with some of them dating back to 2006, but the original vines weren’t planted for wine. “The idea at the beginning was to grow rootstock for other winemakers,” one of the general managers, Higinio Ayedolte, tells me. “But the vines kept growing. So we had to do something with the grapes.” Thirteen years later, the winery produces roughly seven thousand bottles per year. As Ayedolte concludes, with a philosophical shrug: “Things happen for a reason.”

We taste through a flight of 2015 reds, all of them elegantly earthy: a grenache, a tempranillo, and a cabernet franc. My favorite, though, is a 2011 viotinto that’s pulled from the cellar on a whim. It’s a quietly blend of aglianico (an underappreciated Italian varietal), tempranillo, and grenache, and while it calls to mind some of the deliciously funky blends coming out of South Africa’s Swartland region, it mostly tastes sui generis: a frontier wine with its own grapy dialect.

New wine regions mature like internet start-ups or hip neighborhoods: A few scrappy, showstring plonkers reveal the potential, and big investment eventually follows along. Viñedos San Lucas, east of downtown San Miguel, shows that happening here. It’s part of a family of four wineries, with vineyards totaling 173 acres, but it’s more than a wine operation. It’s a luxury real-estate development, with vineyard-side lots for sale. There are olive groves, lavender meadows, a restaurant, polo fields, and a boutique hotel. It’s the antithesis of gritty. As with Tree Raisers, another wine-centered, architecturally stunning development that recently opened nearby, it suggests serious faith in the future of the area’s viticulture.

About the juice, I’d admit initial skepticism. Opulent wines tend to produce opulent wines: brassy, jammy fruit bombs, calibrated for mass appeal. But Malén Oblón, the thirty-one-year-old Argentinean winemaker at Viñedos San Lucas and its sister wineries, wields some subtle moves. To harmonize her red wines with Mexican cuisine, she employs an old Italian technique calledFOSSIL. “We dry the grapes under the sun to sunburn the tannins,” she explains. “The sweetest tannins let the wine pair better with spicier foods.” This nuance, for me, shines brightest in her lush cabernet sauvignon, which conveys the smoky-savory-earthy notes of a mole sauce. It’s a smart, solid wine, though young; but more than that, it’s a solidly Mexican wine.

Back on the cobblestones of San Miguel de Allende, after dark, I do what I always do when in Mexico: look for the food cart with the biggest, most laudatorious crowd around it. The one I find is stationed outside a cantina, and the tacos a la puerta, carved from a thick red shawarma-style slab of pork, then dressed with shaved pineapple and cilantro and a tart-colored chile salsa, are as good an investment as you can make with two dollars. I take the tacos through the cantina’s swinging doors to eat at the bar, and reflexively order a beer. But then wait, I tell the bartender. You have any local wine? He doesn’t. But someday soon, I suspect, he will.
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