

Exclusive Interview: Winemaker Marcelo Bocardo

In April 2014, Winemaker Marcelo Bocardo invited US Wine Consultant, Nora Favelukes to visit him in Mendoza. Nora tasted his wines, visited the winery and vineyards. During a two-day visit, they had several conversations to discuss the best strategy and approach to sell Proemio Wines in the United States.

“I was very impressed by his passion and his story. It is the story of a new phase for the Argentinean wine industry that started in the early 2000’s when Argentine winemakers who worked for traditional and powerful family-owned wineries began to explore the possibility of making their own wines. It was a distant dream for all of them”, says Nora Favelukes.

Read more to learn how Winemaker Marcelo Bocardo made his comeback over the past year from an exclusive interview with Nora Favelukes.



NF (Nora Favelukes): What first attracted you to winemaking?

MB (Marcelo Bocardo): My family has been involved in the wine industry for generations; first in Italy, and then in the early 1900’s in Argentina when my great grandfather immigrated to Mendoza. His first job was as a “contratista”, hired by a large winery to oversee their 500 acres vineyard. My grandfather and father were winemakers, so you can say I was born with wine in my DNA.

NZF: As a third generation winemaker, when did you start to dream about owning a winery?

MB: I’ve always had! I wanted to make the best wines that Mendoza terroirs could provide. I knew the best wines came from the best terroirs; so for the longest time, I explored Mendoza looking for vines at different altitudes, soils and climates to ensure that my wines will have great complexity of aromas and flavors.

NF: Why did you name your winery “Proemio” and not your own name?

MB: Proemio means “prologue” in old Medieval Spanish and it stands for kick-start or first page. This is the first page of my story as a winery owner. I am sure that in the future, one of my wines will carry my name.

NF: I've noticed that your Malbec wines are sourced from different vineyards. Why is this?

MB: Malbec has a different character depending on the terroir. By sourcing grapes from different vineyards (Maipú, Tupungato and Perdriel in Mendoza), we aimed to produce the most expressive Malbecs based on the diverse terroir they were sourced from.

NF: When did you first start producing the blends?

MB: In 2006, with the launching of the Grand Reserve and Icon, we introduced our blends. I like to make them; that's where I can use my craftsmanship as winemaker. The Proemio Grand Reserve and the Proemio Icon are my signature wines; the ones I feel totally identified. Sometimes, as a winemaker, it is hard to produce wines for others. These are mine!

NF: What are you trying to achieve with your wines?

MB: We start with great fruit. Then, we sort the grapes in the vineyards and again at the winery. We work with minimal intervention, in a natural way with small vats and mostly using native yeasts for the wines to reflect the authentic character of the fruit. From the Reserve line up, we age our wines in Vicard barriques, a French family of tonneliers. I have found that our wines and their oak work very well together, they integrate to each other in a perfect balance.

NF: In 2015, Proemio got a National importer after trying for years in many ways. Can you say that the third time is the charm?

MB: I knew from the beginning that exporting Proemio to the United States was going to be challenging as it is a highly competitive market. We started well with a West Coast importer until the company bankrupted. In 2014, I took the plunge and went for a Service Provider to take control over my brand. In September, my wines started selling in the NY market. The trade's immediate response was very positive. And, as of August 2015, Testa Wines of the World became our National Importer, a family-owned company with great tradition of importing excellent wines. And we were back in the big game!

NF: What makes you proud of Proemio today?

MB: It makes me proud that we are a family-owned winery and I can entrust my legacy to my children. I am grateful to have a strong team filled with passion and commitment and honored today that many consumers have accepted my wines and are letting Proemio into their lives.

NF: During 2015, which wines caught the eye of the trade and the consumers?

MB: We expected that Varietal Malbec was going to be the "big seller" because of its affordable price, great price-quality ratio and a hot varietal in the US. But the one that took us off surprisingly was our Reserva Cabernet Sauvignon! Priced at \$20.00 retail, the wine started to have repeated sales and is doing very well.

NF: What are your perspectives for 2016?

MB: Getting consumers who have already established a relationship to continue accepting us; introducing new products such as Petit Verdot (this will be our grand entrance wine); and to develop a larger distribution market in the US. We have just started selling our wines in Brazil and hope to expand to the European market by mid-2016.