

**STONE**

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Gouda is served with a spot of honey to complement the bold fattiness and bitter flavor of the cheese. Ruination paired well, as it is one of the bitterest beers Stone makes. At more than 100 IBUs, the intensity of this beer easily cut through the strong Gouda, with its complex aged flavors.

By the end of the meal, I took a scan of the dining room, and no one was not enjoying himself. The chatter was deafening, and the smiles were abundant. The scene was a perfect example of how properly pairing food and drink can turn a meal into a meal to remember! I took the time to thank the servers and our hosts from the Wine Vault and Stone Brewing for a wonderful evening. If you have never been to a beer dinner, you should take the time and experience one for yourself. You won't be disappointed! Cheers!

The Wine Vault & Bistro is located at 3731-A India St. For more information, visit [winevaultbistro.com](http://winevaultbistro.com).



Tony Clarke and his wife Liz own Airdale Brewing Company, located in San Diego. [airdalebrewing.com](http://airdalebrewing.com)

**This month's spotlight: Malbec**



**THE CORK BOARD**

By Ted Glennon | Special correspondent

Malbec, the leading red wine from Argentina, has exploded in recent years. Throughout San Diego a wide range of products from \$6.00 to \$250.00 a bottle can be found in wine shops and restaurants. The whole world seems to be participating in the latest "gold-rush," in the wine industry. Legendary Château Cheval Blanc, winemakers such Michel Rolland of Bordeaux and Paul Hobbs of Napa, and Master Sommelier Fran Kysela, among others have set up shop in Argentina and are crafting/importing some delicious juice. So what is Malbec? Why the buzz?

Malbec is a thin skinned black grape, displaying flavors of blackberries, black cherry Jolly Rancher, dried strawberries, orange peel, crushed gravel, roasted meat, sweet mushrooms, and sweet to dried herbs. In the glass, the wine's color is opaque purple-black with an electric pink rim. Malbec typically is high in acid, aged in French or American oak barrels, and awash in hedonistic fruit when young and subtle power after some time in bottle.

Malbec is one of the classic Bordeaux black grapes along with Merlot, Cabernet Franc, Cabernet Sauvignon, Petit Verdot and Carménère. Throughout the world, where Cabernet and

Merlot is planted, Malbec is sure to be found close by. Malbec is also an important grape for blending in the Loire Valley in France, where the grape is used in red and rosé wines, known locally as "Côt." Cahors, France's oldest recorded vineyard (50 BC) is a small appellation in the southwest of France. Cahors has long been a producer of Malbec dominated wines, the regions current regulations demand a 70% minimum of Malbec in red



Achaval Ferrer's Finca Altamira, one of Argentina's best wines.

wines. Malbec was at one point very popular in France and was grown in over 30 regions and has been known by hundreds of names.

In 1868, Professor Pouget introduced Malbec, Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot cuttings from Bordeaux to Argentina. Malbec has a thin skin with a very intense color, the ripe clusters are rather large and the individual berries are very full. Typically this low ratio of juice to skin would infer a simple wine, however in the high elevation vineyards of the Andes Mountain Range in the Mendoza region of Argentina the book on Malbec has been re-written. The Andes provide a rain-shadow effect, which results in the dry climate of Argentina as opposed the lush and wet climate of Chile. Pacific storms travel across Chile and slam into the Andes Mountains, dropping most of the storms' power on the Chilean side, keeping Argentina rather dry. This has resulted in the highest elevation vineyards in the world, dominated by sandy soils, which prohibit many pests and diseases. It is not uncommon to find old Malbec vines in this area planted on their native rootstock, an anomaly in the wine world.

I love Malbec with foods such as duck confit, roasted leg of lamb, hard cheeses, BBQ ribs, pepper crusted steaks and especially a great hamburger. Due to the wines richness and acidity (the tart or refreshing character) it is a joy to throw fatty, sticky



Malbec vineyard with the Andes Mountains in background

foods at it.

The real rock stars of Malbec in Argentina are the locals; look out for Luigi Bosca, Achaval Ferrer, Nicolas Catena, and Luca wines. All of the top producers release value offerings. If you get hooked; search for Achaval Ferrer's single vineyard wines; Finca Altamira and Finca Mirador, from La Consulta. The 2005 Finca Altamira is the single most stunning Malbec I've ever tasted, and is one of my favorite red wines of all time. Achaval Ferrer's wines are absolutely delicious and worth spending an evening contemplating.

Ted Glennon, is the Wine Director of *eNOlogy*, a modern wine tasting room at the Hotel Del Coronado. [www.hoteldel.com](http://www.hoteldel.com) [www.enowinerooms.com](http://www.enowinerooms.com)





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