

FABULOUS FOOD & WINE

Malbec And Locro: Celebrating The Flavors Of Argentina

by Ernesto Bajda

(NAPSA)—Over the years, many immigrants have made a new home for themselves in Argentina—and the Malbec grape is no exception.

In 1852, the Argentine government hired French agricultural engineer Michel Pouget to advance the country's farm economy. By uniting France's Bordeaux-born Malbec grape with the high-altitude region of Mendoza, he helped to write a new chapter in Argentina's winemaking tradition.

Pouget believed the abundant sun, mountain snowmelt and cool nights that are characteristic of Mendoza would bring Malbec and Argentina the credit they both deserved—and he was right.

Since its arrival in Argentina, the Malbec grape has adapted to the intense sunlight and dry climate by developing a thicker skin to protect its berries. The grapes grow smaller clusters, which focus more of the vine's energy into fewer grapes.

The increasing complexity that Malbec continues to achieve in the high-altitude vineyards of Mendoza has helped to propel Argentina's wine culture to worldwide acclaim.

To showcase the ultimate expression of the Argentine vineyard, here at Don Miguel Gascón Winery, since 1884 we have been crafting Malbec wines that have an intense violet, deep purple color and soft, round tannins, exhibiting rich aromas of dark fruits with velvety flavors of chocolate, cocoa and mocha.

The finest grapes are hand selected from cool, high-altitude vineyards in the prestigious Uco Valley and Agrelo regions of Mendoza for Reserva Malbec.

This wine is a rich, signature-style Malbec, aged a minimum of



The Malbec grape has been used to create the signature wine of Argentina. Here, it's paired with Locro—a national dish.

one year in oak barrels to impart just the right amount of complexity. Burgeoning with distinctive dark fruit flavors and aromas, its final notes of brown spice and oak combine to create a firm, persistent finish.

In the 1940s, we became the first winery in Argentina to bottle a pure Malbec varietal wine, and have been instrumental in bringing Argentine Malbec to worldwide prominence ever since. The winery still operates on the same site where it first opened its doors more than 125 years ago.

When the weather turns cooler, one of my favorite things to do is prepare Locro, a thick hearty vegetable and meat stew, and serve it to good friends—accompanied, of course, by our Don Miguel Malbec. It is the essence of Argentina.

Locro

- 1 can (15 oz.) of whole corn, drained**
- ½ can of butter beans**
- 1 pound of either sirloin or skirt steak**

- 1 pound of lean pork spareribs**
- 1 pound of lean pork roast**
- ¼ pound bacon**
- 2 links chorizo sausage**
- 4 summer squash**
- 3 garlic cloves**
- 2 bay leaves**

- For the sauce –“Sofrito”**
- 1 onion**
 - 2 Tbsp. red bell pepper**
 - 4 Tbsp. butter**
 - 2 Tbsp. paprika**
 - ½ tsp. cumin**
 - Salt to taste**

Sprinkle the spareribs liberally with salt. Cut the beef and pork into medium pieces, the chorizo into thick slices and bacon into small pieces. Cut the summer squash into cubes. Bring 8 cups water, with added salt and bay leaf, to a boil, reduce heat, add the corn and simmer. Add in the squash, garlic, minced bacon, spareribs and pork. Continue simmering for 10–15 minutes. Remove any foam that rises above the broth with a slotted spoon and stir occasionally. Add in the chorizo, beef and beans and continue at slow boil for 30 minutes, adding water if necessary. Salt to taste (usually this dish is not very salty). The total cooking time of Locro is about 50–60 minutes.

For the sauce:

Chop the onion. Heat the butter in a skillet. Sauté the onion, add the red pepper, paprika, cumin and salt. When serving, add a tablespoon of sauce to each bowl.

Serves 6 people.

Ernesto Bajda is the Don Miguel Gascón Winemaker.

To learn more, visit www.gasconwine.com.