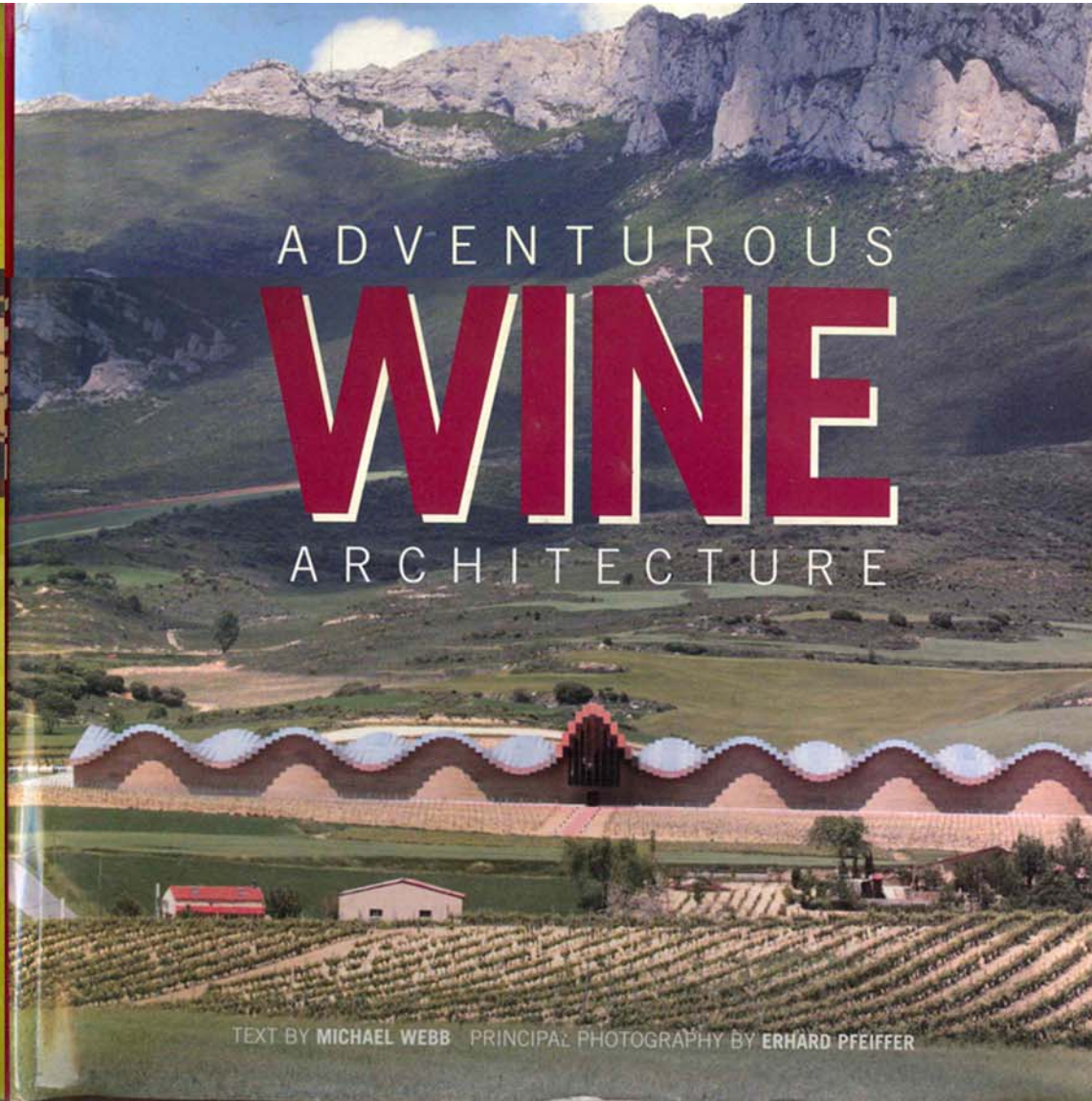


# ADVENTUROUS **WINE** ARCHITECTURE



TEXT BY MICHAEL WEBB PRINCIPAL PHOTOGRAPHY BY ERHARD PFEIFFER

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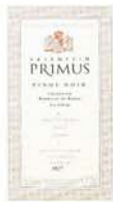
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# BODEGA SALENTEIN



Eliana Bormida and Mario Yanzón have practised architecture in Mendoza for 30 years and early on became interested in viticulture. They remodeled existing facilities and built their first ground-up winery in 1997. They now have about nine projects in design or construction, mostly in the burgeoning wine country to the south of this agreeable provincial capital. "Wine is not a product of industry but of land," says Yanzón. "We try to experience nature deeply, expressing the spirit of the mountains, stony soils and a lack of water; the brightness of the sun and the clarity of the air; the shifts from heat to cold, and the changing seasons. Each site has its own features so all our wineries are different."

Salentein is 4000 feet up in the Alto Valle de Uco, which is rapidly becoming a major wine-growing area, thanks to the rocky alluvial soil, drip-irrigated from underground rivers, and an average snowfall of six inches. The owner is Mijndert Pon, a Dutch businessman who embraced the economic potential of Argentina in fruit, cattle, tourism and now, wine. In a philanthropic gesture, he set aside 125 acres of his estate as a nature preserve, established a foundation to promote literacy, and another to develop the culture of the valley, which has a population of about 100,000. An art collector, he invited artists to design his wine labels in the colors of the Andes.

Pon had no background in wine and worked through Carlos Puñenta, who comes from a winemaking family. He is the general manager (besides managing his own winery, close to Mendoza) and came up with the idea of

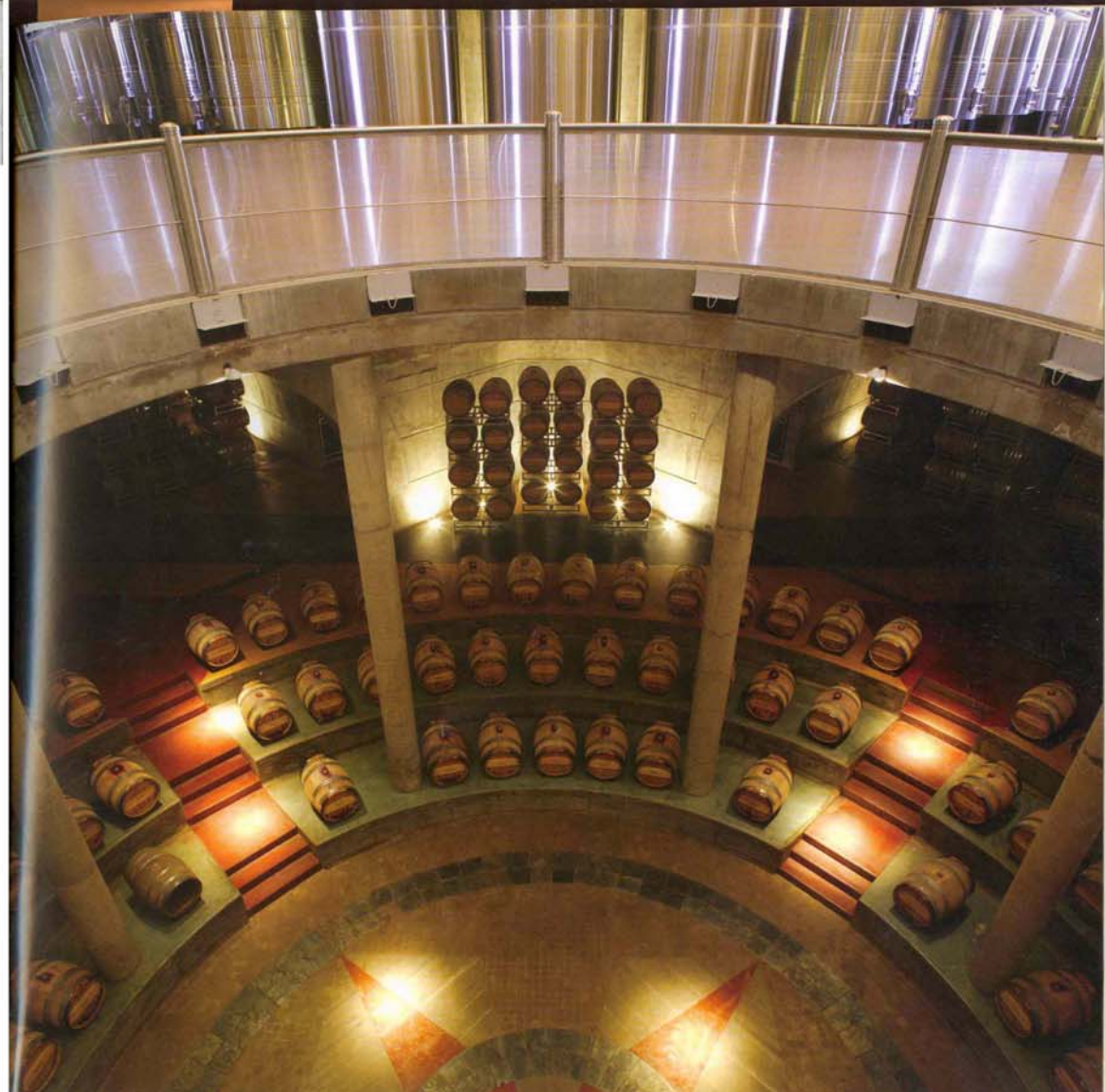
ALTO VALLE DE UCO, ARGENTINA

**Bormida & Yanzón Arquitectos,**  
2000–2004

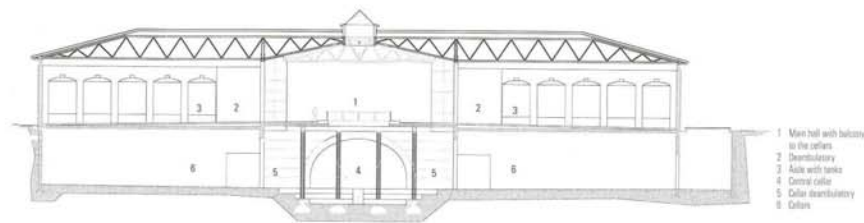
a centralized space, from which the architects derived the cruciform plan. The owner criticized their first proposal for a theatrical entrance, asking that building be direct and simple, but then gave the architects complete freedom. They selected traditional brick, rough local stone, and tinted concrete floors for ease of construction.

Terraces planted with local grasses step up a rise to the pale brick building with its shallow-pitched corrugated tin roof, set against the backdrop of the mighty Andes. Trees extend from each wing of the Greek cross plan, which contains four wine-making operations, one in each wing. These include the Finca El Portillo and Salentein bottlings of Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and Malbec, and the Salentein Primus Pinot Noir. Small tanks are located at ground level and barrel rooms 27 feet below, opening onto a central amphitheater. Behind the reception desk in the elongated lobby there's a glimpse of the tank room with its high-tech steel roof and round opening that looks down into the barrel cellar.

"Nature here is so imposing that we decided to hollow out the earth and make people feel the darkness," says Bormida. Sun comes down through an opening in the roof and down to the center of the barrel room. This is a theater in the round with a circular stone-paved "stage" with an inset compass rose; barrels are set out on steps and stacked beneath round arches in the four stepped transepts. Steps leading to the tasting rooms are entered through a dramatically lit archway.

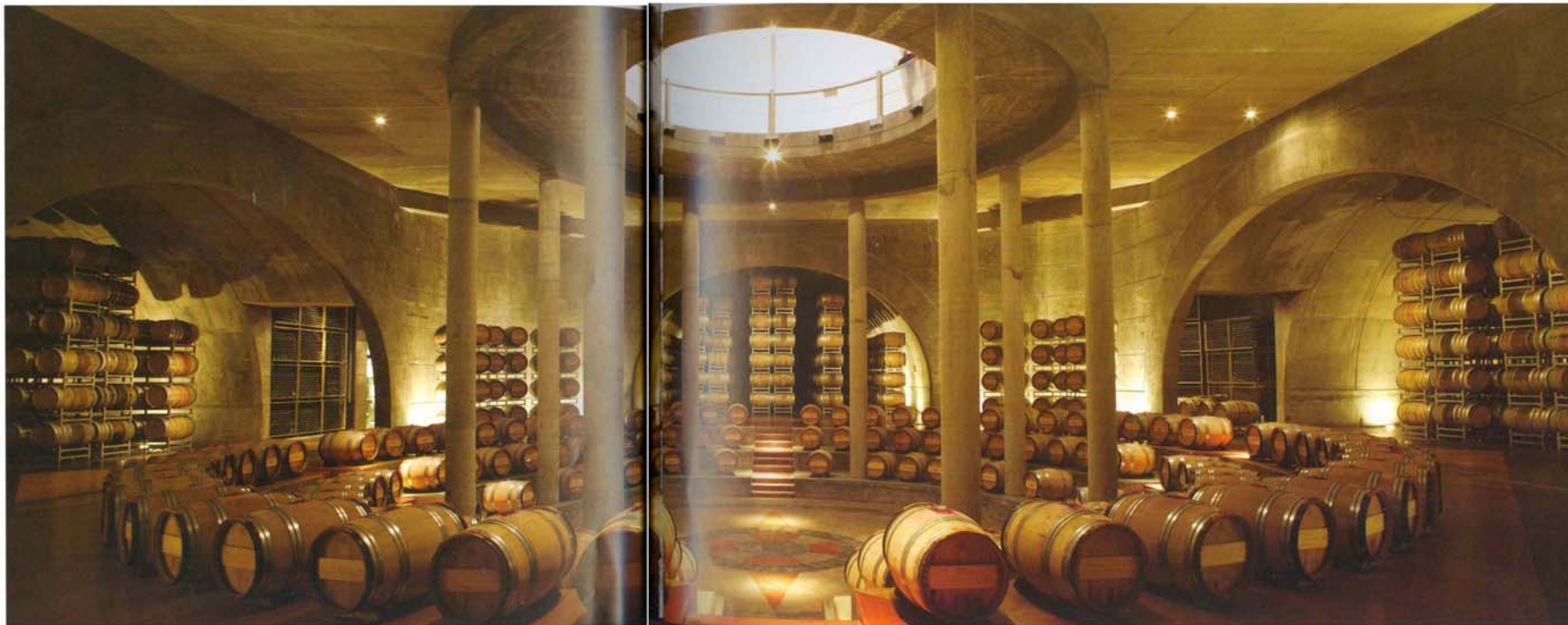


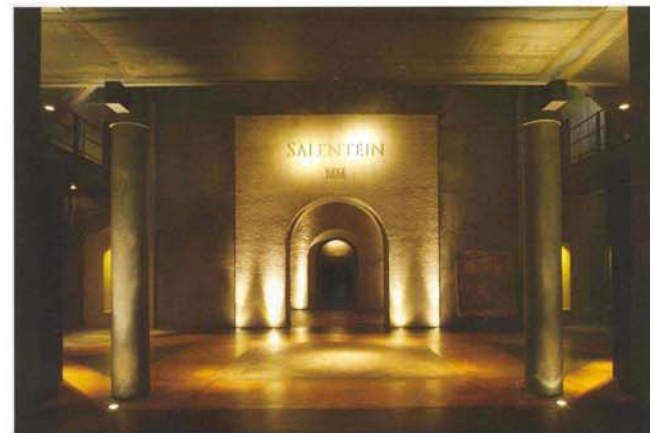
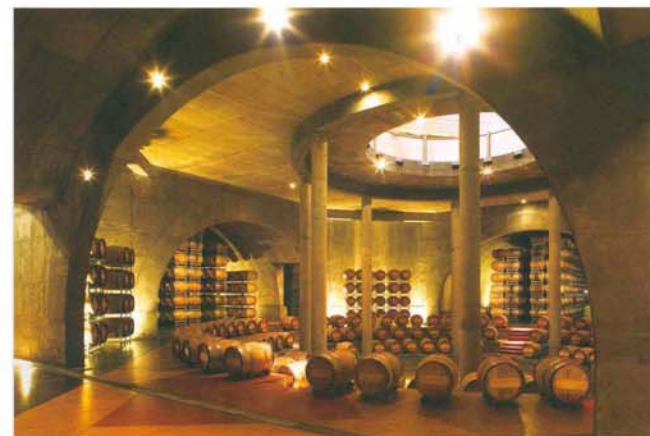




Since completing the 80,000-square-foot winery, Bormida & Yanzón have added an ecumenical chapel that expresses the spirit of the land in an intensely spiritual way. The walls are of rammed earth blocks, a traditional building technique that is brought up to date by threading rebar through the blocks and bracing them with concrete rings at the top and base. Steel roof trusses are also used to conform to the seismic code, but these are concealed by a bamboo ceiling. Narrow skylights, a baffled rear window, and small square openings to either side admit soft natural light. A second building has been added on the same central approach axis to house a visitors' center, restaurant, and art gallery, with an auditorium for the presentation of a video on the year-round cycle of nature. To round out the program for this destination winery, a new posada (bed and breakfast) will be constructed to replace the present modest building.

Tours by appointment. Tel: +54 261 423 8514. RP 89, Tunuyan, Mendoza. [www.bodegaalestein.com](http://www.bodegaalestein.com)







# BODEGA SEPTIMA

LUJAN DE CUYO, ARGENTINA

**Bormida & Yanzón Arquitectos,**  
2000–2001



Septima, named for the lucky number in Latin American cultures, is the first Argentinian property of the Spanish wine group Codorniu. They bought a 750-acre estate, half of which is planted with Malbec, Syrah, Cabernet Sauvignon and Tempranillo, and commissioned Bormida & Yanzón to

design a winery with a strong regional identity, production on a single level, and generous spaces for hospitality. A massive stone block, as impassive and powerful as an ancient temple, rises from a 3500-foot-high plateau just off the highway that leads from Mendoza, over the dizzying heights of the Andes to Santiago.

The architects were inspired by the traditional *pircas* (piled rock walls) of the Huarpes people. Here, the rough, locally quarried stones are layered in four courses of diminishing size with a stone rib between each and are set into reinforced concrete with deep foundations to resist earthquakes. The rocks were locally quarried and the exposed concrete is earth-toned. Walls are more than three feet thick to provide good thermal insulation. The drama of the mass is enhanced by the backdrop of mountains, which are snow covered from July through November. The building is set back 500 yards

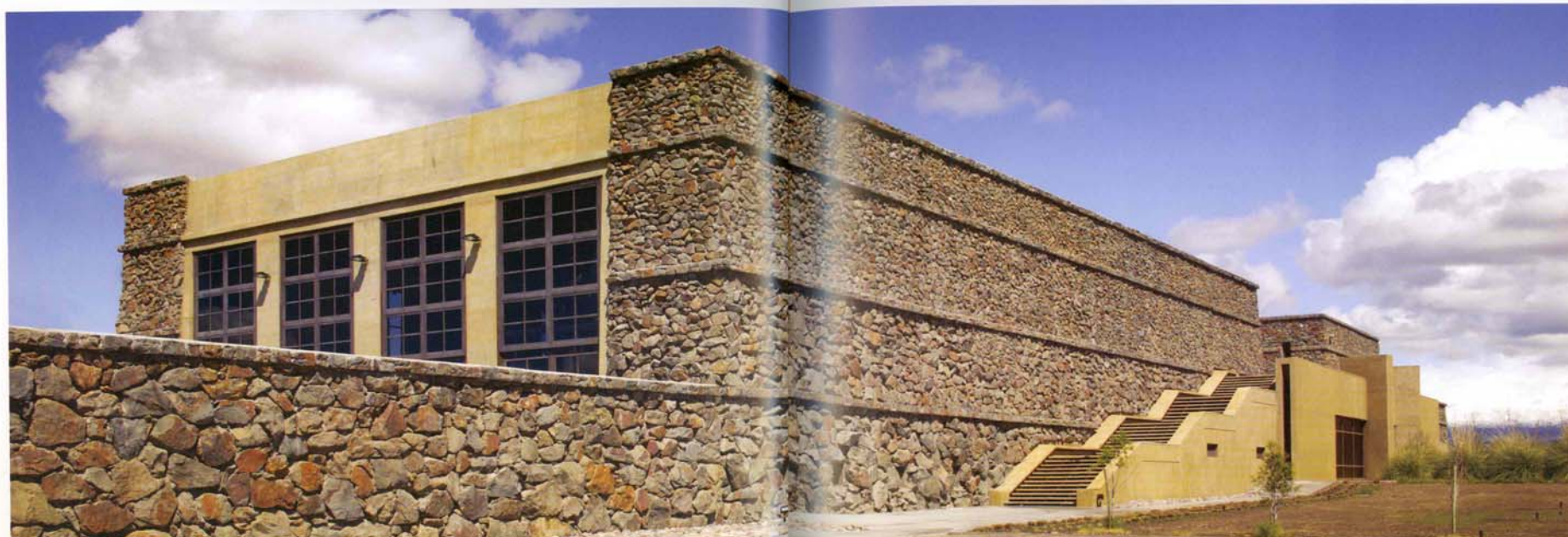
from the highway, with an axial drive to come. Tinted glass cuts glare from the northern sun on the projecting hospitality bay; the rest of the 440-foot-long façade is windowless. Native grasses soften the hard edges, and concrete steps lead up from either side of the entry to a central terrace above the barrel room.

The long lobby has hardwood floors and screens to mask the tasting room at one end, and offices at the other. A lighting strip is clad in a band of perforated metal, and tall windows frame the barrel room behind the reception desk. As at Pérez Cruz and Dominus, there is a linear flow from one end of the building to the other. Grapes are sorted and loaded into fermentation tanks to the east, and cases (there is capacity for up to 100,000) are shipped from the west. A steel gallery carries visitors over the tanks and barrels, to the bottling line and storage (separated by a glass-walled lab). The second-level reception room opens onto the central and west terraces. Nothing could be simpler or more appropriate, in organization and in the powerful impression Septima makes on visitors.

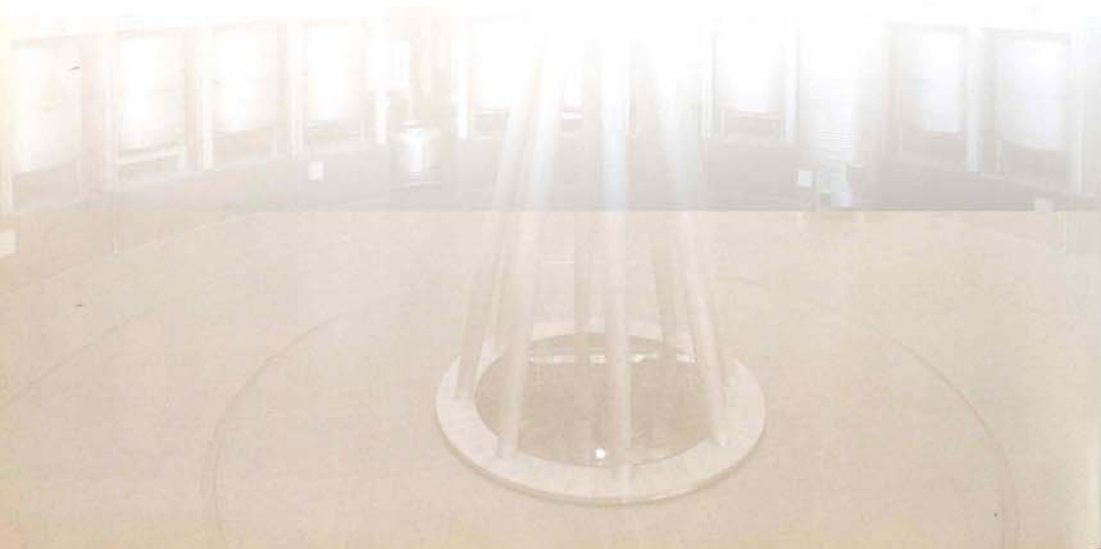
*Tours Monday–Friday, by appointment. Tel: +54 261 498 5164. Ruta Internacional No. 7, Km 6.5, Agrelo, Lujan de Cuyo. [www.bodegaseptima.com.ar](http://www.bodegaseptima.com.ar)*







## NEW AND EARLIER VINTAGES



## BODEGA O. FOURNIER

VALLE DE UCO, ARGENTINA

**Bormida & Yanzón, 2003–2006**

In this ambitious new venture by a winemaking family from Burgos, Spain, a double ramp carries trucks onto the roof of a massive tank room for gravity loading, with a barrel cellar below. Four concrete columns support a projecting steel canopy, which is clad like an airplane wing, and shades a central office and lab. A plaza and visitors' center are to be built to the rear.

*Visits by appointment. Tel: +54 2622 451 579. Calle Los Indios s/n, 5567 La Consulta, Mendoza. [www.bodegasofournier.com](http://www.bodegasofournier.com)*



## DOMAINE CHANDON

YARRA VALLEY, VICTORIA, AUSTRALIA

**Allen Jack & Cottier, 1987–1990**

The design of this winery enhances both linear production sequences and a sense of theatrics. Visitors descend through the production areas that are embedded in a hillside to view the press and fermenting tanks (which extend outdoors to the rear), the bottling line, and the riddling hall (riddle means to turn the bottles of sparkling wine), progressing to a stair landing and look-out across the Yarra Valley beneath a great arched vault. From outside, the arch of the tasting room dissolves into a lightweight, vine-covered pergola, with a restaurant to one side.

*Open daily. Tel: +61 3 9739 1110. Maroonclah Highway, Coldstream, Victoria. [www.domainechandon.com.au](http://www.domainechandon.com.au)*

