



BUY YOUR OWN SOUTH AMERICAN VINEYARD

By ANIEE WHITE BEAZLEY



IF YOU GO...

The Vines Resort & Spa
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"THIS IS MUCH BIGGER THAN A COLLECTION OF GENTLEMAN FARMERS. OUR OWNERS OWN THE PROPERTY AND MAKE DECISIONS. WE GUIDE THEM ALONG THE WAY WITH EXPERT WINEMAKERS. AND, IF THEY WANT, WE DO THE HARD WORK — AND LEAVE THE BLENDING AND DRINKING TO THEM. SOME OWNERS WANT TO PLANT, THEY COME DOWN FOR THAT AND COME BACK FOR HARVEST. BUT IT IS NOT SIMPLY A LABEL WINE MAKING PROCESS. PEOPLE CAN — AND DO — GET THEIR HANDS DIRTY." — MICHAEL EVANS, THE VINES

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(IT'S EASIER THAN YOU THINK)

THE UCO VALLEY in Argentina is one of the top wine regions in South America, and home to nearby Mendoza and the famous Malbec winemaking tradition. It is also one of the most exciting, emerging regions for travel in 2014.



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Almost a decade ago, American Michael Evans traveled to Argentina for what he thought would be a three-week vacation. But he fell in love with the people and the place that is Mendoza and decided to embark on

an adventure of creating Argentina's greatest wines.

"It is just stunningly beautiful, and I discovered the Andes' great wines," Evans says. "I fell in love with the place. Instead of staying for three weeks, I decided to stay for over nine years."

After a chance introduction to Pablo Gimenez-Rilli during that first visit to Mendoza, Evans and Gimenez-Rilli endeavored to provide the highest quality wine experience to Mendoza travelers, and help those who love wine make their own. The result was The Vines of Mendoza. Together they

raised money from friends and family, and purchased 690 acres of land in the Uco Valley, creating The Vines of Mendoza's one-of-a-kind Private Vineyard Estates.

"The genesis of my personal journey is that this is such an engaging, wonderful, warm and welcoming place, this idea came out of potentially doing a hotel one day and wanting to make wine from my own vineyard," Evans says.

Each personalized plot is 3 to 10 acres, and owners can attend to it as much or as little as they like. Plant, harvest, bottle, label independently or share the work with The Vines' team of wine experts. The infrastructure and oversight is managed by the property; they will even help their winemakers sell the wine online or through local distributors should you choose to share their personal vintages.

For the last 10 years, The Vines has brought 120 aspiring winemakers from around the world to buy into its property and craft wines their own.

"This is much bigger than a collection of gentleman farmers," he says. "Our owners own the property and make decisions. We guide them along the way with expert winemakers. And, if they want, we

do the hard work — and leave the blending and drinking to them. Some owners want to plant, they come down for that and come back for harvest. But it is not simply a label winemaking process. People can — and do — get their hands dirty."

The shared vineyard model makes it possible for all wine lovers to become winemakers on their own estate, he says. Buyers include the very well-heeled, but those with budgets as well. For example, there is a group of college friends who pooled their money together to buy several acres, and now produce their own label of wine at The Vines.

"We make something possible for people who otherwise would find this kind of life impossible and something only for wealthy of the wealthiest," Evans says. "These are private vineyard estates, you have your own vineyard and make your own wine. It is very personalized."

And while Malbec is the dominant grape, Evans estimates The Vines planted 20 different varietals last year, and produced several hundred different wines for and with its owners, many of which made it to market.

Evans' dream of a hotel and

sharing the winemaking experience with others is now coming to fruition. At the end of this month, the vineyard will also be home to the highly anticipated The Vines Resort and Spa, a sister property to The Vines of Mendoza. Set on 1,500 acres, the resort's 22 villas have floor-to-ceiling windows, capturing the natural light from 300 days of sun each year, and stunning surrounding views of the vineyards and the Andes.

At The Vines Resort and Spa you can be a winemaker for a day, working the harvest in April, blending Malbecs, or use the luxury retreat as a portal for extended activity in the area, including mountain biking and climbing, or riding horses through the picturesque vineyards.

To ensure visitors get everything out of their trip to Mendoza, The Vines Resort and Spa has gathered a staff full of Argentinian natives. Among them are three young men they call Gauchos, with a capital "G." They are personal tour guides, concierges, storytellers — your new local friend whom you can rely on to take the guess work out of traveling and give firsthand knowledge of the country, the outdoors, wine, food and culture.

"We want everyone to get out into the fields get out and pick some grapes," Evans says. "People's tastes in vacationing are changing. Now they want to go and learn something — learn how to make empanadas and get on a horse. They can do that all here. Perhaps you've been to Napa or Burgundy and you are looking for something more adventurous, to dig in and get engaged. Here, they have a little bit more."

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