

Tasting Notes
Feb 2023 Pick-up
Wines of Chile (and more)



Welcome to your February 2023 Smart Wine Club pickup. The theme this quarter is wine from the country of Chile (and more). Haha. I found five wines from Chile that I wished to include, plus I'm adding on one from Argentina so you can try one more additional varietal.

The vineyards of Chile are basically located in a large number of valleys that run east-west from the Andes to the Pacific, across the central part of this narrow country. We'll be enjoying wines from the fairly well-known Maipo and Colchagua Valleys, as well as the lesser-known Maule and Cachapoal Valleys. European grape vines arrived to Chile with the Spanish conquistadors as early as 1555. However, it was the arrival of French immigrants (and French investors) in the 19th century that brought modern techniques and wine-making knowledge, plus new varietals. This led to the rise of the wine industry we see now in Chile. Interestingly, Chile is famously the only wine-making country in the world which has kept its vineyards free from Phylloxera, due to its complete isolation by the Andes Mountains.

You'll enjoy the following wines in this tote:

- **2019 Garage Wine Co. Phoenix White Blend** – Garage Wine Co. is a very cool winery that sources grapes from a team of family-grown vineyards around the Maule Valley, almost like a co-op. The wines are produced in a very natural style with native yeasts, no additives, and much work done by hand. This white blend is 86% Pais and 14% Cariñena grapes, and is aged in stainless steel. Interestingly, both grapes are typically considered red grapes, but they are made into a white wine in this bottling in the blanc de noirs style, by not allowing them to have any skin contact. The wine is floral and aromatic, fresh and clean, with a vibrant palate. Reg retail: \$14 Smart price: \$12

Pairing: For a white, this is very aromatic and bold, so needs something a little bolder to pair with it. Try it with Chinese food or Thai food. Consider the types of meats you might typically pair with pinot noir; so chicken, duck, salmon or pork will work well.

- **2019 Miguel Torres Cordillera de los Andes Carménère Reserva Especial** – This bottle from the regulated sub-region of Peumo within the Cachapoal Valley is 100% Carménère. (In fact, all of our reds in this tote are single-varietal.) It has a great bold color and perfectly expresses the classic flavors of this grape, such as berry, eucalyptus, and leather. You may discover spice notes such as clove, black pepper, and licorice with a pleasant toastiness. Reg retail: \$21 Smart price: \$18

Pairing: This is the perfect pairing for simple herb-roasted or grilled meats, especially lamb and pork. Use some garlic and rosemary in the marinade.

- **2021 Escudo Rojo Syrah Reserva** – Located in the famed Maipo Valley just south of Santiago, the vineyards that produce these grapes are known for having the ideal climate and conditions for growing Syrah. Escudo Rojo (red shield) is the Chilean label of Chateau Baron Philippe de Rothschild. As such, the grapes are vinified in the style of a Bordeaux, seeking fruit extraction and well-balanced tannins. You'll enjoy dark fruits such as blackberry and black currant on the nose, as well as oak and pepper. The flavor is spicy, with great body and an elegant, long finish. Reg retail: \$19 Smart price: \$17

Pairing: For something easy, Syrah pairs perfectly with several varieties of bold cheese, as well as olives. Put together a big board with any combination of blue cheese, aged Gouda, Pecorino, or quality sharp Cheddar plus some smoky grilled sausages and salty olives, and graze your way through dinner.

- **2018 Viu Manent Cabernet Sauvignon Single Vineyard – La Capilla** – This bottle is the first of two Viu Manent wines from their Single Vineyard series, where the winemakers strive to create extraordinary examples of a specific varietal and region. I'm very excited to share both of them with you. They are made from small production, hand-picked fruit from the best sectors of vineyards in the Colchagua Valley. This Cabernet is cherry red in color with a multi-layered and perfumed nose. You'll enjoy fresh red fruit aromas, black currants, tobacco and a subtle spice. This vintage received 92 points from James Suckling and I think it's just delicious. Reg retail: \$21 Smart price: \$18

Pairing: Since it's still quite wintery outside, let's pair this with warm and comforting foods, like braised beef short ribs, lamb shepherd's pie, or even a nice bowl of homemade chili.

- **2018 Viu Manent Malbec Single Vineyard – San Carlos** – The second Viu Manent bottle is a Malbec, from old vines planted over a hundred years ago. Viu Manent is a rather famous winery in Chile, and they were the first to produce Malbec in that country. This wine has luscious notes of black cherry, plums, and violets. It's a wonderfully modern version of Malbec: delicate, fresh and crisp; with bright structure and a long, flavorful finish. This vintage received 93 points from James Suckling!
Reg retail: \$22 Smart price: \$19

Pairing: It may sound surprising, but this lighter, modern Malbec style can pair nicely with unexpected foods such as salmon or swordfish! It also pairs well with many Asian flavors such as soy and curry. So, I'll recommend you try this with my favorite Salmon Teriyaki recipe from the food blog Just One Cookbook – it's soooo good.

- **2019 Durigutti Cabernet Franc Classico** – Our final red is a 100% Cabernet Franc from the Mendoza region of Argentina. Brothers Héctor and Pablo Durigutti are two of Argentina's most well-respected winemakers, and this is their top Cab Franc bottling on their label. The wine is an intense blue-red color with spiced balsamic and floral notes on the nose. The taste seems almost sweet, it is so velvety-smooth, but ends with persistent tannins that allow it to stand up to food pairings. Reg retail: \$18 Smart price: \$16

Pairing: South American Cabernet Franc tends to be a little bolder and more full-bodied than the classic Loire Valley versions, so go big with steak, grilled meats, or rich braises.