

VINO ARGENTINO

An Insider's Guide to the Wines and Wine Country of Argentina

Part of the fourth generation of an Argentine-Italian winemaking family, Laura Catena's résumé reads as follows: daughter of the so-called Godfather of modern Argentinean wine; dedicated wife and mother; emergency room physician in San Francisco; president of Bodega Catena Zapata; owner of her own wine label called LUCA; and now author of the quintessential guide to everything one might want to know about Argentinean wine, food, travel and the lifestyle that goes with it.

Out this October from Chronicle Books, and just in time to celebrate the fact that Argentina recently surpassed neighboring Chile as the leading South American wine exporter to the United States, *Vino Argentino—An Insider's Guide to the Wines and Wine Country of Argentina* (\$27.50) offers anyone intrigued by Argentina's burgeoning wine lifestyle a look into the personalities, cuisine and various wines and terroirs that have propelled Argentina to the forefront of New World wine.

With a foreword by Jay Miller of the Wine Advocate and myriad eye-catching photos by Sara Remington, *Vino Argentino* takes readers through Catena's home province of Mendoza and its various subzones as well as to southerly Patagonia and northerly Salta. Along the way are profiles of key wine personalities like her father Nicolás, the traveling American winemaker Paul Hobbs and locals including Roberto de la Mota and José Alberto "Pepe" Zuccardi; a primer on Malbec, Argentina's hallmark grape variety; and recipes for classic Argentine foods such as empanadas, milanesas (fried veal cutlets) and rib eye steak with chimichurri.

The book also spells out Argentina's wine history and takes us to the roaring present, where annual wine export numbers have been climbing by 30 to 40 percent per year and nearly a half million Americans annually are visiting Argentina to experience Buenos Aires, the "Paris of South America," as well as Mendoza, the heart of Argentina's booming wine industry.

"This book is my personal invitation for you to visit and experience my country, Argentina," writes Catena in her introduction. And after reading through the book's 240 pages, you too may feel as though it's time to pay a visit to Mendoza, what Catena terms the "land of sun and wine."

—MICHAEL SCHACHNER



DRINK LIKE AN EMPEROR

When it came to wine, Napoleon coveted the bubbly and the sweet.

Wine-loving Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte once said, "In victory you deserve Champagne; in defeat you need it." Vinophiles interested in reliving Bonaparte's famous (and infamous) past can still drink like he did. Historians agree he had three favorite wines, all of which are still being made: Moët & Chandon Champagne, South Africa's Vin de Constance and the wines of Chambertin, from the Burgundy region of France.

Napoleon's first recorded shipment of Moët & Chandon was in 1801, and he made many visits to the Champagne house in Épernay over the years. A plaque at the entrance of the cellars reads: "...The Great Emperor of the French toured these cellars guided by Mr. Jean Remy Moët, 26 July, 1807." Bonaparte also loved Chambertin wines, claiming that "nothing makes the future look so rosy as to contemplate it through a glass of Chambertin."

During his final exile on the island of St. Helena, Napoleon had nearly 300 gallons of Vin de Constance, the sweet, nutty dessert wine of South Africa's Constantia region, shipped to him yearly. On his deathbed, Napoleon refused all other food and drink offered him, requesting only a single glass of Vin de Constance. Adam Mason, head winemaker at Klein Constantia, recreates the sweet nectar with an awareness of the historical tradition of this great wine. For more information on the wines, go to moet.com, kleinconstantia.com and burgundy-wines.fr.

—M.D. & J.J.



GEEK Speak

PUNT

"Punt" is the trade term for the indentation at the bottom of a wine bottle. Also called a kick-up, its actual purpose is a subject of ongoing debate among oenophiles. There's any number of theories: depending on who you ask, a punt's purpose is to snag sediment, bend light for shelf appeal, create volumetric deception to convince consumers they're getting more wine or simply stabilize the bottle on the table. Others attribute a practical purpose: to notch onto pegs fitted on bars and bottling lines to hold bottles in place—leaving one to wonder which came first, the kick-up or the peg. The most likely story, however, is that it's a matter of nostalgia, a residual homage to the dimple inevitably created when bottles were hand blown. —E.J. KELLEY

