

Wine Spectator's Visit to ALTOCEDRO

(see the entire article on James Molesworth's blog at http://www.winespectator.com/Wine/Blogs/Blog_Detail/0,4211,1784,00.html)

“Altocedro represents real artisanal winemaking, a boutique operation with some serious talent behind the wheel.”

-Wine Spectator (James Molesworth blog, Mar. 27, 2008)

Wine Spectator's James Molesworth recently visited the Altocedro winery in Mendoza and had this to say:

Located in the prime La Consulta area, Altocedro is owned and run by Karim Mussi, a third-generation immigrant of Lebanese descent... Mussi, who has a staff of one, is renovating an abandoned winery—which has become a trend in the region—and is another fan of cement vats. Mussi uses a basket press and partial carbonic maceration in vat, noting, “I like to preserve the character of the fruit.”

As for the wines, they are typically superfresh and racy, with unadorned raspberry and floral notes and long, finely tuned finishes. The entry level wine is the **Año Cero Malbec** bottling, which at \$15 **offers a lot of bang for the buck**. It's fermented and aged entirely in vat, with just six to eight months of aging before bottling, resulting in a fresh, open-knit wine with very good complexity. The **Reserve** bottling is a serious step up however. It's also fermented in vat, but then moved to barrel for its malo and 12 to 15 months of aging. The 2006 version, to be bottled next week, **is intense, juicy and pure, with a licorice, floral and mineral-filled finish. The wine shows clearly outstanding potential.**



In the 2007 vintage, Mussi is expanding the Malbec lineup with a Grand Reserve bottling, sourced from that 100-year-old parcel. Aged for 18 months in barrel, the wine drips with melted licorice, blueberry compote and violet notes followed by a long, sappy, intense finish, all brightened by mouthwatering minerality. It's a beauty in the making.

A fourth cuvée, called Desnudos, is fashioned from a blend of Malbec and Tempranillo, and it's vastly different from the straight Malbec bottlings. The wine is aged in new oak for the first six months of its life, and is then racked into second-use barrels, where it stays for another two years. Mussi uses the technique to minimize the extraction of oak tannins into the wine while maximizing the oxygenation benefits of barrel aging. After aging, the two varietals are then blended just prior to the bottling; **the 2004 Desnudos shows lilting perfume, with bluebell, incense, shaved vanilla, anise and black tea notes and a supple, elegant frame. Like the Grand Reserve Malbec it is also outstanding, though in a clearly different vein.**

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