Brenda and Duane met in 1978, only a few miles from where they currently live. They married in 1983 and Marin was born in April of 1992. Their 20-acre property was purchased in 1993 and called it the Black Diamond Ranch. The driveway to the house is so steep, that if it ever snowed in Lockwood, the driveway would be a black diamond ski run. Marin graduated from California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo in 2014 with a degree in Wine and Viticulture concentrating in Enology. She has worked for many prestigious wineries in the Central Coast area. she is currently the head winemaker for Marin's Vineyard and helping to lead the sales and marketing. Winemaking is her passion and that's evident when you hear her talk about wine.

This Malbec displays characteristics of juicy black cherries and hints of violet with plush tannins on the finish. Only seven barrels of this wine were produced.

100% Malbec

15.0% Alcohol

Cellar Through 2019

Comments: _____ ◇ Great ◇ Good ◇ So-So

BERNARDUS - 2015 *Griva Sauvignon Blanc*



Beginning in 2014 Bernardus has chosen to bottle only grapes from the Griva Sauvignon Blanc vineyard. Michael Griva has planted a special block of the celebrated "Musqué" clone of Sauvignon Blanc uniquely for Bernardus. It is widely recognized as the most expressive clone of Sauvignon Blanc. With its perfect combination of sandy, well-drained soils and a warm, breezy climate, Michael's vineyard has proven to be the ideal place to grow Sauvignon Blanc.

The 2015 Sauvignon Blanc exhibits notes of ripe tropical fruits, grapefruit and melon. The palate exhibits a rich texture and complex essences of lime, grapefruit and gooseberry. This wine exhibits a crisp, refreshing acidity along with a trace of minerality.

100% Sauvignon Blanc

13.2% Alcohol

Cellar Through 2018

Comments: _____ ◇ Great ◇ Good ◇ So-So

ODD LOT - 2015 *Red Blend* (Club Red)



Odd Lot Red is the fun friend you want to take to any party. It's approachable, versatile and fits in anywhere, from white tablecloths to picnics in the park. Our philosophy with Odd Lot is simple: make a delectable, lip-smacking red blend. Period. No rules that it has to be Bordeaux-based or Rhône-based or follow the formula that won us a slew of gold medals and accolades on the last vintage. Naw, rules are for sissies. They set out to craft the yummiest red blend from the tools of the vintage – every lot available is up for grabs. And then it's creation time, with beakers and pipettes and no shortage of opinions as to what will enhance our Odd Lot and add that certain je ne sais quoi to really bring it home.

Wine, like politics, make odd bedfellows. This big red blend of Petite Sirah and Petit Verdot is an audacious partnership that defies gravity. Are you bold enough to be Odd?

80% Petite Sirah, 20% Petit Verdot

14.5% Alcohol

Cellar Through 2021

Comments: _____ ◇ Great ◇ Good ◇ So-So

MARIN'S - 2015 *Viognier* (Club Blanc)



Marins vineyard is located in the San Antonio Valley AVA of Southern Monterey County. It's planted on a slope averaging 7% with a soil type identified as the Nacimiento Soil Series. The first representative soil layer is comprised of dark brown, calcareous silty clay loam followed by calcareous shale and rocks, and more rocks, then a layer of weathered sandstone. Some of these rocks take on weird formations, as if water ran through them. Picking up rocks was a daily chore, as truckloads of rocks were removed prior to planting.

A dry Viognier with crisp acidity that expresses tropical fruit with melon, and a touch of honeysuckle. Aged 6 months in two neutral oak barrels and 3 stainless barrels. Only 100 cases bottled.

100% Viognier

14.2% Alcohol

Cellar Through 2018

Comments: _____ ◇ Great ◇ Good ◇ So-So

Cover Article Continued



1995, the acreage of planted Malbec grapes throughout the state has increased by an estimated 800%!

The Malbec grape remains largely used as a blending grape. It is globally popular as an addition to Bordeaux-style blends with its color, body, and depth; but the grape has seen a resurgence in recent years for its use as a single-varietal wine and continues to catch the attention of wine-makers and wine-drinkers alike. For instance, our showcased Malbec from Marin's Vineyard is sure to awaken your palate. It also proves that Southern Monterey County presents the proper terroir to pull it off (which is not actually the most surprising, as we've known

some of our best wineries have been sourcing other outstanding Bordeaux reds from these AVAs.)

Enjoying a nice glass of Malbec on its own may not be the preference for some, as it can be overwhelming to tender palates. If so, hold off until you have a hearty meal in front of you to complement your bold glass of Malbec. The French are renowned for their intrinsic ability to pair wine with an appropriate corresponding dish; the Argentines have their own noble traditions with regards to their "nationalized" grape. Order a steak in Buenos Aires and a glass of red wine, and it will assuredly be a glass of dark Malbec that is poured for you. Whether you choose to pair it with food, or enjoy it on its own, we hope you enjoy this Monterey County Malbec!

RECIPE

GRILLED PORK CHOPS *with Fresh Nectarine Salsa*

Ingredients:

2	nectarines, pitted and diced
1	ripe tomato, seeded and diced
¼ cup	diced onion
2 tablespoons	chopped fresh cilantro
2 tablespoons	fresh lime juice
¼ teaspoon	crushed red pepper flakes, or to taste
1 teaspoon	ground cumin
1 teaspoon	chili powder
2 tablespoons	olive oil
8 (4 ounce)	boneless pork loin chops
	salt and ground black pepper to taste

Method:

Preheat an outdoor grill for medium-high heat. Lightly oil grate, and set 4 inches from the heat.

To make the salsa, place the nectarines, tomato, onion, cilantro, lime juice, and red pepper flakes in a bowl; toss to blend. Season to taste with salt. Cover, and refrigerate 30 minutes to blend flavors.

Stir the cumin, chili powder, salt, and pepper together in a small bowl. Place the olive oil in a small bowl. Brush the pork chops with oil, and season both sides evenly with the cumin mixture.

Place pork loin chops on the preheated grill. Cook until lightly browned and juices run clear, about 4 minutes on each side. Place pork chops on serving plates, and top with a generous spoonful of salsa.



VISITING Varietals



VIOGNIER

Pronunciation: vee-oh-NYAY

Viognier is a full-bodied white wine that originated in southern France. Most loved for its perfumed aromas of peach, tangerine and honeysuckle, Viognier can also be oak-aged to add a rich creamy taste with hints of vanilla. If you love to brood over bolder white wines like Chardonnay, Viognier is definitely something you'll like to swirl.

Viognier is for those who love to stop and smell the flowers. Viognier ranges in taste from lighter flavors of tangerine, mango and honeysuckle to creamier aromas of vanilla with spices of nutmeg and clove. Depending on the producer and how it's made, it will range in intensity from light and spritzy with a touch of bitterness to bold and creamy. If you like Chardonnay you'll like the weight of Viognier and notice it's often a little softer on acidity, a bit lighter and also more perfumed.

On the palate, the wines are typically dry although some producers will make a slightly off-dry style that embellishes Viognier's peachy aromas. Viognier wines are almost always noted for an oily sensation on the middle of the tongue which is a characteristic of wines made with this grape. The drier styles come across less fruity on the palate and deliver subtle bitterness almost like crunching into a fresh rose petal.

The trick to pairing foods with Viognier wine is to fully respect its delicate floral notes and medium acidity. Thus, as a general rule, focus on embellishing and expanding the wine's core flavors while making sure that the foods you pair with it aren't too acidic or bold. A great example might be to match a bolder weight Viognier from Monterey with chicken tangine with apricots and almonds served over a saffron rice. The aromas in the dish should heighten the fruit flavors and creaminess in the wine.

CHEESE

Varietals



GORGONZOLA

Gorgonzola may be one of the best known of the Blue Cheeses, along with Roquefort. Gorgonzola is a cow's milk Italian cheese, whereas Roquefort is a sheep's milk cheese, Roquefort is crumbly; Gorgonzola is creamy, moist and buttery. It is not a cheese for the faint-hearted or weak-nosed! Protected by name, Gorgonzola can only be made in the provinces of Lombardy and Piedmont. As with Fontina Val D'Aosta, Gorgonzola has its own consortium of producers to oversee production and ensure all D.O.C. regulations are followed.

The younger versions are mild in flavor, but strong in aroma. The more aged versions are strong, pungent and assertive both in flavor and aroma. The interior of the aged version is also whiter, with more pronounced blue veining. Originally the blue-green veining of Gorgonzola occurred naturally in the damp caves where it was aged. Today demand for the cheese is so great that modern techniques had to be introduced to speed up the development of the the mold and thus the veining process.
















The cheeses with the most blue-green veining are considered premium Gorgonzolas (premium in price too!) So the cheeses are pierced to allow oxygen to enter. This is true for all commercial blue cheeses made today. Though most Gorgonzola is aged for 6 months or more, there are younger versions available. The cheeses are formed into large 18 to 26 lb. drums, 9 inches high by 14 inches in diameter. The cheese is always wrapped in foil because the rind is relatively fragile. Each producer will have his own foil color and label design.

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