

Weekly Wine Pick
Wine Picks by Wine Pros

Luca and Beef Stew

June 3, 2011 by [Dick Rosano](#)



If you've ever been to Argentina, you're probably still telling stories about the food there. An abundance of savory dishes, from empanadas and asado to the sweet, coconut-infused cookies called alfajores, keep us in our seats for hours, as we linger over the fine cuisine that is Argentina's.

The wines from this country have made a similar impression on Americans, and the bonus is we don't have to travel to Mendoza to enjoy them. Malbec, a somewhat innocuous wine when grown in France, hit its stride when planted in Argentina, bottled as a deep red, spicy wine that hungers for the style of food made in that country.

So, how do we marry the two here in the U.S.? Wines are imported and, with a little help from friends, we can learn to make the Argentine food to go with them.

That help comes from an accomplished source. Nicolas Catena established his eponymous winery in Argentina with the solid intention of creating the country's finest wine -- in fact, Nicolas steered the enterprise toward making some of the finest wine in the world, and his wines prove that he has accomplished that.

Laura Catena, his daughter and the founder of another family winery called Luca, studied his methods but relied more on the passion for excellence that is in the Catena bloodline. Her wines are deeply textured, fragrant, and full-bodied, expressing concentrated fruit and long lingering flavors.

Laura's Malbec pairs beautifully with the grilled meats (asado) and spicy dishes, but my favorite is Carbonada, a meat and vegetable stew that begins with flank steak, but relies on the accents of onions, red peppers, garlic, and tomatoes for accent. She has recently published a book, appropriately titled *Vino Argentino*, that describes her family's roots in the business, the history of wine in Argentina, and a handful of her family's recipes, including Carbonada.

The book is published by Chronicle Books and is available on Amazon.com and other sources.

Luca 2008 Malbec (Uco Valley, Mendoza, \$32). Fragrant and full, with black cherry, plums, and a hint of cocoa on the nose; dark red fruit, highly textured, beautiful balance.