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Ichagua Valley: Wonka's Secret Wine Haven If Willy Wonka were to jum...

Colchagua Valley: Wonka's Secret Wine Haven



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IF WILLY WONKA WERE TO JUMP OUT OF THE SCREEN AND CREATE A WONKA WINE VALLEY, COLCHAGUA WOULD BE IT.

COLCHAGUA- Nothing short of scrupulous detail, innovation and imagination, this place is the real deal for wine lovers.

The proof is in the sprawling hills with vines growing grapes that are the precise size needed to formulate the highest quality wines, which play a valuable role in Chilean exports.

The steel vats macerate the grapes; separating seeds, skins and sugar, while oversized and distinguished barrel rooms let the wine age in the strictest temperature and controlled humidity.

Add the unique touches that each winery has and it's as if you just won a Golden Ticket to discover a secret valley, where afterwards no tour, tasting or lunch will ever be the same.

From Ventisquero's quaint, private tasting room to Lapostolle's six story structure with luxury accommodation built into the mountainside, there will undoubtedly be something else for you to marvel at besides the vineyards' bottles of wine: these wineries all have some degree of sustainability to their winemaking process.

According to Wines of Chile, there are "three components required for a healthy company: the environment, the people, and the economic bottom line." Whether they have been certified or are progressing toward certification, it was another tidbit that I got to learn about while touring the following vineyards:

VIU MANENT



The horse and carriage ride at Viu Manent is part of the family vineyard's charm

The entirely family owned business prides itself on its property and traditions that have given way to 80 years of producing wine.

Take a horse-drawn carriage around the property to realize the extent of the vineyards, sprawling toward the snowcapped Andes.

Through a sustainability report and following the Sustainability Code of the Chilean Wine Industry, Viu Manent is managing their impact on the environment, with energy efficiency being a top priority for the winery.

Our group walked past the laboratory where they test the pH of the maturing, and matured, wines. Although technicians were not in the glass-walled room, bright test tubes and equipment caught my eye, tempting my inner Charlie to go explore the room that holds the winery's secrets.

Wines tasted:

ViBo, Malbec

2013 El Olivar Alto, Syrah

2012 La Capilla, Cabernet Sauvignon

2011 El Incidente, Carménère

2011 Viu 1, Malbec

The Viu 1 Malbec, being vintage and all, was one of my favorites. The story behind the wine also makes it stand out, as the Malbec is created from the Centennial Malbec vines and dedicated to Don Miguel Viu Manent, the master behind the Malbec in the Manent family and winery.