

LEARN A BIT MORE ABOUT

# MALBEC



*Often regarded as a bit of an 'also-ran' in its home country of France, Malbec is enjoying phenomenal success in the New World. It's mainly associated with Argentina but canny South African producers are also seeing the potential, both as a blending partner and as a stand-alone variety. Is it just another black grape from Bordeaux, or is there more to this globetrotting grape?*

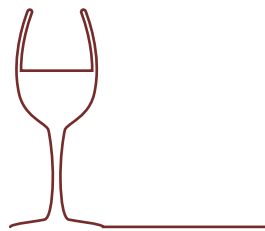
## WHERE DOES IT COME FROM?

Like the rest of the Bordeaux Big Five, Malbec tends to prefer a bit of warmth but not too much, which makes Stellenbosch the perfect setting for growing this grape. With plenty of cool sea breezes sweeping up from False Bay and lots of different folds and aspects in the surrounding mountains, expect to see not just increased plantings of Malbec coming from Stellenbosch in future, but also more Petit Verdot and Cabernet Franc as well.

### OPTIMAL SERVING TEMPERATURE:

15-20°C

\* according to wine.co.za



## WHAT DOES IT TASTE LIKE?

Again, Malbec isn't reinventing the Bordeaux black grape wheel here, showing lots of dense, dark, chewy black fruits and good levels of tannin. In addition to these more familiar flavours, however, it also has a distinctive perfumed edge to it – some say violets, some say lilies. This delicate fragrance adds bags of character and appeal to Bordeaux blends when young and as it ages, it turns more into a leathery, spicy kind of thing making it an excellent partner for meat – of which more, later!



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## WHAT ELSE SHOULD WE KNOW?

The home of Malbec nowadays is Argentina. It was originally grown both in Bordeaux and also the region of Cahors, just below Bordeaux in South West France where it still makes excellent, dark and dense wines, often labelled as 'Cot', a synonym for Malbec. But at some point in the mid-nineteenth century, some bright spark took this grape to Argentina and the rest, as they say, is history. A lot of research into the grape was done by Dr Nicolas Catena in Mendoza and it is largely owing to his diligence in identifying good soils and sites that Malbec has been

the Argentinian success it is today. Interestingly-enough, the clone of Malbec which was taken to Argentina then died out in Bordeaux during the phylloxera epidemic which devastated the vineyards in the late nineteenth century. What was replanted after that was subtly different and not very impressive. So now, following the Argentinian success, the Bordelais are starting to replant - this time using the original clones which have proven themselves so spectacularly in South America.

## WHAT SHOULD WE EAT WITH IT?

One word – meat! Argentina is famed for its beef, producing some of the world's finest steaks from cattle grazed on the pampas plains. Much of Argentina's wine is consumed locally alongside those steaks but a South African Malbec will pair just as well with our local beef and game. If you're not a meat-eater, try it with tangy, mature cheeses or softer, riper versions of the grape may even be able to handle classic veggies dishes such as eggplant parmigiana without too much difficulty.

