



KASEY WILSON

Kasey Wilson is an award-winning food and travel writer, broadcaster and author. She is editor of *Best Places Vancouver* and her articles have appeared in *National Geographic Traveler*, *Bon Appetit* and *Gastronomica*. Wilson is executive producer and co-host of the “Best of Food and Wine Show” on AM650. The author of ten non-fiction books on travel and food, Kasey is a member of the judging panel for the World’s 50 Best Restaurants.

LAURA CATENA

IS THERE A DOCTOR IN THE VINEYARD?

Balancing a professional life in medicine with a family life is daunting enough, but throw a second career into the equation and the sum of those demands seems all but impossible. Such is the world of the energetic Laura Catena. She studied biology at Harvard, medicine at Stanford and is fluent in four languages (English, Spanish, French and Italian). As a physician, she works in the emergency department of the UCSF Medical Center in San Francisco, then somehow manages to also find the time to manage and promote her family’s winery in the Mendoza region of Argentina. Her father, Nicolás Catena, is Argentina’s most famous vintner and is known as the man who revolutionized the Argentine wine industry with his vision of utilizing high-altitude vineyards planted with specific varietals that would flourish there – Malbec being a prime example of this successful experiment. As an economics professor, he was also able to understand and navigate the shaky economy of the country, and his winery Bodega Catena Zapata flourished. It seems dual professions run in the family. Today, Laura is the general director of the winery as well as founder of La Posta winery, owner and creator of Luca winery, plus she’s an author, medical practitioner, teacher and mother of three. It might just be the wine talking, but I’d say that’s simply amazing.



photo by Catena Zapata

WHAT IS YOUR EARLIEST MEMORY OF WINE?

It would be a drop of wine in soda at age five at my grandfather’s house. At that age, you’re no longer squirming around at dinnertime and my grandfather said to me, “Okay, you are now ready to dine with the adults” and put me at the family table with that drink, which was really more of a symbol than anything, and I still remember that day very well. Maybe it was a sign of things to come and my love of wine.

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WHAT DO YOU LOVE MOST ABOUT THE WINE REGION OF ARGENTINA?

It's about the 400 years of winemaking on the one side and at the same time, it's our incredibly innovative energy in Argentina. It's a balance between the old and the new, tradition mixed with experimentation and the freedom that experimentation brings. We're not tied down to one way and in Argentina, due to the variety of crises that have swept the country both politically and economically, we have learned to live in the "now."

YOUR FATHER IS CREDITED WITH SINGLE-HANDEDLY RE-ENERGIZING THE ARGENTINE WINE INDUSTRY AND HAS BEEN CALLED THE ROBERT MONDAVI OF ARGENTINA. HOW DO YOU FEEL FOLLOWING IN THOSE FOOTSTEPS?

I think of it as continuing the family tradition rather than following in my father's footsteps. My great-grandfather Nicola emigrated to Argentina from Italy in 1898 and planted his first vineyard to Malbec in 1902. I wake up every day and set out to make Argentina and my region a winemaking industry on par with the global picture challenging me. It's interesting that, when I first started out, and with my bit of a fiery personality, my father, who is very calm, would always tell me I couldn't behave in certain ways. Years later, as we've grown together in winemaking, he said to me, and I remember the day because it was very important to me: "I was wrong.

Keep doing what you're doing. Your personality and passion translate to the winery. We must simply be who we are, and if our heart's in the right place, that compels others."

DO YOU FEEL YOUR KNOWLEDGE OF SCIENCE AND MEDICINE HAS GIVEN YOU AN INSIGHT AND EDGE IN THE WORLD OF VITICULTURE?

Absolutely, and in intriguing ways. Doctors are taught to be skeptical of things and to be constantly questioning. The same could be said for grape growing and winemaking. And, more to the point, especially in dealing with grape production in Argentina and the long history of varieties that we have introduced from France, Spain and Italy and worked with to grow in our climate. Each individual plant, not unlike a patient, has its own characteristics, its own individuality that we must deal with. Every row, every plant is different and it's a specialized approach to winemaking that's not unlike medicine. Plus both are extremely rewarding.

AFTER A LONG DAY IN THE EMERGENCY ROOM, DO YOU HAVE A SPECIFIC WINE AND FOOD YOU LIKE TO RELAX WITH?

This might sound a little old school for some people, but I like a white wine on weekdays and red wine on the weekends. I think it's the crispness of the whites I find so refreshing after a hard day, whereas weekends are more for languishing over big meals and

sipping a bold, spicy red. I like Prosecco, too, and would drink more of it if it came in small bottles. As for food, I'm very much an Argentina-style type of diner. [Our cuisine's] influences range from Spanish to Italian to local grilled meats, and being fourth generation Argentine-Italian, I feel right at home with this combination of cuisines.

AFTER WRITING "VINO ARGENTINO: AN INSIDER'S GUIDE TO THE WINES AND WINE COUNTRY OF ARGENTINA" IN 2010, WHERE DO YOU SEE ARGENTINE WINE GOING IN THE NEXT DECADE IN THE GLOBAL MARKETPLACE? ESPECIALLY WITH THE MALBECs THAT YOU HAVE CHAMPIONED SO MUCH.

In the end, I'd like to bring prosperity to new regions, much like my father did. Helping people and enriching the infrastructure through wine production. As for the Malbecs and Petite Verdot and other varieties, I'd like to continue the great Argentine process of experimentation and bringing out new flavours from these historical blends. There are so many different kinds of Malbecs, and each one holds a different possibility of flavour depending on its region. These are nuances and expressions that are still yet to be captured, and in that sense, still an untapped source. Really, when you think about Argentine wine and the region and climate, this is just the beginning. My heart, my mind and my energy still belong to Argentina, and to the great and innovative wines still waiting to be discovered.



HIGH ALTITUDE **MALBEC** PIONEER

"Thirty years ago my father, Nicolás Catena Zapata, dreamed of making an Argentine Malbec that would stand among the best of the world. He planted a vineyard at almost 5,000 feet elevation, at the limit of vine cultivation, where no one thought that it would ripen. But it did."

Laura Catena
Dr. Laura Catena,
Fourth Generation Vintner.



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LA POSTA TINTO RED BLEND

Argentina \$14.39 779520

La Posta, or the tavern, is a place where ideas and expertise are exchanged. Such is the case in this red blend of Malbec, Syrah and Bonarda, where the individual varietals are fermented separately and married together at the end for a full-figured wine that exudes concentrated raspberries, cherries, mocha and oak spice. This is a solid, balanced red with vibrant acidity and firm tannin that pairs nicely with burgers or steak.



photo by Catena Zapata



CATENA HIGH MOUNTAIN VINES CABERNET SAUVIGNON

Argentina \$21.19 427849

This is a solid, dense red with polished tannin and a weighty core of figs, cassis, raspberries and plum preserves. The mid palate further unveils cedar, oregano and graphite, leading to a persistent and vegetal finish.



CATENA HIGH MOUNTAIN VINES MALBEC

Argentina \$22.39 478727

Deep violet in colour, this high-altitude Argentine Malbec blend offers generous texture and concentrated flavours. Aromas of dark fruits, mocha and violet are woven together in a rich palate of blueberries and sweet spice. This will go perfectly with red meat stews.



LA POSTA PIZZELLA MALBEC

Argentina \$18.49 923789

This 100 percent Malbec is a beautiful offering at a great price. The nose combines dense berry and ripe dark-fruit aromas with notes of licorice, chocolate and sandalwood. The palate is expansive and vibrant, showing generous amounts of violet and blackberry flavours backed by firm tannin. A great sip on its own, or pair it with lamb, fillet mignon or even skirt steak.