



# PIATTELLI

## VINEYARDS

## Profile of Piattelli's Winemaker: Daughter of the Vineyard

In the thick of the grape harvest, a small figure flits from vine to vine, examining clusters, tasting the grapes, judging if they're just the perfect degree of ripeness, hauling crates of freshly harvested grapes for a quick transport to the cool recesses of the winery, working 18-hour days. She is Valeria Antolin, 5-feet-nothing, 33 years old, boundless energy, lead winemaker for Piattelli Vineyards.

In another life, Antolin could have been a famous field hockey star. She has played incessantly since she was 8. She still plays most Saturdays, when she's not hiking in the mountains or skiing.

But in this life, she says, winemaking was destined for her, even before she understood the concept of destiny.

Her mother's family had made their own wine in Italy, before immigrating to Argentina—where a family hobby took root as a profession. Her father, Enrique Antolin, was a well-known Mendoza sparkling wine producer; her uncle held leadership positions at several of Argentina's leading enological universities including Don Bosco, Latin America's first winemaking university, and Universidad Maza. One of two daughters, Valeria grew up with winemaking the way of life for her family. Without brothers to take over the business, the Antolin daughters began learning the trade. "Ever since I can remember, my life has gone by between vineyards and wineries," Valeria says.

"According to what people around me say, my first words were not 'papa,' daddy, but 'papán,' referring to a glass of Champagne that was served on the table," Antolin says.

"Since we were very little, my sister and I used to go with my father wherever he went, horseback riding, fishing, farms, wineries,

vineyards, etc," she explains. "Nowadays when we meet several characters from the wine industry, and they get to know our last name, they comment that they have known us since we were very little."

In 1992, at age 11, Valeria began her formal winemaking education in high school, when she attended the agriculturally focused Liceo Agricola—the academic stomping grounds for many of Argentina's future winemakers and agronomists. At age 15, along with some cousins and her sister, Valeria helped her father launch his first solo winemaking effort. The young people herded the juice through its various stations, labeled and bottled, and released the wine. She graduated with an agrarian technician and winemaking degree in 1997.

Then she nearly went to medical school. But thanks to the cautions of her then-boyfriend, Gonzalo, she rethought. She and Gonzalo had met hiking in the mountains. They fell in love and eventually married in 2009. Gonzalo questioned the deviation away from wine and into medicine. It was the moment of truth, where Valeria finally, without doubt, understood everything thus far had prepared her to take her place in the family annals of winemaking history for good.

"I realized I did not see myself as a future doctor, but I wanted to have a career that would keep me in contact with nature," Valeria said. Guided by her father's advice that, "the elaboration of wine starts in the vineyard," Valeria initiated the second leg of her academic studies—in agronomy—at the Universidad Nacional de Cuyo, Facultad de Ciencias Agrarias, a prestigious university in Argentina. During that time, she worked the 2002 and 2003 harvests at Paul Hobbs' winery, Viña Cobos, where her cousin by then had taken

up a leadership position in the winery operations. Between harvests at home, Valeria traveled to France on scholarship for several classes and worked the harvest for the cooperative winery west of Beziers, Les Vignerons du Pays d'Ensérune.

With her newly minted agronomy title, Valeria began looking for a project that she could make her own. "Even though I felt very well at Viña Cobos, collaborating fully with the elaboration of wines, I felt that I wanted something else, something I could personalize a bit more, a project that would allow me to start at the vineyard and end in the consumer, just like my father had taught me," she said.

She joined Piattelli Vineyards for the 2004 harvest. With her double-edge specialties in both the fieldwork of growing grapes and the post-harvest process of making wine, Valeria wasted no time digging into her new position—literally. Every aspect of Piattelli's wine has Valeria's hand on it—from soil quality to irrigation, from compost to leaf canopy, from bud break to harvest, crush, maceration, aging, blending and bottling. And though her operating base is the Mendoza winery, she collaborates daily with Alejandro Nesman, the Piattelli winemaker in Cafayate.

Her approach is authentic, impassioned, humble. This is a path that has chosen her as much as she has chosen it. The winemaker's craft, the grapes, the wines—these must all be in harmony in order for the wines to reveal their true depth—and these are in Valeria's sights each day. From vineyard to winery, Valeria pursues perfection of her wines; she can do no less. Such is the way of destiny.



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## Valeria Antolin: El perfil de la Primer Enóloga de Piattelli

En lo profundo de la cosecha, una pequeña figura se visualiza a lo lejos desde los viñedos, mirando con detenimiento cada racimo, probando las uvas y juzgándolas, deliberando si su nivel de madurez está en su nivel justo, acarreando cajas de uvas recién cosechadas para transportarlas al fresco descanso de la Bodega, trabajando 18 horas por día. Ella es Valeria Antolin, un metro sesenta de energía, 33 años, tenacidad y vocación, la principal enóloga de Piattelli Vineyards.

Elaborar vinos estaba destinado para Valeria, inclusive antes de entender el significado de la palabra destino. Con un linaje de productores de vinos (El padre de Valeria, Enrique Antolin, fue un enólogo muy conocido en Mendoza, especialmente por sus espumantes), ella creció entre la vitivinicultura, "Desde que recuerdo, mi vida ha transcurrido entre viñedos y bodegas", comenta Valeria.

"Según dice la historia, mi primer palabra no fue papá, sino papán, por una copa de Champagne que siempre estaba en la mesa, "Antolin aclara.

"Desde que éramos muy chiquitas, con mi hermana íbamos con nuestro papá a donde sea que él fuera, andar a caballo, pescar, viñedos, bodega, etc," ella explicó.

A los quince años, empezó su entrenamiento en serio. Junto con unos primos y su hermana, ayudaron a su padre a llevar adelante su

proyecto de elaborar sus vinos. Por la misma época empezó el Liceo Agrícola en Mendoza. Después de seis años de estudio, se graduó con una tecnicatura Agrícola y un título de enología.

"Quise seguir una carrera que siempre me tuviese en contacto con la naturaleza," Valeria nos dice. Guiada por un consejo de su padre que, "La elaboración del vino comienza en el viñedo," Valeria comenzó la segunda parte de sus estudios – en Agronomía – en la Universidad Nacional de Cuyo, Facultad de Ciencias Agrarias, una prestigiosa Universidad en Argentina, en donde su tío fue el Jefe del departamento de Enología. Durante ese período trabajó desde el 2002 al 2003 en Viña Cobos, Bodega de Paul Hobbs, en donde su primo ya se había convertido en el jefe de enología. Entre las cosechas, Valeria viajó a Francia por una beca.

Con su nuevo título en Agronomía, Valeria empezó a contemplar la idea de un proyecto propio. "Quise un proyecto que me permitiese empezar en el viñedo y terminar con el consumidor final, de acuerdo a lo que mi padre siempre me enseñó", dijo.

Se unió a Piattelli Vineyards para la cosecha del 2004. Con sus ambas especialidades bien afiladas tanto en trabajo de campo como en elaboración de vinos, Valeria no perdió el tiempo. Todos los aspectos de los vinos Piattelli tienen su mano-

desde la calidad del suelo, irrigación, manejo de la canopia, cuidado de los racimos, cosecha, maceración, añejamiento, blending y embotellado. Si bien, su base operativa está en la Bodega de Mendoza, colabora diariamente con Alejandro Nesman, enólogo de Piattelli en Cafayate, Salta.

Su enfoque es auténtico, apasionado, humilde. Este es un camino que la ha escogido a ella tanto como ella lo ha elegido a él, su esfuerzo constante por perfeccionar su enfoque respecto a la elaboración de vinos. De la viña a la bodega, Valeria persigue la perfección de sus vinos; ella no puede hacer menos. Tal es el camino del destino.