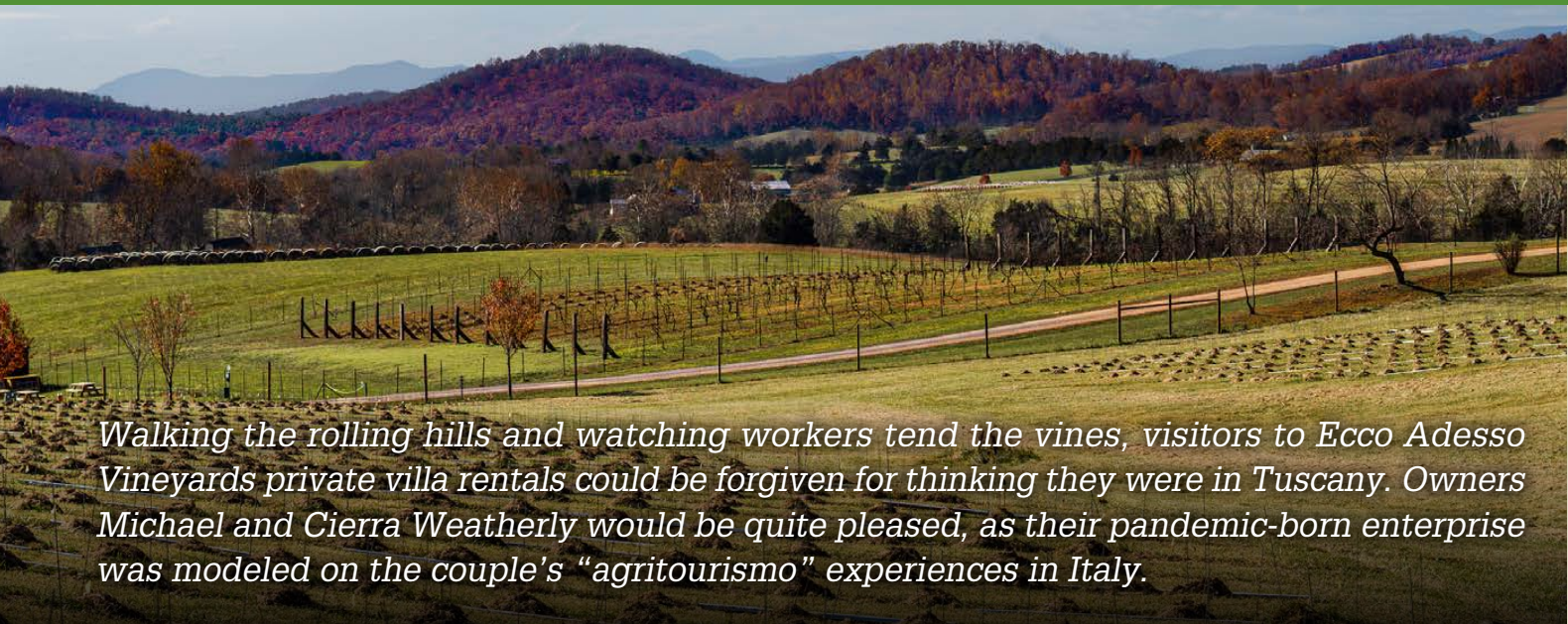


# THE SPIRIT OF ITALY COMES TO STAY IN VIRGINIA



*Walking the rolling hills and watching workers tend the vines, visitors to Ecco Adesso Vineyards private villa rentals could be forgiven for thinking they were in Tuscany. Owners Michael and Cierra Weatherly would be quite pleased, as their pandemic-born enterprise was modeled on the couple's "agritourismo" experiences in Italy.*

"We loved our agriturismo experience so much we wanted to bring it back home and help reconnect our community with the agriculture that sustains it," says Cierra. "Believe it or not, this seemed like the perfect time."

Last year, the Weatherlys decamped to their rural cabin, using remote technology for their children's schooling and to run Michael and Cierra's tech consulting company. They had started looking for a 5-acre farm in Nelson County, Virginia, to pursue their dream when they raised their sights a little further and found the ideal 340+ acre parcel in Fairfield.

With financing from Farm Credit of the Virginias in hand, the couple closed on their purchase in late August of 2020 and got started turning their new property into their dream, beginning with establishing and expanding their

vineyard from the one acre they'd inherited. As experts in their own field, they knew to do their homework — especially with no experience in farming.

"We had the soil tested by a local geologist with HydroGeo, used electrical conductivity measurements, and worked with an experienced wine consultant to identify the best varietals for our location and conditions," says Michael.

From the list of 20 potential grape varietals, the Weatherlys then undertook the arduous task of tasting wines produced from each variety. Involving friends and family in the fun, the blind-tasting process revealed an unexpected front-runner: the Saperavi grape, relatively unknown in America, with Ecco Adesso one of the first vineyards in Virginia raising the variety.

With the initial planting of 5,445 grape

vines — two varietals of red and two of white — finished this past spring, Ecco Adesso should see its first harvest in the next two years. They'll be expanding with four more varietals next year with the goal of producing a full range of wines, potentially including fruit wines from their two-acre, mixed fruit orchard. While they're waiting for their new wines to be ready, the Weatherlys are selling wine harvested from their old vines and showcasing wines from other Shenandoah Valley producers in the Ecco Adesso tasting room, selecting grapes and styles similar to what they hope to produce.

With the great strides made in the vineyards in just a year, it could be easy to forget that Ecco Adesso isn't only about wine.

A destination resort, Ecco Adesso features a three-bedroom guesthouse, one-bedroom cabin





and one-bedroom barn loft currently available for rent via Air BnB. A separate purchase of a four-bedroom, 1819 farmhouse and its land, also financed by FCV, re-combined a historic farm and added another large rental facility.

“We hope to provide a place people can visit to hike or relax, have authentic experiences and make memories with loved ones,” says Cierra. “Parents can sit on the porch and drink wine and the kids can run free and interact with the farm safely.”

Ecco Adesso translates from Italian to “here and now,” and signifies an attitude of living in the moment. Michael and Cierra try to do that as much as possible while nurturing multiple businesses along with their young family. However, they also live the spirit of philanthropy and consider daily what they can do here and now

to make other people’s lives better.

“Our consulting company tithes one-tenth of our income to non-profit organizations that our employees choose on a monthly basis,” says Michael. “Our intent is to tithe here at Ecco Adesso as well, and look for other ways we can give from our farm to others’ lives. We also started our own non-profit this past year that operates on the farm, called Vet First, which hires U.S. military veterans to grow produce.”

To start with, two veterans have been hired to work on the farm, tending an extensive vegetable garden raised following organic practices. Additionally, 100% of the farm’s produce is donated back to the community. In 2021, more than 1,000 pounds of food went to local food banks. The Weatherlys plan to add a pumpkin patch and beehives next year, with all



## Ecco Adesso Helps Rebuild History

After careful consideration by visiting experts, a white oak tree from Ecco Adesso Vineyard has been harvested to serve as one of the major truss beams in the rebuilt Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris. After a brief display on the National Lawn, the tree is waiting in the Smithsonian Museum to be part of this historic endeavor.

proceeds going to their non-profit.

In another ambitious project, the Weatherlys are pulling dead wood out of their sizeable timber land and milling it onsite to build a series of cabins that will be made available free to Veterans looking for a place to decompress. They also just received approval for a special exemption permit to hold weddings and events on the property.

“We’ve been so blessed and we promised each other we’d always give back,” says Michael. “We’re working to get to full profitability at Ecco Adesso, of course, but the core success of our business has always been what we’re able to give to others.”

**For more information about Ecco Adesso Vineyards, visit their website at [eccoadesso.com](http://eccoadesso.com).**

