

2016 Uco Valley Malbec

TintoNegro, Mendoza, Argentina

Product details

Vintage:	2016	Drinking:	
Producer:	TintoNegro	Alcohol:	
Region:	Mendoza	Variety:	
Country:	Argentina		

About the producer

TINTONEGRO WINE

It's a long way from Nebraska to Mendoza, in every sense... the Argentinian province is far more mountainous, has a lot less by way of prairie and has far fewer Bruce Springsteen albums written about it. However, Omaha-born Jeff Mausbach has made Mendoza his home since the 1990s. He trained as a sommelier in Buenos Aires, set up a wine export business and then moved west to work for one of the leading wineries in the region, before setting up the TintoNegro winery.

His journey has been strongly influenced by two Argentinians. The first is a woman called Véronica he met on holiday in Italy while he was pursuing his Masters in International Relations (appropriately!). He eventually married her and they decided to raise a family in Argentina. At first, Mausbach worked in the restaurant business, but developed a passion for wine. He took a job as wine education director at Bodega Catena Zapata. For 15 years, he worked closely with the vineyard director, Mendoza native Alejandro Sejanovich, until the two of them decided to set up TintoNegro on their own in 2009.

As its name, which translates as "black wine", and its founders' previous jobs suggest, TintoNegro's focus is on Malbec. Argentina's famed red grape, with its quintessential inky hue, intense fruit and velvet smoothness is at its best grown at altitude in the foothills of the Andes. Sejanovic knows a thing or two about reaching the heights of this grape's possibilities, having been the man to plant Catena Zapata's 1,500m Malbec vineyard. Since 2013, Armit Wines has brought these wonderfully expressive examples of TintoNegro Malbec's variety to UK connoisseurs.

For TintoNegro, the partners have acquired vineyards with particularly interesting terroir, as well as negotiating access to fruit from other parcels in prime locations. Their vinification has taken place at various wineries around the region, all done by hand in the manner of craft winemakers. As their second label, Mano Negra, alludes to, they have been like a sort of Black Hand Gang, swooping into town, breaking the rules of winemaking and moving on. But their experimental techniques are simply used to reveal the true heart and soul of Mendoza Malbec.

TintoNegro's lead-off hitter is a Malbec from the Primeres Zones of Lujan de Cuyo and Maipu, southwest of the city of Mendoza. Altitudes range from 2,600' to 3,300' elevation. Lujan de Cuyo and Maipu have a deep soil profile with a clay loam texture. This terroir is an alluvial valley, with deep, dense clay loam soil which retains water and coolness. At relatively low altitudes (for the region, at least) of 800m to 1,000m, this land produces Malbecs with bright, upfront, silky fruit and a soft, supple texture with a spicy finish.

Alto Valle Malbec from the more vertiginous Uco Valley (up to 1,500m), deeper into the Andes, where the vines grow in rocky terrain with sand-silt soil, and cope with temperature changes between hot days and cool nights. This helps to retain bright,



natural acidity with dark cherry flavours and powerful floral aromatics, as well as greater structure and concentration.

TintoNegro's own vineyards are Finca La Escuela, in Paraje Altamira, and Vineyard 1955 in La Consulta. These premier plots allow them to craft intensely expressive and deeply complex examples of single-vineyard TintoNegro Malbec from exceptionally low yields.

Finca La Escuela is named after a school which still operates on the property, a link between the brand and the surrounding rural community. In the 7.5 hectare TintoNegro winery plot, there are four distinct soil types - limo (silt), piedra (stone), grava (gravel) and arena (sand). Each soil profile lends its own aromas, flavours and textures to the Malbec fruit grown there. There are also exceptionally limited-edition bottlings of wines from the individual soil types.

At the southern tip of the Uco Valley, Vineyard 1955 refers to the year in which this old-growth Malbec was planted. A shallow soil which combines silt, sand and limestone rocks, produces exceptionally low yields - often under 700g per vine - and lends surprising freshness, salinity and minerality to the Malbec, which otherwise has the expected concentration of fruit with a pleasingly elegant balance.

TintoNegro strays from Malbec with a 100% Cabernet Franc. As in the hilltops of St Emilion, the limestone-rich soil at 1,200m in the Uco Valley suits the varietal very well. The expression has intense floral aromatics, bright red fruit and chalky minerality.

And, while Mausbach and Sejanovich are undoubted Masters of Malbec, they are also keen to show off Mendoza and the Andes in all their glory - and that means planting the other great Argentinian grape, Torrontés. Inveterate mountain-lovers that they are, they have achieved this at an eye-watering 1,650m height in the Cafayate Valley in Salta Province, northern Argentina. The resulting white wine - released under their Manos Negras label - is fresh, with dancing floral aromas, zesty citrus flavours and a clean, finessed finish.

It seems that Nebraska's loss is the wine-drinking world's gain.

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