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The Wine Life: What I Am Drinking Now ...

By Stanley Browne
Jan 23, 2020



2017 FINCA DECERO REMOLINOS VINEYARD MALBEC

Grape: 100% Malbec

Location: Agrelo, Mendoza, Argentina

Owner: Thomas Schmidheiny

Winemaker: Juan E. Marco

Approximate Retail Price: \$20

Website: dezero.com

TASTING NOTES:

Color: Decidedly ruby and opaque, but not too dark, with a reflective surface

Aroma: Dark berries and wild cherry combined with subtle hints of black tea, leather and a touch of oak

Taste: Extremely well-balanced; envelops the whole mouth with dancing fruit and mild tannins with acidity enough to leave the mouth watering

Swiss-born Thomas Schmidheiny, whose fortune comes from concrete and cement, also has a family history in viticulture and winemaking. Switzerland's Heerbrugg estate, where he grew up near the Rhine, has 12 acres planted to vine, and as a child, Schmidheiny watched the harvest; as an adult, though, over time he acquired wine operations on four continents.

While motorcycling from Chile east through the Andes at one point, Schmidheiny fell in love with the Agrelo wine region of Mendoza, Argentina; he later purchased a plot of bare land there and subsequently founded Decero (*de cero* translates from Spanish to "from scratch").

Agrelo numbers among the best areas in Mendoza for viticulture, with perfect *terroir* making rich, complex reds. Named Remolinos (loosely, "whirlwinds"), the vineyard has an elevation, a slope and a wind capacity that cause dust devils, and they, in turn, form spirals of loose dirt and actually benefit the vineyard by helping keep it cool and dry.

Remolinos, as noted, occupies one of Agrelo's highest elevations (3,500 feet), which combines with a rather unconventional planting pattern of north-northwest to south-southeast orientation to prime the vineyard for favored ripening.

Decero employs a rather important philosophy in its winemaking, the *amano* (“by hand”) approach, wherein every step – including planting, pruning, picking and sorting – takes place *by hand*, with as little machinery as possible. The winery also employs a gravity-fed technique to allow a gentler pressing of the grapes. To boot, Decero strives to embrace sustainability, impacting the land as little as possible while striving also to benefit the surrounding community.

Decero and Remolinos concentrate mostly on malbecs and cabernet sauvignons, with petite verdots and tannats also planted. They present a few tiers of wine, including the celebrated The Owl & the Dust Devil Icon Blend, but the Signature Series Malbec not only ranks as extremely affordable but also numbers among the region’s most enticing malbecs. Among so many Mendoza malbecs of so many different qualities, in fact, Decero’s re-invites the jaded wine aficionado (who long ago likely lost faith in malbecs) to return to the fold to enjoy malbec again.

The hard work in the vineyard and winery, in sum, impressively have yielded a wine that perfectly balances structure, complexity, tannins, great acidity and excellent fruit while remaining quaffable.

Food Pairings: Cured meats, braised beef, lamb shank, goat cheeses, grilled vegetables and smoked trout all would pair wonderfully with this wine.

Certified Sommelier Stanley Browne owns Robust Wine Bar in Webster Groves.

Stanley Brown

Stanley Browne is a Certified Sommelier through the Court of Master Sommeliers, a Certified Specialist of Wine by the Society of Wine Educators, and the owner of Robust Wine Bar in Webster Groves.