



The Salentein Winery

Last Hurrah for Argentina

WE STARTED OUR SECOND DAY with a gourmet breakfast overlooking the Andes and then made our first stop at Salentein Winery. It is known for both its wines, art, cuisine, and pleasure. We had a wonderful tour, tasted the top wines, and strolled the grounds set against the Andes.

We then motored to the Casa de Uco in the foothills of the Andes. This view was also spectacular and set the tone for our great lunch. Choices were numerous, but most chose the tenderloin carpaccio with arugula pesto and matured Sardo cheese versus the baby greens salad or the soup of the day. The carpaccio paired perfectly with the Finca Casanova Wallpa Pinot Noir 2014. The main course choice of butternut squash was enjoyed by few, but since we were in Argentina, the large beef tenderloin with grilled tomatoes, potatoes, and Provençal salad was calling. Paired with the Finca los Maza Reserva Malbec 2013, it was outstanding. We finished with either



The Catena Zapata Winery

a caramelized pear clafouti or two versions of paté. The clafouti paired perfectly with the Susana Balbo Torrontes Late Harvest 2012—what matches!

After lunch, we stopped at Catena Zapata Winery for a most memorable wine tasting. The owner, patriarch Nicolás Catena, a third-generation Argentinian pioneer, is generally regarded as the owner of the greatest winery in South America. He pioneered the planting of Malbec at high altitudes and has worked tirelessly for decades to improve his wines so that his top wines compete with the world's best. The winery is headquartered in a Mayan-inspired pyramid at the foothills of the Andes. We spent three hours at the winery and were treated to five of their greatest wines. The first wine was White Stones, a 100 percent Chardonnay within Block 1 (27 rows) of the Adriana Vineyard in Mendoza at 4,757 feet elevation. The wine gives aromas of pears and apples, vanilla, white flowers, and stony minerality. Although the finish is crisp and dry, there are notes of pears, quince, and spices. This wine pairs well with rich shellfish dishes.

The second wine poured was White Bones from the same vineyard, but a separate location within. It is slightly more austere, think Chablis Grand Cru, with great complexity and nuances. It marries well with swordfish and tuna and with seafood dishes prepared with butter and cream. This wine, as is the case with White Stones, is extremely rare such that the winery limits the sale of each to one bottle per day. At \$100-\$150, each of these two whites is worth

the time and money to locate several bottles as they are among the world's greatest white wines.

The first red wine was the Malbec Argentino, one of three 100 percent top tier Malbecs produced by Catena Zapata. The others are Nicasia and Adrianna. Argentino is a blend of the other two Malbec vineyards. The wine is big and bold with flavors of fig, violets, and blue fruit and floral notes. The wine is very aromatic and rich with sweet tannins. For many, this is the penultimate expression of Malbec.

The final two red wines were 2011 and 2001 Nicolas Catena Zapata. The 2011 is 80 percent Cabernet Sauvignon and 20 percent Malbec, while the 2001 is 52 percent Cabernet Sauvignon and 48 percent Malbec. Since the first vintage in 1997, the owners have challenged many of the world's greatest Cabernet Sauvignons as in the five Bordeaux First Growth Grand Crus, Sassicaia, Opus One, etc., and has been beaten once, tied once, and won all others. The wines are extremely rich and muscular with typicity of both grapes in evidence. The wine is one of the best available with great beef steaks, prime rib, beef tenderloin, rack of lamb, and flavorful pork. Remarkably similar, the 2001 showed how well the wine matures (enjoy for another 10-20 years), while 2011 was very exuberant. I have drunk this flagship wine from most vintages and can report that almost no Cabernet Sauvignon wine at any price has beaten it in blind competition.

We returned to our hotel to freshen up for a special private tango show on property. Most of us were spectators only, but Barb and Frank Ross (Barrington) as well as Susan and Bob Schramm (Arlington, Va.) were brave enough to hone their skills on the dance floor with the tango stars.

We finished the day by having a wine tour at the nearby Domino del Plata Winery (Susana Balbo) and dinner at the restaurant Espacio Crios on property opened especially for us. For the remarkable starters, choices were warm goat provoleta (soft round provolone cheese made from cow's milk) or fresh tiger prawns salad, or crispy sweetbreads on green leaves.



A piano sits in the depths of Salentein Winery.

BIG IRON HORSE

Chicago's Premium Barbecue



Big Iron Horse Barbecue was created to bring the flavors and cooking techniques of Texas, the great southwest, and Caribbean together for a unique blend of fusion barbecue.

The Big Iron begins by introducing custom rub blends and smoke flavors to prime cuts of beef, pork, and chicken cooked low and slow to perfection then garnished with a select barbecue glaze.

Served with a selection of barbecue Cuban black beans, cilantro jasmine rice, fresh fruit, sweet corn bread or fresh vegetables.

Full Service Catering is Available for Pick-Up, Delivery or Prepared Onsite!



the **BIG IRON HORSE** bbq
CHICAGO'S PREMIUM BARBECUE

bigironhorse.com

Located in downtown Barrington

117 S. Hough St. | 847.382.IRON (4766)

PHOTO: BOB SHRAMM



Jim Bryant, Bob Shramm, and Greg Pearson tend to lunch.

The main course choices were barbecued hot top (beef covered with juniper berry sauce) and veggies, pork "Matambrito" (pork flank steak drizzled with lemon juice just before being tucked into one of several cuts such as rib-eye, sirloin, short ribs, or skirt steak) with potatoes and lemon pica limoneta (Brazilian lemonade made with limes, sugar, condensed milk, and water) or angel fish with black olive oils on baby vegetables or a beautiful vegetarian option of vegetables wrapped in spinach leaves with scallions. The wines were diverse from the premium collection of Susana Balbo and/or her husband's winery, Benmarco. We finished at midnight and all I remember as a lover of pork, the "Matambrito" was the best pork I've had. We motored home through a light rain which turned to hail for our quick run to our rooms. The day was long (15 hours) but the day will live longer for those of us who experienced it.



Lunch was served outside at the Lagarde Winery. Right: The wines served at the Lagarde Winery lunch.

After experiencing one of the greatest days visiting wineries, we had to leave this enchanted land so after a leisurely breakfast we left for the airport. We had no idea that one of our best experiences would be our last. We arrived at Lagarde Winery to see beautifully cobbled courtyards, antiquated wine presses, and 100-plus-year-old vines tended by horse and cart. We ate outside with vines and a courtyard on either side. After starting with a toast of Lagarde's Blanc de Noir, we began with a fresh salad or chef's pizza accompanied by the 2012 Malbec (Guarda) and the 2014 Malbec. The main course was braised pork with sweet potato mash and fresh salad, or mushroom tagliatelle with sun-dried tomatoes, arugula, and parmesan cheese. They were perfectly paired with the 2012 Primeros Vinos from ancient Cabernet Sauvignon vines. Finally, desert choices of homemade flan with "Dulce de leche" and fresh cream or seasonal fruit crumble were married with Lagarde's Dolce. As we left the most frequent comments were "over the top", "a perfect end to a perfect trip", and as if we needed more food and wines, both were praised lavishly. A vôte santé! 🍷



PHOTO: THOMAS BALSAMO

Barrington resident Jim Bryant is pursuing his passion and love of wine as an international wine consultant. This follows a 30-year career in senior financial and general management positions at two Fortune 100 companies. He is the owner of James R. Bryant L.L.C.; contact him at profwino@comcast.net.