

VINOS DE TERROIR
Benchmark Wines of Chile
New York
November 13, 2012

Casa Marin Sauvignon Blanc Cipreses Vineyard 2011, San Antonio **(+)**

Pale straw gold. Pungent initially to the nose, then concentrated and intense, with vividly expressive grapefruit, lemon peel and green herbs. The palate is focused and also highly aromatic as well as ultraclean. There is noteworthy length and an aftertaste dominated by stone fruits and white citrus. Vibrant, mouthwatering acidity. This is very much my style. 13.5% alc.

Santa Rita Casa Real Cabernet Sauvignon 2009, Maipo **(+)**

Dense blackish red with purple rim. Concentrated, mature dark fruit, particularly damson plum, black cherry and blackberry. The nose offers restrained warm accents. On the palate, the wine reveals concentration and beautiful balance. The finish is intense and persistent, with ripe dark fruit highlights. Framed by firm acidity. The alcohol (14.7%) is concealed in the wine's flesh. 100% Cab Sauv. Malo and aging in new French oak.

Concha y Toro Don Melchor 2008, Maipo *(*)**

Opaque black red. Deep, dense dark fruit with subtle tarry, leafy, herbal notes. The nose has a controlled warm lift. The palate is reserved at first, and then shows breadth, flesh and a touch of warmth. Full and youthful. Firm, well-managed tannin and integrated ripe acidity. At the end, French oak and a faint bitterness are detectable. 97% Cab Sauv, 3% Cab Franc. 15 months in French oak. 14.8% alc.

Concha y Toro Carmin de Peumo Carmenere 2008, Maipo *(*)**

Dense black with purple cast. Lifted and expressive nose offering sweet red fruits, flowery accents and herbal notes along with faintly peppery oak. The taste is concentrated, balanced and fresh although held back. There are red fruits, herbs and French oak in the finish, which is defined by firm acidity. This wine has real presence and flavor interest. 90% Carmenere, 7.5% Cab Sauv, 2.5% Cab Franc. 18 months in all-new French oak. 14.6% alc.

Altair 2007, Cachapoal *(+)**

Opaque blackish red with thin purple rim. Assertive aroma dominated by tarry and herbaceous overtones together with graphite and a mentholated aspect. The nose shows depth and warmth. In the mouth, Altair is ample and fleshy but somewhat withdrawn, with an undercurrent of dark red fruit and earthy, tarry notes. A solid wine but a bit blunt. 65% Cab Sauv, 22% Syrah, 7% Carmenere, 5% Cab Franc, 1% Petit Verdot. 15 months in new French oak. 14.7% alc.

Erraziriz Don Maximiano Founder's Reserve 2007, Aconcagua *(?)**

Dense dark red with thin purple rim. High-toned nose marked by dark red fruits, a touch of alcohol, and tarry notes. In the mouth, the wine is notably direct and very firm and edgy. Cool in its maturity yet leaves a warm impression. The finish is held back, rather dry. The wine needs to come together and resolve its pinched, angular profile. Would less Cab and time in wood have produced a better result? 82% Cab Sauv, 6% each Cab Franc, Petit Verdot and Syrah. 20 months in new French oak barrels. 14.5% alc.

Seña 2007, Aconcagua *(*)**

Dense blackish red with purple edge. Ripe, inflected aroma revealing red fruit, tobacco, creamy oak, and a mentholated lift. The palate is focused and well-defined by fresh acidity and firm tannin. This is relatively understated with good underlying intensity. Tarry and tobacco highlights remain in the aftertaste. 65% Cab Sauv, 26% Carmenere, 5% Cab Franc, 3% Syrah and 1% Merlot. 22 months in new French barrels. 14.5% alc.

Montes Alpha M 2010, Apalta (Colchagua) *(*) ?**

Opaque black red with purple. At first, the aroma is dominated by alcoholic lift, and then reveals concentrated ripe dark red fruits and a graphite accent. The palate is highly concentrated and structured, finishing with rather aggressive tannins. Clearly very young and in need of 5 to 6 years to be approachable. 80% Cab Sauv, 10% Cab Franc, 5% each Merlot and Petit Verdot. 18 months in new French oak. 14.9% alc.

Lapostolle Clos Apalta 2009, Apalta (Colchagua) **(+)**

Opaque black red with purple. Very rich, very mature and warm mélange of red and black fruit – a very ample, giving nose. The taste is similarly large scaled and expressive. This is a very generous, chewy and muscular wine. The budding finish is layered and powerful and leaves an oaky, creamy finale. A very youthful wine which has considerable potential. 78% Carmenere, 19% Cab Sauv and 3% Petit Verdot. 24 months in new French oak. 15% alc.

Montes Folly 2009, Apalta (Colchagua) **(+)**

Opaque black red with purple. The nose delivers dense, generous dark fruit and is full and powerful, with an oaky overlay and meaty accent. The palate is concentrated and chewy – this is a big, mouth-filling wine with plenty of substance and fruit. There is a powerful but not aggressive frame. A highly successful pure Syrah matured for 18 months in new French oak. 15.1% alc.

Overall remarks about the red wines:

This range of red wines includes many of Chile's best and most expensive, with retail prices of \$75 to \$150 per bottle. As a group, they possess enormous extract and power. The alcohol levels, around 15%, are high across the board. Some of the wines hide their alcohol content better than others. The mass of fruit is offset to varying degrees by noteworthy acidity and tannin levels. Those wines based on Carmenere and Syrah have dramatic, strong personalities.

While there are many impressive large-scaled wines, I wonder if greater harmony could be achieved by greater reliance on a softening component (Merlot, perhaps) and a lower proportion of new oak. This may be the next step for this elite tier of Chilean wines.