

# escape magazine

MAY / JUNE 2007

TRAVEL AS A STATE OF MIND

## THE REAL CUBA

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STREET VIBES, DINING AND HOTELS

## PENANG

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# *Field of Dreams*

*“The Andes is a gigantic, unexplored area, you can find virgin valleys with an unlimited potential for vineyards”*

Nomade visitor centre



Nomade cellar





Las Mulas vineyard



Achavals family

What makes life wonderful is that at any point in a person's life he or she can find his true calling. Tomas Achaval, CEO and Founder of Nomade Wines and Vineyards, found his "life's work" in 2003 crafting premium wines from grapes grown in the Andes Mountains. As a former corporate executive, he followed a roundabout route to vineyard. His passion for wine was whetted in 1994 when he was appointed by luxury brands conglomerate LVMH to manage Chandon wines and sparkling brands and its wineries. By 2002, he was ready to leave his CEO position at a leading television network to pursue his dream of starting up a winery.

Achaval echoed his feelings at the time. "The Andes are a gigantic, unexplored area. You can find virgin valleys with an unlimited potential for vineyards that were planted in the early 1900s and located in the highest altitudes. Growers still use ancient techniques and varieties that develop superbly."

Three varietals, Syrah, Torrontes and Malbec, are grown over 38 hectares in the Andes foothills at an altitude of 3500 feet with day and night time temperature variations of 18 degrees C. Nomade's philosophy is to surprise consumers with wines of very high quality, produced with grapes from unique locations that will capture the unique flavour of the Andes.

Nomade Malbec comes from a small, 70 year old, vineyard from La Consulta. Malbec is a major red varietal in Argentina where it was transplanted from the Southeast of France prior to the outbreak of phylloxera. It produces wines of pleasant taste, medium body with certain earthy notes and a very intense purple colour. The vineyard manager, Don Jose Salvatico and his family, have nurtured the vineyard since the beginning. The vineyard's top location at the foot of the Andes, the exceptionally low 1 kilo per vine grape yields and drastic temperature fluctuations, distinguish the Malbec from the other varietals. Grapes are fermented in stainless steel tanks and aged for eight months in French and American

oak barrels. Production is limited to only 4000 cases.

The Syrah was born in a 30 year old vineyard in Altamira, using a balanced trellis system in small lots with low production has proven to be the best way to cultivate these grapes.

The Torrontes is the most distinctive of all Argentine wines. Being the only country to produce it, it is classified as a wholly Argentine variety. It has become the symbolic white grape of Argentina. It originates from Malvasia in the Mediterranean. The microclimate and the extreme altitudes give this wine a fruity taste and long aftertaste. Nomade grows in an old vineyard at 5,445 feet located in the astonishing Calchaqui Valley, which is renowned for growing Torrontes. French and American oak barrels are used for aging.

Like any smart executive turned wise wine maker, Achaval has teamed up with competent professionals. Gabriela Celeste, executive director of Eno-Rolland (Michael Rolland's technical arm in Latin America) and Fernando Di Lello. Both men not only have extensive experience growing wine in Argentina and in wine consulting, but are experts in Nomade's terroirs and their microclimates.

In total, Achaval's vineyards make about 15,000 case of Syrah and Malbec varietals annually under the labels of 'Nomade' and '7 Lunas'. He has partnered with a local 'posada', a small estate on an historic 300,000 acre farm, to establish a boutique hotel and ranch where guests will be able to tour the vineyards and ride across the Andes into Chile. It's the starting point for eno- and eco-tourism in this region.

Few people can find their passion in life so Achaval counts himself as being very lucky. "Nomade is more than a wine project; it is a way of life. I am always learning new things by trying new and innovative methods. The world is my market."