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Argentina's wine highways speak to heritage

From around the Web

Posted: Monday, Mar. 25, 2013

We started in San Juan Province, going first to Callia Winery and then to Graffigna, where Chief Wine Maker Gerardo Danitz, eager to answer even the dumbest question, fielded a tasting that could have doubled as Wine Wisdom 101. His patient explanations were an ideal send-off for what would be three days of tasting, spitting, tasting, sneaking a swallow here and there – for the strength to push on – and running out of adjectives to describe the infinite range of fruity, nutty flavors.

Heading south to Mendoza, we stopped first at Vistalba Bodega, wine czar Carlos Pulentá's show place, where most visits include both tasting and lunch at his much-acclaimed five-star restaurant, La Bourgogne. Then it was on to Tupungato Winelands to see recently planted vineyards and the new golf course; to Salentein and a culture museum; and finally to Zuccardi. Which is how we found ourselves in the dirt, discussing olive cultivation.

Until then I hadn't given much thought to immigrant history and the parallels between Argentina and the United States. But in most of the towns we saw, you could walk down the street and – except for the signs in Spanish – think you were at home. Both countries were settled by immigrants. Settling in places like Wisconsin, Iowa, Virginia and throughout Argentina, they saw what looked like empty land, and displacing or killing the indigenous tribes, claimed it.

Like Argentina's immigrants, Malbec grapes are also an import, brought from France. But it took Mendoza's sandy clay to create those tongue-tingling perfect fruity, nutty, oaky, you-name-it flavors. A wine bottle, tucked into my luggage for the return trip, would have been nice. But the custom-picked, personally selected, orchard-to-table olive oil made a better souvenir.

– Anne Z. Cooke and Steve Haggerty

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