

Finca Decero, once a bare patch of soil in the Argentine foothills of the Andes, is now our one-of-a-kind vineyard, where each vine is nurtured by hand and our winemaking is without compromise. As Decero means - 'from scratch', we are fortunate to be free from constraints of tradition, and we have developed an 'amano' or 'by hand' approach that is human, sustainable and sensitive to natural differences. We try to tread lightly in an environment that we have come to know intimately, almost inch by inch. Only in this way can the unique natural attributes of the Remolinos Vineyard, and of Agrelo, shine through in our single vineyard wines, handcrafted from scratch.



SINGLE VINEYARD WINES
HANDCRAFTED FROM SCRATCH

STARTING FROM SCRATCH



Decero, meaning 'from scratch', was born of a bare patch of land and a family's love affair with wine. Winemaking in Thomas Schmidheiny's family went back to his grandparents in Switzerland and, just as Napa had inspired his mother, Adda, in the 1970s, so too did Agrelo capture the heart and mind of Thomas, when travelling over the Andes into Argentina, 20 years later. Starting 'decero' was exactly how Thomas Schmidheiny dreamt of beginning a world-class vineyard, free from constraint of tradition and full of passion. Here in Agrelo, the source of some of Argentina's finest red wines, Thomas instinctively knew that he had found the place to continue the family legacy and to handcraft wines whose allure would lie in being true to their origin.

The beautiful yet desolate spot Thomas had found was cradled in the heart of the Agrelo, in the foothills of the Andes. This land, bare apart from wild shrubs, was to become our Remolinos Vineyard.

We named the vineyard after its strangest and most special natural attribute, the *remolinos*, or tiny whirlwinds. These gusts of wind stir up the bare soil into dancing spiral forms which thread their way through the vines, keeping the grapes in perfect condition during the growing season. Situated 3500 feet (1050 meters) above sea level, our vineyard is the highest in Agrelo: here the cool night westerly air from the Andes passes over a land that is warm by day.

In coming to understand the unique qualities of this place, certain things became very clear to us. We would make no compromises, planting only the red varieties perfectly suited to Agrelo. The soil presented a tapestry of natural variations that meant we would have to get to know it and nurture it inch by inch, knowing the reward would be that every parcel of wine would have its own character. Our viticulture had to be sustainable, treading lightly in the environment and having a positive role in the life of the local community. Our winemaking philosophy required both local knowledge and international expertise, but above all it needed to be hands-on from start to finish: we called it our 'amano' approach.



With Thomas' world-class vision and conviction in starting from scratch, Finca Decero is a legacy for generations to come. We are proud to have built Decero from the ground up, and of the wines we have

crafted by hand to be true to their origin, our one-of-a kind Remolinos Vineyard in Agrelo.

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REMOLINOS VINEYARD

Remolinos Vineyard, named after its tiny whirlwinds, was started from a patch of bare land where only wild shrubs grew. At 3,500 feet (1,050 meters) it is located in the highest area of Agrelo, in the region of Mendoza. The planning of the vineyard was meticulous and based on our conviction that all decisions had to be sensitive to the natural attributes of this beautiful, if desolate, terrain. We chose to plant only red varieties, those ideally suited to Agrelo. Our Amano approach involved working in harmony with the climate and tapestry of soils exploring the sub-variations of our Remolinos Vineyard to find the area most suited to each variety. We nurture our vineyard vine-by-vine so that we can handcraft wines which truly reflect our one-of-a-kind Remolinos Vineyard.

The altitude of 3,500 feet (1050 meters) allows the grapes to mature slowly to perfection, developing complex flavours, but it demands viticultural precision and expertise. Agrelo's climate is one of warm days and cool nights, an extremely marked temperature difference that encourages gradual maturation of the grapes. Our vineyard is in an ideal site within the area, where the westerly night air from the Andes passes its cooling influence through the vines, continuing over our vineyard before being trapped in the lower land beyond. The vineyard's aspect, sloping from the higher west towards the lower east, combined with an unconventional row orientation doubly ensure our vines benefit from the gentle morning sun and are protected from the stronger afternoon heat.

The strangest and most special natural attributes of the site are the remolinos, or tiny whirlwinds. When we found the site there were many of these little gusts of air stirring up the bare earth into dancing spiral forms. They are most conspicuous just prior to vintage, when they lightly cool the grapes and perform a critical function in maintaining vine healthy and dry during the light summer rains. The soil itself is a tapestry of alluvial deposits of clay through to sandy loams over gravelly sub-soils. The exact soil composition and particle size across our long, thin Remolinos Vineyard creates a wealth of variation to which varieties and clones respond in particular ways. Our winemaking approach is about observing these natural attributes and differences and working in harmony with them. Every parcel within our single vineyard has a unique character.

As for varieties, we refused from the start to compromise by working with any variety other than the reds which are perfectly suited to Agrelo, particularly Malbec and Cabernet Sauvignon. We emphasize clonal diversity for complexity, particularly in the new Malbec selections, and we are always exploring the uniqueness of our Remolinos Vineyard. Just as we have come to recognise lifted violet aromatics as a trait of Malbec planted on the coarser soils in the north-western part of our Remolinos Vineyard, we have noted the concentration and firmer tannins of Malbec planted in the finer soils. Planting Petit Verdot vines on some of our coarser soils has restrained the vines' natural vigour and resulted in consistently complex and balanced wines.

Our approach means getting to know this single vineyard intimately, almost inch by inch, so that we can develop sensitive, sustainable methods of viticulture that allow the unique natural attributes of the Remolinos Vineyard and of Agrelo to shine through in our wines.

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AMANO APPROACH

HANDCRAFTED | WORLD CLASS | SUSTAINABLE

We call our philosophy 'Amano', meaning by hand. At every stage we handcraft our wines to be world class, whilst treading lightly in our environment. From planting to pruning and picking our vines by hand, we have come to know every inch of our vineyard. It is here that our winemaking truly begins. The interaction of each vine with the soil, the wind and an east facing aspect towards the gentle morning sun form nuances of structure and flavour which make each parcel of grapes unique. Nurturing every parcel of grapes and wine individually, we never shy away from the small yet extra efforts of being hands-on which ultimately yield extraordinary results, giving credence to our 'Amano' approach.

A vineyard that begins from scratch demands a holistic vision. At the outset, we analyzed the soil carefully to select the varieties to be planted, being mindful of the intricate tapestry of soil variations underfoot. Unconstrained by tradition, we adopted a north-north-west to south-south-east orientation, so that the vines can benefit from direct exposure to the gentler, morning sun and indirect exposure to the stronger, afternoon sun.

At every stage of the process sustainability is at the forefront of our minds, and we try to minimize our impact on the soil, air and water whilst encouraging biodiversity. When required, we use modern technology to enable us to get the best understanding of the vines' development and make precise decisions about when to irrigate.



Knowing our vineyard inch by inch, hands-on information and human judgement are the things that help us achieve our goal of grapes with intense aromas, balance, maturity and good acidity. The vines are pruned and picked entirely by hand, as befits an 'amano' approach.

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AMANO APPROACH

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We have a meticulous four-step selection process for all grapes, hands-on at every step, representing the ultimate standard in grape selection. When picking, we select only the best bunches from the vine and further remove leaves by hand from each small tray of fruit, at the end of each row. Then, in the winery, 2 sorting trays, one before the destemmer for cluster selection and one after for selection berry by berry. These final 2 steps are meticulously overseen by eleven people, who allow only pristine grapes to continue through to fermentation.

Our state-of-the-art winery design works using gravity, allowing us to handle our grapes extremely gently after the selection process. Vinification takes place in small, wide tanks. This allows us to keep small parcels separate during the alcoholic fermentation and for greater contact between the fermenting juice and skins which ensures more intense colour in the final wines. All of our fruit is basket-pressed. This is a gentle pressing technique ensures protection of fine tannins. Malo-lactic fermentation in barrel gives our wines integrated tannins and greater colour stability, complexity and texture.

Our barrels are made exclusively from fine-grained French oak, from several different coopers to increase complexity. We prefer to use ozone to clean the barrels whenever possible, not only does this have an environmental benefit (releasing ozone instead of sulphur dioxide into the atmosphere) but we also find that it helps keep the barrels impeccably clean. For all our sophisticated equipment, there's not even a hint of 'remote control' management. Winemaking for us is all about being hands-on. We need intimate knowledge that comes only from constant tasting and interaction with our wines. This is the day-to-day attitude of our winemaker Marcos Fernandez. Marcos' expertise is complemented by our consultant winemaker, Paul Hobbs, whose contribution further reflects a world-class approach.



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