

Viva Argentina

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part II - more Mendoza

From Tupungato, to Luján de Cuyo, to Eastern Mendoza.

Mendel

A new name on the Mendoza map, but one that comes with a fantastic pedigree, Mendel is a partnership between Annabelle Sielecki and Roberto de la Mota, one of Argentina's most experienced and talented winemakers. I last interviewed Roberto several years ago, when he was in charge at Cheval des Andes. Roberto suffered severe spinal injuries in a near-fatal car crash in 2007, and it was a joy to see him looking so well and full of enthusiasm for his new project. Founded in 2003, Mendel is an estate who's vineyard in Lujan de Cuyo is 80 years old. It was finding the vineyard that was Annabelle's inspiration to start Mendel, and she immediately approached Roberto to be winemaker and partner in the venture. The vineyard consists of just 22 hectares of Malbec and three of Cabernet Sauvignon, though it is also studded with ancient olive trees. Formerly belonging to a farmer who sold his grapes to big wineries, under the new regime the yield has been cut by almost two-thirds. This is a firmly 'boutique' operation, aimed at the highest quality levels. The beautiful little winery was abandoned when they bought the property, but is now fitted out very carefully and pragmatically, with gravity fed movement of grapes and must, all stainless steel tanks and one pneumatic press. There is enormous potential here. Prestige Agencies is the UK agent for Mendel.



the wines

These notes accompany our in-depth feature on Argentina. There is fantastic potential here. As the vineyards are brought into better and better balance, the progression in quality through the first three vintages is absolutely obvious. Stockists of Mendel wines include Jeroboams, The Wine Society and Playford Ros.

Mendel Malbec 2006

Bottle for one month. Seductive nose of creamy, very ripe blackberry and plum fruit, with a sheen of Cedary, quite exotic spice and a touch of dark, chocolaty violet. The palate has a beautiful delineation of that pure, intense, compact and powerful fruit, with a wrapping of liquorice and plumskin, such elegant plummy tannins and really taut cherry skin acidity. Fantastic length and focus. **93/100**. Around £12.00.

Mendel Malbec 2005

20% of this vintage did not see oak, rest a split of new and second fill. Has a beautifully lifted, cherry and floral note before that blue/black intensity and concentration of fruit and just a touch of briar and spice. Silky, pure, flooded with black fruit and pastille quality. The palate falls away slightly, the tannin and acidity becoming slightly pronounced in the finish, but that lovely purity is there. **90/100**

Mendel Malbec 2004

45% tank, 55% new barrel (had no old oak). Slightly more briary and earthy, without quite the fruit svelteness. The palate has a chewy but ripe, black cherry fruit concentration. Very powerful with a thick, liquoricy stripe of tannin and extract. Very powerful, but just lacks the finessing elegance of the 2006, but excellent. **90/100**

Mendel Unus 2006

70% Malbec, 30% Cabernet Sauvignon. Always with 100% new Taransud oak. Lovely deep, muscular black fruit with a huge concentration of plummy black fruit and intense Sandalwood spice. A background of coffee. The nose is concentrated and really sumptuous, with a flood of fudge and chocolate-edged black fruit. The tannins are very tight and pure, with a plum skin, bittersweet grip. Very fine balance and succulent but crisp character, the spice and smokiness of the oak adding warmth and depth. **94/100**

Mendel Unus 2005

65% Malbec, 35% Cabernet Sauvignon. Toasty and deep, with a very pure cassis note. A touch gamy and earthy. The palate has huge concentration without over extraction, giving a ripe, pure, cassis and black cherry. Very liquoricy but tight and svelte tannins and acids, and a lovely mouthfilling wine that also has freshness and a tangy bite. Very good. **92/100**

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