

## Celebrate Malbec World Day with These Argentine Reds

Written by Jacqueline Coleman, BT Contributor  
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### Red, white, and you: Agreeable wine for \$12 or less

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One of my favorite wine holidays happens every year in April. All proper wine lovers should know that April 17 is Malbec World Day, and a day that is widely celebrated in the country that has put Malbec on the map: Argentina.

Because we have many Argentines living here in South Florida, it's only fitting that we commemorate this day and party like a real wine-o Argentino. Plus it means having an excuse to drink all the Malbec we want on a Tuesday this year.

Argentina loves wine so much that it was designated as the country's National Drink by the government back in 2010, and Malbec is certainly the flagship grape of this beautiful *pais*.

A "must-drink" with *lomo a la parilla*, Malbec is a big red wine that varies in its expression but is usually noted by its deep purple color and the purple-blue it leaves on your lips and teeth after a few glasses. But don't let the possibility of purple wine lips deter you from indulging in a night of Malbec, because this wine has an exciting and lively personality you don't want to ignore, much like the country where it is produced.

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As someone who has traveled extensively across Argentina, I can attest to just how colorful the country is -- from the streets of La Boca in Buenos Aires to the red rock deserts surrounding the Salta wine region in the north. Similarly, Malbecs from Argentina are just as beautifully diverse. To try one is *not* to try them all. I experienced this even as I tasted this month's wines, all of which proved to be unique. Here are some notes on wines to try as we celebrate Malbec World Day.

Out of the six wines tasted, there were two overwhelming crowd favorites. The **2016 Diseño Old Vine Malbec**

and the young

**2017 Portillo Malbec**

displayed the best expressions of the varietal; each with deep purple hues and some smoky spice on the nose. Diseño even had a hint of bacon floating above the glass. In true New World fashion, these are fruit-forward wines, with dried cranberries and blackberries coming alive on the palate. The prize for a fuller body and longer finish goes to Diseño, but both would be a suitable accompaniment to a tenderloin on the grill.

**Bodegas Belgrano** makes a Malbec that hits you with a bold nose. Licorice and black pepper tease you with their intrigue before you even take a sip. Once on the palate, flavors of cocoa come first, bleeding into a fruit-forward jammy mix of strong mulled black and blueberries and some cranberry. At the lower end of the price spectrum, this wine has a decent structure and a bit of weight for a nice medium finish.

The **2016 Ruta 22** Malbec exhibited a lighter form of this grape, with a ruby red color in the glass. Fresh raspberries, cherries, and some blackberries dance around your tongue, but no tannins or acidity hold up the wine under pressure. I would save this wine for an afternoon aperitivo.

The winery behind the **2016 Don Miguel Gascón** Malbec has been making wine in Mendoza, Argentina since 1884. You may recognize the popular purple label. In the glass, Gascón has a beautiful magenta color, and notes of plum and mocha on the nose. This is a light Malbec that left me craving a bit more structure if I'm going to include it with a juicy steak dinner. The wine is very dry with mild tannins, which makes it a perfect choice for some cheese and charcuterie.

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For something a little bit different, try the **2017 Phebus MMC**. The MMC stands for “Malbec, Merlot, Cabernet.” Predominately Malbec, at 70 percent, and 15 percent each of Merlot and Cabernet Sauvignon, this wine seemed to have a bit more complexity than some of the other 100 percent Malbecs in the group. There was a strong structure associated with this wine, and low acidity and tannins. With more pepper and mineral scents wafting into the nose from the glass, the wine itself is still fruit-forward, with some plum and dark berries taking over inside the mouth.

In order to be listed as a single varietal in Argentina, a wine must contain 80 percent of that varietal, so Phebus MMC misses being labeled a Malbec by ten percent. However, at an economical level, this blend represents the country well.

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