

National Wine Days

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April 14th is designated as Tannat Grape Day and the 17th is World Malbec Day and so I will offer a few ways for you to celebrate them. Tannat originated in the South of France, but Uruguay considers it their national grape. I would love to offer you a version from this South American country, as we did import a selection and they sold out, but at this time shipping complications prevent us from restocking – however there is France.

I can assure you that the word carboxypyrananthocyanidins is not my attempt at April 1st humour, but they are an actual sign that microoxygenation has been used during production of a wine. This gradual and very controlled introduction of oxygen to the winemaking process was invented in France in 1991 with the purpose of softening tannins. As the name Tannat suggests, these wines can be quite tannic and besides this new practice, they are often blended with other grapes. Here are two examples.



Plaimont 'Héritage' Saint-Mont

Firstly **2016 Plaimont 'Héritage' Saint-Mont**, a blend of Tannat, Cabernet Sauvignon and Pinenc. Plaimont is made up of more than 800 wine-growing families, all with a common will: to develop their own homeland. Community is the guiding principle of their activities and is not limited to the sharing of know-how in the cultivation or production of wine: Plaimont supports local music festivals, renovation of cultural and historical buildings, promotion of wine tourism and research and conservation of local indigenous varieties. Saint Mont is an AOC wine region.

The Wine Enthusiast magazine describes this wine this way. "Juicy with ripe black fruits and generous tannins, this open wine will be ready to drink young. It offers a good balance of tannins, perfumed acidity and black-currant fruitiness. Drink the wine from 2019". \$18.90. Stock #9315.



Plaimont La Madeleine de Saint Mont

2016 Plaimont La Madeleine de Saint Mont a blend of Tannat and Cabernet Sauvignon is from a plot of vines – La Madeleine – that were the first to be planted after the phylloxera insect (a small, root-eating louse from North America) had decimated the vineyards of Europe. They date back to 1880. You probably know the formulae; old vines equals less fruit, old vines equals deeper and more complex root systems, more roots and less fruit equals more complex fruit and therefore more complex wine! All you need to prove this is taste the wine.

Again, going to the Wine Enthusiast, "from a small parcel of vines planted in the 19th century, this is a rich and impressively dense wine. It has layers of black fruits and tannins, both structured and topped with licorice and juicy blackberry flavors". 94/100. \$52.00. Stock #9318.



Georges Vigouroux 'Pigmentum' Malbec

As we move on to Malbec you perhaps expect for me to cross the ocean and end up in Argentina, but let's tarry for a moment in France as this is where Malbec all started, in the southern Cahors district.

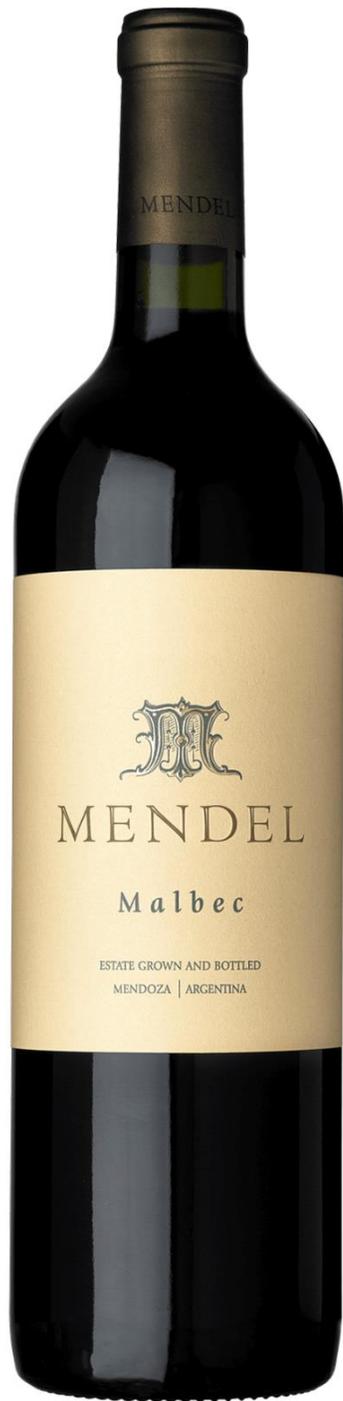
I like what Wine Curmudgeon has to say about **2017 Georges Vigouroux 'Pigmentum' Malbec**, "it's red meat wine – I drank it with a roasted lamb shank and white beans, and it was spot on. But it's also meatloaf and takeout chicken, the sort of thing for a middle of the week dinner. Because where would we be without wines like that"?

If you prefer a more traditional review, I give you the Wine Enthusiast. "Well balanced and full of ripe black fruits, this wine is made to be drunk young. Spiciness goes easily with the blackberry flavors and a final pinch of pepper. Drink now". \$19.75. Stock #7760.



Georges Vigouroux Chateau de Haute Serre

Staying with this magazine for their review of **2015 Georges Vigouroux Chateau de Haute Serre**, "Malbec blended with a total of 10% Merlot and Tannat gives a wine that is firmly structured. It comes from the heights above the River Lot, a magnificent chalk-soil vineyard. Rich in tannins and young black fruits, it is just beginning to develop. Drink from 2023. 92/100". \$36.00. Stock #7762.



Mendel Malbec

My wife and I had the very educational experience of standing, with a winemaker, amongst vines high in the foothills of Mendoza, Argentina. He showed us how to squeeze the grapes between our fingers and look for ripeness in the seeds to determine the harvest date. Rows of newer French clones had quite small fruit compared with other rows of plumper ones that had evolved over many years in Argentina. Something magic happens in the desert-like, direct sunlight that produces these renown wines of South America.

The Mendel winery was founded in 1928 in the sub region of Mendoza known as Lujan de Cuyo and their winemaker, Roberto de la Mota is highly respected. This is a quite new arrival for us, and we have their **2019 Mendel Malbec**. James Suckling, Parker's Wine Advocate and Vinous all rate it a fine 92 points, with the last one writing, "the 2019 Malbec Mendel comes from a vineyard first planted in 1928 in Mayor Drummond, Luján de Cuyo and was aged for 12 months in barrels, 1/3 of them new. A vivid purple in the glass, the perfumed nose offers aromas of prune and ripe fruit with sweet spices, white pepper, cedar and other notes from the aging process. In the mouth, it's terse with an expansive, tacky palate, good freshness and ripe, fruity flavors. A classical, well-rounded Mendoza red." **\$32.00. Stock #8922.**

I cannot leave Argentina without, once again, mentioning the name of the family that really started the modern, highly respected wine industry of this country. I should not take sides, but their **2019 Catena Malbec** is a standard go-to wine in our home. Soft texture, intense aroma, ripe red and dark fruits, delicate lavender with traces of vanilla and mocha, blueberries and blackberries – how can you lose. Robert Parker's Wine Advocate says, “the excellent and floral 2019 Catena Malbec shows the typicity of the grape, violets and red berries, and the freshness of the year. It has the textbook aromas and a soft and velvety mouthfeel, with very fine grainy tannins”. \$23.80. Stock #71116. Happy wine days.



Catena Malbec

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