

Move over Mendoza...Malbec gets juicy up north!

California's Clay Station Vineyards produces mouth-watering Malbec befitting of its European and South American roots



Clear a spot on the harvest table! Clay Station Vineyard's lush, ripe Malbec is a seasonal standout for fall. Whether you're en route to a football game or a holiday gathering, this Malbec is ready to open up and share its worldly heritage.

Originally a blending grape in Bordeaux, Malbec became known as the legendary "black wine" due to its dark skin and firm tannins. Its hearty, blackish-purple berries grow well in Argentina and the Pacific Northwest. In just the past three years, the number of acres of Malbec planted in California increased 20% from 862 to 1065; yet this represents only 0.2% of all wine grape acreage in the state demonstrating how it is growing in population, albeit slowly¹. By 2015, experts predict that Malbec will achieve a popularity and nobility similar to its fellow classic Bordeaux grapes². Clay Station

Vineyards is on-board with this trend, producing uncommon varietals, like Malbec, in the emerging appellation of Lodi, California.

This is the second vintage of Malbec produced by Winemaker Tim Wong who crafts a likeable, aromatic wine from 7 and 9 year-old vines. The winery sources its Malbec grapes from local growers, and is one of the few wineries in California to bottle the grape singularly, rather than using it for blending. The 2002 Malbec was aged for eight months in small American and French oak barrels, then blended with 7% Petite Sirah - a grape known for body and firm tannins.

Deep purple in color, the 2002 Clay Station Malbec exudes aromas of warm earth, mushrooms, and green shoots. On the palate, it surprises: ripe plum and raspberries meld together in a velvety chocolate *tartine* finish. Clay, gravelly soil, rich in minerals from the Sacramento Delta River imparts a silky, layered texture in the wine. Try Clay Station Malbec with braised beef and hearty risottos. Enjoy it by the fireside or be adventuresome with your festive, fall pairings...this is a wine that takes you beyond the ordinary.

¹ 2003 Grape Acreage Bulletin, California Association of Winegrape Growers

² Food & Wine magazine, October 2004, pg. 124

93% Malbec, 7% Petite Sirah
5000 cases
Suggested Retail Price: \$12.99

Challenge Your Readers to Malbec Trivia!

Which of these grapes is sometimes used in red Bordeaux wines?

- a) Zinfandel
- b) Malbec
- c) Syrah
- d) Pinot Noir

Answer: b) Malbec

In 18th century Bordeaux, Malbec was often blended with the more famous Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot grape varieties, as well as Petit Verdot. Today, very little is now grown in the region, and it can more often be found to the south in Cahors and to the north in France's Loire valley. This grape's flavors can mimic Cabernet Sauvignon in density and tannin, though it can also be rounder and softer.

Which of the following regions is famous for its Malbec?

- a) Washington State
- b) Australia
- c) Argentina
- d) Austria

Answer: c) Argentina

Argentina is one of the few places that produces wines purely from Malbec grapes, without blending with other grapes. The Argentinean region of Mendoza produces some wonderful Malbec wines. Malbec is also popular in France where it's often blended with other grapes in France's Bordeaux region, the Loire, and in Cahors.

True or False:

In Argentina, the name for Malbec is Mendoza.

Answer: False

In Argentina, this grape is also called Malbec. Mendoza is a region in Argentina that produces most Argentinean wines. If you like Malbec, you'll have an easy time with Argentinean wine labels -- just as in the U.S., the labels feature the main grapes featured in the wine. Malbec was originally imported to Argentina from Bordeaux over 100 years ago, but it has made quite a home in this region, producing lovely, high-quality wines. Now California's Lodi region is making a home for Malbec as well.

Extra 'Lodi' Credit!

The Lodi wine region is located nearest:

- a) Santa Barbara

- b) San Francisco
- c) Santa Cruz
- d) Santa Ana

Answer: a) San Francisco

Lodi is located near the San Francisco Bay, east of San Francisco and near the foothills of the Sierra Nevada. This area features a classic Mediterranean climate with warm, dry summers and cool winters. The Lodi appellation was approved in 1986, allowing wine lovers to look for the name of Lodi when selecting wines.

** Questions courtesy of WineSmarts, the question and answer cards that make learning about wine easy and fun. www.smartsco.com **