
*La vid y el vino en el Cono Sur de América Argentina y Chile (1545–2019). Aspectos políticos, económicos, sociales, culturales y enológicos* (The vine and wine in the Southern Cone of America Argentina and Chile [1545–2019]. Political, economic, social, cultural, and oenological aspects) is a thought-provoking book. In a very systematic effort, *Vine and Wine in Argentina and Chile* describes the history of the wine industries of Argentina and Chile since their beginnings as part of royal Spain in the 16th century and until nowadays worldwide presence. Lacoste does so in a storytelling style to convince readers of his pre-eminent argument: “the outstanding issues of the viticulture of Argentina and Chile appear in the field of the identity of their wines and their heritage dimensions” (p. 165). The book is structured in four chronological parts and is presented with drawings, pictures, labels, and cartoons.

The first part, “*Artisan Viticulture,*” is dedicated to the years 1545–1860 (315 years). Lacoste introduces the history of vines and wine development in the Americas through the presence of Spanish *conquistadores* and the Catholic church. At the beginning of this section, he explains the primary importance of Potosí (today Bolivia) as the main city and destination at the time for vine and wine products. Lacoste pays special attention to the development of the new *vitis-vinifera* type of grapes once these European vines adapted to the distinctive South American climates and soils; he particularly focuses the analysis on the local grape varietals *Pais* (Chile) and *Criolla* (Argentina). Lacoste describes customs and habits of the time, and the development of local techniques for vine growing and winemaking through the intersection of the know-how of Spaniards, slaves, and aboriginal people for the creation of this region’s initial wine industry practices.

The second part, “*Take Off of the Wine Industry,*” covers the years 1860–1930 (70 years). This is a period of great expansion of the wine industry for both countries. Lacoste explains that this major transformation of the wine industries of the Southern Cone of South America was encouraged by these main factors: the increase in population (immense influx of European immigrants—especially to Argentina), a prosperous economy, the revolution of transport (a strong expansion of railways and steamboats), and the devastating *phyloxera* plague in the vineyards of
Europe. He describes the exponential growth of vines planted and wine produced, the “discovery” and promotion of Malbec and Cabernet in Argentina and Chile, and what he considers the beginning of the implementation of “the French paradigm” in these countries, an industrial process where farmers and winemakers should “minimize the importance of their own grape’s place of origin and their local peasant traditions” (p. 63), privileging French and European foreign winemaking practices. For this historical period, Lacoste emphasizes his concept of “big wine factories” that produce an industrial product opposed to an artisanal product respectful of ancient and local traditions, local grapes, the environment, and sustainability. At the end of this part, he discusses the incorrect use of the names of wines for the marketing of local products (“All adopted the culture of imitation, copying, and falsification of the reputed Denominations of Origin of the Old World producers,” p. 87).

The third part, “Wines for the Domestic Market,” describes the period 1930–1990 (60 years). Lacoste presents a time when the wine industries change drastically and are fundamentally oriented to their local markets. Huge variations in stock, production, logistics, and marketing practices happened at a time of crucial political changes in both countries with the appearance of dictators and populist politicians, Perón in Argentina and Pinochet in Chile. He suggests that Perón incentivized a wine industry focused on the local market, with a strong government presence to “fight the oligopoly” (p. 164), and always contingent to a macroeconomic disaster: inflation, no access to credit, corruption, and disproportionate public spending. He then mentions that Pinochet stopped Allende’s agrarian reform, deregulated the activity, promoted exports, and facilitated the concentration of the industry in large companies. Lacoste then recounts the cases of Giol and Greco, both cases of government intervention in the wine industry of Argentina. In a controversial perspective, he finds the opportunity to link the Cuban revolution to the industry “through the agrarian reform in Chile, the action of the Montoneros [a leftist terrorist group] in Argentina, and the claims to make wines with identity” (p. 92).

The fourth and last part, “To the Conquest of the World,” presents the last 29 years (1990–2019). Lacoste summarizes as the main strengths of the period: the improvement of the quality of Argentinian and Chilean wines (nowadays comparable to those of the Old World and other New World producers), the expansion of exports, and the local strengthening of the culture of wine appreciation. He recognizes as weaknesses: the market concentration (almost 90% of Chile’s wine market is owned by three major companies, and almost 50% of the Argentine market is owned by four major companies), and the lack of development of local territories as Denominations of Origin and Geographical Indications as a means to balance the hegemony of brands. Lacoste recommends that both countries need to learn from each other’s experiences: “in Chile, it is urgent to advance in the decentralization of the industry, and the case of FeCoVitA [a major cooperative company from Argentina that Lacoste calls ‘a treasure’] can serve as an inspiring model; on the other hand in Argentina, the chronic macroeconomic problems that come from
constants fiscal deficit and inflation, could be improved from the emulation of the fiscal discipline of the Chilean model” (p. 164).

The way I see this book is one with a strong agenda. Lacoste is a firm believer in the need for government intervention in the wine industry against the creation of a commercial oligopoly and opposes neoliberal capitalistic practices; those beliefs play a fundamental role in how the storyline is presented regarding the wine history of Argentina and Chile. The book is also one that can make policymakers from both countries reflect on the importance of the preservation of local territories, traditional customs, and original products, and a necessary book that needs an English version to broaden the discussion of such important topics.

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