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## TASTING REPORT: CHILE'S SOULFUL WINE REVOLUTION

June 20th, 2014

Although Chile is considered one of the best value wine producers in the world, it's quickly becoming one of the most serious wine producers, making fascinating wines from balanced and complex pinot noirs to tiny production old vine carifena and syrahs.

Don't miss the opportunity to catch the Chilean fine wine revolution now as many of the wines are priced between \$20 and \$30. In terms of quality, many are worth two or three times the price.

It seems so many of the winemakers there are striving to make soulful, heartfelt wines with balance and finesse. They are wines that emphasize the uniqueness of Chile.

I spent almost a week in Chile tasting a few hundred wines and visiting dozens of wineries and winemakers while my tasting coordinator and videographer travelled up and down the maritime nation, from the south in Bio Bio to the north in Aconcagua. JamesSuckling.com has lots of videos from Chile coming online as well.

I don't have to tell you how fascinating Chile is as a wine producing country. Many of you already know it, and that the country offers so much more than just simple, cheap and delicious wines. I am back in Chile this weekend to taste another 200 wines.



People speak about the influence of the Andes Mountains in Chile for viticulture and wine styles, but I believe it's much more about the effect of the sea. Maybe I am stating the obvious? But Chile has more than 4,000 kilometers of coastline and it dramatically influences what and how grapes are grown and, in effect, what wines are produced.

When I taste excellent pinot noirs from Chile, I think of California's Central Coast or Australia's Mornington Peninsula. Cariñenas are like funky yet soulful reds from maritime-influenced areas of Southern France. And this doesn't even take into account the fabulous cabernet sauvignons made from the Valle de Maipo near the capital of Santiago that have an almost Graves-like iodine or oyster shell subtlety running through them.

Of course, carmenere leaves its special mark in Chile. In certain areas, it makes a wine with unique rose petal and ripe fruit character with hints of fresh herbs and wet soil. The best I have tasted is Lapostolle Clos Apalta from the Valle de Apalta and the Purple Angel from Montes in Valle de Colchagua. They are some of the top reds in the country and prove that Chile is the only country in the world that can manage to make great wines from this finicky grape.

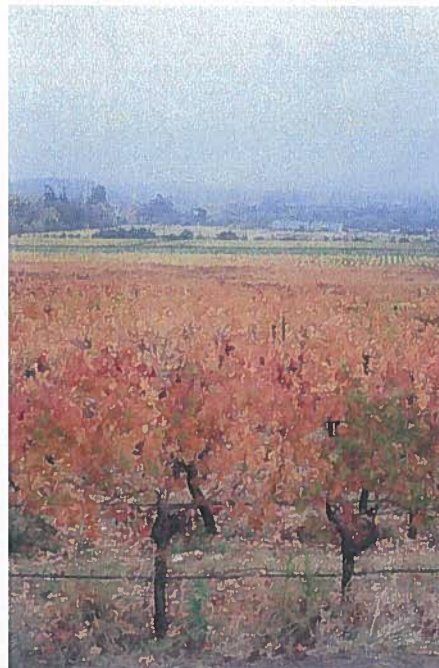
There's also a growing band of underground winemakers who are challenging traditions and accepted wisdoms of Chilean winemaking. They make individualist wines from old vine grape types such as cariñena moscatel, and pais (mission). They tend their vines organically and even use horses in the vineyard. They make their wines in small wineries or garages and do everything themselves. Some of them work together in makeshift associations such as MOVI (Movimiento de Viñateros Independientes).



"We want to show the world that apart from having big companies in Chile producing very good wines, there also exists these small family companies that have the capacity to make wines with a lot of character and a lot of soul," said Andres Sanchez, co-founder of MOVI.

Yet, for now the best wines of Chile are still from the top families of the country whether it's Eduardo Chadwick of Sena, Vifredo Chadwick and Errazuriz or the Guisasti of Concha y Toro, Almaviva, and Emiliana. And most emulate great Bordeaux, more than anything else.

It's obvious that the great names of Chile - some like to call them "icon



wines of Chile" - will continue to be benchmarks for the country. But I am even more excited by the soulful wines from such places as Bio Bio and Casablanca. And who knows where else? It's wonderful that many producers, large and small, are embracing sustainable viticulture as well as organic and biodynamic.

What if parts of Chile become known as great areas for world-class pinot noirs or fabulous Rhone-like blends? Or Chile makes the best carifena or syrah in the world? It all seems possible for Chile, especially after I tasted so many fascinating and high quality wines from there in the last six weeks, and visited so many wonderful places.

Below are 100 outstanding Chilean wines that I scored 91 points or more. Stay tuned for another 200 to 300 more tasting notes in the next few weeks.

### RITUAL PINOT NOIR VALLE DE CASABLANCA

COUNTRY *Chile*  
 REGION *Casablanca*  
 VINTAGE *2013*  
 SCORE *94*

#### TASTING NOTES

A dense and wonderfully long and silky pinot with strawberry, light hazelnut, and hints of lemon peel. Full body, yet lively and wired. This gives competition to Sea Smoke pinot but at half to one-third the price. Drink now.

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### NEYEN DE APALTA APALTA ESPIRITU DE APALTA

COUNTRY *Chile*  
 REGION *Colchagua*  
 VINTAGE *2011*  
 SCORE *93*

#### TASTING NOTES

A red with plenty of currant, mint and blackberry character on the nose and palate. Full body, with round tannins and a succulent finish. Turns to terracotta and iron undertones. Drink or hold.

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### RITUAL PINOT NOIR VALLE DE CASABLANCA

COUNTRY *Chile*  
REGION *Casablanca*  
VINTAGE *2012*  
SCORE *93*

#### TASTING NOTES

This is gorgeous and reserved with sweet strawberry, delicate spice and cedar character. Medium to full body, with ultra-fine tannins and a clean finish. Hints of mineral too. This is truly exciting. Drink now.

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### RITUAL SAUVIGNON BLANC VALLE DE CASABLANCA

COUNTRY *Chile*  
REGION *Casablanca*  
VINTAGE *2012*  
SCORE *93*

#### TASTING NOTES

This is intense and energetic with sliced lemon, pear and slate character. Salty too. Full body, with wonderful acidity and a dynamic finish. All about texture. Mostly fermented in old barrels with some concrete and stainless. Plenty of battonage for about eight months. Screw cap. Drink now.

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### NEYEN DE APALTA APALTA ESPIRITU DE APALTA

COUNTRY *Chile*  
REGION *Colchagua*  
VINTAGE *2010*  
SCORE *91*

#### TASTING NOTES

A round and juicy red with hints of sandalwood, dark berry and blueberry. Full body, velvety tannins and a juicy finish. Opulent yet shy. A blend of half carmenere and cabernet sauvignon. Better in 2015.

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### PRIMUS CABERNET SAUVIGNON VALLE DE MAIPO

COUNTRY *Chile*  
REGION *Valle de Maipo*  
VINTAGE *2012*  
SCORE *91*

#### TASTING NOTES

A balanced and harmonious red with plum, hazelnut, hints of toasted oak and a savory finish. Full to medium body, with delicate round tannins and a subtle fruity finish. Drink now.

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### PRIMUS VALLE DE MAIPO THE BLEND

COUNTRY *Chile*  
REGION *Valle de Maipo*  
VINTAGE *2012*  
SCORE *91*

#### TASTING NOTES

A red that shows silky tannins and chocolate, berry and walnut character. Full body, with fine tannins and a fresh finish. Attractive and harmonious red with backbone. Cabernet sauvignon, carmenere, merlot and syrah.

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### VERAMONTE CHARDONNAY VALLE DE COLCHAGUA

COUNTRY *Chile*  
REGION *Colchagua*  
VINTAGE *2012*  
SCORE *91*

#### TASTING NOTES

A juicy chardonnay with sliced apple and bread dough. Full body, and very fresh with lots of mineral, chalky character and white pepper. Stylish. Drink now.

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