

# The Marvels of Mendoza

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If Familia Zuccardi offers a wonderfully earthy day in the wine country, Espacio Salentein is absolutely other-worldly. Located 90 minutes south of Mendoza city, one first enters Salentein's singular world via the Killka [Art Gallery](#) with its somehow just-right mix of Renaissance-era Dutch paintings and contemporary Argentine art. This sets the stage for the half-mile trek to Salentein's winery, whose interior design impresses one as a throwback to 1920s movie sets that happens to be tailor made for aging and cellaring Salentein, Finca de Portillo, Numina and Primum wines before they flow into Argentine and international markets.



Inside the cavernous Salentein winery, in a tasting room elegantly forged from stone, visitors can experience the range. Salentein Reserve 2008 Chardonnay, a pale yellow liquid with a delicate nose of core fruit, floral essences and butter as well as a round mouth with hints of pineapple. Salentein Reserve Pinot Noir 2006, one of the more unusual wines I have sampled on this journey, is pinkish brown with a spicy cherry nose. Though its original impression is startling, it evolves nicely in the glass, releasing a bouquet of plums, wood and raisins. The round and fruity Salentein Reserve Malbec 2006, meanwhile, is the company's star wine thanks to its mild mouth and smooth nuances of plum and cherry. Numina 2005 Premium Blend (70% Malbec and 30 % Merlot) is distinguished with its deep rich royal purple color, very fruity nose and lush ripe fruit mouth. The 2004 Primum Malbec, with its concentrated color, aroma and flavor, won top honors in a Japanese competition—no small feat, with Lorena explaining [Japan](#) only imports in the best of the best.

With the Andes providing the perfect backdrop, we enjoy [flights](#) of several other premium Salentein selections (Finca El Portillo's Malbec, Cabernet Sauvignon and Sauvignon Blanc; Salentein Reserve Malbec, Chardonnay and Cabernet Sauvignon) with highlights from chef Gabriel Rodríguez's menu. Following a Cheese Provoleta on fresh greens, a beautifully seasoned lamb with couscous follows. However the standout for this meal is

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perhaps one of the most magnificent incarnations of the classic Dulce de Leche dessert, with molten caramel oozing from the pores and faults of a flaky, sugar-dusted pastry shell.

Back in town, on Avenida Villanueva, **Bianco & Nero** beckons with chic signage and a dapper team of uniformed staff. A wall of flavor selections puts Baskin Robbins to shame, while cases drawers bursting with chocolate pieces, truffles, patries and fruit jellies would make Willy Wonka's head spin. Getting back to my mission to sample Argentina's fames sorbet and ice cream, I take a gamble, resisting the extensive assortment of Dulce de Leche and Chocolate-based flavors in favor of a refreshing combination of creamy lemon gelato and sour mango sorbet.



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