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Our Story

Why on earth would two American hunters, the *Dos Cazadores*¹, end up buying a vineyard in Argentina? Because they (and their families) were passionate about their sport, their food and their wine, and wanted a wine that expressed the history, beauty, art, style and excitement of hunting and was especially designed to be drunk with game.

This is our story.

We have been hunting and fishing around the world for a combined 100 years – starting with going after quail with our Dads behind our pet pointers. Hunting is a complex sport, a combination of a sensory art form and skill. When you see a picture of a flock of ducks cupping across the rising sun into a block of decoys, that picture only captures a part of the beauty of that scene. The entire experience includes, not just the visual beauty of the magnificence of nature but also the smell of the brackish marsh, the sound of the soft quack of the mallard hen and wheeze of the drake, the wind biting your nose and cheeks, the feel of the cold steel and oil-polished walnut in your hands – your heart races, your muscles tense. And, then comes the skill part: overcoming this rush of emotion (they don't call it "buck fever" for nothing), raising the gun, shouldering it properly, swinging to and through the bird going 45 mph (66 ft./sec.) and squeezing the trigger. The feeling of relief if there is a convincing "splash" in the pond - *"I've not embarrassed myself in front of my friend"*. Your dog catapults from his stand beside the blind, arches himself into the water with droplets gleaming in the sun, grabs the duck in his mouth and proudly retrieves it to your hand. And, then, the memories of hundreds of similar experiences through the years and the tears in your eyes when you murmur silently to yourself, *"If only my Dad could be here with me today"*. When we look out of the corner of our eyes to see our son or daughter in the blind with us, we know that, years from now, he or she will be thinking the same thing. No father, who is a hunter, could ever desire any family tie more special or wonderful.

¹ C. Allen Foster is a trial lawyer in Washington, DC. He has been active in numerous sporting and conservation organizations, including the International Order of St. Hubertus, the oldest shooting and conservation organization in the world. Allen and his wife, Susan, live in Alexandria, VA and have three grown children. Everyone in the family shoots, including a grandson and granddaughter. James Wade Logan is an investor who lives with his wife, Maria, and their nine-year-old triplets, in London, England. Everyone in the family shoots (or plans to shoot). Allen and Wade have been hunting and fishing together for nearly 40 years.



Hunting has existed as long as man. Some anthropologist theorize that the primate brain of carnivores enjoyed greater development than that of primates who were remained vegetarian. Cave paintings thousands of years old overwhelmingly feature hunt scenes. Earliest recorded history highlights hunters providing food for their families. Esau (Gen. 25:27) and Nimrod (Gen. 10:9) in the Old Testament. Orion in Greek mythology (Iliad, Bk. VIII). Diana in Roman mythology. St. Hubertus, the patron Saint of hunters, who converted pagans in the Ardennes forest by shooting the heads off their idols with his bow and arrow. The principal sport of European royalty was hunting and the great chateaux of the Loire were nearly all hunting lodges for them and their nobles or mistresses. Today, most of the stately homes of England are preserved, at least in part, by the revenues from shooting. Indeed, it is only in America, with its historical hostility to class distinctions, that hunting is enjoyed by people of all social and economic classes and, more and more, including women and girls. Perhaps the finest shot at the premier social club in Washington, DC is a woman. And, in Paris, the Club Amazones fields an outstanding shooting team. Their children and grandchildren will be saying: *"I only wish my Mom could still be here with me today"*.

Hunters and fishermen don't just hunt and fish. They are the founders of some of the leading conservation organizations in the world – Ducks, Quail and Trout Unlimited. The World Wildlife Fund. Theodore Roosevelt, one of the greatest hunters of all times, founded the US National Park system. The sale of Duck Stamps generates over \$ 37.5 million per year (over \$1 billion since inception) for waterfowl habitat preservation. The tax on sporting arms and ammunition and fishing gear raises over \$ 1 billion per year for conservation. The International Order of St. Hubertus reports that, in the space of only five years, just its US members spent over \$100 million on conservation. Some of the most ardent anti-blood sports organizations admit that, without the revenues from hunters and their control of poaching, major species would be endangered.

And, so, whether it is ducks in Louisiana, South Carolina, and the Eastern Shore of Maryland. Doves on plantations in Virginia and ranches in Texas. Quail in South Carolina and Georgia. Twenty-two safaris in Africa. Grouse, pheasant and partridge in Scotland, England, France, Spain, Italy and Morocco. Red deer and wapiti in New Zealand. Ducks and bats (yes, bats) in Mexico. Boar on montera in Spain and at Chambord Castle in France. Pheasant and mouflon in the Czech Republic. Partridge in Morocco and Spain. The complete sensory and emotional experience, always ending with: *"If only my Dad (or Mom) could still be here with me today"*.



And, more to the point of this web site, a half century of shooting in Argentina - 14 species of ducks, a different species of dove, over a dozen species of perdiz, two of pigeon, plus red stag, boar, water buffalo, Patagonia rabbit and more. Back in the '60's when we first started going to Argentina, it took two days or more to go from the mid-Atlantic of the United States to a hunting lodge in Argentina, and the ticket cost 1-2% of the average American's yearly salary. Despite the superb shooting, excellent food, and (then, only) good wine, it was just too damn far and too damn expensive. After our first trip, we didn't go again for five years. Then, three years. Then, two years. Then, every year. (Planes got faster and cheaper and the wine got better!).

Of course, just as the picture does not capture the experience, the hunting and shooting is only a part of it. After the hunt, we gather around the fire in the field or hunting camp to enjoy the fruits of our hunt. No real hunter ever shoots just to kill (except, perhaps, bats). "Bringing home the bacon" is baked into our DNA. Hunting without eating the quarry is contrary to a gene which cannot be bred out of us or sublimated to the supposed veneer of civilization or pressure of the virtue-signaling and shame culture of the current elites. And, an essential element of that part of the experience is the wine that goes with the game.

In 2010, we were in San Luis Province, sitting around the lunch asado with our outfitter, Ruben Falcon (whose day job was then as Director (Principal) of a School in San Rafael). Our lunch asado that day was the duck we had shot in the early morning and the perdiz we took over dogs thereafter. We were drinking a nice Malbec with a perdiz on the label but, for us, the wine just wasn't "right" for either the flavorful, musky duck or the more delicate, perfumed perdiz. Wade asked Ruben: "*Doesn't anyone in this famous hunting and wine country make a wine that is designed to be drunk with game?*" Ruben: "*Our wine is good with everything*". No use arguing with Ruben about the versatility of Argentine wines. But, the question stuck in our minds: why doesn't anyone make a wine that is designed to be drunk with game? We began to talk to wine shop owners, and, then, winemakers: "*No one thinks about it that way*". We decided we wanted to think about it that way.

At that time, our cellars were mostly French – Burgundy and Bordeaux. But, over the years, we had learned that, somehow, the silky Shiraz of the Cote de Rhone had the breadth and capability to add that extra "something" to all sorts of game – from duck and boar to pheasant and partridge. So, in a first very crude way, we began to experiment with mixing a Cote de Rhone Syrah or Australian shiraz (same grape, different name) with an Argentine Malbec. (Wine "experts" are now throwing up their hands



and shouting “OMG.”) We weren’t trying to produce a wine; we were just trying to see if the blend of those grapes had promise and we didn’t have any Argentine Syrah. The Malbec gave some additional “backbone” and “fruitiness” to the syrah but did not give it so much strength that it overcame the white-meated game birds.

The next trip to Argentina, we tried our new “mix” with all-Argentine wines. Not bad for a trial run. Not being ones to wait for research, blind tastings or any of the other intellectual tools we use in our regular businesses, we jumped right in. We acquired a 98 ha. finca on the outskirts of Goudge village, about 19 km from San Rafael, in Mendoza Province, the most famous Argentine wine area. We knew little about farming, and nothing about growing grapes or making wine, but we had reckless enthusiasm. And, of course, our enthusiasm caused us to buy Maseratis when Mustangs would have done. We picked expensive land with a superabundance of water (both irrigation allotments and two wells), selected the most expensive, 2-3 year-old grape stock (we were in a hurry), built the most elaborate trellis system (parral) and spaced our vines double the optimal distance apart, halving our potential production. In the end, however, our overindulgences turned out to be virtues. The mature grapes-tock had superior vigor and grew quickly onto the 1.5 meter high parral support and helper wires. The 4.6 ft. height (compared to the 16 in. distance from the ground of the first wire of most espaldero trellis) protected the vines and grapes from the worst of the frost that both stressed them for quality but threatened them with destruction. The parral design and the distant spacing exposed the grape clusters to the maximum amount of sunlight (especially when the surrounding leaves were thinned). By sheer chance, the land turned out to have the perfect terroir for the style Syrah we needed. And, we had the exceptional good fortune to discover Ignacio Estevez and Lucia Baldo-
vin, two recent graduates of the viticulture school of the University of Mendoza, to be our professional enological engineers. (As described elsewhere, their romance started at our finca and they were married in 2018) Their sound advice has turned us from enthusiastic neophytes to, we hope, reasonably experienced, if consequentially impoverished, viticulturists.

At Ignacio’s and Lucia’s instance, we dampened our haste and allowed our vines to reach relative maturity – it was eight years before Ignacio and Lucia told us that we were ready to make our first wine. Previously, we just sold our grapes to local wineries but the enthusiasm of our customers, particularly for our syrah, gave us a lot of hope and support. Ignacio researched and selected Fabricio Orlando as the “right” wine-maker for our project. In the spring of 2020, under Fabricio’s watchful eye, the vines continued to be cultivated, the leaves thinned and, then, the very best grape clusters



were selected for hand-harvesting into small boxes for immediate transport to the winery where Fabricio would make and design the wine.

The time to pick up the grapes is in March when the Syrah and the Malbec reach their peak of expression and fruitiness. Our engineers and winemaker, working as one, taste the grapes three days a week in order to define the exact maturity point in which flavors, concentration and sugar are in perfect harmony, ready to take to the winery and start that choreographic and precise process of wine making. Once the grapes reach the winery, the whole process has the premise of being extremely careful with the integrity of the bunches as we try to make the process as delicate as possible. Therefore, the extraction of aromas, tannins and color previously and during fermentation is slow and constant in order to produce a stable and complex wine. We believe the wine should be natural and respectful of the terroir where it is made. That is why, after alcoholic fermentation in stainless steel tanks, we wait for spontaneous malolactic fermentation that is finished at the French oak barrels where the wine is conserved for a full 12 months. The two varietals age separately for 8 months in barrels of 500 and 225 liters. After that, the blend is made and the resulting wine (45% Malbec and 55% Syrah) ages another 4 months in oak. The time of the process, combined with the coronavirus pandemic in the United States, made waiting for the result suspenseful, to say the least. Finally, in June 2021, Ignacio called to say that Fabricio had deemed the result to be “superb”, he is not known for his compliments and, from him, whose wines compete with ours, that was high praise.

Of course, making the wine is only the beginning of producing the product which was our object: a wine that was perfect to be drunk with a wide range of game – from elk, deer and boar to pheasant, perdiz and grouse. On this score, we knew more than Fabricio so we began to introduce him to the flavors of game before he would be called upon to blend the Syrah with the Malbec to achieve the versatile wine we sought. Fortunately, Ignacio and Lucia have a welcoming home in San Rafael with a chef’s kitchen, and we set out to expand Fabricio’s waist line with some of our favorite game and fish dishes (future editions of this website will feature Our Recipes). We’ve tried everything from roast duck and smoked perdiz to grilled Patagonian red stag and wild boar to pan fried or sauteed trout and salmon, even a Creole-style shrimp etouffee from John Folse’s “After the Hunt ” recipe book. After all these food pairing, we got the blend we were seeking and we named it “Iconic Red Blend”, since this wine summarized everything we were looking for and made the experience of drinking it with game an Iconic moment that we hope you can enjoy with us.



This wine can be described as bright and intense, full bodied red wine with violet hues at the lips. Elegant and savory, with silky persistence. Captivating aromas of currants, raspberries and other red fruits. Distinct tobacco and chocolate aroma melded with honey and amalgamated notes of pepper and nuts from its passage through French oak barrels. It has what winemakers describe as sweet tannins which makes this wine have good presence but also benefits its roundness and drinkability. This wine has a unique bouquet and tension but is also versatile enough to be drunk in many different situations.

And, every time we sit around the table to enjoy the fruits of our hunt, with a glass of Iconic Red in our hands, we thank God for the many blessings we enjoy and we continue to say, *“If only Daddy were here”*.