



Vias Imports Ltd.

About Hans Vinding-Diers

Hans Vinding-Diers, 38, was born in South Africa's Stellenbosch district, and is of Danish heritage. Raised in Bordeaux on his family-owned properties in Graves, Vinding-Diers winemaking education started early and developed on a worldwide stage. Since then he has completed over 40 harvests in countries like France, Italy, Spain, Portugal, Hungary, Australia, Chile, Uruguay and Argentina. Vinding-Diers now focuses on his two main projects: Argentina's Bodega Noemia de Patagonia, which he co-owns with countess Noemi Marone Cinzano, and Argiano, Noemi's Tuscany estate.



His lengthy locks and studiously retro Ray-Ban tortoiseshell frames enshroud him with an almost scholarly robe. His manner-calm, collected, and quietly confident-suggests that he is at ease with himself. He is quick to converse, to share his opinions, and to offer his knowledge concerning all things vinous-all in a manner that is as disarming as it is detailed. Accurate, accessible, articulate, and authoritative; the Dutch-born Hans Vinding-Diers--perhaps surprisingly--in no way betrays the anxieties that one might suffer knowing that he labors in the shadow of Giacomo Tachis. For it was Tachis who had conceived and crafted Sassicaia and Tignanello, iconic Italian wines--wines that indeed defined what Italian fine wines are--knowingly designed in defiance of the vinous practices and cellar techniques espoused at the time.

From promoting a controlled and induced malolactic fermentation so as to avoid the angular textures so common in lesser Tuscan Chiantis; to the judicious blending of only red varietals (even French varietals such as Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot) so as to produce a more deeply hued and balanced wine capable of maturing and growing more complex with age; and to espousing the use of *barrique* rather than *botti* so as to further promote a more rounded and velvet-textured wine--all of these Giacomo Tachis practiced and propounded in defiance of the wine laws and traditions of the time. He of course suffered derision at first. Yet Tachis's *vino de tavola* enjoyed success overseas; and those who bore witness to the acclaim and accolades bestowed upon both Sassicaia and Tignanello could not but accept and acknowledge Giacomo's twin achievements--and perhaps adopt his cellar techniques as well.

All of which are not lost upon Vinding-Diers: "I am walking in big footsteps.." And perhaps even in the shadow of Tachis, a long shadow that spans all of Italy. Yet Vinding-Diers is quick to say that "his shadow, I think, should remain his shadow. And what I like to do is try and interpret Argiano as it is, not to try to and follow up what he's done."

To be sure, Hans (like his predecessor) is a craftsman in the cellar, willing to adopt and deploy foreign methods so as to tame the tannins inevitably found in his Sangiovese. He chooses a cold soak prior to fermentation rather than post-fermentation; he prefers the berries intact so as to promote a semi-carbonic maceration; he deploys *delestage*, *remontage*, and *pigeage*--and the last only late in fermentation. All are a cocktail of French techniques; all are deployed by Hans both so as to capture

the cherry notes found in Sangiovese and to avoid the harsh tannins often found in wines carved with a less deft hand. Yet unlike Tachis (whose expertise never extended beyond the cellar--despite an avid interest in viticulture), Hans actively chooses to delve deeply into *all* matters viticultural.

Yet delving deeply demands an almost scholarly patience and persistence, a willingness to overturn any stone of a clue that might offer any overlooked insight into the character of Argiano. And perhaps over and above others, Hans willingly speaks to the Tuscan locals--no small task, given his Dutch and *Bordelais* origins; it certainly demands if not a humility a trust in the local lore: "...there's a lot of homework behind that in asking the locals--*especially* the old people--what did they think of the vineyards, what do they know about *that* land, what do they know about *this* plot, what do they know about *that* plot. So I think that you have to read a little bit of your history in order to go ahead. You cannot just arrive fresh.."

He even deploys biodynamic techniques--techniques which ensure the very health of Argiano's soils: "We mainly work with compost in order to have micro-organisms--not as a fertilizer. A compost is just [a] micro-organism that lays like a carpet on a surface of land." This layer of compost not only safeguards against erosion; moreover, compost ensures a diverse and living biosphere, whose existence provides corollary benefits for the vines. Burrowing earthworms, for instance, not only leave tunnels in their wake--tunnels that allow for the flow of water demanded by the roots of the vine; moreover, earthworms and other microorganisms gnaw upon what others might consider to be detritus--and thereby convert such detritus into nutrients that are now accessible to the vines of Argiano.

Such viticultural concerns are a welcome advancement. Twenty-odd years ago, aspiring proprietors who had purchased swathes of Tuscan hillsides uprooted the fields of vines and other crops that the tenants had cultivated and perhaps thoughtlessly planted in their place whatever clones were available--clones known more for yields than for quality clusters. Moreover, they cultivated their vineyards with the assistance of tractors--whose weight pressed upon the delicate biosphere beneath, threatening its very existence.

Such aspiring proprietors, perhaps because of their sizable purchases, were seeking a quick return on their investments--a not altogether unreasonable request; improvements in the cellar facilitated such an endeavor. Yet wines of quality and distinction demand a deft hand in the vineyards as well as in the cellars--more manual labor (itself more costly) than mechanical means. And vineyard cultivation demands decades of experimentation and research as well as further financial investments--all of which bar a quick return on investment.

"So what we try to do is individualize and to try and find the identity, the *true* identity of Argiano and because one day I will leave. I will die inevitably. But Argiano is not going to die. And what I would like to leave behind me is Argiano as it is. Not Hans Vinding-Diers. So this is quite a different feat [from what] Giacomo Tachis was trying to do. But that makes a difference. Both valid I guess. I think Italy has benefited a lot from Giacomo Tachis. In his time. And I don't think Italy is going to benefit from me. But Argiano will. And that is the main--*main*--importance."

"If you treat your vines well and respect them, I think they [the wines] will make themselves in the cellar. It's just as you say--a custodian." And a grin seized his face and laughter escaped from his lips: "you become a lazy winemaker!"