

## VINA VIK: WINE FROM THE VALLEY OF GOLD

By **Mark Spivak**

About three years ago, I flew down to Chile with Alex and Carrie Vik to inspect their new vineyard project. It was an ambitious undertaking, to say the least. The Viks had purchased nearly 11,000 acres adjacent to Clos Apalta, the Casa Lapostolle property that arguably produces the country's best red wine. They hired a team of vineyard managers and



enologists from Bordeaux to plant 800+ acres of vineyards and carefully craft the eventual estate bottling. They had plans to build a space-age hotel and visitor's center on the property.

I'll admit that I was a bit skeptical, despite the integrity of the vineyard site and the impressive level of winemaking talent. Alex was projecting a price of \$100 per bottle for Vina Vik, not an easy amount to get for a Chilean wine in the U.S., where triple-digit price tags are typically reserved for Classified Bordeaux and designer California Cabernet. As impressive as the hotel plans looked, the location of the estate was rural and remote.

The hotel is now finished. It consists of a series of stunning suites decorated with art from the Vik collection, two restaurants, a spa and the winery itself. The wine is entering its third vintage (when I visited, I tasted components from the fledgling vineyard sites). So I was both intrigued and excited when a sample of the 2011 Vina Vik arrived recently. The numbered bottle is part of a 2000-case release, and the price (\$140) is more elevated than Alex had projected.

I underestimated him, because the 2011 Vina Vik from the Millahue Valley (which translates as "place of gold") is a very classy and elegant wine, composed of 55% Cabernet Sauvignon and 29% Carménère with small amounts of Merlot, Cabernet Franc and Syrah folded in. The nose is perfumed with scents of anise, minerals, black fruits and toasty oak. On entry, a sturdy tannin structure frames flavors of blackberries, Damson plums and black cherries. There is a strong herbal element that rises in the mid palate and continues on the long finish; the wine opens up nicely in the glass, becoming riper and plumper with time. As the vines age and the wine becomes more complex, this will really be a property to watch.

For those who find \$140 a bit steep, Vina Vik has released a second label, the 2011 Milla Calla (\$35), a blend of 47% Cabernet Sauvignon, 44% Carménère and 9% Cabernet Franc, described as "relaxed, easy-going and bohemian, with plenty of finesse."