

Malbec's status rising in Argentina

By Florence Fabricant, New York Times

In Argentina, where the malbec grape is king, winemakers have put a different and intriguing spin on what is usually known as a Bordeaux blend. Instead of the typical mix of Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc and Merlot, they are relying primarily on Cabernet and Malbec.

Malbec because it dominates the vineyards of Mendoza, the country's largest wine region. And Cabernet because making a top-of-the-line Malbec blend seems to beg for its cachet, especially if you have French partners.

"Cabernet Sauvignon has always been considered classier than Malbec," said Alejandro Vigil, the head winemaker at Bodegas Catena Zapata, a top Argentine producer based in a stunning Aztec-style winery in Mendoza with the high Andes in the background. "It's more noble, has more prestige and is more expensive."

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