



# Wine Spectator

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## WINE & DESIGN

### A Winemaker's Downtown Loft

*Piero Incisa della Rochetta's New York City kitchen blends the Old World with the New*

**BY JENNIFER FIEDLER**

“Everyone is always in the kitchen,” says Piero Incisa della Rochetta, owner of Argentina’s Pinot Noir-focused estate Bodega Chacra, about his newly renovated New York City loft.

“Whether we’re eating or talking or listening to music, that’s what we do.” And that’s just the way he likes it

Incisa della Rochetta, 43, an accomplished cook who frequently entertains, credits his passion for food and wine to his childhood in Tuscany (his grandfather, Mario, was the founder of Tuscany’s Tenuta San Guido, producer of Sassicaia). “I grew up in an environment where food was always made at home,” he says. Having a real, functional kitchen in the loft he purchased in 2007 in New York’s Little Italy, where he spends roughly one-third of the year, was key.

The aesthetic inspiration for the interior, however, came from designing his winery in Patagonia. “I grew up in houses that were very big, with a lot of heavy-looking furniture and doors,” Incisa della Rochetta says. “I wanted to free myself of that.” Using the idea of a sailboat as a template (“some of the most effective, efficient machines”), he went minimalist in the construction of Chacra, keeping the palate neutral and the sight lines open, and limiting the clutter—all elements echoed here.



There aren’t many features in the loft that are overtly oriented to wine—he prefers not to display a collection. Instead, the details are subtle. There’s the metaphoric, like limestone in the guest bedroom (“the best for growing Pinot Noir”), as well as the practical, like nonfragrant flowers (orchids and cherry blossom stems) and a skylight in the kitchen that opens to funnel out smoke from cooking, which might handicap a wine tasting. >



Natural materials—cement, wood, and marble—add warmth to the spare lines of the space. “If you look here, there is a hole,” he says, pointing out a knot in the 1-inch-thick white oak floors near the sink. “But I love imperfections. It reminds me of my life a little bit.”

The uncluttered lines may say sleek and modern, but scratch the surface and there are some real Old World sensibilities as to what makes a kitchen a kitchen. The sink, for instance, is a deep, farmhouse-style version that reminded him of sinks in old houses in Tuscany.

Likewise, the marble table, which sits at the center of the kitchen under the skylight, is a blend of old and new. He grew up with marble in the kitchen—its cool internal temperature is perfect for making some very Italian things, like fresh pasta—and liked the idea of having that sort of cultural touchstone in his home.

He isn’t unaware of the Old World influences. He laughs that he ended up in Little Italy, of all places in New York. “We are animals of habit,” he says, recalling his apartment hunt, which took more than two years to complete. “I just fell in love with the atmosphere.”

Incisa della Rochetta designed the modernist marble table himself, sourcing the thick slab, which weighs hundreds of pounds, from a

quarry upstate, and the custom frame from a company in Brooklyn. During the day, the table serves as an office desk, covered in laptops, mail and piles of newspapers and magazines. Come evening, it gets transformed to a prep station while he cooks, with simple plates laid out for guests, maybe burrata with a splash of olive oil, or prosciutto from Di Palo’s, the famed Italian food shop in his neighborhood.

With the dining table in the kitchen, the ingredients for that night’s dinner become part of the set, and the preparation, the show. “The idea was to have people in your kitchen that you can talk to and whatever—argue, make jokes with—while you cook,” he says. “And then we’ll all eat.” When the food is ready, the table is cleared off again. The almost-square shape can seat eight, which is, he feels, just the right amount of people for dinner.

Wine inevitably plays a big role at the table. As evidence, emptied bottles from a recent gathering of sommeliers, chefs and restaurateurs have joined a lineup on a top shelf in the kitchen, where bottlings of Dujac, Rousseau, Ulysses-Colin and Coche-Dury sit next to 2001 Sassicaia and his first bottling at Chacra. “All of them have meaning,” he says, on why he keeps them. “Sometimes they’re part of that year, that month, that mood, and sometimes they remind me of the people that I drank them with. They keep me company.”

