



ACADEMIA ARGENTINA  
DE GASTRONOMÍA

# NICOLÁS CATENA ZAPATA Grand Gold Award



*Nicolás Catena Zapata,  
his wife Elena Maza  
and Ignacio Gutiérrez Zaldívar.*

*On June 30 2016, Nicolás Catena Zapata received the Grand Gold Award from the National Academy of Gastronomy on “THE ART OF WINEMAKING”.*

During his acceptance speech, Dr. Catena explained that the history of the improvement of Argentine wine quality in the last decades encompasses three stages that can be actually considered three “revolutions” in Argentina’s winemaking history:

His story begins in 1982 when, while residing in California as a visiting professor of Economics at the University of Berkeley, he discovers that Californian winemakers were trying to produce wines that could compete with the best wines in the world – the French wines. He decides then to do the same in Mendoza, introducing new wine making techniques, which he calls the Californian-French trend. The first vintage resulting from these technological innovations, a 1990 Cabernet, is successfully exported to the United Kingdom and the United States.

Soon, all wineries in Mendoza incorporate modern technology and Argentine wine exports grow significantly.

The second stage starts while having dinner with a famous French producer, who mentions that Argentine reds seem to come from high temperature areas. Nicolás then decides to plant a vineyard at 5,000 feet elevation, at the foot of the Andes, where the air temperature decreases as you ascend. The wine obtained from these high altitude vineyards is of a much higher quality than those produced in traditional areas of Mendoza. As a result, the price of land with water, located at above 3,958 feet, increases by more than 50 times.

The third stage starts in 1999, when his daughter Laura, a biologist graduated from Harvard University, initiates a partnership with the most prestigious château in the world, Château Lafite, owned by Baron Eric de Rothschild. Catena absorbs the French influence, which is based on the belief that quality comes only from a certain composition of the soil. Laura carries out research work in her high altitude vineyard, demarcating plots composed of different soils, thus obtaining a clearly superior quality. She starts vinifying single vineyard lots. It’s a revolution. It’s the future.