



Vino Mex

More about Mexican Wines Opinion about Mexican wines by Patrick Pollak

Yes, it's me again, but this time I am not here to talk about the elixir of the gods called Tequila, but about a much more common product... wine.

Wine production is widely spread throughout the globe. Not only countries like France, Italy, Spain, the United States or Australia produce wine. But let's focus on the region I want to talk about today, Mexico.

If I am lucky you might have heard that Mexico produces wine, however I am pretty sure you have a certain, not very good or quality oriented image of them. Well it is time to change.

Mexico has been producing wine for more than 5 centuries. This might come to a surprise, but the oldest vineyards and winery in America is in the state of Coahuila in Mexico. This winery founded by Don Lorenzo Garcia in 1597, 73 years after Aztecs fell, is nowadays called "Casa Madero". This house is a fine example of the wines that Mexico can produce: Clean, fruity, elegant and straightforward products like their Chardonnay & Cabernet Sauvignon Reserve. Try them you will not be disappointed.

Like other wine producing countries, Mexico has passed through many changes and cycles. Many varieties of grapes have been used in the past, however today, the most popular ones are the basic grape types like Chardonnay or Cabernet. A bit rough some might say, however this is changing, the proof being Mexican wines have won several medals in different international contest like the "Challenge International du Vin" in France or the "Orange County Fair" in California or still the "Selections Mondiales" fair among many. Cabernet Sauvignon, Chardonnay, Chenin Blanc, Sauvignon Blanc are among the ones that excel in the warm Mexican climate.

There are a few wine producing regions in Mexico: Queretaro which produces mostly Cavas (Spanish version of Champagne), Parras in the North Eastern state of Coahuila. However the elite region is located near the town of Ensenada in Baja California, which has the best climate for wine growing. This is where we will find almost all of the wineries of this vast country.

The wine industry in Mexico has a tremendous potential and future. However it is still young in regards to modern wine production techniques and definitely young in terms of quality.

But quality is what brought me here and that is a common characteristic found in several of the Mexican wineries. Monte Xanic might be the best example of it. They have successfully positioned themselves as the first quality making winery in Mexico. This goes back to the 80' when they started producing wine. Nowadays, it is Mexico's finest large scale producing winery. They actually have 2 lines: the "Monte Xanic" label and the more easy drinking, less complex "Calixa" Line. Then comes the Ultimate "Gran Ricardo" which is a very limited production only bottled in Magnums. Exquisite and elegant. This winery is mainly recognized for producing wines of complex aromas, big fruit concentration and cellaring potential. Their newest line (Calixa) is made for day to day drinking with more flexibility and user friendliness. Their Chardonnay "Calixa" is a delight with tropical flavors, a lot of freshness and crispiness but not heavy.

Bodegas Santo Tomas is another big player in the Mexican industry. They produce some fine wines like the "Santo Tomas Gran Reserva Unico" among others. They have successfully produced a joint venture wine with Wente Bros in Livermore California called "Duetto": Elegant, complex and very well made red wine.

Domecq might be a familiar name for some of you and why not, it is one of Spain's most notorious names in regards to sherry. This traditional house, which begun producing Mexican brandy some 60 years ago also brings some interesting choices. The "X-A" range is a well made all day line of wines, whereas the "Chateau Domecq" is the real stuff: Complexity and extraction with cellaring potential.

You might be familiar with the wines from L.A. Cetto. This winery has done a very good job at exporting their products overseas, like to the UK, which by the way is still the best client of Mexican producers. L.A. Cetto produces several examples of fine wines, one of their best being the "Nebbiolo Reserva" and the fairly new "Don Luis" line, which is a premium line with interesting blends.

And then there are the small wineries... Ranging from size and production, these emerging wineries like Chateau Camou, Casa de Piedra, Vinas de Liceaga, Mogor Badan or Cavas Valmar produce some of the most interesting wines. These houses, some of them we could refer to as boutique wineries bring some of the best examples of the New Mexican "savoir faire". Their wine makers are constantly producing new and exciting wines like the red "Vino de Piedra" and the white "Piedra del Sol", which for me exemplifies the driving desire to produce fine wine. These two wines are certainly some of the best wines I have tasted from Mexico and getting your hands on a bottle of these might be either costly or difficult to do.

El "Gran Vino Tinto" from Chateau Camou is another fine example of Bordeaux like wines, which have received numerous awards. This house also produces a good oaky style chardonnay and Fume Blanc.

Reviewing in detail each of these wineries would take too long and I would probably confuse you with the funny names. So let's wrap it up, just remember that there is another exciting wine region out there with products to suit every taste and whose industry is still flowering. I am sure it will come to you as a different & nice surprise.

Salud!!

Written By Patrick Pollak

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