



# Sommelier Readings

A Review of “Exploring Wine Regions: Argentina” by Michael Higgins

By **ALEXIS CHABERT**      OCTOBER 18, 2016

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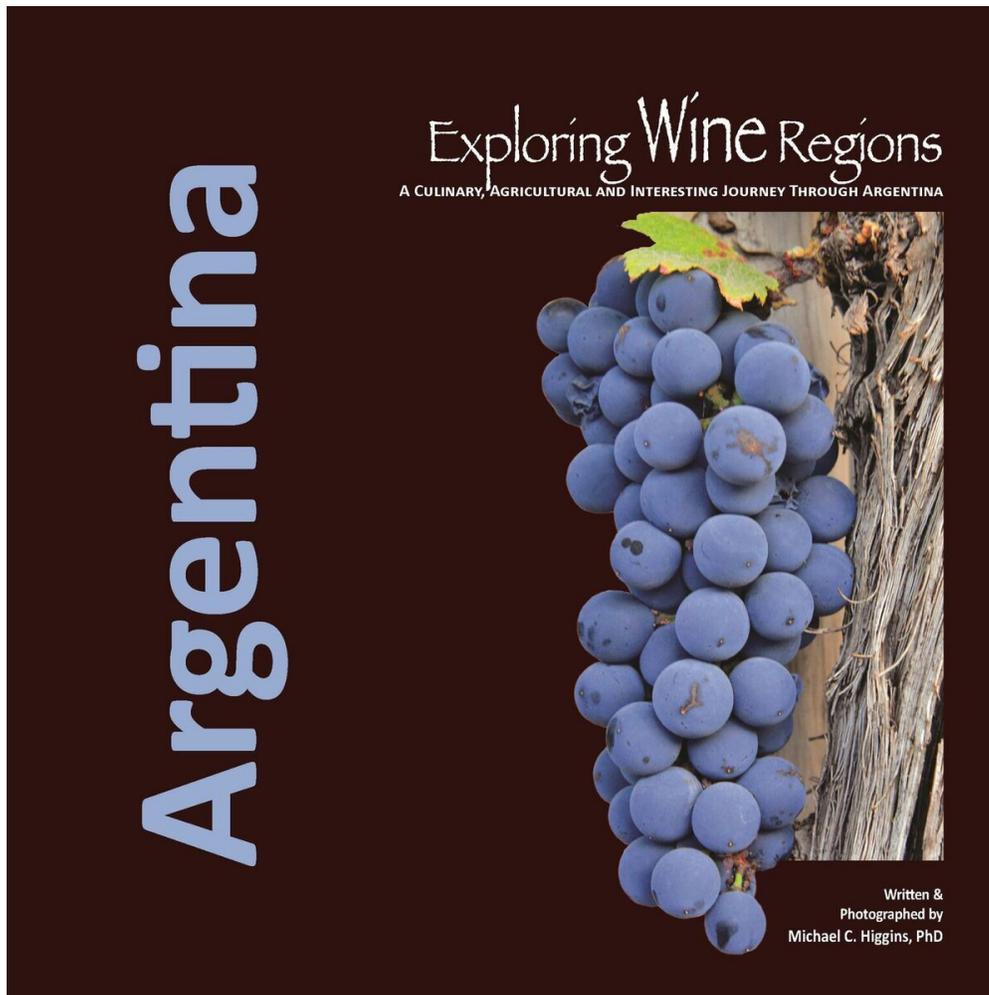
*Alexis Chabert, Sommelier at El Che Bar*

*Editor’s note: Alexis Chabert is the sommelier at El Che Bar (845 West Washington), an Argentinian-inspired bar and restaurant by John and Nicole Manion. Who better, we thought, to review a book about the wines of Argentina than a person who probably knows more about them than just about anyone else in Chicago?*

When I first opened Michael Higgins’ “Exploring Wine Regions: Argentina,” I was struck by the sheer beauty of the photography. Each page is filled with gorgeous photos of vineyards, landscapes, cellars, wineries and their rich viticultural tradition. With each flip of the page, I found myself drawn into their culture, their land—their art of wine making. I was immediately transported to Argentina.

I was pleasantly surprised to find that some of the selections Higgins highlights are wines that we feature on the list at El Che Bar. The Zorzal Terrior Unico is our most affordable Malbec on the list and also one of my favorites. I love it, because natural wine holds a spot near and dear to my heart. These wines just feel alive and special—they are authentic. This wine has so much going on—chocolate, coffee, plum and a textured minerality with so much vibrancy.

It's hard to believe the Michelini brothers have been making wine since only 2008. Torrontés is the most famous white grape coming from Argentina. Higgins notes that Torrontés is affectionately called "The Liar" by locals. A whiff and a sip and you'll know why. The Colome Torrontés, which we pour by the glass, is a wine that tells two tales: it offers a beautiful, aromatic nose; floral and spicy, but when you taste it, it's delicate and full of stone fruit and minerality. It has wonderful versatility.



Carmelo Patti is an Argentinian legend. I was fortunate enough to gain access to his wines just a month or so ago. On my wine list, I normally stick to one offering per producer, but when I was offered the opportunity to represent his Cabernet Sauvignon as well as his Gran Assemblage, I couldn't resist. The wines embody true passionate winemaking for the love of the game. The Gran Assemblage is a Bordeaux blend, very different from so many of the wines I have tasted from Mendoza: extracted, rich and full bodied with whopping tannins. It has great savory notes of herbs, cured meat and earth alongside fruit notes of ripe raspberries and plum. I once let this wine sit in a decanter for most of the afternoon, revisiting it periodically, and it just got better as the day went on. I even blind tasted the wine with neighboring sommeliers and they swore it was a Bordeaux!

"Exploring Wine Regions: Argentina" is a beautifully written, insider's guide to the wine regions of Argentina. Whether you're a wine professional looking to expand your knowledge, an avid Malbec enthusiast planning a trip to Argentina, or simply a fan of breathtaking photography looking for a new addition to your coffee table, this book is worth checking out.

Link to story: <http://www.boozemuse.com/2016/10/18/michael-higgins-exploring-wine-regions-argentina/>