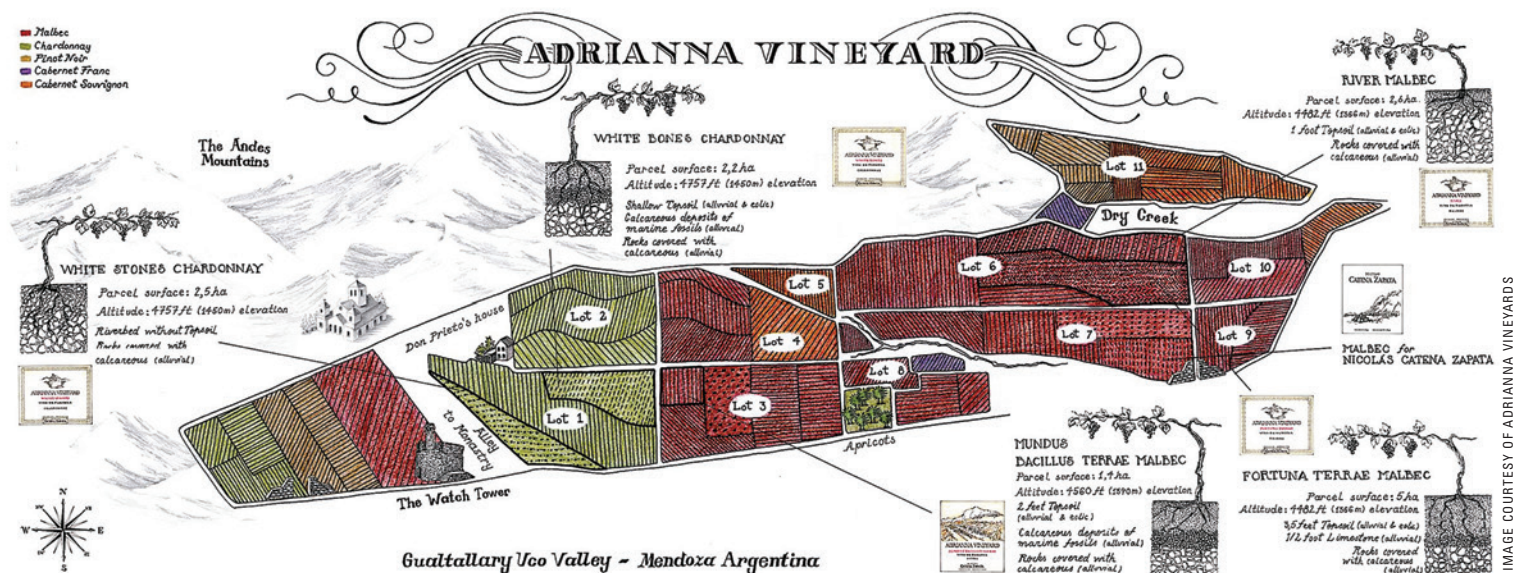


# DOWN CELLAR STORY AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY JIM BRYANT



Often called the “Grand Cru” vineyard of South America, Adrianna Vineyard’s carefully mapped parcels reveal the diverse terroirs behind Catena Zapata’s legendary Chardonnay and Malbec wines.

## Beyond the Mendoza Vineyards

Rare wine tastings, Michelin-starred dining, and unforgettable wines in Argentina and Chile

THE MAY/JUNE 2026 column was dedicated to a very rare wine tasting at Catena’s Adrianna Vineyard. Nothing in the wine world will probably ever make such an impression on those 11 of us who have experienced it. Nevertheless, there were other highlights from the trip which I will detail in this issue.

After a city tour of Buenos Aires, including the obligatory stop at Eva Perón’s final resting place, we went to a charming restaurant for a delicious, multi-course Argentinian lunch with ample white and red wines which were all excellent. The next morning, we had an early flight to Mendoza where we had a wonderful lunch outside by the vineyards at Kaiken Winery. Kaiken is the name of an indigenous bird which flies across the Andes and can be found in both Chile and Argentina. The winery is owned by Montes of Chile and is now making much improved wine over the past decade. We ate outside under perfect temperature conditions with a canopy to shield us from the sun. After numerous courses accompanied by excellent wines, we either ate little or none once we checked into the Mendoza Park Hyatt.

The next day started early with the drive to the Adrianna Vineyard and for the following three hours we enjoyed the tasting detailed in my previous column. After the Adrianna tasting, we went to the world headquarters of Catena where we were treated to another rare tasting. This time the focus was on a recent pet project by Laura Catena. She set out to be the first producer in Argentina of distilled spirits. None of the distilled spirits have been sold but we were able to taste samples of all these ‘eaux de vie’ which will be sold in the United States and Argentina if Laura approves the quality level. Based on our tasting, I believe we should be able to taste them again soon.

After this tasting, we walked next door to the Guide Michelin two-star



The gardens of Angélica Cocina Maestra are more than scenery—they are a living pantry supplying the fresh ingredients that accompany Catena’s world-class wines and reinforce the restaurant’s farm-to-table philosophy.





Our group of 11 continues our story on an incredible South American wine adventure.



Left: Rows of polished copper stills reflect Catena's spirit of innovation, transforming exceptional vineyard fruit into a new generation of Argentine distilled spirits. Laura Catena is experimenting with eaux-de-vie made from exceptional grapes and other fruit grown in Mendoza. The goal is to preserve the essence of the fruit in distilled form, much as fine wine expresses a vineyard's terroir. Center: The wine cellar at Catena's Adrianna Vineyard. Right: A sweet ending to the day at Angélica Cocina Maestra.

restaurant Angélica Cocina Maestra which showcases modern interpretations of traditional Mendoza cuisine. Because of our extended visit to the Adrianna vineyards, we were two hours late for an extensive lunch (planned for three hours) so we reduced the number of courses to eight and selected the greatest wines from the entire Catena estate, having one of the most enjoyable meals ever.

During our dining, we witnessed two short but very intense rainstorms with 60-to-80 mile per hour winds. After the first 15-minute storm with no visibility possible, the sky cleared for an hour, then followed an even more intense 10-minute, blocked vision downpour with extreme winds.

The food and wines were exceptional. I have included a photo which resembles more forms of art but from the appetizers to entrees to desserts they were all as good as they looked and the wines were outstanding. Once again, we had as much of the Chardonnay and Malbec wines from the Adrianna Vineyards that we visited earlier as desired. The comfort of the restaurant and the accompaniment of the wines contrasted with the same wines served from the back of a pick-up truck, earlier in the day at the vineyard, but both events were forever etched in our memories.

In addition to these wines, we had several of the greatest vintages of Nicolás Catena Zapata which is a blend of principally Cabernet Sauvignon with lesser amounts of Malbec. What an end to one of the greatest wine days anyone will ever experience. À Votre Santé! 🍷



PHOTO: THOMAS BALSAMO

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