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## The Chilean Winemaker Whose Roots Extend to France

Wine runs in Patrick Valette's blood.

As the son of the former owners of France's revered Château Pavie in Saint-Émilion, the 55-year-old winemaker has the distinction of having been born in Chile, educated in France and trained in Napa Valley by Robert Mondavi, and of creating some of Bordeaux's best wines. Mr. Valette returned to his native Chile in 2000. He is now the winemaker for Viña Vik, an 11,000-acre vineyard that includes a winery and hotel. Its vines were planted in 2006 in Chile's Milla-hue Valley; it now commands upward of \$130 a bottle, a rarity in Chile.

Mr. Valette carries his Longchamp satchel as he traverses the vineyards and on regular trips to wine-related events in Europe and the U.S.

**WHAT'S IN YOUR BAG?** The contents speak of his French background: a wine-bottle opener, a Laguiole folding knife for trimming vines and an Hermès leather-bound notebook, given to him by his daughter, Quitte-rye, to keep track of his tastings.

"People usually use a computer, but I always write my perceptions by hand when I taste the wine," he says. "When you write something down, you tell the story of the event in the moment."

A rainbow of Hermès neck scarves are tucked into the bag's corners. He wears them to block the sun and to provide warmth in the high desert. "As with wine, the expression of colors is very important," he says. "I tend toward fresh, humorous colors, and I use them to clean my glasses. It's nicer to do that chore with a



Patrick Valette, winemaker at Chile's Viña Vik vineyard, also feels at home in France. Clockwise from top left, Mr. Valette's straw *chupalla* hat, wine-bottle opener, Terre d'Hermès cologne and aftershave, neck scarves by Hermès, book about King Louis IX to pass the time, Longchamp satchel and a Longchamp wallet he bought in Biarritz.

touch of elegance." He wears them jauntily like a Chilean *huaso*, the local name for *gaucho*, along with a straw *chupalla*, a traditional farmer's hat. "When I came back to Chile, I didn't realize how abrasive the sun can be," he says. Since Mr. Valette spends at least a third of his time on horseback or on foot tending to his acres of vines, a comfortable hat is imperative.

A pair of Aigle rubber boots, which he purchased in Saint-Émilion, are typically on his feet. "They are not heavy but high enough to protect

my pants," he explains. "When you travel, you never know what climate you will find, so it's easier if you carry your own boots."

Much of what Mr. Valette carries in his satchel isn't wine-related. In the Longchamp wallet he purchased in Biarritz, he can fit currency of many sizes, as well as his two driver's licenses: "I use the French one in Chile when the police stop me and I say, '*No comprendo español*,' with my horrible French accent, and the Chilean one I show to the French police."

His cologne and aftershave balm of choice are Terre d'Hermès. "It's not too aggressive, and it's very elegant," he says. "When you're working in very high-quality wines, every thing has to be balanced."

Mr. Valette sometimes uses his folding knife to shave a sliver of Mercier chocolate to complement the bottle of Vik wine he carries. "The chocolate was created by a Belgian man who came to Santiago," he says. "It's the best in Chile, and the dark chocolate is very good with the tannins of our wine."

"I try to live a blend between South American and European lifestyles, and to think about what I'm doing not as working, just as living," Mr. Valette says.

He takes comfort in the simple pleasures of being a farmer, both French and Chilean. "To pick *cèpes* [a type of mushroom], to enjoy a nice *fromage* and to open a nice bottle of wine and just talk with friends and family without worrying about the clock. Isn't that a nice philosophy of life?"

—Heidi Mitchell