The Society’s ‘The American Dream: Wines from the Americas’ tasting.

Canada and the U.S.A are producing some of the world’s finest and most individual wines. Elegant chardonnay from Ontario, full-bodied sweet and sour zinfandels from Sonoma and Napa and ripe, savoury pinot noir from Oregon, there is an almost limitless range of styles available in North America alone. South America boasts two of the world’s largest wine producing countries – Chile and Argentina. Chile’s range of climates and soils is reflected in the wealth of differing styles on offer. What Argentina may lack in diversity in relation to Chile it more than makes up for in sheer quality – their malbecs are unrivalled, with torrontes providing an aromatic white counterpart. Although small in comparison, winemaking in Uruguay has skyrocketed over the past decade and is challenging its giant neighbours to the top spot in South America.

The Society’s sweetness code:
White wines from bone dry [1] to lusciously sweet [9].
○ = white wine
● = red wine
S = screwcap closure

A GUIDE AS TO WHAT STYLES OF WINE CAN BE FOUND WHERE

WHITE WINE

CANADA
1. Norman Hardie Niagara Peninsula Chardonnay 2015

U.S.A
2. Bergström Old Stones Oregon Chardonnay 2014

CHILE
11. Mystery Wine

ARGENTINA
17. Faldeos Nevados Torrontés 2017
**RED WINE**

**U.S.A.**
3. Lemelson Six Vineyards Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 2014
4. Domaine de la Côte Santa Rita Hills Pinot Noir 2014
5. Grace Lane Washington Cabernet Sauvignon 2013
6. Ridge Estate Cabernet Sauvignon 2011
7. Shenandoah Amador County Zinfandel 2015
8. The Society’s Exhibition Napa Valley Zinfandel 2015

**CHILE**
13. Ignacio Recabarren Casablanca Pinot Noir 2015
15. Koyle Cerro Basalto Cuartel G2 Carmenère 2015
16. Coyam 2013

**ARGENTINA**
20. Weinert Cavas de Weinert Mendoza 2007
21. The Society’s Exhibition Mendoza Malbec 2016
22. Susana Balbo Delphina Paraje Altamira Malbec 2013

**URUGUAY**
23. Pisano Progreso Tannat 2015

**CANADA**
Canada’s wine industry has only come of age as recently as the late 1980s. Now, with a focus on using high-quality grape varieties, coupled with the use of modern techniques, Canadian wines can hold their own on the world stage. The best wines are labelled VQA (Vintners Quality Alliance) and are produced in the province of Ontario, where 80% of the country’s grapes are grown, on the Niagara Peninsula.

1. ○ [1] **Norman Hardie Niagara Peninsula Unfiltered Chardonnay 2015**
   Now with an international following, Norman Hardie’s wines are refined vintage on vintage. This 2015 has a touch of flinty struck match on the nose, with preserved lemon and citrus peel on the textured, chalky palate and a long fresh finish. Drink now to 2025. 11% S
   ref CA151 £23.00 bottle £276 dozen

Contrary to appearance, Canada actually has a relatively warm, continental climate and if it wasn’t for the abundance of lakes (especially in and around the Niagara Peninsula) it would be far too warm during the summer and harvest seasons to produce fine wine. Canada is actually on the same latitude as the north of Spain. The cooling influence of the lakes helps to extend the ripening period allowing the grapes to achieve full phenolic ripeness whilst maintaining exceptional freshness.
U.S.A

Only France, Spain and Italy produce more wine than the USA, with all 50 states (including Alaska!) now making wine. However, California produces over 90% of all the wine made in the USA. Here the potential of the vineyard site is determined by what lies between it and the Pacific: the more mountains between the vineyard site and the sea, the less chance there is of the cooling sea air or fog reaching the vineyard to moderate the climate. Within the Pacific Northwest, northern Oregon is making a name for itself with the production of distinctive cool-climate pinot noir, chardonnay and riesling, and Washington (considerably warmer than Oregon despite being further north) is now home to some of the country’s most stylish pinot noir alongside a flair for experimentation with varieties such as riesling.

A very fine, restrained American white, showing that Oregon can produce world-class chardonnays. The oak is well balanced and offers great support to the bright acidity and lovely green-apple and lemon flavours, which continue on the long finish. Drink now to 2021. 13%  S
ref US7221 £24.00 bottle £288 dozen

Although south of Washington, Oregon has a far more marginal growing season and is greatly affected by the Pacific Ocean meaning achieving complete ripeness can be difficult. Early ripening varieties such as pinot noir, riesling and chardonnay are favoured here.

3. ● Lemelson Six Vineyards Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 2014
A lovely example of Oregon pinot which offers great value for money. Plenty of sappy cranberry and spice flavours with fine tannins, and a red berry finish. Drink over the next 12 months. 13.5%  S
ref US7001 £19.50 bottle £234 dozen

Pinot noir is arguably the most charismatic of all grape varieties, and without doubt the hardest to get right. It needs a precise terroir to thrive with temperatures that are neither too cool nor too warm. The grapes, relatively thin-skinned and tightly bunched together, are prone to a host of vine diseases, not to mention rot. When it works, though, it's incomparable. No other grape has the same power of seduction, from it naturally pale and delicate hue to the charming raspberry and cherry notes it presents in its youth, the more gamey aromas that appear with age, the lacy texture on the palate of a fine, mature Burgundy, or the warmer, more velvety allure the grape takes on in the cooler corners of the New World.
4. **Domaine de la Côte Santa Rita Hills Pinot Noir 2014**
The grapes are harvested when just ripe, and 50% are whole-bunch pressed, adding a great freshness and herbal complexity to the wine. No new oak is used in the production to protect the elegant red-berry fruit flavours. Drink now to 2024. 12.5%

ref US7691 £43.00 bottle £516 dozen

5. **Grace Lane Washington Cabernet Sauvignon 2013**
There is a good concentration of cassis and bramble flavours here, with bright acidity and structured tannins. Would work well with a rib-eye steak. Drink this year and next. 13.5%

ref US6651 £11.95 bottle £143 dozen

The state of Washington in the Pacific northwest is second after California in terms of importance for wine. All of the wine growing regions are in Eastern Washington where the Cascade Mountain range acts as a rain barrier allowing for vines to grow. The climate is generally continental with hot dry summers and a significant diurnal temperature flux with summer night time temperatures dropping by more than 15 degrees. Washington is becoming recognised globally for the production of fine cabernet, merlot, riesling and chardonnay.

6. **Ridge Estate Cabernet Sauvignon 2011**
The excellent 2011 Estate balances Monte Bello’s cool-climate fruit with mineral elements and firm acidity. Sensuous and beautifully defined, it will develop further over time. Drink now to 2024. 13%

*For tasting only*

South of San Francisco in the Santa Cruz Mountains Paul Draper has been making some of California's most individual and iconic wines since 1969. Paul’s success is built on a natural approach to his craft, never applying a formula, but altering his techniques in the winery to best express the character of the vineyard. He is a firm believer in the notion of terroir and is famous for his natural approach to winemaking. He says:

“*A strong element of humility is required in dropping the western ideal of dominating nature; rather than forcing nature into your mould, you should see what is there and work with it to allow it to express itself.*”

7. **Shenandoah Amador County Zinfandel 2015**
Classic zinfandel, with sweet and sour cherry cola notes on the nose, this is made in a full-bodied but refreshing style with soft tannins and a long chocolate and dark cherry finish. Drink now to 2020. 14.5%

ref US7251 £10.50 bottle £126 dozen
Zinfandel has truly found its home in California. It has large bunches of grapes and so the ripening can be uneven, this is exacerbated by the fact that the best producers often pick earlier to avoid excessive potential alcohol levels which means some berries are yet to fully ripen. The result is a delicious sweet and sour contrast in the wines alongside a rich, velvety palate.

8. ● The Society’s Exhibition Napa Valley Zinfandel 2015
New to our range, this comes from Napa stalwart John Williams at Frog’s Leap. Uncharacteristically elegant with bright cherry acidity, this zinfandel retains the sweet-and-sour bramble and mocha concentration so typical of this variety. A completely serious but totally delicious zinfandel. Drink now to 2022. 13.5%
ref US7341 £16.00 bottle £192 dozen

CHILE
Surrounded by geographical barriers with the Atacama Desert to the north, the Andes to the east, the Patagonian Ice Field to the south and the Pacific Ocean to the west, Chile’s unique and diverse combination of geography and climate makes it ideal for winegrowing. Unusually, it is not the distance from the Equator which plays the dominant role here, rather the vineyards’ proximity to the Pacific Ocean or the Andes Mountains, with a greater diversity in soils and climates from east to west than from north to south.

From stunning vineyards perched on a dramatic cliff overlooking the Rapel River in Litueche, this is a cool, gooseberry-flavoured sauvignon blanc. Drink over the next 12 months. 13% S
ref CE9611 £7.95 bottle £95 dozen

From the stunning 2016 vintage this is a blend of viognier for peachy perfume and roussanne and marsanne for structure. The result is a really satisfying wine which is fleshy yet structured. Drink this year and next. 14% S
ref CE9161 £7.75 bottle £93 dozen

The Maule Valley, the largest and one of the oldest of Chile’s wine regions, is located 250 km south of Santiago. The climate in this region is Mediterranean with an average of 735 mm of rain per year, whilst the soils are alluvial, clay and sand.

11. ○ Mystery wine
Can you guess the grape variety? All correct answers will be entered into a ballot to win a bottle of wine no. 11.
Details for wine 11 will be handed out by a member of Society staff as you leave the tasting along with the order forms for this evening’s wines.

Fresh, rose-petal scented gewürztraminer made from organically farmed vineyards. Chile has the remarkable ability to make classic gewürz at very keen prices. Drink this year and next. 13.5% S
ref CE9601 £6.75 bottle £81 dozen

13. ● Ignacio Recabarren Casablanca Pinot Noir 2015
This pretty, perfumed, black-cherry-fruitied pinot noir is matured entirely in tank (so no oak) in line with Ignacio’s philosophy of lending a light touch in the cellar. The resultant flavours are pure, intense and delicious. An excellent buy. Drink now to 2022. 14% S
ref CE9321 £13.95 bottle £167 dozen

From a warm spot in the cool Casablanca Valley, an ideal climate for merlot, this is a plum and red-cherry flavoured wine with a cedary top note. Aged for ten months in barrels to polish the tannins to a silky sweetness. Drink now to 2021. 14% S
ref CE9141 £12.50 bottle £150 dozen

Located 75km north-west of Santiago, Casablanca valley was Chile’s first cool-climate coastal region, planted with vines in the mid-1980s. Situated within the D.O. of Aconcagua, Casablanca has a cool Mediterranean climate with a pronounced maritime influence and receives 540mm of rain each year. The proximity to the ocean creates cool foggy mornings ideal for top-quality red and white wines which are mostly grown on clay and sandy soils.

15. ● Koyle Cerro Basalto Cuartel G2 Carmenère 2015
This sweet, cedar-scented and fine-flavoured carmenère is one of the best our South America buyer, Toby Morrhall, has tasted from Chile. The hillside vineyard is planted on the top terraces of Cerro Basalto, where the roots plunge deep into the friable, low-fertility schist rock. The altitude, restrained vigour and small yield explain the outstanding quality. Drink now to 2025. 14%
ref CE9271 £15.50 bottle £186 dozen
Very low stock, the 2016 vintage to follow

Originally from the Médoc region of Bordeaux, carmenère has truly found its home in Chile. It disappeared from Europe in the late 19th century only to be found planted amongst merlot grapes in Chile where they were originally thought to be one and the same. A notoriously late
ripe, carmenère often produces deep purple wines with touches of spice and ripe bramble fruit.

16. ● Coyam 2013
A powerful blend made from syrah, carmenère, merlot, petit verdot and mourvèdre, all organically farmed. Toby particularly likes this opulent blend in cooler years, like 2013, when it has more balancing structure and tannin. Drink now to 2025. 14.5%
ref CE9591 £16.00 bottle £192 dozen

ARGENTINA
The world’s fifth-largest wine producer, Argentina has an enviable diversity of grape varieties thanks to mid-19th century immigration from Spain and Italy. Here the quality of the vineyards is due to altitude, which range from 700 to 1,400 metres and up to 2,800 metres in the northern province of Salta. At this height, overnight temperatures regularly drop low enough to lengthen the ripening period producing deeply flavoured and coloured reds, and aromatic whites.

A peach and grapefruit tinged white from the Uco Valley that goes for elegance over overt perfume. Drink now to 2020. 13.5% S
ref AR3721 £8.50 bottle £102 dozen

Torrontés has become one of Argentina’s best-loved wines, ranking second in white wine exports from the country. There are three strains of torrontés – Mendocino, Sanjuanino and Riojano. The first two are best suited to being drunk whilst young and fresh; the latter is the most extensively grown of the three and is used for the production of premium wines. Torrontés makes a perfect aperitif, or is well suited to spicy and aromatic Chinese or Thai cuisine.

2016 was a very cool year and the whites from Argentina are unusually fresh and vibrant. This comes from a 70-year-old vineyard in Paraje Altamira, and has aromas of greengage and a touch of oak. 15% of the blend was barrel fermented and aged for about four months. Drink now to 2020. 13%
ref AR3531 £12.95 bottle £155 dozen

From a very cool year this is one of the best recent vintages for this wine. Ripe yet fresh with a lovely peachy fruitiness made from vineyards over 950m of altitude. Maturing 10 months in barrels adds an attractively light hint of oak. Drink now to 2020. 13%
ref AR3711 £11.95 bottle £143 dozen
20. ● Weinert Cavas de Weinert Mendoza 2007
2007 was a fine year and this is a lovely traditional style, aged in large oak vats for three to four years until soft and mellow. Cavas is made from a blend of 40% malbec, 40% cabernet sauvignon and 20% merlot. Drink now to 2023. 14.5%
ref AR3761 £20.00 bottle £240 dozen

Bodegas Weinert is one of Argentina’s finest and most individual properties. Their red wines are noticeable for spending upwards of five years in old oak foudres in a deep, cool, granite cellar. Over time their brash fruit softens, mellows and develops the tertiary aromas of leather, tobacco and cedar. These wines have a certain similarity to other long-aged, slightly oxidative wines like Lebanon’s Château Musar.

21. ● The Society’s Exhibition Mendoza Malbec 2016
Cooler even than the very cool 2015 vintage, 2016 is fresh and floral, more medium-bodied than full, with an attractive, vibrant palate. It comes from excellent high altitude vineyards (900-1450m) and was aged for around 14 months in French oak barriques. The addition of 10% cabernet sauvignon to the blend contributes some structure and a cedary aroma.
Drink now to 2021. 13.5%
ref AR3701 £10.95 bottle £131 dozen

22. ● Susana Balbo Delphina Paraje Altamira Malbec 2013
Named after Susana’s mother, this was one of the best wines Toby tasted on his visit to Argentina in 2016. From a vineyard with special plant selection of low-yielding, 15 year-old malbec planted on stony soils, this is refined and has extraordinary length on the palate.
Drink now to 2030. 14.5%
ref AR3651 £38.00 bottle £456 dozen

Wines made from malbec, or cot as it is sometimes known in France, tend to be deeply coloured, intensely flavoured with black fruits, and sometimes exhibit a hint of violet or game aromas. The wines can range in style from soft and fruity to more structured, sophisticated examples capable of long ageing. The finest malbecs in Argentina are found in Mendoza, at elevations often in excess of 1,500 metres.

URUGUAY
Uruguay is the fourth-largest producer in South America but the production is only a tiny 73,000 tonnes per year making Uruguay close to Japan or Switzerland in terms of volume worldwide! Uruguay is a flat country – the highest point is only 514m above sea level. This flat landscape and its proximity to the Atlantic ocean give the southern coastal region a cool maritime climate that could be comparable to Bordeaux or Australia’s Margaret River. In the main winemaking
areas, the soils are a mix of alluvial clays, silts and sand with some gravel overlying limestone bedrock. It is this combination of climate and soils which are the secret to the success of Uruguay’s wines. In general Uruguay produces a more ‘European’ style of wine with fresh fruit, lower alcohol, higher acidity and structured tannins.

23.  ● Pisano Progreso Tannat 2015
A balanced tannat which is not dry or hard, but fresh and characterful, with attractive brambly fruit. Drink this year and next. 13%
ref UR451 £7.95 bottle £95 dozen

Tannat is the star performer in Uruguay, producing deep, rich full-bodied reds, with a herbal, black-fruit character. Tannat produced in Uruguay is much plumper and more velvety than that produced in its homeland in southwest France and can often be drunk when only a year or two old.

A dark, rich and dense yet succulent petit verdot with black-fruit aromas and flavour. In its homeland, Bordeaux, it remains more of a blending option, however this variety blossoms in warmer climates and this is a lovely wine in its own right. Drink now to 2020. 13%
ref UR431 £9.95 bottle £119 dozen