

The Mendoza Wine Region.

(These notes are compiled and edited from various internet sources mostly Wine Searcher and Wine.com)

Mendoza Province, responsible for over 70% of the Argentina's wine production, is divided into several distinctive wine making sub-regions, including Luján de Cuyo and the Uco Valley. It is the source of some of the country's finest wines. Most large wineries are in the provincial capital of Mendoza.

For many wine lovers, Mendoza is practically synonymous with Malbec. Originally a Bordelaise variety brought to Argentina by the French in the mid-1800s, here it found success and renown that it never knew in its homeland where a finicky climate gives mixed results. Cabernet Sauvignon, Tempranillo, Syrah, Merlot and Pinot Noir are all widely planted here as well (and sometimes even blended with each other or Malbec). Mendoza's main white varieties include Chardonnay, Torrontés, and Sauvignon Blanc.

The pink-skinned grapes of Criolla Grande and Cereza account for more than a quarter of all planting. Criolla is used to produce deeply colored white wine. It is sometimes used to produce a light-colored rosé. The grape is rarely exported outside of Argentina where it is used to produce massive quantities of box and jug wines.

Vineyards are planted at some of the highest altitudes in the world, in the eastern foothills of the Andes, in the shadow of Mount Aconcagua, with the average site located 600–1,100 meters (2,000–3,600 ft) above sea level. Altitude is one of the most important characteristics of the Mendoza terroir. The strip of vineyard land that runs along the base of the Andes lies between 800 and 1200 meters (2600 and 3900 ft) above sea level, and it is this altitude that moderates the hot, dry climate of the region. The climate is dry and continental, presenting relatively few challenges for viticulturists during the growing season. Warm, sunny days are followed by nights made much colder by westerly winds from the Andes. This cooling-off period slows ripening, extending the growing season and contributing rich, ripe flavors to the grapes that do not come at the expense of acidity. There is barely any variation in climatic conditions from year to year, resulting in highly consistent quality of wines produced regardless of the year. Predictable harvests also afford Mendoza's winemakers the luxury of increased control over the styles of wine they produce – a factor which has contributed to the region's international reputation.

The soil of the Mendoza wine region is primarily alluvial composed of loose sand over clay. These rocky, sandy soils have little organic matter and are free draining, making them dry and low in fertility. This kind of soil is perfect for viticulture – vines are forced to work hard for hydration and nutrients, and will produce small, concentrated berries in lieu of leafy foliage. The wines produced from grapes grown on these soils are often highly structured, with firm tannins, and have a distinct minerality that is often attributed to the soil.

Mountain rivers provide ample water supplies from melted glaciers in the Andes. Nearly 17,000 wells provide the equivalent of an additional two rivers' worth of water flow. A system of irrigation channels, canals and reservoirs (some dating to the 16th century) help sustain viticulture in this semi-arid desert region. Irrigation is facilitated by the rivers that cross the region, including the Mendoza itself, which runs down from the mountains. Warm, dry harvest periods mean that winemakers can pick their grapes according to ripeness, rather than being ruled by the vagaries of the weather.