

GOLD MEDAL WINE CLUB

# Taste the Adventure!

Baja California, Mexico





**A RISING STAR ON THE INTERNATIONAL WINE STAGE, THE VALLE DE GUADALUPE OF BAJA CALIFORNIA, MEXICO IS A FAST-GROWING WINE MECCA PROMISING TO SATISFY THE MOST DISCERNING AFICIONADOS.**



It might be a tad hard to fathom, but five hundred years ago, Mexico was an important wine-growing and producing country. It was the Spanish conquistadores who developed the notion that certain high-altitude areas of Mexico were ideal for European grape cultivation. Conquistador Hernan Cortez demanded the planting of thousands of acres and with the Catholic missionaries utilizing this production at mass services.

A century later, the Spanish crown began fearing Mexico's wine dominance and banned its production. Only Spanish missionaries carried on the cultivation of grapevines and brought the first cuttings to California and its mission colonies.

Today's modern Mexican wine industry is considered a frontier of wine with origins as recent as the late 1970's. Numerous varietals are planted and the country now boasts of almost eight thousand acres under vine. The vast majority of wine production (upwards of 85%) occurs in the Mexican State of Baja California, just south of Tijuana and clustered around the City of Ensenada. At last count, there more than 150 wineries operating throughout the Baja California growing area that benefit from the existing Mediterranean climate, the always present Pacific morning fog, and a favorable topography that resembles several parts of Central and Northern California.

The Valle de Guadalupe is the principal growing region in Baja California and many scribes have christened it "the Napa Valley" of Mexico. A large number of small boutique wines have risen of late and have found commercial success both in the local markets and in some export markets.

Other established growing areas include Sonora, located across the Gulf of California from Baja, and its two sub regions, Hermosillo and Caborca, where Mexican brandy is produced.

The Laguna Region straddles the Mexican states of Durango and Coahuila, and a prized growing area, the Valle de Parras, is found in the latter. The Valle de Parras is home to the oldest



winery in North America, Casa Madero, which was founded in 1597 and still exists today.

Central Mexico also boasts of some high-altitude vineyards in Zacatecas, Aguascalientes, Guanajuato and Queretaro, but most of these grapes are used in the production of brandy.

Mexican wine is exported to 38 countries at this time, but is not always easily found.

At the 2016 Vinalies Internationale held in Paris, some 3,441 wines were entered, of which only 30% received medals. Mexican wineries participated in the event and entered 19 wines, with six receiving high awards. This was considered something of a coup in international wine circles.

While Mexican wines are still a rarity in the United States, sage restaurants and wine stores have begun offering a selection of Mexican wines to their customers. We are delighted to offer our *International Wine Club* members a first look at these amazing wines.

## REGION SPOTLIGHT: BAJA CALIFORNIA, VALLE DE GUADALUPE

In terms of quality of wines produced, Baja California is unquestionably Mexico's top wine producing area. It features an impressive Ruta de Vina (wine route) in the Valle de Guadalupe, Mexico's best individual growing area that is home to more than 100 wineries. The area is relatively young with most wineries some 30 years old or younger. The area was originally settled by Russian immigrants, many of whom left the area during World War II and headed north to lucrative wartime jobs in California and never returned.

Elevation is the key here, with most vineyards resting above the 1,000-foot level. The area is dry, with mostly clay and calcareous soils, and benefits from the Mediterranean Climate provided by the Pacific Ocean. Excellent morning fogs abound here, similar to those found along the California Coastline that aid the growth of the vines, particularly red varietals.

There is little pretense here and the setting is similar to the Napa Valley of the



1950's and 60's. A number of excellent restaurants offer sophisticated food combinations (sometimes called Baja Med Cuisine) at incredibly low prices compared to their North American counterparts. Its main village is called Francisco Zarco and it is in close proximity to the larger Ensenada City, and is just two hours south of San Diego, California.

A large number of varietals are produced in the Valle de Guadalupe, including Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Mourvedre, Nebbiolo, Syrah, Tempranillo and others. Many wineries utilize organic or biodynamic farming that further enhances their fruit and wines.



## WINE REGIONS OF MEXICO

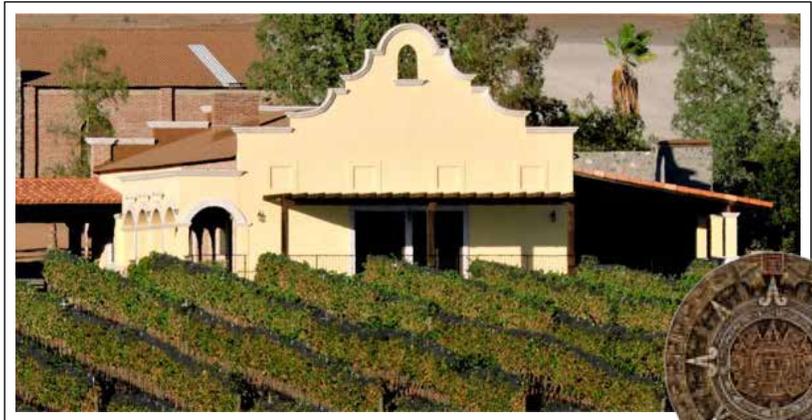
There are three areas in Mexico where wine grapes are currently grown: The North area includes Baja California and Sonora, the La Laguna area encompasses Coahuila and Durango, and the Central area consists of Zacatecas, Aguascalientes and Queretaro. Most of these regions have a fairly warm climate, which tends to make Mexican wines spicy, full-bodied, and ripe. Many may know that the 30th parallel (above and below the equator) is considered the theoretical boundary of successful grape growing, so it might be a surprise that a region so close to the tropics can grow grapes at all. Fortunately, the region is arid and vineyards are located at high altitudes, which provides cooler air and an increased diurnal shift (warmer days and colder nights).

Most of the country's wine is made in Baja California, specifically within the Valle de Guadalupe, and this Valley owes its success largely to its geographic anomaly: the Baja peninsula has a semi-desert climate, but Ensenada's region has a cold marine current, which helps to produce a Mediterranean-style climate (ideal for growing wine grapes). With its warm summer days and cool nights, and mild winters, this valley produces fine Mexican wines with a style of their own.



# Mexico: Fun Facts!

- Modern Mexicans are a unique blend of many ancient civilizations, including the Olmec, Zapotec, Toltec, Maya, Aztec, Inca, African, French, and Spanish.
- Mexico is located in the 'Ring of Fire,' one of the Earth's most violent earthquake and volcano zones.
- Mexico introduced chocolate, corn, and chilies to the world.
- The first vineyards in North America were planted in Mexico, in the 1530's.
- Mexican pyramids are different from the Egyptian pyramids. While Egyptian pyramids are smooth sided and tend to taper to a point, the Mexican pyramids are usually step pyramids. Their sides resemble huge staircases that lead to a temple at the top. Moreover, Egyptian pyramids were places used to lay the dead, while the Mexican pyramids were built for Gods or as military installations for defense purposes.
- Winemaking in Mexico began with the arrival of the Spanish in the 16th Century; they brought with them vine cuttings from Europe.
- Baja California produces 90% of Mexico's wine in the Valle de Guadalupe, the "Napa Valley" of the Mexican wine industry.
- The largest pyramid in the world is the Great Pyramid of Cholula in Mexico. It is also the largest monument ever constructed in the world. Chichen Itza, a pyramid that was once part of the Mayan Empire, was named one of the Seven Wonders of the World in 2007.
- Mexico is the largest silver producer in the world.
- The Day of the Dead (Día de los Muertos) is widely celebrated in Mexico. This traditional celebration is made to honor, celebrate, respect and remember deceased family members.
- Bull-fighting is a 500 year-old traditional Mexican sport played in a bullring. Plaza de Toros Mexico, situated in Mexico City, is the largest bullring in the world.



## Photos, top to bottom, left to right:

- The red grape varietals of France and Spain thrive in Baja California's ideal Mediterranean climate.
- Owner of Vinedos Malagon, Jose Malagon runs one of the largest wineries in the Valle de Guadalupe.
- Fruit is hand-sorted at Vinícola Solar Fortún to ensure only the highest quality grapes make it into the winery's award-winning blends.
- The quaint hacienda-style Vinícola Solar Fortún winery is filled with old world charm, but the wines are modern and cutting edge, with some of the most unique blends found in Baja California.
- Bodega Roganto is nestled in the San Jacinto Valley (one of the five valleys in the Valle de Guadalupe) and produces a range of grape varietals including Cabernet Sauvignon, Tempranillo, Merlot, Cabernet Franc, Nebbiolo, Grenache, and Mourvedre.

## THE FLAG OF MEXICO



Established in 1968, the Mexican flag is full of national symbolism. The flag consists of three vertical bands in green, white, and red, with the Mexican Coat of Arms in the center of the white band. The green band represents hope, the white

band represents unity, and the red band represents the blood of the national heroes. Mexico's Coat of Arms symbolizes the Aztec heritage and, according to legend, recounts the way the Aztecs chose the location for their capital city, Tenochtitlan (where Mexico City stands today). According to the legend, the Gods had advised the Aztecs to settle in a place where they found an eagle on a prickly pear cactus eating a serpent. The Aztecs saw this mythical sight in a place that was quite inhospitable - a swampy area in the center of three lakes, but this is where they settled and build the great city of Tenochtitlan. This image is now the Mexican Coat of Arms and it is proudly displayed on the flag.



Add it to your shipment of wines for just **\$34.95!**

## Taste the Adventure!

Our unique "Adventure Package" takes you beyond the wines to experience delectable selections of imported gourmet treats from the featured country. We take the time to search out regional delights to pair with the wines. All products are exclusive imports that represent the wine region along with the local culture.



## FEATURED MEXICAN WINERIES

Three boutique family wineries earn impressive international recognition and help bring stardom to modern Mexico's hottest wine growing region:  
The Guadalupe Valley of Baja California.

### BODEGA ROGANTO

Begun as a hobby back in 1987, Bodega Roganto began commercial operation in 2001. It is located in the San Jacinto Valley (one of the five valleys in the Valle de Guadalupe), and currently consists of about 60 acres that are home to several varietals including Tempranillo, Cabernet Sauvignon, and Merlot. Bodega Roganto also buys grapes from neighboring farmers located within the Valle de Guadalupe. From the initial 125 cases, the winery has grown to around 20,000 cases (quite a large production for a Mexican winery) and plans to expand its production as its markets dictate. The winery utilizes new barrels of Russian, French, Hungarian and American origin that provide a wide mixture of woods for its blends of varietal wines.

Bodega Roganto is owned by two old friends, Rogelio Sanchez del Palacio and Antonio Luis Escalante, and the name *Roganto* is a combination of their first names. The wines of Bodega Roganto have won high acclaim (both nationally and internationally) and are considered among the top tier of Mexican wines.

#### Winemaker: Antonio Escalante

Winemaker Antonio Escalante originally studied agricultural engineering at Instituto Tecnológico de Monterrey and later became a noted well-drilling expert. He is co-owner of Bodega Roganto and handles the winemaking chores with help from Dr. Enrique Ferro Salazar, the celebrated enologist and winemaking consultant. Escalante began as a home winemaker in 1987 and is active in the Confradio del Vino, an organization that

brings together restaurants and wineries to celebrate Mexican food/wine pairings.



### VINÍCOLA SOLAR FORTÚN

Founded by Dr. Jose Alberto Lopez in 2007. Vinícola Solar Fortún is a family winery with Santiago Lopez (Jose's son) serving as winemaker. Dr. Lopez was an astronomer/physicist by profession with a PhD in astrophysics, hence the name *Solar Fortún*. Located in a hidden valley in Francisco Zarco, the winery utilizes certified bench-grafted rootstock from Napa Valley (French Mercier Nursery) that is particularly well suited to growing both Rhône and Bordeaux varietals.

Vinícola Solar Fortún has gained instant recognition with its competitive wines and can be found on the wine lists of a number of top international restaurants. Vinícola Solar



Fortún currently produces around 1,500 cases each year, making it one of Mexico's top boutique wineries. Most of its wines are blends of French varietals as is the case with a number of Mexican wineries.

#### Winemaker: Santiago Lopez

Santiago Lopez is the son of Vinícola Solar Fortún owner Alberto Lopez. He studied engineering at Penn State University and holds a winemaking certificate from UC Davis that has furthered his winemaking skills. He is also a gifted athlete and was a member of five Mexican international gymnastic teams. As a winemaker, Santiago Lopez is something of an individualist regarding the blending of certain varietals. For instance, one of his wines is a blend of Mourvedre, Cabernet Sauvignon, Syrah, and Petite Verdot. "Europeans would ask," he recently explained, "why would you do that? It's wrong. Then they taste it and say, 'Oh, maybe not so wrong. At this point, we can take risks with our blends.'"

### VIÑEDOS MALAGÓN

One of the larger wineries in the Valle de Guadalupe is the beautiful Viñedos Malagón that sits on 400 acres of rolling hills in a practically pristine setting. The ranch itself has been in place for over a century and was first developed by Russian settlers who came and found the rich soils to their liking. In 2000, Jose Luis Malagón bought the property and its section of 'Old Vine' (originally planted in the 1960's) Grenache. The Malagóns (Jose and wife Rachel) developed the property and immediately updated the winery equipment and winery structures, and also built a church with twin towers that still rings its bells to call the faithful to prayer. The property also contains a bed and breakfast operation for visitors that is framed by fragrant white rose bushes that remind visitors of an earlier age.



The first releases of Viñedos Malagón appeared in 2005 and have been incredibly successful. Viñedos Malagón produces around 5,200 cases each year and has garnered a number of high scores and medals in competitions.

#### Winemaker: Alberto Rubio

Alberto Rubio is an enologist who studied in France and imparts his appreciation for French winemaking. His former winemaking jobs include Vinícola La Trinidad, Bodegas F. Rubio (Rubio's uncle's successful winery), Vinícola Mogor Badan, as well as La Borde Vieille in the Languedoc-Roussillon region of France. He is considered one of the rising stars of the Mexican wine industry and has his own small winery called Vino Fluxus. He has appeared at several international wine and food events including the mammoth *Kapalua Wine and Food Festival* in Hawaii.



The International Wine Club features exclusively imported hard-to-find wines of the world strictly for members of the Gold Medal Wine Club.



1-800-266-8888

www.goldmedalwineclub.com

**Hard to Find!**  
Only 500 Cases Produced



## SOLAR FORTÚN 2016 'O POSITIVO' RED BLEND

Valle de Guadalupe, Baja California, Mexico

A blend of 50% Cabernet Sauvignon and 50% Syrah, the Solar Fortún 2016 'O Positivo' is a full-bodied powerhouse wine that shows wonderful balance between intensity, freshness, and fruitiness. Interestingly, all of the vines at the Solar Fortún estate were grown from cuttings from Napa Valley (French Mercier Nursery) and speak to the high level of grape quality at this Baja California winery. Deep violet in color, this wine blends notes of black cherry, spices, vanilla, plum, and cocoa on a rich, full body with soft, well-structured tannins. The finish is long, smooth, and persistent. Solar Fortún recommends pairing the 2016 'O Positivo' Red Blend with semi-sweet mole with chicken or steak cuts. Aged 12 months in oak. Enjoy now until 2026.

You Save 13% to 22%  
off Winery Retail Price

Winery Retail Price	2+	6+	12+
<del>\$40.00/btl.</del>	btls.	btls.	btls.
2 & 3 Btl. Members:	\$35.00	\$33.33	\$32.50
4+ Btl. Members:	\$35.00	\$32.50	\$31.25

**Gold Medal  
Special Selection**



## ROGANTO 2016 PICCOLO VINO TINTO DE LA CASA

Valle de Guadalupe, Baja California, Mexico

A blend of 34% Cabernet Sauvignon, 30% Merlot, 25% Tempranillo, and 11% Cabernet Franc, the Roganto 2016 Piccolo Vino Tinto de la Casa was made in honor of Francisco Maria Piccolo, an Italian missionary who was chiefly responsible for introducing vines and olives in the region of Baja California. Father Piccolo worked intensely on the missions of Santa Rosalia de Mulege and San Francisco Javier de Vigge-Biamundo. This wine blends together French and Spanish varietals, which is very typical of wines produced in Baja California - it is very uncommon outside this region however. The 2016 Piccolo offers fruity aromas and flavors, with notes of blackcurrant dominating the palate. Notes of French and American oak (from the barrel aging) and another layer of complexity to the flavors and a soft tannin structure that lingers on the finish. Aged 12 months in oak. Enjoy now until 2026.

You Save 14% to 28%  
off Winery Retail Price

Winery Retail Price	2+	6+	12+
<del>\$28.00/btl.</del>	btls.	btls.	btls.
2 & 3 Btl. Members:	\$24.00	\$22.33	\$21.50
4+ Btl. Members:	\$24.00	\$21.50	\$20.25

**Hard to Find!**  
Only 375 Cases Produced



## MALAGÓN 2017 GRENACHE BLANC

Valle de Guadalupe, Baja California, Mexico

The Malagón 2017 Grenache Blanc comes from winery owners Jose and Rachel Malagón's estate vineyard in the Valle de Guadalupe in Baja California. Grenache Blanc, a varietal mostly found in Rhône wine blends in France and northeastern Spain, is a unique varietal to Baja, as there are only a few current producers. This wine offers bright citrus aromas, a rich, full body with clean flavors of fresh apple, minerality, and a touch of peach. Its crisp acidity lingers on the long finish. This Grenache Blanc is an excellent pairing to authentic shrimp ceviche or sea bass. Aged 4 months in stainless steel. 100% Grenache Blanc. Enjoy now until 2022.

You Save 14% to 31%  
off Winery Retail Price

Winery Retail Price	2+	6+	12+
<del>\$22.00/btl.</del>	btls.	btls.	btls.
2 & 3 Btl. Members:	\$19.00	\$17.33	\$16.50
4+ Btl. Members:	\$19.00	\$16.50	\$15.25