

STONE VINE & SUN

Fine Wine of the Southern Cone: Chile & Argentina

It's been a long time since we gave any prominence to our South American growers. As this list accompanies our sale, which includes plenty of wine under £10 a bottle, the focus here is on fine wine from Chile and Argentina – but also **all discounted by the bottle by a minimum of 10% - and in some cases a lot more** until the end of September.

It used to be easy to summarise Chile as a source of good value Sauvignon Blanc and Merlot; and Argentina as just the font of Malbec. From the former we list neither Sauvignon Blanc nor Merlot – instead top quality Chardonnay, Carmenère, Cabernet Sauvignon, Pinot Noir, ancient vine Carignan and cool climate Syrah. From the latter, beside Malbec we offer Viognier and Cabernet Franc. From both countries we also present highly successful red blends. There is lot to be said for the argument that the forward and generously fruited Malbec grape gains from being bolstered by the more structured Cabernet Sauvignon; whilst the Tutunjian red below, drawing on grapes grown in the most suitable terroirs in Chile for each variety, exemplifies the freedom available to South American winemakers.

Prices from both countries have remained remarkably stable: as an example, six years ago we were selling the Errázuriz Wild Ferment Chardonnay for £11.25 - more than it is discounted to here. This is in contrast to other New World countries, notably Australia and the USA, whose strong currencies have driven considerable price increases for their wines. (The concentration and suavity of some of these wines stacks up very well against Californian wines at least twice the price!). If you have never tried top wines from Chile and Argentina I urge you to buy from this selection as they offer both superb quality and striking value. Do mix and match from this list but I have put together one mixed case below including some of my favourites.

*Simon Taylor
August 2018*

Peaks of the Southern Cone

£161.60, saving £24.20 on list prices Code PSC18

Two bottles each of two whites and four reds

Errázuriz, Chardonnay, Aconcagua Costa, 2015

Carinae, Viognier, Mendoza, Argentina, 2017

Apaltagua, Envero, Gran Reserva Carmenère, Apalta Vineyard Selection, Colchagua, Chile, 2016

Errázuriz, Pinot Noir, Aconcagua Costa, Chile, 2016

Pandolfi Price, Larkün Syrah, Valle del Itata, 2015

Walter Bressia, Profundo, Mendoza, 2011

Chile

Apaltagua & Tutunjian

With plantings beginning in 1950, Apaltagua was one of the pioneers in Apalta, a hilly side valley off Colchagua and a terroir which has become famous in part through the wines of illustrious neighbours Casa Lapostolle and Montes. More recently the estate and cellar was bought by an American businessman, Edward Tutunjian: some of the wines bear his surname.

**Apaltagua, Envero, Gran Reserva
Carmenère, Apalta Vineyard Selection,
Colchagua, 2016, 14%**

Bottle ~~£11.95~~ £10.50 Code APA416

The latest vintage of this deservedly popular wine – still at the same bottle price as in 2015! From vines averaging 50 years old, this lightly oaked Carmenère - with 10% Cabernet Sauvignon - delivers spectacular value for its concentration, quality and smart presentation. Bittersweet red and blackcurrant fruit with liquorice and tobacco hints over subtle tannins. Now-2022

Tutunjian, Entre Valles, 2013, 14.5%

Bottle ~~£18.50~~ £15.50 Code TUT113

A blend of four grapes, all grown in Apaltagua owned vineyards, and each variety matched to the best sites in different valleys: 54% Carmenère from 60+ year old vines in Apalta; 19% Syrah and 15% Malbec from Maule; and 12% Cabernet Sauvignon from Puente Alto in Maipo. Youthful, showing lots of vanilla-spiced oak and intense primary black fruit. Extrovert but retains an old world balance and food friendliness. Now-2023



Errázuriz, Aconcagua

Errázuriz is a giant in Chile, where the winemaking team is focused on making pure, modern-style wines, at every price point, whether entry level wines for the supermarkets or their new Pizarras super-premium wines. Head winemaker Francisco Baettig is continuously refining his Chardonnay and Pinot Noir: picking earlier for greater freshness and using fewer new oak barrels than in the past.

Four wines are from the fairly recent plantings at the mouth of the Aconcagua Valley at Manzanar, just 12 kms from the cool Pacific, where the vineyards lie on schist. Note in particular the alcohol levels of these wines, so moderate for Chile. We have been watching the Pizarras wines: only with this third vintage did we decide to ship them.

Errázuriz, Wild Ferment Chardonnay, Casablanca, 2016, 13% [Screwcap]

Bottle £11.95 £10.95 Code ERR816

Consistently successful and weighty New World Chardonnay, now in a fresher, less oaked idiom. Good weight, very ripe - a hint of tangerine - and generous. Now-2020

Errázuriz, Chardonnay, Aconcagua Costa, 2015, 13%

Bottle £14.95 £12.95 Code ERR115

From a cool coastal vineyard, a brilliant barrel-fermented Chardonnay. Sharp green fruit, hint of chalky bite, nervy and mineral. 95/100, Decanter Best in Category, Chilean Chardonnay, **Decanter World Wine Awards 2016** – a stunning award against more expensive examples. Now-2020

Errázuriz, Las Pizarras Chardonnay, Aconcagua Costa, 2016, 13%

Bottle £55.00 £49.50 Code ERR616

Beautifully balanced, satiny Chardonnay. Less than 20% of the wine went into new barrels; and just 55% of the wine underwent malolactic fermentation; so one sees more fruit and more freshness. Stunning, this represents a new level of elegance for Chilean Chardonnay. It was scored by American wine critic James Suckling in May 2017 at 98/100. Now-2022



Errázuriz, Pinot Noir, Aconcagua Costa, 2016, 13%

Bottle £15.50 £13.50 Code ERR916

2016 is the best vintage yet of this increasingly Burgundian and wholly enticing wine. Pretty dark cherry hue. Pure, ripe berried perfume. Beautifully smooth and balanced, offering a light and fragrant mouthful of red and black cherries with minimal tannins. Perfectly poised and graceful. Now-2021

"The obsessive work of Errázuriz and Francisco Baettig in Aconcagua Costa has led to simply stellar Pinot Noir. Top-label Las Pizarras [see below] is sensational; this is a more affordable version but still offers outstanding value at this price. Piercing scents and fine, poised, classy flavour profile. Drink 2018-2022, 91/100" Peter Richards MW, **Decanter**, February 2018.

Errázuriz, Carmenère, Aconcagua Alto, 2014, 14%

Bottle £17.95 £14.95 Code ERR214

100% Carmenère aged in French oak, 1/3 new; from the Max V vineyard 600 metres up against the Andes: superb this vintage, smooth blackcurrants scented with nicotine, green pepper and sweet oak. Highly aromatic and would appeal to Bordeaux lovers. Now-2023

Errázuriz, Cabernet Sauvignon, Aconcagua Alto, 2013, 14%

Bottle £17.95 £15.25 Code ERR513

From 85% Cabernet Sauvignon, 8% Cabernet Franc and 7% Petit Verdot, from vines grown on stony, colluvial soils. Very textured, blackcurrants, cut by a streak of lead-pencilly graphite. Now-2022

Errázuriz, Las Pizarras Pinot Noir, Aconcagua Costa, 2016, 13%

Bottle £70.00 £63.00 Code ERR716

Very Burgundian wine-making: 18% whole bunch fermentation, all into open top fermenters, gentle punch downs and into French barrels - 1/3 new, but you wouldn't know it, so classy is the integration of fine oak and sumptuous fruit. Very lush black fruit but there's a proper structure there too, a backbone which will keep this going for years. Scored at 99/100 by American critic James Suckling in May 2017. Best 2019-2024

Pandolfi Price, Itata

Enzo Pandolfi Price bought a farm in cool climate Itata, south of Cauquenes and east of Concepcion, in 2002 which included a vineyard planted by a local professor of viticulture on granular, decomposed volcanic soils in the mid 1990s. The climate here is perfect for Chardonnay, being relatively temperate - the harvest is in April - and plentiful rainfall means no irrigation is needed. The winemaker here, François Massoc, is a thoughtful man. Born just down the road in Concepcion, he spent years studying in Dijon and making wine in Burgundy before returning to Chile. He assists with advice in the vineyard, chooses the best parcels for the family's wine, likes to work with long, slow fermentations, and knows barrels backwards.

In past vintages we have had huge success - critical and commercial - with these wines. However Los Patricios Chardonnay and Pinot Noir have not been such fast sellers, largely because of their alcohol levels - 15% for the former and 15.5% for the latter. But if you get beyond that, the wines are both impressive, with generous substance and style - and now there's a significant temporary discount. The Larkun Syrah is striking, neither French nor Australian in style, but a benchmark expression of specifically Chilean cool climate Syrah.

Pandolfi Price, Los Patricios Chardonnay, Valle del Itata, 2014, 15%

Bottle £22.95 £18.50 Code PAP314

Winemaker François Massoc is acknowledged to craft the finest Chardonnays in Chile. This shows enticing aromas of smart toasty oak and dairy elements; followed by a powerful and well-textured mouthful of green fruit with a smoky note. Hugely impressive - a Chilean Meursault? Now-2022

Pandolfi Price, Larkün Syrah, Valle del Itata, 2015, 14%

Bottle £14.50 £12.95 Code PAP615

Exciting coolish climate Syrah, showing bright blackcurrants, bittersweet and crunchy. Sits perfectly between Northern Rhône and Australian styles. Excellent keeping potential too. Now-2022

Pandolfi Price, Los Patricios Pinot Noir, Valle del Itata, 2014, 15.5%

Bottle £24.95 £19.95 Code PAP814

Pinot Noir but not as we know it Jim - extravagantly flavoured, wildly powerful (see the alcohol level) and we couldn't resist it. Black fruited, showing hints of eucalyptus and spice, this is possibly not for Pinot purists but undeniably dramatic. Now-2019



Meli, Loncomillo

Meli has one single, isolated Carignan vineyard, planted in 1949, one of the oldest vineyards in Chile. Carignan was largely first planted in the region after a devastating earthquake in 1939, replacing the workhorse grape País. Adriana Cerda, one of Chile's first female winemakers, bought the vineyard, then in an almost abandoned state, in 2005. Four years later she was one of the founders of Vigno, the association of "Vignadores de Carignan". The rules of the group are firm: for a wine to carry the Vigno name on the label it has to be from the fruit of vines at least 35 years old, dry-farmed (i.e. no irrigation); it has to contain at least 65% Carignan; and it has to be aged for at least two years before release.

2011 Meli, Vigno Carignan, Maule, 14.1%

Bottle £17.95 £13.95 Code MEL311

This is vital, open, rich and velvety, but also beautifully aromatic, with a floral grace. It would drink beautifully with game in a rich gravy, a *daube* or *mole poblano*. Now-2019

Volcanes de Chile, Talagante

Volcanes de Chile is a fascinating project, making wines from vines on volcanic soils - there are 900 active volcanoes in the country. Winemaker Pilar Diaz brings a sensitivity to the task, trying to emphasise the flavours of the land rather than the hand of the winemaker, but Parinacota is no shrinking violet, rather a bold and still youthful Syrah-based wine of real power and character. As it seems to be priced the wrong side of £20 for regular sales we are making a temporary dramatic reduction!

Volcanes de Chile, Parinacota, Syrah-Carignan, Maule Valley, 2012, 14%

Bottle £20.95 £16.50 Code VOL812

82% Syrah and 18% Carignan, largely from old vines grown on lava-based soils full of pyroclastic fragments and breccia, given 12 months in French oak barrels. A big wine, but elegant. Bittersweet cassis fruit, mouth-wateringly refreshing, with a sense of violets. *"Imagine a cliff face hewn from liquorice with seams of juicy black fruit and ground spice - it's that awesome"*, Olly Smith, *Daily Mail* online, 19th March 2016. Now-2022



Carinae, Maipú

French engineer Philippe Subra established Carinae (named after a giant, glowing nebula in Sagittarius which lights up the southern sky at night) in 2003, buying several small parcels of ancient vines (between 85 and 100 years old) just south of Mendoza, at Cruz de Piedra, near the winery, and especially at the renowned Calle Cobos in Perdriel, Luján de Cuyo.

Winemaking here is overseen by the Mendoza arm of consultant Michel Rolland. The reds here show the hallmarks of Rolland's influence: the grapes are picked late, resulting in a lush, generous and powerful style; there is bleeding off (especially for the top cuvées) to maximise the percentage of pip and skin to liquid; long macerations; and plenty of French oak. But not for nothing are the services of Rolland and his team so widely employed in Argentina. The concentrated fruit of old vines and top terroirs can benefit from this formula.

Finally, note the vintages we are offering of the premium reds: these concentrated, well-oaked wines show so much better after some time in bottle.

Carinae, Viognier, Mendoza, 2017, 13.5%

Bottle £12.50 £10.95 Code CAE717

There's very good Viognier coming out of Argentina now: and the grape is much better suited to the heat (in all but the very highest vineyards) than Chardonnay or Sauvignon Blanc. From 15 year old vines, this is a well-balanced example, showing a heady mix of jasmine, lime, stone fruit and grapey (Muscat-like) characters. Well-textured but with crisp bite, this makes a lovely aperitif but is equally at home with spicy food (for example a Goan fish curry). Now-2019

Carinae, Malbec, Mendoza, 2016, 13.5%

Bottle £11.25 £9.75 Code CAE116

Old vines deliver impressive concentration to this summer-puddingy, unoaked Malbec. Balanced, and with a fresh finish, this leaves one wanting more. Now-2020

Carinae, Cuvée Brigitte, Mendoza, 2014, 14.5%

Bottle £12.50 £10.95 Code CAE814

About 60% Malbec and 40% Cabernet Sauvignon: the former brings rich red fruit from old vines and the latter black fruit and structure. This is very successful and shows it needn't be just the top wines at any Argentine estate (see the Prestige or Bressia's Profundo below) which are blends. Such a complete wine at this price. Now-2019

Carinae, Malbec Harmonie, Mendoza, 2013, 14.5%

Bottle £12.95 £11.25 Code CAE213

Definitive oaked Malbec – brambly fruit, concentrated, smooth and opulent – from 90 year old vines in Cruz de Piedra. Demands beef. Now-2021

Carinae, Hommage, Mendoza, 2010, 15%

Bottle £21.50 £17.95 Code CAE410

Pure Malbec from ancient vines, very inky and concentrated indeed – essence of brambly fruit. Now-2019

Carinae, Prestige, Mendoza, 2009, 15%

Bottle £26.50 £22.50 Code CAE509

About 70% Malbec, with 25% Cabernet Sauvignon and Syrah, a selection of all the best parcels of the vintage, aged in new barrels for 18 months. Hugely powerful and concentrated, yet balanced. Very lush cherry and cassis core, spiced with cinnamon. Drinking perfectly now. Now-2019

Argentina

Walter Bressia, Monteagrello

When we first started working with Walter Bressia, the grand old man of the Argentine wine scene, the first wine we shipped was Profundo, his superb Malbec-based blend: it's a remarkable and ageworthy wine. Grapes are sourced in part from his own 5 hectares of vineyards and part from local parcels, both in the fine Monteagrello terroir near Mendoza at around 950 metres, and in the slightly higher and cooler Tupungato area in the Uco Valley to the south. Walter's wines follow a European model in their refinement, ageworthiness and complexity.

Walter Bressia, Monteagrello Cabernet Franc, Mendoza, 2013, 14.5%

Bottle £16.50 £14.95 Code BRE513

From fruit sourced in the cooler, higher vineyards of the Uco valley, but emphatically not a light, Loire-like example of the grape; instead very ripe and powerful, perfumed; supple and long. Now-2019

Walter Bressia, Profundo, Mendoza, 2011, 15%

Bottle £23.50 £19.95 Code BRE111

About 50% Malbec, 30% Cabernet Sauvignon, 10% Merlot and 10% Syrah, aged in French oak barrels. Cassis-flavoured, this wine offers power, elegance and length. Svelte, showing red fruit and floral hints above a velvety structure. Very good value. Now-2022



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