

THE BOUTIQUE WINERY PHENOMENON: ARGENTINA AND CALIFORNIA COMPARED

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Abstract

The study is based on a comparison of boutique wineries in the Mendoza region of Argentina and the Sierra Foothills in California. The co-authors are Steve Stein, who is presently completing a manuscript on the history of the Argentine wine industry and Gary Zucca, owner of Zucca Mountain Vineyards in Vallecito, California.

Our study is based on research involving six boutique wineries in each region which includes in-depth interviews with winery owners and administrators. The issues explored include:

- Histories of the wineries.
- Goals and pretensions. Types of wines produced. Definition of quality. Is the winery committed to super quality? Does the winery consider itself distinctive? How does it establish its distinctiveness?
- Size. How big, upper limits, evolving towards something else?
- Profiles, backgrounds of owners and key employees.
- Capital. Where from, how abundant?
- Source of grapes. Relationship with growers.
- Market and commercial options. Distributors, restaurants, tasting room, online. Marketing associations. The relative importance of wine tourism and cellar door sales.
- Technology. The response of boutiques to extensive investments in relatively large state-of-the-art wineries. Relationships with large wineries.

- Related business activities, i.e. sales of wine or winery related articles at tasting rooms.

- Terminology considered appropriate to describe the wineries—boutique, artisan, authored wines, other.