



## TRAVEL INTERNATIONAL

# Putting down roots

## For many Chilean winemakers, success is a family affair

JANIE ROBINSON, SPECIAL TO POSTMEDIA NETWORK

MAULE VALLEY, Chile -- We hop into a dusty pickup truck and bounce down a rutted farm road through organic vineyards. Even though we just met, we talk away like old friends. My Chilean driver doesn't speak English and I don't know a word of Spanish, but we have a great visit!

It turns out that visiting wineries in Chile is a little like catching up with your favourite far-off relatives -- who just happen to make amazing wines.

Here are some of the "folks" me and some travel writing colleagues dropped in on during a recent wine country tour with Wines and Barrels:

### VINA VIK

Visiting Vina Vik Winery, Hotel & Spa is like dropping in on rich relatives you hope will let you stay for awhile. Perched on a hilltop in Chile's Millahue Valley, Vina Vik is a gleaming modern work of art, boasting 360-degree views of grapevines as far as the eye can see.

A Vina Vik visit is all about sampling outstanding wines, horseback riding and hiking through the 12 vine-covered valleys, hanging out by the infinity pool and living the lux life. Each of the hotel's 22 bedrooms has been designed by a different artist (most of them South American).

And the food!

We join Rodrigo Acuna Bravo -- the hotel's executive chef -- in his organic kitchen-garden, where he is picking produce for tonight's all fresh, all local menu. The 36-year-old Chilean, who lived in St. Andrews by-the-Sea, N.B., for several years, says he loves Canada. When it's time to go, Bravo sends us on our way with a care package of local olive oil, sea salt and his own mixture of merken -- a traditional Chilean smoked chili pepper. See [vik.cl/en](http://vik.cl/en).