



# ARGENTINA

## Bodega Norton

### Top Malbecs From Precision-Farmed Vineyards

Over the past decade, as the thirst among Americans for Argentine Malbec's rich, dark fruit flavors and supple texture has exploded, scores of new producers have rushed to enter the fray. As a result, quality has sometimes taken a backseat to marketing. But one old-line producer that has excelled and upped its game for the modern era is Bodega Norton.

Founded in 1895, Norton has been owned since 1989 by Austrian billionaire Gernot Langes-Swarovski, of the famed crystal company. Since 1991, his son Michael Halstrick has overseen the winery, pursuing an aggressive modernization program. A turning point came in 1997, when Norton bought a large tract in the prime Agrelo *terroir* near its winery in the Luján de Cuyo subdistrict of Mendoza, Argentina's heartland for prime Malbec.

"When we purchased the winery in 1989, we were the first outside family to buy in Argentina," explains Halstrick. "We choose Norton because there was a traditional winery with vineyards around it—a rare find."

Today, Norton harvests half of its fruit from 1,700 acres of estate vineyards and buys the rest from 150 growers. Except for a few prestige labels, its wines are made in

multiple thousands of cases, positioning Norton as one of the most widely distributed Argentine brands on the market. Veteran winemaker Jorge Riccitelli heads an experienced team, and joining him recently is the talented David Bonomi, formerly of Doña Paula.

Outside the cellar, they pursue precision farming in the vineyards, which are subdivided and managed as small plots with the help of satellite and aerial imagery. High-tech tools have helped this tradition-steeped winery move forward. Norton is now experimenting with plantings of Chardonnay and Pinot Noir in the higher altitudes of Patagonia, south of Mendoza.

—Kim Marcus

#### **Bodega Norton Malbec Agrelo Lote A-112** 2012 | 92 | \$35 | 500 cases imported

This is the third vintage of this varietal Malbec, sourced from 90-year-old vines in Agrelo. Sixteen months spent aging in new French oak barrels makes for a ripe red that oozes with dark fruit flavors.

#### **Bodega Norton Privada Mendoza** 2014 | 91 | \$26 | 21,000 cases imported

A blend of 40 percent Malbec, 30 percent Cabernet Sauvignon and 30 percent Merlot, this is well-structured, with muscular flavors of dried blackberry, dark plum and cherry tart.

#### **Bodega Norton Malbec Mendoza Reserva** 2014 | 90 | \$19 | 125,000 cases imported

A stalwart Argentine Malbec, with a long record of outstanding quality—and impressive production levels. This delivers a silky mouthfeel and plush flavors.



# CHILE

## Montes

### A Trailblazer Continues to Forge Ahead

Aurelio Montes has been on the cutting edge of Chilean winemaking for almost three decades. In 1988, with two partners, he founded what would become Viña Montes; before that, he worked in the cellars of such historic estates as Undurraga and San Pedro.

Today, his winemaking home is Viña Montes' state-of-the-art winery in the Apalta district of the Colchagua Valley, south of Santiago, in central Chile. Montes first bought land in Apalta 25 years ago, when the region was still largely unknown for wine. It has since become one of Chile's prime *terroirs* for high quality reds.

His top-of-the-line labels—Folly, Purple Angel, Alpha M and Alpha—routinely rate among Chile's best. A neighboring facility makes the Classic range of wines, which offers formidable value.

Montes' style combines easy-drinking approachability with firm structure and restrained tannins. He expertly farms more than 2,000 acres in Colchagua, where he has been a leader in sustainable viticulture, spearheading ways to reduce water consumption in the vineyards—an important goal in Chile's drought-plagued climate.

He has been a trailblazer in the nearby coastal appellation of Marchigüe, where Syrah thrives, and he excels with the distinctive variety Carmenère, as well as with Cabernet Sauvignon. Montes rarely misses the mark while making some of Chile's most elegant reds.

—K.M.



**Viña Montes Folly Santa Cruz**  
2012 | 93 | \$90 | 500 cases imported

Grapes for this Syrah are grown on very steep slopes at the Apalta estate, where the yields are less than 2 tons per acre. Rich and intense, with concentrated flavors of dark plum, raspberry and blackberry.

**Viña Montes Syrah Colchagua Valley Alpha**  
2014 | 92 | \$23 | 1,300 cases imported

Also from the Apalta estate, but from higher-yielding vineyards, this is blended with small amounts of Cabernet Sauvignon and Viognier, which give it a lithe texture and concentrated, brambly flavors.

**Viña Montes Purple Angel Colchagua Valley**  
2013 | 91 | \$85 | 15,000 cases made

A Carmenère-based red with a dollop of Petit Verdot, this is powerfully spiced, featuring dark fruit flavors.

**Viña Montes Cabernet Sauvignon**  
Colchagua Valley Classic Series  
2014 | 90 | \$13 | 50,000 cases imported

The vineyards for Montes' trademark red are rooted in soils rich with decomposed granite and clay. This shows a minerally freshness to the dark fruit and spice flavors.

**Viña Montes Carmenère Colchagua Valley**  
Alpha 2013 | 90 | \$23 | 900 cases imported

Filled with dark plum, dried berry and roasted cherry flavors, this rich red is made from grapes harvested from Montes' estate in Marchigüe.

## SOUTH AFRICA

### Mullineux

#### *A Love Story Spanning Three Continents*

This winery grew out of Chris and Andrea Mullineux's transcontinental love story. Chris, from South Africa, and Andrea, from California, crossed paths while on a wine trip in Champagne. As they pursued their careers in wine, they worked separate stints in Languedoc, the Rhône, Provence and California.

Andrea wound up in South Africa, while Chris returned to his homeland. Later, they joined up again at Tulbagh Mountain Vineyards (now known as Fable Mountain). The couple married in 2007 before leaving Tulbagh to start their own winery in 2009.

The Mullineuxs chose the relatively

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Andrea and Chris Mullineux

undeveloped Swartland region for their winery. Drawn by easier start-up economics as well as the area's old-bush-vine Chenin Blanc vineyards, they have acquired vineyards steadily while augmenting production with purchased fruit. Today the winery draws on 80 acres of vines (25 of which they own), and the focus is primarily on Syrah and Chenin Blanc.

Rather than producing single-vineyard wines, Mullineux opts for "single-terroir" wines—bottling grapes from the same soils, even if the parcels don't comprise a single block. For Syrah, Mullineux produces versions sourced from schist and a red gravel known locally as koffiekliip. Chenin Blanc, meanwhile, is sourced from granite, quartz and schist soils. The single-terroir wines are rare, with just a couple hundred cases of each produced. The portfolio is rounded out with some blends and a larger-production, value-priced line called Kloof Street.

Andrea handles winemaking, and Chris manages the vineyards. They are part of a younger generation of winemakers that has played a large role in fueling South Africa's recent qualitative surge.

—James Molesworth

**Mullineux Chenin Blanc Swartland Granite**  
2014 | 93 | \$88 | 208 cases made

This is the debut vintage for the Granite bottling, which offers the freshest profile of the winery's three Chenin Blancs. It features orchard fruit and verbena notes.

**Mullineux Chenin Blanc Swartland Quartz**  
2014 | 93 | \$88 | 100 cases made

This bottling straddles the racy and rich sides of the equation, with mirabelle plum and apple notes contrasted with lemon curd and shortbread flavors.

**Mullineux Syrah Swartland Iron**  
2013 | 93 | \$140 | 266 cases made

From koffiekliip soils, this delivers on its name, featuring a prominent iron spine. Cherry and plum fruit race throughout, backed by singed wood hints on the finish.

**Mullineux Chenin Blanc Swartland Schist**  
2014 | 92 | \$88 | 100 cases made

The most opulent of the three Chenin Blanc bottlings, with peach, ginger and sweetened butter flavors. Maintains good cut throughout the finish.

**Mullineux Syrah Swartland Schist**  
2013 | 92 | \$130 | 266 cases made

Think Côte-Rôtie and you'll get an idea of this wine. Tightly wound, with black tea and alder hints, this will take a little time for the cherry and raspberry fruit to unwind, but should be worth the wait.

**Mullineux Old Vines Swartland White**  
2014 | 91 | \$28 | 1,500 cases made

This blends Chenin Blanc with Clairette Blanche and Viognier, mixing fruit from shale-, schist-, granite- and iron-based soils.

**Mullineux Syrah Swartland**  
2014 | 91 | \$33 | 2,430 cases made

This bottling blends fruit from schist and koffiekliip soils, featuring velvety fruit flavors offset by a bright sanguine edge on the finish.