

ARGENTINE WINES

ARGENTINA VITICULTURE PRACTICES

With the wine growing regions being on the eastern side of the Andes the vineyards are sheltered from the cool moist air of the Southern Pacific Ocean. This creates ideal conditions for viticulture. It is a country where the unique terroirs and climates of each region produce wines that display remarkable changes in the characteristics of same grape varieties.

The vineyards in Argentina are found at altitudes typically around 900m (3000ft), but wine is made successfully from vineyards up to 2300m (7500ft) in the north. The reason for these high plantings is to increase the natural acidity and flavour of the grapes and to extend the growing season. The higher radiation at this altitude is believed to make photosynthesis more efficient and the plants healthier.

The vines are typically trellised vertically, either by normal tall wire or high overhead wire to minimise late frost damage on the budding shoots. Irrigation and pruning is used to keep yields low and fruit quality high. The irrigation of the vines is usually by the flood method, which helps keep phylloxera under control. The drip irrigation method used by some producers, has required grafting onto resistant root stock.

The mineral rich and pollution free water that filters down from the Andes together with lots of sunshine and little rain not only contribute to the terroirs, but also makes fungicide spraying rare and allows sustainable viticulture practices among producers.

Generally growers use sulphur for oedium and occasionally copper sulphite for mildew. In fact the biggest threat to the vines in Argentina is from hail damage so that a lot of vineyards have employed canopy protection mesh.

Producers in Argentina usually hand pick in the early mornings and handle the fruit gently throughout the wine making process with small 20-40 kg baskets.