

Wine, Dine and More in Baja's Wine Country

By Patti Morrow



Move over Napa! The heart of Mexico's wine district – the Valle de Guadalupe in Baja, Mexico – is demanding critics' attention.

Off the beaten path, but rapidly gaining respect is Adobe Guadalupe – a vineyard, winery, stables, and sprawling hacienda open to tourists. Founded by American Don Miller and his Dutch-born wife, Tru, Adobe Guadalupe is a great place to escape the frenetic pace of life.

Don, a former international banker has always been passionate about wines. His dream was to retire from banking and make wines. From their current home in Laguna, California, this would be impossible. Tru is a linguist, fluent in ten languages including Spanish. She was familiar with and loved the Mexican culture, so in

1998 they purchased 60 acres of land in Baja's Valle de Guadalupe wine region, built the impressive six-bedroom villa and adjoining winery, and their grape-growing venture began. They produced their first wine in 2001 and sold the first bottle in 2003. Today, their eclectic blend wines, each of which is named after a different archangel, are some of the most sought-after in all Mexico. "Our wines are so good because of the Mediterranean microclimate, and because we own both the vineyard and winery," says Don. "We have a lot of control and therefore consistency."

Tru, who has loved horses since childhood, also saw another opportunity. She built stables on the property and began breeding Aztecas, Mexico's exclusive horse, a cross between the beautiful but fragile Andalusian and the hearty quarter horse. "The world is ready for a new breed," says Tru. Guests can ride the horses through the valley and nearby vineyards, led by Tru or horse trainer, Marcy.

The Millers also rent out the cozy bedrooms in the hacienda which surrounds a stunning courtyard with fountain. A stay at the hacienda will also include a bountiful, authentic Mexican breakfast made in their large, inviting farm-style kitchen, where you can chat amicably with other guests or even the Millers themselves. Formal dinners are served promptly at 7:00 pm by the romantic fireplace in the adjoining cavernous dining room, and of course accompanied by their own wines.

Guests may also take the opportunity to partake in a fun wine-tasting tour hosted by Don. His love for the winery shines through as he regales visitors with funny and poignant stories about their life as winemakers in Mexico. "Mexican wines are improving every year; they're coming of age," says Don. "It was my dream to come and help expedite that, and it's exciting to see it coming to fruition"

The tasting of the archangel-themed wines ends with a chaser shot of the winery's fiery, smoky mescal – appropriately name Lucifer.

The winery is a great place to kick back your heels when you're craving a laid-back weekend. Between the expansive valley views, the serenity, and the gracious hosts, Adobe Guadalupe is filled much of the time.

