May 2023: Emerging Stars of Chile

The history of Chilean wine dates way back to the 16th Century, when Spanish missionaries first planted the vines they brought with them on the ships from Europe. And it is just as well that they decided not to leave home without them, as to this day, Chile is THE only wine-producing country that is free of Phylloxera, an insect that caused mass devastation to the European wine industry at the end of the 19th Century.



Chile is a thin strip of land sandwiched between the Pacific Ocean and the Andes Mountains. This position creates what is essentially a massive air conditioner effect — channelling cool ocean air inland and through the regions' many valleys. Chile's coastal regions are best suited for growing cool climate grapes such as Pinot Noir and Chardonnay, whereas the warmer inland valleys are known for their soft and supple Bordeaux blends. Altitude as well as climate have a great impact upon the style of wines produced in Chile — the high elevation of the Andes creates wines with powerful structure and this has led to the region producing a number of intriguing wines using Syrah and Malbec as well as the more well-known Bordeaux varieties such as Cabernet Franc and Merlot.

The wine industry in Chile has seen great changes over the course of the 19th and 20th centuries, with the introduction of Noble European varieties, such as Cabernet Sauvignon and Pinot Noir and the uptake of major technological advances which has seen not only increases in quantities produced but also (and most importantly) quality. This has seen Chile grow from a small producer of poor quality wine for domestic

consumption to a major player on the international wine stage, producing several internationally acclaimed styles, especially its field blends – one of which is included in this month's case.

2018 Old Vine País-San Francisco 'Las Olvidadas', De Martino, Itata Valley - 12.5%, £42.99

The De Martino family, originally started their wine-making tradition in Italy, and have been heralded as pioneers of the Chilean wine world. They are renowned for being the first to identify, bottle and export Carmernere. They are doing great work in reviving traditional and lesser-known varietals such as País, and have also been named as Chile's first Carbon Neutral Winery. The País and San Francisco grapes for this wine are put through a 'Zaranda', a traditional tool made of wood and canes that is used in Itata to gently separate the stems from the berries. This means that the grapes are much less likely to be damaged prior to the fermentation process, thus minimising the risk of any damaged grapes spoiling the wine. Native yeasts are used in a relatively natural fermentation, and no sulphites are added prior to the wine spending 12 months ageing in French oak barrels.

This wine is a beautiful ruby red colour, and has a herbal yet red fruit perfumed character on the nose. Medium bodied, yet packs an intense punch with textured tannins and grip. A long finish, which would pair well with all manner of red meats, but especially wild boar or venison. However, despite its complexity, you could happily enjoy this with some rustic homemade pizzas or a charcuterie board with friends. Try it slightly chilled on a warm Spring afternoon.

2017 Vetas Blancas Reserva Especial Pinot Noir, Tabali, Limarí Valley – 13.5%, £17.99

Tabali is an icon of Chile, despite only being established a mere 21 years ago. Located on the edge of the Atacama Desert, it is one of Chile's northernmost wineries. They were one of the first to settle in Limarí and their wines faithfully reflect their terroir, unique climate and soils. They are also the only winery whose vineyards cross the full width of Chile, west to east the full length of the Limarí Valley. In their quest for winemaking perfection, they have recently acquired a site in the renowned region for Cabernet and Merlot, Maipo Valley.

Winemaker, Felipe Muller, was named 'Chilean Young Winemaker of the Year' in 2014 and has been acclaimed for his in-depth understanding of Tabali's distinctive terroir and his use of it to create truly remarkable wines. Tabali also has the honour of stewardship of the Limarí Valley's most significant archaeological sites, the mystical Valle del Encanto (Enchanted Valley) which borders their vineyards. This sacred site of the ancient Molle and Diaguita culture has many rock drawings and carved Tacita stones, which depict the ancient way of life. The winery celebrates this special connection by using the rock carvings as inspiration for their wine labels, which feature ancient Chilean artwork.

This is a deliciously mouth-watering yet delicate Pinot Noir with notes of smoky plum and redcurrant, and hints of strawberry on the nose. The palate has lashings of fresh red fruit with a subtle smoky finish. A great alternative to red Burgundy, this would make a brilliant partner to roasted lamb or venison and all the trimmings, or a woodland mushroom risotto.

2020 Talinay Sauvignon Blanc, Tabali, Limari Valley – 14%, £22.99

Another offering from Tabali winery, their Sauvignon Blanc is simply divine. The vineyards are located just 12km from the Pacific Ocean; this unique location provides truly excellent conditions for cool climate viticulture and is the only vineyard site in Chile to be planted over pure chalky limestone soils – known for producing refine and elegant wines. The constant breeze that drifts from the ocean over the vines creates the coolest vineyard conditions in Chile – maximum average temperatures in the summer months never go above 23.5°C so the harvest is 2-3 weeks later than in other regions. The grapes ripen gently in the cool summer days, refreshed by the ocean breezes and irrigated by the local mist, the famous 'Camanchaca'. Proximity to the Atacama Desert also means that the vineyards are virtually rot and disease free, removing the need for use of pesticides.

This Sauvignon Blanc is barrel-fermented, so has a unique character – herbaceous notes of gentle elderflower on the nose with a palate of striking acidity with clean flavours of lemon, lime and nettle leaf. The pure limestone soils show through in the wine's exquisite minerality – you'd be forgiven for blind-tasting this and guessing Pouilly Fumé. Enjoy with fresh seafood dishes such as Ceviche, or with a warm Goat's Cheese Salad.

2020 Coyam, Emiliana, Rapel Valley – 14%, £28.99

Emiliana's 'Coyam' is named after the oak forests which surround the winery's magical Colchagua home, Los Robles. The Coyam field blend is iconic, and a firm favourite of ours at The Vineking – it is a blend of Syrah (44%), Carmenere (30%), Cabernet Sauvignon (12%), Mourvedre (4%), Malbec (4%), Petit Verdot (2%), Garnacha (2%) and Tempranillo (2%). As you can see, it would probably be quicker to list what's not in it! After fermentation in separate batches, it is blended and then aged for 14 months, then very lightly filtered prior to bottling and release to retain as much natural character as possible.

Violet red in colour, this is an elegant and complexly perfumed wine with fruity notes of cherries, plums and blueberries, along with fresh notes of mint and a hint of black pepper spice, notes of leather and graphite. The palate, while fruity, has great structure, acidity and concentration and a brilliantly long finish. This is a complex wine that required equally intense pairings – such as grilled red meats including beef or lamb.

2018 Estate Carmenere, Las Veletas, Valle dei Maule – 13.5%, £17.99

The Las Veletas project started out as a small pet project, just creating wines to be enjoyed by friends and family. This allowed the winemaking team the complete freedom to experiment (and to make mistakes!) – but this freedom allowed for the team's imagination to roam free, creating some truly distinctive and unique wines in the process. The wines are so good, that the family decided that they



simply had to be shared. However, they do keep their batches small and produce incredibly low yields, as they didn't want to compromise on quality at any stage.

The Las Veletas Carmenere vineyard is located at high altitude, up to 250 metres above sea level, and much like the vineyards of the Limarí Valley is heavily influenced by the cooling breezes off the Pacific Ocean.

This wine has an intense purple colour, indicative of Carmenere, and has notes of cooked fruit such as blackberries and black cherry, with savoury notes of roasted bell peppers. An aromatic black pepper spiced finish with a surprising freshness. Enjoy now or any time over the next 5 years, with grilled beef, roasted duck or pulled pork. It would also work very well with Indian or Chinese dishes.

2020 Cordillera Chardonnay, Miguel Torres, Limari Valley – 13.5%, £21.99



In 1979, the Torres family purchased 100 hectares of vineyards and a winery in the Curicó Valley. Miguel Torres was one of the first foreign investors to buy land in Chile, and brought with him 140 years of family tradition and expertise. He was attracted by the perfect climatic conditions of the region, which can be described as extremely arid, with a warm days and very cold nights. The Andes Mountains are key to the irrigation of the vineyards, with snowmelt water doing more to replenish the region's water reserves than the annual rainfall.

The Chardonnay vineyard lies in the Tabali area of Limari Valley, where the temperatures are cool and influenced by the sea breezes. The cool and fresh climate is perfect for the production of high-quality Chardonnay.

The Cordillera Chardonnay is a brilliant example of barrel fermentation and the wine is aged on its lees for 9 months, to add richness and complexity. On the nose, floral notes of peach and lychee leap from the glass, followed by a juicy palate with refreshing acidity. It also has a subtle saline quality, indicative of the vineyard's calcareous terroir.

This wine would be sublime with caviar (if you're feeling fancy), but would also be a great pairing for fresh trout and smoked salmon.