

Discerning Drinker: Mad for Malbec

12 April 2012

by Andrew Neather



**Mendel Lunta Malbec 2009, Mendoza
(Majestic, £12.99, or £9.99 each when you
buy two or more)**

From old vines in the Luján de Cuyo sub-region of Mendoza, this is wine to lose yourself in. Deep, rich, opulent, with generous oak: even with its balancing acidity, it's not that subtle but very attractive nonetheless. One of a range of Argentinian malbecs available to taste in Majestic stores from tomorrow, for one week only.

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The designation of next Tuesday as World Malbec Day would normally be of no more significance than other such marketing wheezes — were it not for the fact that this is an Argentinian wheeze, and this month marks the 30th anniversary of the start of the Falklands war.

Quaffing Argentinian malbec is certainly an agreeable gesture towards better Anglo-Argentinian relations, strained as they are just now. Indeed, Kent winery Chapel Down has taken the idea further, air-freighting over grapes from Mendoza to make just 1,300 bottles of the first ever Anglo-Argentinian wine, Chapel Down Malbec 2011. You can buy it at the winery and in branches of Gaucho restaurant. Or you could just open one of the following and drink for peace.

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Terrazas de los Andes Selection Malbec 2008, Mendoza (Majestic, £11.99, or £9.99 each when you buy two or more)

Terrazas is Moët & Chandon's Argentinian operation, so named because its vineyards are at over 1,000m — not especially high for Mendoza, but far higher than most European vineyards. This is rich and smooth with pretty hefty oak and solid tannins.

The Society's Exhibition Mendoza Malbec 2009 (Wine Society, mail order only from thewinesociety.com, £9.95)

From the Wine Society's excellent Exhibition range, this is made by Catena Zapata, one of Argentina's most illustrious producers. Made from 85 per cent malbec from three different sites; the balance is petit verdot and cabernet franc. Sweet and lush yet balanced — and not as big as some, either.

Harvey Nichols' Malbec 2010, Valle de Uco, Mendoza (£9.50)

Made by top producer O Fournier in the Valle de Uco sub-region, this is big, gamey and rich, almost chocolatey, but with good acidity.

Kaiken Limited Selection 2009, Mendoza (Majestic, £9.99, or £7.49 each when you buy at least two).

This is mostly malbec plus some bonarda and petit verdot, helping give its lush berry fruit a nice balance of acidity and tannins.