

AN INTRODUCTION TO ARGENTINA

of Acres

210,639 ha

Major Regions

Mendoza 143,764, San Juan 48,869 (Centre West)

Latitude

25 - 45 South

Harvest

1999 12, 681,000 litres

Note:

White Wine Sales	Pedro Gimenez, 20,405, Moscatel de Alejandria, 10.075, Torrontes Riojano 9.857, Torrontes Sanjuanino, 4.666, Chenin 4,284, Ungi Blanc, 3.174, Chardonnay 1.859
Red Wine Sales	Bonarda 12,013,, Malbec 9,777, Tempranillo, 5.255, Cabernet Sauvignon, 3.625, Sangiovese, 2,892, Merlot, 1.761
Consumption	90 down to 40

The first vines planted in Argentina were planted in Santiago del Estero about 1554 by Jean Cidron, a priest belonging to the Order of Our Lady of Mercy who had been asked to come from La Serena, Chile, to take over as the local parson. In those times priests were under the necessity of obtaining wine for the Catholic Mass liturgy; that was the origin of the first wine in Argentina. Some years later Father Cidron, together with the second founder of Mendoza, Jean Jufre (the first one had been Pedro de Castillo), introduced the first vines in that region; now the province of Mendoza is the most important grape producing region. By the end of the 16th century, vineyards had spread and there was a powerful winemaking industry. Towards the middle of the 18th century, the product began to be sent to Buenos Aires, the principal consuming centre.

The first important improvement to viticulture was made with the Governor of Cuyo, Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, summoned a French Agronomist, Miguel Aime Pouget. He was an illustrious citizen exiled in Chile for political reasons, and was hired to run the Quinta Normal de Agricultura in Mendoza. Pouget introduced the first Malbec plants – the kick-off for the grape that would come to dominate Argentinean red wine and be the pride of the country's winemaking industry.

In 1885, the start of the railway between Mendoza and Buenos Aires (Ferrocarril Buenos Aires al Pacifico) led to a constant increase in traffic and the increased Spanish and Italian immigration, with a tradition of meal-time wine consumption, to Buenos Aires built the demand for Mendoza wine. Numerous wineries were started in the last quarter of the 19th century and many of them are still in operation.

After world war one, Argentine wines increased in quality with the importation of Spanish, French and Italian vines. By the 1970s, Argentina was the fourth largest producer of wine in the world. Large is not necessarily better, and most of the wine was simply massive production for current consumption.

Wine Producing Areas:

Calchaqui Valleys 1,500 ha

- located at the north end of the country, at 25° Latitude and 1,500 m above sea level. White wines are best.

Famatina Valleys 7,000 ha

- located in La Rioja, 29° S at 935 m above sea level. This is a zone 5 in terms of heat.

Tulum Valley 45,500 ha of vine in 9,000 vineyards

- in the province of San Juan, between 31 and 32° S and 630 m above sea level.

North Mendoza

- a low altitude area at 600 – 700 m above sea level.

High Rio Mendoza 30,000 ha of vines and 360 wineries.

- 33° S latitude in the foothills of the Andes as 1,060 to 650 meters. This is the most important region for fine wine production. The climate is temperate and arid; rains, cloudiness and humidity are limited and winds moderate. This is region III and IV (1,850 to 2,100 degree days).

East Mendoza 60,000 ha

- located at 32° S, and at elevations of up to 750 m above sea level, this plain produces the majority of table wine and is showing considerable progress in cultivation management and technical improvements.

Uco Valley

- located Southwest of Mendoza

South Mendoza 29,500 ha of vines and 6,300 vineyards

- between 34.5° S and 35° S at the foothills of the high mountain range; 800 m to 450 m altitude

Rio Negro

- 39° S and the lowest elevation at 300 m. Region II, (1,657 degree days).