

# TERRAZAS DE LOS ANDES AT PLATO'S HIGH-ALTITUDE WINES IN AN ELEVATED SETTING

**OF THE GREAT RESTAURANTS** in Aspen, I would argue that none show off the splendor of the local mountains like Plato's in the Aspen Meadows Resort. The

cantilevered windows virtually frame the majesty of the area's ski mountains. The bird's eye view of Castle Creek as it rushes below with the spring runoff is breathtaking. And the sun, setting in the West at the valley's end, is unforgettable



KELLY J. HAYES

And over the past couple of years, Plato's wine and food pairings have elevated to meet the expectations presented by the outstanding vistas. If you have not been to the Meadows in a while, a unique wine dinner featuring the offerings of Terrazas de los Andes presents a perfect opportunity to get reacquainted with this Aspen jewel.

On Saturday, March 14, the kitchen staff at Plato's will prepare a special Argentine-inspired five-course meal to accompany the high-altitude wines made in Mendoza, Argentina, by Terrazas de los Andes. Flavors, both subtle and bold, will be paired by Plato's chef de cuisine Aaron Schmude to match the wines of one of Argentina's most historic producers. The regional grapes that grow so well in the foothills of the Andes, from a fresh and aromatic white Torrontés to a darkly mysterious Malbec, will be showcased along with a special pouring of the Cheval de Andes, a bottling made in partnership between Bordeaux's Cheval-Blanc and the Terrazas de los Andes.

"I always get excited about doing special dinners," says chef Schmude. "It gives us a chance to play with ideas and stretch our imaginations. This particular wine dinner has been a fun challenge due to the Argentinean background the vineyard has. From the research, we have come up with our play on traditional Argentinean flavors and ingredients. We were pleasantly surprised to find a huge Italian influence."

Working with the Plato's team — including Andrew Tennis, director of food & beverage; Meadows executive chef Jason Thompson; pastry chef Aleece Alexander; and restaurant manager Bonnie Calderon — Schmude spent hours over the last couple of months creating a menu that ranges from a shrimp ceviche, blending in both chorizo and caviar, to a show-stopping short rib asado over polenta.

For a finale, chef Alexander has created a Valrhona chocolate ganache with seckel pear, corn ice cream and dulce de leche that will be delectable with the Terrazas Malbec. "With all of my menus, I try to take classic dishes, ones that people are comfortable with, then put a modern twist on them with trending ingredients and techniques," Schmude explained.

Of course, co-starring at this event are the wines from Argentina. Terrazas de Andes was the first outpost of Moët & Chandon, the esteemed Champagne house (producer of Dom Pérignon) that was established in Épernay, France, in 1743. A little more than two centuries later, Renaud Poirier, chief winemaker at Moët & Chandon, was dispatched to Argentina to research the region's potential for producing world-class sparkling wine.

Suitably impressed, Bodega Chandon was established in 1959. In 1999 the company began the process of producing still wines at altitude in a restored 1898 Spanish-style winery in the Lujan de Cuyo region. Terrazas instantly become a force in the production of Cabernet Sauvignon, Malbec, and Chardonnay plantings in vineyards that range from 3,200 to 3,900 feet with each varietal matched to an altitude that 40 years of experience has deemed apt.

While the Cheval de Andes, created with an eye to being "the Premier Cru of the Andes," will be a highlight, there will be other discoveries to embrace as well. "Aaron, Bonnie and myself have been blown away by some of the single vineyard wines we'll be



showcasing," said Andy Tennis, teasing the Single Vineyard "Los Aromos" Cabernet Sauvignon. This wine is grown at 3,200 feet on vines that were originally planted in 1929. A splendid example of how the long growing days and the glacial waters flowing from the peaks of the Andes can nourish and produce exceptional Cabernet.

Sometimes wine dinners give short shrift to the food and wine pairings, using the occasion, instead, as a gimmick to pour expensive wines in order to get people in on a slow night. This is not the case with Plato's, which clearly has invested the passion needed to create a special evening that not only presents, but celebrates the wonderful wines of

the region.

The only caveat to this evening at Plato's is that one needs to act quickly. "We limit our dinners to 30 guests to create an intimate atmosphere with the winemakers or representatives," said Tennis. "After we published the menu for our last wine dinner in The Aspen Times, we sold out within 24 hours."

Ándale!

*Kelly J. Hayes lives in the soon-to-be-designated appellation of Old Snowmass with his wife, Linda, and black Lab named Vino. He can be reached at mali-bukj@aol.com*

## UNDER THE INFLUENCE

It's best to get to Plato's early for a cocktail with a sunset view before dinner (the sun will slip out of site by 6:13 p.m. on the 14th), but even if you miss it, the small-wood ceilinged room is intoxicating: Plato's, and the Aspen Meadows, is home to the bold, colorful geometric designs of Aspen legend Herbert Bayer. The tapestries and sketches that hang on the walls of Plato's give the restaurant artistic bona fides that make it totally unique. Bayer, a founder of the Bauhaus movement, designed the hotel and grounds of the Meadows and the Aspen Institute and the works that hang in Plato's are not only beautiful, they are historic.



**IF YOU GO...**

Argentine-inspired dinner wine pairings from Terrazas de los Andes  
 Saturday, March 14  
 Five courses: \$120 per person  
 Reservations required, 970-544-7814

THE PLATO'S TEAM: Aaron Schmude, chef de cuisine; Aleece Alexander, pastry chef; and Jason Thompson, executive chef.

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Chicken-fried lobster

Scallop Bake

Diver Scallop, Honshimeji Mushrooms, Fresh Basil  
 "Dynamite" Foie Gras, Shaved Truffle  
**Grgich Hills Fumé Blanc, Napa Valley, CA**

Duo of Rabbit

Mustard Seed-encrusted Loin of Rabbit,  
 Confit of Rabbit Leg, Housemade Bacon, Swiss Chard  
**Grgich Hills Zinfandel, Napa Valley, CA**

Venison Osso Bucco

Slow-braised Venison, Parsnip Purée, Roasted  
 Cauliflower, Pistachios, Cabernet Jus

**Grgich Hills Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley, CA**

Dessert Cheese Plate

Maytag Blue Cheese Ice Cream w/Port Drunk Cherries  
 Vanilla-whipped Brie w/Blackberry-Orange Marmalade  
 Chevre Cheesecake Crumble/Honey-preserved Kumquat  
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Executive Chef, Will Nolan  
 Pastry Chef, Ashley Jenkin  
 Wine Director, Rick D. Lang

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