



THE HARVEST REPORT

ARGENTINA
2021

► **THE 2021 HARVEST IN ARGENTINA**
A cool year that left its mark on the wines



Week 23 of the harvest. Almost all the grapes have been processed and those still left on the vines won't much alter the overall picture of a year that caused no little anxiety and required careful calculation and patience if the best results were to be achieved across the different regions of Argentina.

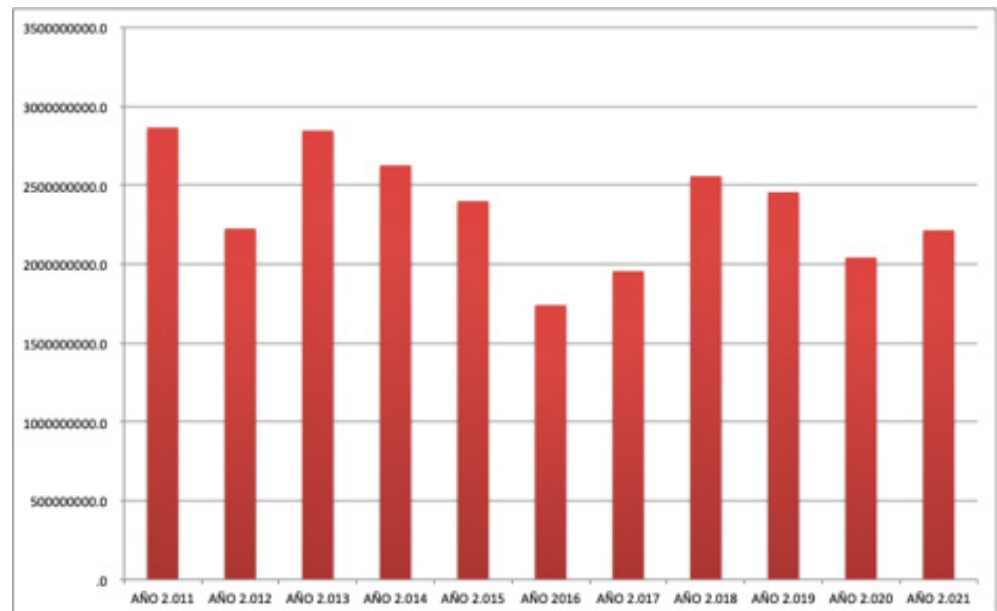
Calculation because the climate this year led to unusual grape ripening patterns across four fifths of the country where rain fell consistently throughout February. There were also fewer accumulated degree days leading to a compressed harvest in March and April.

Patience because the difficult conditions weren't suited to hasty decisions about the harvest and in many cases winegrowers simply had to trust that the plants' health wouldn't suffer. On the whole, the vines resisted the onset of fungus well as the showers of February passed and temperatures began to rise again in March as did the number of dry days. Consequently, white grapes stayed on the vine for longer than in other years and in some regions the harvest of white and red grapes overlapped one another.

With the exception of December, temperatures this summer were lower than average, by between 5 and 6% compared to the historical mean in the lower lying areas and as much as 15% higher up. Only one brief heat wave of temperatures higher than 35°C was recorded in January. To offer some more concrete examples: the meteorological station in Ugarteche, Luján de Cuyo, recorded temperatures 1.5°C lower than average in January and 1° lower in March. 'So long as the vines didn't succumb, leaving grapes in the fields for longer was rewarded with a more precise, subtler flavour profile,' says Martín Kaiser, Director of Production at Bodega Doña Paula before adding enthusiastically: 'This year I was able to harvest all the quality grapes with the fruit profile I was looking for.'

So, 2021 was a mixture of concern and patience that played out in the vineyards as a series of feints and withdrawals, working both fast and slow, requiring both experience and technical expertise.

Early indications suggest an excellent year for Chardonnay with ‘low alcohol and fruity expression,’ says Alejandro Vigil at Bodega Catena. ‘Malbec has a fruity freshness, less volume in the palate but greater precision,’ ventures Sebastián Zuccardi, especially in the higher regions. Cabernet Sauvignon, meanwhile, appears to have enjoyed a dream harvest in 2021 thanks to the conditions in April. Mariano Di Paola, who has 41 harvests under his belt, reports excitedly: ‘I’ve rarely seen such good quality Cabernet.’



Source: INV, Volúmenes acumulados de cosecha hasta la semana 23, serie 2011-2021

► THE VOLUMES HARVESTED

In statistical terms, by Week 23 (up to 9/5) the harvest looks in line with the average: 2.215 million kilos of grapes, less than in 2018 (2.386 m.) and a touch below 2019 (2.230 m), but more than 2017 (1.908 m) and 2020 (2.014 m). The number thus actually places it slightly higher than the average for the past decade (1.922 m).

Such results contradict the gloomy forecasts being made back in December which anticipated a drop in yield of as much as 25% below average due to harsh spring frosts (more on this below). But there are sound agricultural reasons for the harvest’s resilience: ‘We measured several indicators to determine what happened and it seems that, with two varieties especially, Malbec and Cabernet Sauvignon, productivity was greater than in previous years with a leaf to fruit ratio that was almost ideal,’ says Marcelo Belmonte, Director of Production at Grupo Peñaflor.

The fact that improved productivity made up for losses suffered during the frost overall shouldn't detract from the reality that eastern Mendoza and the plains of San Juan were hit hard: 'We lost up to 50% of the crop in some vineyards to the east of Mendoza,' says Vigil; the frost came when the buds were tender, with stalks at about 10 cm.

However, in general the climate, and specifically the 2020 frosts don't seem to have affected yields to a degree that might severely hurt the bottom line.



Degree days and rainfall

To get an overall qualitative and quantitative picture of the 2021 harvest, we need to start with the end of the 2020 harvest. Last year's harvest started early, rocked by the severely dry season that necessitated bringing forward harvest dates. Marcelo Canatela, the agricultural engineer at Clos de Los Siete, suggests that this was the first important factor in producing the good yields seen in 2021: 'April 2020 saw little rainfall and no harsh early frosts ensuring a good build-up of reserves during the post-harvest season, which was then reflected by good budding in spring.'

Spring 2020. The season was cold and the accumulation of hours also led to even, bountiful budding. On 5 October, however, in the lower areas of Mendoza and San Juan and also in Patagonia, a severe frost fell, brought by a polar front following a few days of the warm, *zonda* wind that had raised temperatures and dried out the environment. Thermometers plunged to -5°C for several hours of the night and losses were severe but localized. 'The frost hit the lower areas hard, not so much the higher areas where budding occurs later,' explains Alejandro Sejanovich, Agronomist and Oenologist at Manos Negras. The frost did strike the Uco Valley and Luján de Cuyo but losses were minor while the northwest escaped entirely.

With the exception of the odd shower, the weather continued dry with rising temperatures that reached a peak when the plants bloomed, ensuring good fruit formation throughout the country. All records show that following the frosts, spring was warmer than average, accelerating the growth cycle in many areas well into December.

Summer 2020-2021. An unusual aspect of the cycle this year is that across the regions, December was the warmest month of summer when that honour generally goes to January. At the beginning of the year, with veraison already occurring in the earlier ripening varieties, temperatures dropped lower than average and rain made an appearance at the end of January. 'The situation changed due to the rainfall, which was frequent but not very intense. By April 2021, over 400mm of rainfall had been recorded in some regions of the Uco Valley,' says the harvest report prepared by Luis Coita Civit, Agronomist at Durigutti Family Winemakers. The average figure is 250 mm.

At Doña Paula, Martín Kaiser reports about '200 mm between January and March, about 40 mm higher than average with many isolated showers.' Sebastián Zuccardi, meanwhile, says that 'it rained more in Paraje Altamira than San Pablo and Gualtallary, when it's usually the other way around.' Close by, in Campo los Andes, summer rainfall between January and March was recorded at 296 mm, while in Las Compuertas, Luján de Cuyo, the figure was 250 mm. Overall, the numbers show more frequent summer storms.

The consistent cloud cover thus brought a drop in temperature and lower solar radiation, reducing the number of degree days and increasing humidity, which led to greater threat of fungal infections. The weather stations run by the Grupo Peñaflor throughout Argentina monitored this process, showing a curve of accumulating degree days that begins to level out from January onward. In some terroirs such as Paraje Altamira and the Pedernal Valley, the end figure was below average while in Gualtallary the curve was flatter. In the east of Mendoza and the north of Argentina, the curve was similar to the historic average.



The ripening process

In high quality areas – the high altitude vineyards from Luján de Cuyo to San Carlos – the cloud cover and drop in solar radiation slowed the ripening of the grapes, with lows that were higher than normal and highs lower than normal, leading to the fruit being left longer on the vine and potential alcohol at normal to low levels, while natural acidity was preserved.

For similar reasons, the threat of botrytis increased for the early varieties, when they began to accumulate sugar: ‘Pinot Noir and Chardonnay were affected to some degree,’ says Alejandro Sejanovich, ‘but they also preserved a delicious acidity with less alcohol, a balance that we can legitimately be excited about.’ Other oenologists producing whites broadly agree: Vigil says that ‘the Chardonnays this year are expressive,’ while Santiago Mayorga notes that ‘the balance between lower alcohol and higher acidity,’ defines the year for the whites.

The vineyards that remained in good condition and more resistant red varieties managed to complete their sugar accumulation gradually, without consuming all their malic acid. After the heat returned in early March with dry days and high temperatures, the grapes ripened fully with no further mishap. ‘Those of us who decided to wait achieved a perfect ripening period in terms of elegance,’ says Andrés Vignoni at Viña Cobos. ‘The pHs are good, with refined fruit and complexity among the Malbecs. Those who were patient will have a dream year with their Cabernets.’

Regardless of the individual resources of each team, agricultural engineers and oenologists agree that after the instability brought by the rain, this was a quality focused harvest. ‘It wasn’t a typical year,’ ponders Zuccardi. ‘It was cooler and that will come out in the wines.’ A large part of those consulted thought back to 2019 or 2017 and all agree that it was clearly different to the 2020, 2018 and 2016 harvests.

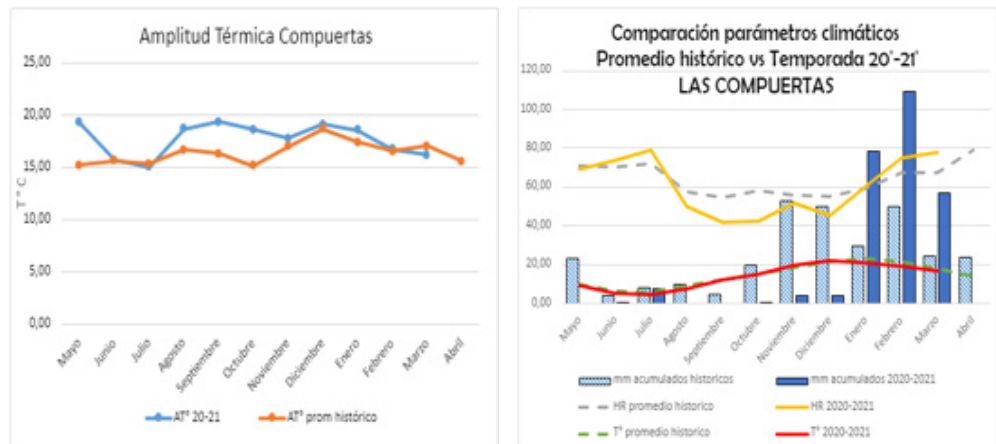
Overall, one thing is clear: the harder you look at each vintage, the more you see the differences, displacing the old-fashioned attitude that they all tend to be more or less the same.

► MENDOZA

The largest winemaking province in Argentina, with 150,000 hectares under vine, sees its vineyards scattered across four oases whose different experiences in 2021 depend on their height and relative proximity to the Andes.

Primera Zona

Known as such because it was the first section to be served by an irrigation system, Primer Zona also contains most of the oldest vineyards in the province, clustered around the city of Mendoza and the departments of Luján de Cuyo (15,550 ha) and Maipú (11,200 ha).



Source: Terrazas de los Andes

Las Compuertas. 'In spite of the climate events – the frosts, which hit just when the region was budding 10 days early – which affected yields, there was an excellent correlation between alcoholic ripeness and high natural concentrations of acid, resulting in fresh but concentrated and elegant wines. The must has also developed excellent colour and potent aromatic intensity,' says Pablo Durigutti.

Perdriel. 'We use the grapes from our Perdriel vineyard to produce aromatic, elegant and fresh wines. We've found good proportions of malic acid within the total acid content which results in creamier textures and longer finishes after the malolactic fermentation. There are notes of herbs and dark fruit, good structure and lengthy time in the mouth,' reports Gonzalo Carrasco, from Terrazas de los Andes.

Noelia Torres from Marchiori & Barraud, whose main vineyards are in the region, says: 'The Cabernets are a joy, especially the Franc, which is more herbal with a lot of fruit and spice, very complex with pepper, camphor and less alcohol thanks to the cool year.'

Ugarteche. 'It was a cooler year, so the Chardonnay and Cabernet Sauvignon did better. From 24 February onwards, the quality of the whites started to diminish with lower freshness and issues with fungus. We're very happy with the Cabernets we harvested early. In general, we achieved low alcohol and as we work biodynamically, the decision looks to be the right one,' says Victoria Brond at Alpamanta.



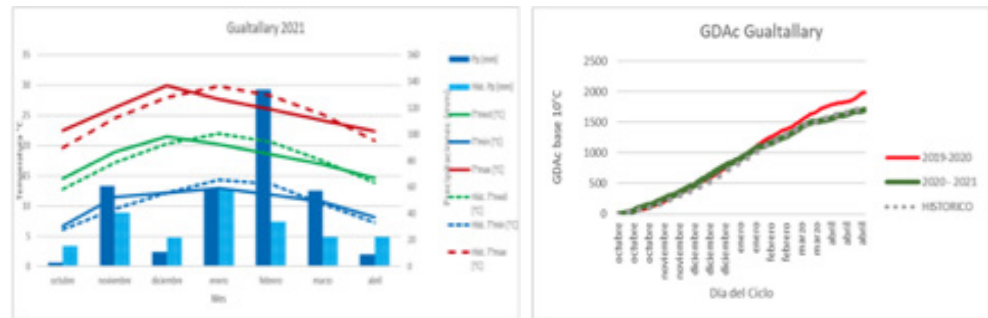
Agrelo. 'We're surprised at how the Cabernet Sauvignon behaved because ordinarily you'd have thought it would be unripe in Mendoza but it's quite the contrary, it's more like what happened on the left bank of Bordeaux in another era: fruitiness with low pHs for the variety,' says Fernando Buscema at the Catena Institute of Wine. He adds that for the area, the accumulated degree days were similar to those of previous harvests such as 2014, 2015 and 2017, with rainfall of 310mm, 17% higher than average. 'For the moment our theory is that the relative humidity and milder temperatures seem to have avoided what people in Bordeaux call *blocage*, so the ripeness of the Cabernet Sauvignons is somewhere close to perfection.'

Barrancas. 'The large amount of rainfall falling in a brief period of time caused channels to overflow and issues with swamping of the rows,' complains Rogelia Rabino at Finca Flichman, who recorded '193 mm of rainfall between January and March along with particularly severe storms.' However, 'the colours were normal and the acidity higher than average. The Cabernet Sauvignon stands out with good colour possibly because of the lower frequency, intensity and duration of the heat waves. Along with the slow ripening, that allowed us to choose the harvest time at our leisure,' sums up Gustavo Rosell from Bodega Toso.



Uco Valley

The region consists of three departments, Tupungato, Tunuyán and San Carlos, and since the 1990s has seen the fastest growth in terms of vineyards, all of which are planted at least 1000 metres above sea level. It is also where the largest number of high end vineyards are gathered, spanning about 28,900 ha. Within the departments, several clusters of terroirs are of particular interest.



Source: Grupo Peñaflor

Gualtallary. 'In general, we're seeing wines with low levels of alcohol, both whites and reds, with one or two exceptions. We are getting wines of extreme quality, vivid and colourful reds, especially the Malbecs, with complex noses that combine herbs, spices, flowers and soils, excellent balance and good volume, texture and acidity,' says Juan Pablo Michelini at Zorzal Wines.

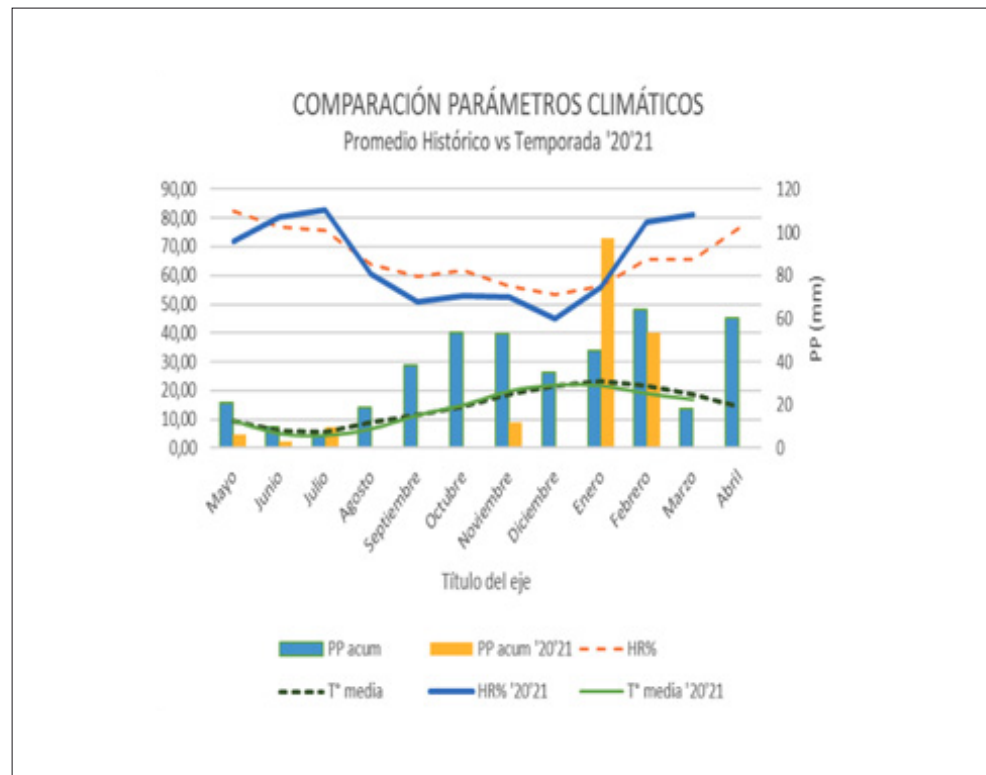
Julia Hallupzock, the Oenologist at Sopenia, elaborates further: 'With the exception of some isolated hailstorms higher up, the climate was quite steady, with few surprises. In February we had a window between rainy periods that allowed us to harvest whites with freshness and lower alcohol than normal due to the slow ripening. From March onwards, we saw mild days that allowed for even ripening with excellent amounts of polyphenols, moderate alcohol and good fruitiness. It was a lovely harvest for the reds.'

For his part, Juan Roby at Bodega Lagarde, which grows its own grapes in the area, says that he's 'very happy with the Chardonnays from Gualtallary. The cool year was perfect for the style we're looking to achieve.'

San Pablo, Tunuyán. 'The summer was cool and damp, delaying ripening and causing a few health issues with the white varieties and the Pinot Noirs, although the acid levels were perfect and potential alcohol average, resulting in balanced, fresh cellar wines,' says Diego Morales, Agricultural Engineer at Bodega Salentein.

Los Chacayes, Tunuyán. 'The high rainfall led us to harvest the white grapes early. The Tockaji, between the 18 and 26 of February, while the Sauvignon Blanc came in during the first week of March. The aim with them is to deliver freshness and varietal expression with alcohol of up to 13%. The Pinot Noirs from 2021 are cool with pHs of between 3.15 and 3.2 and alcohol levels of around 12%,' says Lepoutre Thibault, the oenologist at Piedra Negra.

In the neighbouring area of Campo de Los Andes, 'the wines stand out for their crystal clear fruit flavours while in the mouth they're more tense than mellow. The Cabernet Sauvignons ripened in a surprisingly well-balanced way,' says oenologist Pamela Alfonso at Bodega Alta Vista. Noelia Torres, who produces from the Las Pintadas area, reports: 'We're very surprised by the character of the Chardonnay, which has notes of linden blossom and white flowers but is very crispy with malic acid thanks to the cool year. The reds are surprisingly vivid and redolent with dark fruit, with a light structure. The harvest has been excellent quality.'



Source: Terrazas de los Andes para su finca El Pedregal, Paraje Altamira

Paraje Altamira, San Carlos. ‘Due to the rain, the viticulture was key this year. Among the reds I’m seeing intense red fruit, no dark fruit and herbal traces such as thyme and jarilla. In the mouth they’re not so sweet, with more texture and freshness and less concentration. I’m very happy, it’s the style I like,’ enthuses Sebastián Zuccardi from Piedra Infinita.

Southern Oasis

San Rafael is located in the geographic centre of the Province of Mendoza. It contains around 16,750 hectares of vineyards clustered around the southern oasis, beginning at 850 metres above sea level and ending at 500. The general climatic conditions, along with a late hailstorm in March 2020 hit output from the region, which produced the lowest yield of the decade, 39% below the historic average. However, the low yield also helped to improve the quality.

‘It’s been many years since we’ve seen white varieties that are so fresh, rich, floral and fruity with very good acidity and, very interestingly, low alcohol,’ says Silvio Alberto, the Oenologist at Bodega Bianchi. The conditions allowed the grapes to ripen very well, both in terms of sugar and polyphenols. ‘2021 went on for about 20 or 30 days longer than the previous harvest, with excellent ripening in terms of aromas, tannins and colour but also perfectly balanced acidity; low pHs for the area, which balances out the sugar very well. We were thus able to achieve a harvest of varieties and mid-range wines with low alcohol and good acidity.’



Northern Oasis

Containing over 60% of the vineyards in the Province of Mendoza, the east was forced to deal with a difficult year that led to lower yields from Santa Rosa and Rivadavia as a consequence of the frost of 5 October. The unusual nature of the year is reflected in the fact that although the maximum temperature was in line with the historical average, slightly lower from January to March, the minimums were well below normal. At the Santa Rosa vineyard accumulated degree days were the lowest in the past five years. Because of the cloud cover and rainfall – which at 356 mm was higher even than 2016 – solar radiation was also lower than in 2016, making this a very unusual year indeed.

‘The combination of these events meant that harvest occurred especially early in some areas and was exceptionally healthy,’ says Luis Coita Civit from Durigutti Family Winemakers.

‘The harvest was of excellent quality, with good alcohol levels in the reds, good colour and good natural acidity for the area. The wines have fruity profiles, medium-bodied with alcohol levels of between 12.00 and 13.50 and natural acidity between 4.90 and 5.60. The Criolla Chica stood out for its fruitiness, as did the Malbec from the area, the Torrontés, Moscatel and Pedro Giménez’, sums up Lucas Niven from Niven Wines and Pala Corazón.

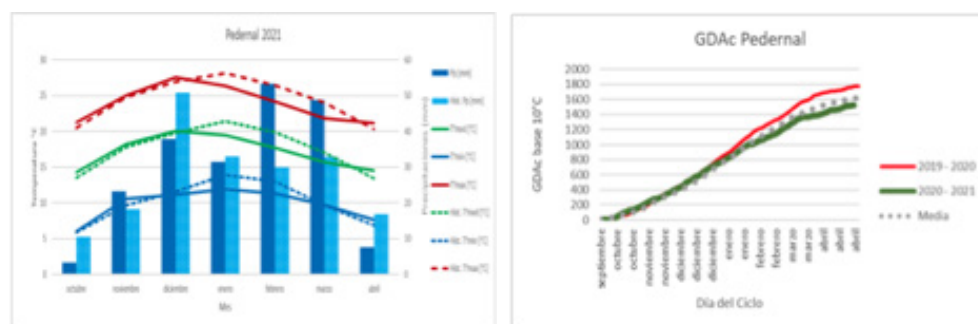
► SAN JUAN

The second largest wine producing province in Argentina accounts for about a fifth of total vineyards. By week 22 of the harvest, 519.5 million kilos of grapes had been gathered, one of the best yields of the decade following a few difficult seasons. Production was up 5% in comparison to 2020, which was an especially brief harvest, but still 15% lower than the average since 2011.

Producers say that the drop in yield was due to a lack of water and the drought continued in 2021, affecting vineyards once more.

Ullum and Zonda. ‘The 2021 harvest will be considered excellent from the simplest varietals consumed within the year to the more complex and structured cellar wines, which have achieved very high quality expressions. Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc and Viognier from the cooler areas and Malbec and Syrah from all of them have enjoyed very good results this year,’ says Eduardo Casademont, the Oenologist at Finca Las Moras.

Daniel Ekkert, Oenologist at Bodega Xumek, is also hopeful: ‘My feeling is that we’ll get different reds from what we usually see in the province, very expressive, with less alcohol but a ripe and potent presence of fresh fruit, natural acidity and expression of native flora.’



Source: Grupo Peñaflor

Valle de Pedernal. Set in the Andean foothills, this valley has become known as a producer of premium wines and has the best international reputation in San Juan. Grown at between 1200 and 1500 metres above sea level, its 1300 hectares under vine enjoyed favourable growing conditions throughout the 2020/21 season. In addition to the increased humidity experienced in the west, temperatures were mild, making Pedernal ‘the coldest of the Andean valleys, with 1400 degree days compared to 1700 in the Uco Valley in Mendoza,’ reports Casademont.

“Malbec this year is notably fresh with an elegant, refined expression. Chardonnay has excellent acidity and staying power in the mouth. Meanwhile, the Cabernet Sauvignon has its characteristic flavours and tannins, and the Syrah delivers a lot of red and dark fruit with spice notes,” concludes Paula González, Winemaker at Pyros Wines.

Calingasta Valley. Another pre-Andean valley, Calingasta boasts old Criolla vineyards and is becoming more prominent in spite of the scant surface area under vine. 'We didn't experience any difficulties, it was a cool, healthy year in which the harvest was delayed by twelve days. We harvested with good natural acidity, low pHs, bright, less intense colours and lower levels of alcohol. It's been a great year for the Criollas,' says Francisco Bugallo, the owner of Cara Sur.



► LA RIOJA

Located to the west of central Argentina, the winemaking region of La Rioja is set in a number of mountain valleys of different heights. With around 7700 hectares under vine, winemaking activity is focused around Chilecito, where around 6100 hectares are under vine 1000 metres above sea level.

Chilecito. Producers are pleased with how the white grapes have performed, especially Torrontés, and the precision of the varietal aromas. Regarding the reds, Doctor Rodolfo Griguol, from Cooperativa La Riojana, says 'most of the wines have an alcohol content of around 13% and deliver intense colour. They have excellent quality tannins and are very expressive aromatically.'

Chañarmuyo. Among the vineyards at 1700 metres above sea level to the north of the province, the 2021 harvest had excellent results. Matías Prieto, winemaker at Chañarmuyo Estate, says that the rain didn't affect ripening: 'We harvested with good levels of acidity and only in the late reds did we see more concentrated tannins than in other years. The Malbec and Tannat stand out, they have their own distinctive regional quality.'



► North of Argentina: SALTA & JUJUY

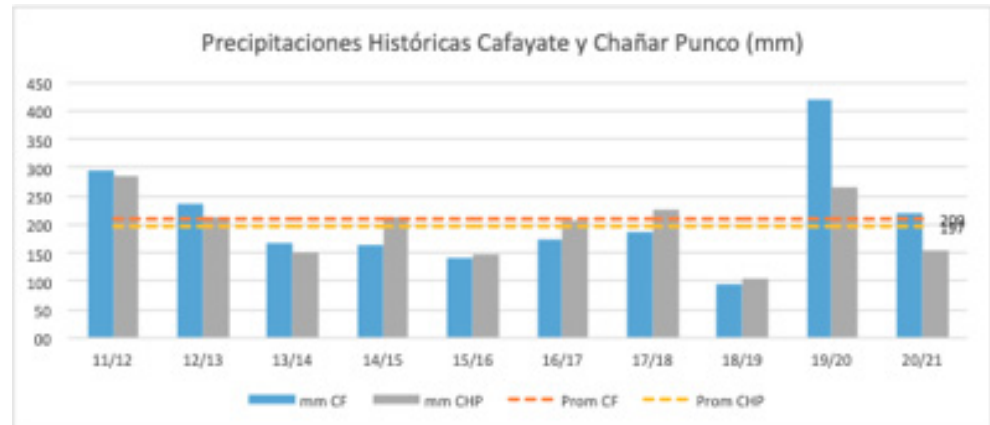
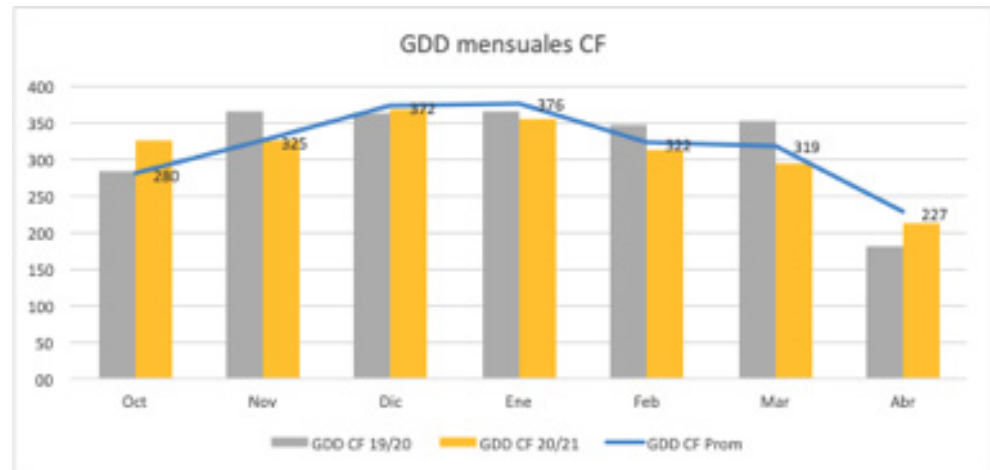
Cafayate contains 65% of the 3574 hectares under vine in Salta. The winter wasn't particularly cold in the region, which seems to have had an effect on the yield.

'We've seen a drop of 14% compared to the predicted yield for Cafayate, but the effect is general across the Valley. We had a good number of shoots in November but by the end of the cycle, they weighed less than we'd anticipated,' reports Francisco Tellechea, head of production at El Esteco, who goes on to say: 'The winter was warm and that affects the size of the shoots because it alters the rate of bud differentiation, that's the best explanation we've found for the loss of weight so far.' However, by week 22 of the harvest yield was only a little lower than the historic average.

Cloud cover is regularly seen in Cafayate summers and the rainfall (which was regular but fell within the usual range) helped to keep temperatures mild. 'The quality is very good, with lower than average alcohol content, mainly among the reds with long ripening cycles such as Cabernet Sauvignon and Tannat. The aromatic expression is notably fresher. Given the lower temperatures and lack of solar radiation, the Malbecs have excellent freshness while the whites such as Chardonnay, Semillón, Marsanne and Roussanne also produced strikingly fresh expressions,' says Francisco Puga from Porvenir de Cafayate.

Mariana Paéz, oenologist at Finca Quara agrees that the whites are 'very good this year' before talking enthusiastically about the reds. 'The Tannat is a treat,' while 'Cabernet Sauvignon took a while to ripen but finally made it just as the leaves were beginning to turn yellow.'

Jorge Noguera, oenologist at Bodega Amalaya, sums up Cafayate's year: 'The conditions helped us to ensure the fruit stayed healthy, with ripeness and good natural acidity.'



Source: El Esteco

The high altitude valleys of Salta. 'We had a very relaxed harvest in practical and logistical terms but we were hurt by the drought this year,' says Raúl Dávalos from Bodega Tacuil who also acts as a consultant for several smaller projects across the region. He is referring to a lack of rainfall in the northern Calchaquí Valley, which only got 40 mm compared to the usual 120 mm.

'Because of the lack of rain, harvest was brought forward fifteen days, beginning in the middle of February and ending halfway through April in the highest vineyards. We produced very balanced grapes with good ripeness, and freshness and moderate alcohol levels,' says Thibaut Delmotte, the Oenologist at Bodega Colomé.

Chañar Punco. Having experienced less rainfall than usual (about 20% below average), the lack of cloud cover and increased solar radiation left their mark. Between November and February higher than average levels of radiation were recorded combined with a mild drop in temperature 'so we decided to bring the harvest forward so it would be in line with our stylistic objectives, producing wines with lower pHs than normal, heightened acidity and vivid colour among the reds,' says Claudio Mendoza, Head of Bodega Chañar Punco.

Quebrada de Humahuaca. 30 hectares of vineyards are planted in Quebrada de Humahuaca at an altitude of between 2200 and 3300 metres above sea level. 2021 saw 'a frost on 8 November,' says Ezequiel Bellone, agricultural engineer at Amanecer Andino and Viñedos de Yacoraite. 'Which slightly affected yields in the higher areas.' The accumulation of sugars indicates potential alcohol higher than 13.5% but lower than 15%. Total acidity was between 6.5 and 6.6, with pHs of 3.6.



► PATAGONIA

The wine country of Patagonia consists of a series of valleys irrigated by large rivers along a vast landscape of steppes and desert plains. The northern border is formed by the Río Colorado, which runs along the 37° parallel while vineyards appear all the way down to 45° of latitude. Around 3700 hectares are under vine, spread between Neuquén (1766 ha), Río Negro (1629 ha), La Pampa (269 ha) and Chubut (75 ha). The climate in the region this year was normal.

25 de Mayo, La Pampa. The 2020/21 season here 'was warm and dry with not much wind and no untoward events. A week of days where the temperature reached 40°C at the end of January brought forward the harvest of early white varieties. There was good polyphenolic intensity, good acidity (a few tenths higher than 2020) and yields similar to 2020 (10,000 kg/ha on average)' says Sebastián Cavagnaro, Oenologist at Bodega del Desierto.

General Roca, Río Negro. 'The harvest occurred without any health problems or delays from 22/2 to 9/4. Both dates were earlier than usual. The sugars didn't accumulate as intensively as last year but the temperatures during the summer made it necessary to continue irrigation right up until a few days before the harvest. Overall the quality was very good across the varieties. The whites will be easygoing, fresh and aromatic. The reds, meanwhile, will be well-rounded, complex and smooth with good colour and balance,' says Juan Martín Vidiri, Agronomist at Humberto Canale.

San Patricio del Chañar, Neuquén. 'The wines from 2021 typically offer varietal purity with clean, bold aromas. The average alcohol content among the whites is 13% and 13.5% in reds,' says Julio Viola, head of Bodega Malma.

Meanwhile, Ricardo Galante, the oenologist at Bodega del Fin del Mundo, describes the year as having been 'very fruity, with rich natural acidity and very low pHs. In addition to outstanding Pinots and Chardonnays, the Merlot has been excellent, with a very attractive colour, plenty of ripe fruit in the nose and elegant tannins.'

At Bodega Schroeder, who specialize in sparkling wines, the Oenologist Mariano Diletti Brovedani believes that the 2021 harvest 'will stand out because we've been able to process the bases at different degrees of ripeness, allowing us to make very complex wines with vibrant acidity.'

Capitán Sarmiento, Chubut. 'The beginning of spring was warm and so stimulated early vascular movements in the plants. There were two intense frosts at the beginning of October, including one that saw temperatures drop to -7°C, damaging the buds of the early varieties. However, budding and fertility reached record levels,' reports Juan Pablo Murgia, oenologist at Bodega Otronia. 'It's going to be a great vintage,' he concludes enthusiastically.

Trevelin, Chubut. 'The region recorded a record number of degree days, and it was very dry which helped with the plants' health,' says Marcelo Yagüe, owner of Casa Yagüe. Meanwhile, Sofía Elena at Bodega Contra Corriente, noticed 'greater aromatic expression and concentration in the wines in addition to good colour and an alcohol content 1.5 points higher than normal. Total sugars were between 6.5 and 7, rather than the usual 8 grams with pHs between 3.3 and 3.5.'

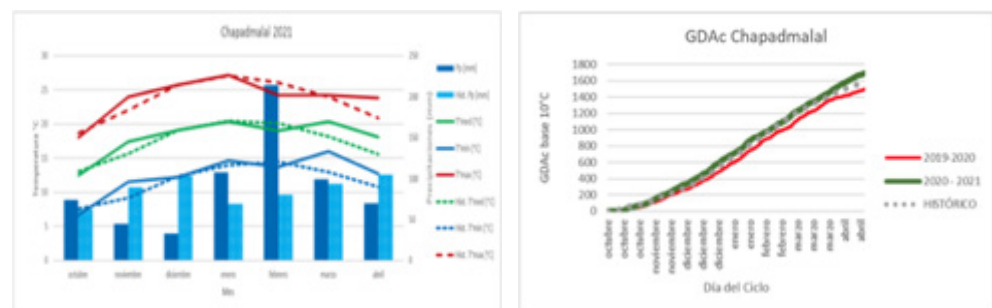
Bahía Bustamante, Chubut. Just metres from the Atlantic, this small vineyard is celebrating its fourth year and its 2000 vines made it possible to make the first 1000 litres of Semillón and Pinot Noir. 'We're seeing wines with a saline, iodised character,' says Matías Michelini, the head winegrower.

► EMERGING REGIONS

Pampa Húmeda and the effect of the Atlantic

More and more small (and not so small) vineyards are appearing on the Atlantic coast. Although the main factors influencing these wines are the ocean and cool Malvinas current, the further south you go the more the pampas comes to resemble the steppes of Patagonia.

Of the winemaking provinces closest to the sea, Buenos Aires has 145 hectares under vine and Entre Ríos 58.



Source: Grupo Peñaflor

Chapadmalal. The vineyard planted 8 kilometres from the sea near the city of Mar del Plata had a wonderful year says Marcelo Belmonte, the winegrower. To put it in numbers, the region accumulated a higher than average number of degree days, a February during which it rained 200 mm, with cool temperatures and constant wind. This all led to ideal pHs and alcohol levels. 'The 2021 harvest is of exceptional quality, creating wines with more volume in the mouth, good natural acidity levels and balanced output from the vines,' says Ezequiel Ortego, Oenologist at Costa & Pampa.

Balcarce. Part of the Tandilia system, the Sierras of Balcarce are home to Puerta del Abra. Due to the summer rains and mild temperatures which encouraged fungal infestations, yield of varieties such as Albariño, Tempranillo and Tannat dropped significantly. March was relatively dry with appreciable radiation producing good polyphenol ripeness and excellent levels of acidity in the must. 'It's a harvest that promises to highlight the attributes of each variety,' says Delfina Pontarolli, the agricultural engineer in charge of the vineyards.

Entre Ríos. A brand new geographic indication, declared at the beginning of May 2021, Entre Ríos sits between two large rivers: the Uruguay and the Paraná, and is part of the Pampa Húmeda. 'This year was a little rainy with solid levels of Brix and alcohol; a good year for the region. At the Alonso Saenz vineyard we made Merlot, Tannat and Pinot Noir for sparkling wines,' says Gonzalo Alonso, owner of Viñedo Alonso Saenz.

The Sierras of Córdoba

The sierra ranges in Córdoba, in the heart of Argentina, run along the edge of the Pampa Húmeda. On the eastern slopes are a handful of vineyards gathered around Caroya where the weather is rainy, while other producers have settled to the west, centred around Mina Clavero, where the climate is dry, sheltered by the mountains from the damp winds. In all the province has 277 hectares under vine.

‘The whites harvested in 2021 will have an aromatic profile tending towards white fruit and flowers with pleasant natural acidity and good structure in the mouth. Among the reds Malbec and Cabernet Sauvignon from the north of Córdoba stand out, as do Tannat from Caroya, Cabernet Franc in Quilino, Syrah in Cruz del Eje, Pinot Noir in Calamuchita and Merlot in Traslasierra. The 2021 reds will have a more intense colour than 2020, good varietal expression and aromas of fresh fruit. This is in addition to the aromas from the native flora; the biodiversity among which the vines grow will be more evident than last season, with a moderate structure in the mouth,’ says Gabriel Campana, Oenologist at Terra Camiare.

Now that the reds have finished their fermentation and been transferred to barrels, the 2021 harvest is complete. It only remains to spend the winter tasting the commercial labels and carrying out in-depth analysis of what promises to be a ve

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