

All Eyes on Argentina, from Fútbol World Champions to Wine Champions

Argentina's most-awarded wine family, Catena, announces new restaurant opening February 2023, featuring 'Messi of Wine' as chef and 'wine-first' concept.

MENDOZA, ARGENTINA, December 22, 2022 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Following Argentina's World Cup win against France on December 18th, Tablet Hotels (the French Michelin Guide's hotels newsletter) published a piece titled "Argentina is the Best at Everything," suggesting that "It's Argentina time. Specifically, Mendoza, the country's acclaimed wine region. When you've won the biggest prize in sports, you might want to honor yourself with a little Malbec (the greatest wine in history), a little chimichurri asado steak (the greatest food in history), and a little scenery provided by the Andes (the greatest mountains in history)." The piece is signed, "Merry Christmas, Messi."

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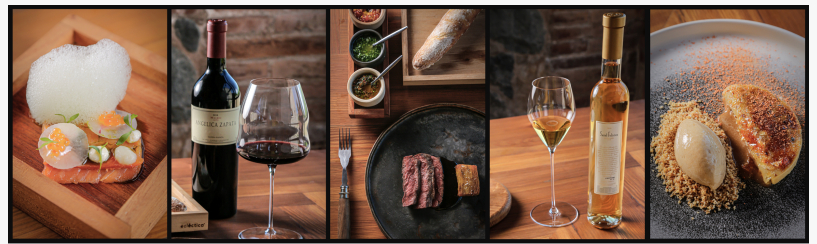
The success of our national soccer team is marked by creativity, balance, and teamwork. Ours is similar. Creativity and balance shine throughout the menu. Teamwork defines the entire operation.”

Alejandro Vigil



RESTAURANT - COCINA MAESTRA | FOTO: ALICIA SISTERÓ

Angelica - Cocina Maestra Exterior



Angelica - Cocina Maestra Food + Wine

Humor aside, this has been as great a year for Argentine wine in its Argentina-France competition as it has been for its fútbol team. Inspired by the 1978 Judgement of Paris, where California wines famously defeated their French counterparts (the judges were French), Nicolás [Catena Zapata](#), a descendant of Italian vintners, began a wine revolution in Argentina. His vision at the family winery, Catena Zapata, founded in 1902, was to make Argentine wines that could stand with the best of the world. In 2022, his namesake wine, Nicolás Catena Zapata, was chosen by Le Figaro (the largest national newspaper in France) as one of the four best wines in the world outside France (along

with three Italian wines) and rated the same as the famous Premier Grands Crus (First Growths), Chateau Margaux and Chateau Mouton Rothschild.

ANGÉLICA – COCINA MAESTRA

The winery's new restaurant is named after Angélica Zapata, family matriarch and education pioneer who was headmistress of the local country

school but died tragically at the age of 40 in a car accident. Angélica was a demanding teacher and mother, pushing her students, male and female, to aim high. She believed in the great natural resources and cultural patrimony of Argentina, and in education as the main conduit to what she called the Argentinean Dream. The Angélica Zapata foundation is dedicated to changing lives through the gift of education.

The 'Wine-First' Approach

Angélica – Cocina Maestra is led by a triumvirate of 'wine chefs', truly putting wine at the center of the dining experience: Nicolás Catena, Alejandro Vigil, and Laura Catena. They taste together, spending days deciding upon the wine menu, which forms the foundation of each tasting menu. Then Vigil confers with the team of cuisine chefs on a food pairing concept for each wine on the menu.

From here, the full team may take either of two approaches. One is the complimentary approach, in which the wine and food blend with each other. The other is an approach in which the food exaggerates some aspect of the wine. Alejandro calls this choice the *maridaje a favor* or *maridaje en contra* (pairing in favor or pairing against). For example, Catena Zapata Malbec Argentino is an old vine Malbec that forms a *maridaje a favor* with a juicy steak, which allows the fruit in the wine to dominate, enhances the acidity on the palate and presents balance of weight between the wine and the food, resulting in a long finish. The D.V. Catena Chardonnay is paired, in a *maridaje en contra*, with sweetbreads and local herbs, which act to exaggerate the citric and herbal nature of the wine.

A Team Effort with the "Messi of Winemaking" as its Captain

Argentina's soccer team has long been recognized as one of the best in the world. Alejandro Vigil, the Wine Director for Catena Zapata and one of the restaurant's wine chefs, is widely known in Argentina as "the Messi of wine," a nickname he first received from La Nación, Argentina's main newspaper over a decade ago. Vigil noted "the success of our national soccer team is marked by creativity, balance, and teamwork. Our own recipe for success is similar. Creativity and balance shine throughout the menu, and teamwork is the central principle that defines the entire operation."

Coming Up Next: A Rollercoaster Dining Experience



At first, the wine chefs structured the menu in the traditional way, a progression from fresh, fruit-forward, high-acid wines to heavier reds. Now, with the confidence that the 'wine-first' concept is working and that the space lends itself to a 10-course menu, Vigil noted, "we plan to change the pairings to what we call a montaña rusa (rollercoaster) approach, in which we will intermix whites and reds and also go back and forth between lighter and more succulent foods."

An Awarded Wine Family Honors its Roots

Nicolás' vision for the restaurant space was brought to life by architect Ricardo Zumel. While the Catena Zapata winery itself is known for its distinctive Mayan-inspired pyramid structure, the restaurant building honors the Catena family's Italian ancestry. It evokes the feeling of an Italian villa, with spaces for entertainment and for people to meet and eat together. The space was built in the basement of an old winery from 1920. The hand-cut stones, the carefully stacked handmade bricks, the recycled wood beams on the ceiling, the wooden floor made from used barrels, the olive trees and native flora, the fountain in the center of an interior courtyard and the tower with a spiral staircase that leads to a black stone obsidian mirror, all coalesce to harmoniously situate an Italian aesthetic sensibility in a local, natural, Argentine context.

Angélica – Cocina Maestra will officially open on February 10th, 2023.

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