

Chilean Sauvignon Blanc

While this variety is a work in progress, says Peter Richards MW, it is yielding some of the country's most exciting wines, with great stylistic and regional diversity

SAUVIGNON BLANC IS a key variety for Chile. The second most planted wine grape after Cabernet Sauvignon, its plantings having grown steadily over the past decade – in 2000 it represented 6% of the national vineyard; by 2010 its share was up to 11%.

There was a time when Chilean Sauvignon Blanc was largely defined by cheap, dreary wines that were actually made from the inferior Sauvignon Vert vine, also known as Sauvignonasse. (The kind of wines that taste fine for six months after the vintage but then fall flat on their faces.)

While many of these wines still crop up in the bargain bins, by and large Chile has moved on, planting (or grafting) proper clonal Sauvignon Blanc in appropriately cool sites and making the wines with increasing expertise.

The benchmark regions for Chilean Sauvignon remain Casablanca and San Antonio (the focus of this tasting, along with Leyda and Aconcagua Costa), though other areas are growing in renown and production. These include Elqui, Limarí, coastal Colchagua and Bío Bío.

Stylistic diversity is a hallmark of Chilean Sauvignon. Casablanca produces a range of styles, from easy-going, crisp, everyday wines to more structured and scented ones from the cool coastal west of the region. San Antonio (which includes Leyda) is increasingly diverse but tends to major on spicy intensity and a broad structure. Elqui is all about tangy pungency; the best from coastal Limarí are mineral and savoury; Bío Bío is elegantly understated.

There is a good deal of experimentation and innovation taking place within the Sauvignon category. Examples include clonal diversification and improvement, tinkering with harvest times to encourage complexity, the increasingly deft use of oak and a growing number of sweet wines.

Chile's cheerleader

New, small-scale producers making individual styles of Sauvignon are emerging while established producers are refining vineyards and winemaking to craft increasingly complex, daring wines. Good examples of the latter include Cono Sur, Undurraga, Casa Marín, Matetic, Viña Leyda, Casas del Bosque, Errázuriz, Santa Rita, Montes and Luis Felipe Edwards.

While it's fair to say Chilean Sauvignon Blanc is a work in progress, it's also true that this variety has consistently been making some of the country's most exciting and ambitious wines of late. Yes, Chardonnay is undergoing something of a renaissance, and Riesling shows great promise, but Sauvignon Blanc looks set to remain the principal cheerleader for Chilean white wine for some time.

Both 2011 and 2010 were good vintages for Chilean Sauvignon Blanc, producing crisp, intense, aromatic styles. In general, it's usually worth finding the most recent vintage you can. This is not because the older wines fall apart – far from it in the best cases – but more because the rapidity of change and improvement in Chile is such that the country's wines, including its Sauvignon Blanc, seem to improve with each harvest.

Peter Richards MW is the Decanter World Wine Awards Regional Chair for Chile and author of The Wines of Chile (Mitchell Beazley 2006)



Chilean Sauvignon Blanc: know your vintages

2011 Good to very good vintage: late harvest, low yielding, fresh wines. Some variability.

2010 (The 'earthquake' vintage) Very good: cool, dry and late, intense wines. Best wines still maturing well.

2009 Average to good: warm, high-yielding year, lacks the freshness of 2007 or 2010. Drink up.

2008 Good: warm, dry year gave decent wines, perhaps a notch below 2007. Drink up.

Chilean Sauvignon Blanc: the facts

Total Chilean area under vine: 116,831 ha

Sauvignon Blanc: 13,278ha (Sauvignon Vert 857ha)

Key regions for Sauvignon Blanc: Casablanca (1,085ha planted, of a total 3,852ha in the region) and San Antonio (98ha planted, of a total 327ha in the region). San Antonio is a sub-region of Aconcagua Valley, and is divided into four sectors: Leyda, Lo Abarca, Rosario and Malvilla.

Sources SAG Vineyard Surveys 2010, 2005, Wines of Chile

The results

Chilean Sauvignon Blanc can offer fantastic value for money, said our panel, and discernible regional character. Casablanca was the unexpected star, amid an upbeat mood. Amy Wislocki reports

So, 64 out of 80 wines recommended to readers – a respectable performance by any measure, isn’t it? The tasters were certainly won over by many of these wines, emphasising their attractiveness as a category on the shelves. ‘At the very top end, I think New Zealand is still ahead of Chile, because the experience it has counts for so much,’ said Peter Richards MW, the Decanter World Wine Awards Regional Chair for Chile. ‘But the very best Chilean Sauvignon Blancs are fantastic wines that can more than hold their own in a global context. Chilean Sauvignon Blanc is fantastic value for money next to New Zealand, South Africa and the Loire, and that is its forte. There’s still some fine tuning to be done at the top end, but Chile should be right up there on a consumer’s radar for great-value Sauvignon Blanc, at all price ranges.’

Annette Scarfe agreed: ‘At the mid-range, Chilean Sauvignon Blanc is about as good as you can get. And the wines are offering elements of Loire style. I am so often disappointed by Sancerres and Pouilly-Fumés, but many wines here delivered a Loire elegance and flinty minerality – I’m sure at more attractive price points. They’re also incredibly food friendly, and are stylistically drier than many New Zealand wines.’

So no problem with residual sugar then?

There were no complaints. ‘A couple of wines lapsed into it, but generally the wines were very well balanced,’ judged Richards. ‘And a touch of residual sugar balanced with good acidity works well with many dishes – particularly fusion cuisine, seafood or dishes with chilli or coriander.’ Scarfe agreed that the sugar was ‘very well managed’, noting that where there was residual sugar, it often added something from a stylistic perspective.

A greater concern was the occurrence of faults in the samples tasted, particularly sulphur. ‘Many of the wines were under screwcap as you’d expect, but producers must work on getting the sulphur regime right because that was the main fault,’ observed Scarfe. Some wines did have excessive sulphur, agreed Juan Carlos Rincón, with others suffering from excess acidity.

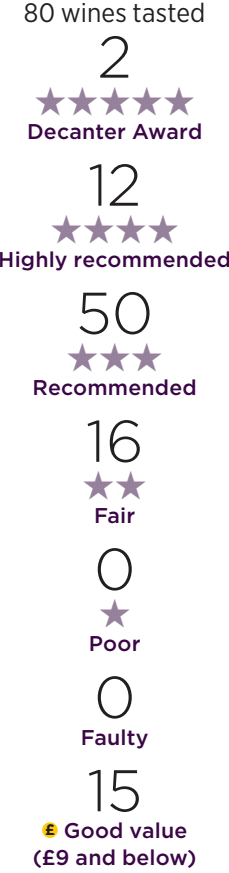
Most of the tasters also commented on reduction in some wines. ‘I wouldn’t want winemakers to take away the message that everything should be pristine, with zero reduction, as it can add complexity to a wine,’ said Mel Jones MW. ‘But there was an awful lot of it in this tasting.’



“Chilean Sauvignon Blanc is fantastic value for money – that is its forte”

Peter Richards MW

The scores



Richards agreed that it was a fine line: ‘Reduction is something that winemakers can play around with, and some was probably intentional. One person’s “reduced” is another person’s “added complexity”.’

And what about oak?

Well handled, was the general verdict. ‘I like oak with Sauvignon Blanc,’ said Jones. ‘It’s a very good marriage and the wines with a touch of it had another dimension.’ Richards would even like to see more of it. ‘Only a few wines are being made with ostensible oak, and I’d like to encourage more of that,’ he said. ‘In the early days, oak was overdone, but now we are seeing it used more sensitively – it doesn’t have to be overt.’

He applauded the experimentation going on in general with Sauvignon Blanc: ‘The winemakers have been very smart. To make complex Sauvignon Blanc you do need to play around with your winemaking, and we’re seeing a lot of that. Obviously it will all come down to good fruit quality, and there were lots of disappointing wines which had been manipulated a lot but lacked the fruit quality to start with. But if you get the site selection, viticultural management and harvest decisions right, wines with a bit of winemaking craft can sing in the glass aromatically, with wonderful texture, complexity and fruit on the palate. I feel very positive as I found many wines like this in the tasting.’

What about the regions? What was so great about the wines from Casablanca?

Casablanca was the clear winner, perhaps surprisingly. ‘Casablanca has been very variable in the past for me,’ confessed Richards. ‘There is a lot of high-yielding, questionable vine material there – a lot of wines that, to me, smelled and tasted like [the poorer quality] Sauvignonasse, though many producers deny it’s there. It gives muted, earthy, commercially driven wines – satisfactory but nothing out of the ordinary.’

‘But I saw much more ambition in this tasting, especially from the western part of Casablanca, and in the coastal hills – fantastic minerality and concentration coming from there. I also loved the more tangy, fresh styles that are more usually associated with the area. The success of San Antonio has led Casablanca producers to re-evaluate what they have planted, and where. And overall quality here has definitely improved as a result.’



“Many wines offer Loire elegance and minerality – at more attractive prices”

Annette Scarfe

The tasters

Mel Jones MW runs Quaffersoffers.co.uk, a website that details special offers in wine retailers

Juan Carlos Rincón is a broadcast journalist, presenter and wine judge

Annette Scarfe is a wine educator and consultant for restaurants in London, Hong Kong and Singapore

Peter Richards MW is the Decanter World Wine Awards Regional Chair for Chile

Rincón was also won over by Casablanca, declaring it his ‘top area’. ‘I agree with Peter [Richards] that the region was resting on its laurels, but there is definitely more experimentation now.’

And beyond Casablanca?

‘While Casablanca is upping its game, San Antonio has become more variable, with producers piling in there,’ said Richards. ‘The best wines show San Antonio’s unmistakable powerful character – it’s a very terroir-driven style: rich, ripe, spicy, broad-shouldered, food friendly and with quite high alcohol. But as more and more wine is made from here, quality and styles are becoming more varied.’

‘Aconcagua Costa, meanwhile, is really exciting – like all new coastal regions in Chile,’ continued Richards. ‘There is a great demand globally for that pure, tangy, tomato leaf and blackcurrant-scented Sauvignon style – reminiscent of Awatere in Marlborough. It will be interesting to see how that style develops as the vines here get older.’

Scarfe recommended that readers look to Leyda for a more mineral style, with Jones finding a ‘greater richness’ in wines from here. At the end of the day, though, many consumers will stick with Casablanca, afraid to experiment with wines from San Antonio or Leyda, predicted Rincón. Not a bad strategy on the evidence of this tasting.



“Sauvignon Blanc and oak marry well, and the wines with a touch of oak had another dimension”

Mel Jones MW

5 star wines Decanter Award 18.5–20pts



Santa Rita, Reserva, Casablanca Valley 2011 18.75 N/A UK www.santarita.com

Attractive aromatic nose of herbs, gooseberry, lemon and minerals. Complex, intense palate of blackcurrant leaf, gooseberry, lovely, crunchy herbal notes and a long, expressive length. Delightful, grippy and true to the variety. **Drink:** 2012. **Alcohol:** 13.5%



Casas del Bosque, Gran Reserva, Casablanca Valley 2011 18.5 N/A UK www.casasdelbosque.cl

Very rich, honeyed, heady, tropical nose with some roasted lemon and creamy notes. Well balanced and complex, multi-dimensional white. It is dense, minerally and layered with lots of facets to it and a long, intense flavour. Very successful. **Drink:** 2012. **Alc:** 13.5%

4 star wines Highly recommended 16.5–18.49pts



Valdivieso, Single Vineyard, Wild Fermented, Leyda Valley 2010 17.63 £13 Bibendum

Very strong aromas of oak, lemon, vanilla and roasted fennel. A seamless wine which has a lovely creamy, glossy texture and refreshing acidity. Oak adds body and texture. Long, vibrant and exciting. **Drink:** 2012. **Alc:** 13.5%



Casas del Bosque, Pequeñas Producciones, Casablanca Valley 2011 17.5 N/A UK www.casasdelbosque.cl

Inviting ripe aroma of lemon, tomato leaf, green beans, grapefruit and lemon. It has attractive sweet ‘n’ sour citrus notes and guava fruit backed by refreshing acidity. Compelling wine which is layered, dense and structured. Has been masterly crafted. **Drink:** 2012. **Alc:** 13.5%

ENTRY CRITERIA: Producers and UK agents were invited to submit samples of their latest-release, single-varietal Sauvignon Blancs from the regions of Casablanca, San Antonio, Leyda and Aconcagua Costa

4 star wines Highly recommended (continued) 16.5–18.49pts



Viña Casablanca, Nimbus, Casablanca Valley 2011 17.23
N/A UK www.casablancawinery.com
Intense bouquet of gooseberry, ripe tropical fruit and lemon. A gently zesty and balanced wine with plenty of tropical and elderflower fruit flavour and zingy acidity. Long, exciting, elegant and imposing. **Drink:** 2012. **Alc:** 14%



Quintay, Casablanca Valley 2011 17
N/A UK www.quintay.com
Very attractive aromas of pea pod, tangy nettle, nuts and roasted citrus fruit. Lovely, bright flavours of pea pod, blackcurrant leaf and nuts on a long length. A complex wine with a freshness and tartness that’s pretty exciting. **Drink:** 2012. **Alc:** 13%



Montes, Outer Limits, Zapallar, Aconcagua Costa 2011 16.88
£14 [Waples Wines](http://WaplesWines.com)
Green beans, pepper, lime, marine breeze and mineral bouquet. Has a touch of spritz with a strong green pepper and elegantly herbal flavour. Vibrant and tangy style with very good persistence. Appealing and inviting white. **Drink:** 2012. **Alc:** 13%

“Casablanca was resting on its laurels, but there is more experimentation now”
Juan Carlos Rincón



Casas del Bosque, Reserva, Casablanca Valley 2011 16.75
N/A UK www.casasdelbosque.cl
Subtle aromas of citrus, pea pod, nuts, minerals and limestone. Juicy and dense palate which is long and linear. It has a bright, pithy grapefruit character and a really lovely purity and harmony to it. Persistent and good. **Drink:** 2012. **Alc:** 13.5%



Viña Leyda, Single Vineyard Garuma, Leyda Valley 2011 16.75
£8.50–£10.95 [Great Western Wine](http://GreatWesternWine.com), [The Wine Society](http://TheWineSociety.com), [Denby Dale Wines](http://DenbyDaleWines.com), [Harper Wells](http://HarperWells.com), [South American Wines Online](http://SouthAmericanWinesOnline.com)
Restrained eucalyptus, forest, kiwi fruit, mineral, pea pod, citrus and grapefruit nose. Dense, spicy and layered with minerality and complexity. The fruit is dry, savoury and pithy. A unique style. Delicious. **Drink:** 2012. **Alc:** 13.5%



Santa Rita, Gran Hacienda Reserva, Casablanca Valley 2011 16.64
£10 [The Vineyard](http://TheVineyard.com), [Hailsham Cellars](http://HailshamCellars.com), [D Byrne & Co](http://DByrne&Co.com), [Berkmann Wine Cellars](http://BerkmannWineCellars.com)
Engaging aromas of minerals, tomato leaf, lemon zest. Good, tangy, moreish flavours of crunchy herb, juicy citrus, guava and watercress. It has nice bright acidity and a persistent Sauvignon flavour. Very good; as it should be. **Drink:** 2012. **Alc:** 13.5%



Casa Marin, Cipreses Vineyard, Lo Abarca, San Antonio Valley 2010 16.63
£21 [Harvey Nichols](http://HarveyNichols.com)
Very attractive creamy aroma of chalk, honey, roasted pepper and cabbage. It has herbal and vegetal notes mingling with lemon curd. Vigorous and compellingly complex white. **Drink:** 2012. **Alc:** 13.5%



Cono Sur, 20 Barrels, Limited Edition, Casablanca Valley 2011 16.5
£14.99 [Harrods](http://Harrods.com)
Intense nose of pea pod, honey, grapefruit, gooseberry and passion fruit. Super drinkable stuff which is round and refreshing with good weight, a smooth texture and moderate acidity. A rewardingly lovely and complex Sauvignon. **Drink:** 2012. **Alc:** 13%



Echeverria, Reserva, Casablanca Valley 2011 16.5
£10 [Hallgarten Druit](http://HallgartenDruit.com)
Bright bouquet of asparagus, pea pod, honey and minerals. Fairly sweet which makes it seem flabby. A bit overworked but nevertheless pretty, concentrated and rewarding. Simple but good. **Drink:** 2012. **Alc:** 13.5%



Matetic, Casablanca Valley 2011 16.5
£15 [Armit](http://Armit.com)
Ripe gooseberry, mineral, grapefruit, lemon and herb bouquet. A tart palate with ripe grapefruit, asparagus and gooseberry flavours and refreshing bright acidity. Integrated, complex, elegant and long. Good. **Drink:** 2012. **Alc:** 13.5%

“While Casablanca is upping its game, San Antonio has become more variable”

Peter Richards MW

3-STAR WINES Recommended 14.5–16.49pts

WINE	SCORE	TASTING NOTE	ALC	DRINK	PRICE	STOCKISTS
Caliterra, Tributo, Leyda Valley 2011	16.38	Sweet aromas of ripe melon, pine nuts, herbs and granadilla. Fresh, sweet, ripe melon and pithy fruit rounds out the palate.	13.5%	2012	£11	Les Caves du Patron , Leamington Wine Co , Eagle Wines , Partridges
Viña Casablanca, Cefiro, Casablanca Valley 2011	16.25	Inviting herb, lemon and mineral bouquet. Restrained green bean, mineral, flint and honeyed fruit is textured and long. Nice balance and intensity.	13.7%	2012	N/A UK	www.casablancawinery.com
Amaral, Leyda Valley 2011	16	Restrained gooseberry, tomato leaf, lime zest, sweat and mineral aroma. Mineral style with gooseberry fruit and sharp acidity. Dry, clean, elegant and linear.	14%	2012	N/A UK	www.amaralwines.cl
Casa Marin, Laurel Vineyard , Lo Abarca, San Antonio Valley 2010	16	Intense, rich nose of savoury and creamy pureed pea, mint, herb and guava. Heavy, ripe, tropical and intensely fruity with high residual sugar and acidity.	13.5%	2012	£18	Mentzendorff
Santa Rita, Medalla Real, Leyda Valley 2011	16	Chalk, herb, green pepper, mineral, passion fruit and vegetal aromas. Elegant Old World style with a lean minerality, good balance and tangy palate. Layered.	13.5%	2012	£11	www.santarita.com
Undurraga, Terroir Hunter Lo Abarca, San Antonio Valley, 2011	16	Aromas of green pepper, chalky white fruit, pear, mandarin and ripe apricot. Full-bodied, textured palate. Impressive harmony and concentration.	14%	2012	£12.99	Noel Young
Veramonte, Ritual , Casablanca Valley 2011	16	Inviting aromas of new oak, tangerine and vanilla. Oaky but balanced palate and it has an overall sense of sweetness. Lacks typicity but is very good.	13.5%	2012	N/A UK	www.veramonte.com
Santa Carolina, Ocean Side, San Antonio Valley 2011	15.88	Expressive nose of savoury with green pepper, mineral, and lemon. Refreshing, vibrant acidity surrounding sweet, fresh mineral fruit and a long length.	N/A	2012	N/A UK	www.santacarolina.cl
Veramonte, La Gloria, Casablanca Valley 2011	15.88	Chalky white stone fruit and floral perfume. Bright, sweet tropical and herbal fruit is backed by fresh acidity. It is gently tangy with a good length and aftertaste.	13.5%	2012	N/A UK	www.veramonte.com
Viña Chocalán, Malvilla, San Antonio Valley 2011	15.88	Expressive nose of pea pod, citrus, green pepper, mineral and lemon. Quite astringent and phenolic, it has bags of character and vibrancy and a long length.	13.5%	2012	£14.99	Liberty Wines
Arboleda, Aconcagua Costa, Aconcagua Costa 2010	15.75	Pea pod, herb, citrus, lemon and restrained, ripe melon bouquet. Correct, simple and fresh style with herb, jasmine tea and zesty notes. Good, yet could improve.	13.5%	2012	£12.50–£13	Highbury Vintners , Wood Wines , Hangingditch , Oxford Wine Co
Carmen, Gran Reserva, Leyda Valley 2011	15.75	Lemon, mineral, zest and green nose. Tart, clean and simple with a leaner, greener style. It has restrained minerality and citrus. A convivial wine.	13%	2012	£12.49	Hallgarten Druit
Concha y Toro, Casillero del Diablo, Casablanca Valley 2011	15.75	Attractive lemon peel, mineral, honey and green pepper nose. Dense, spicy, broad wine with zippy acidity. Impressive, if not the most elegant.	13%	2012	£8	Tesco.com
Montes, Limited Selection, Leyda Valley 2011	15.75	Restrained mineral, tropical fruit, mandarin, lemon and coriander nose. Crunchy, tangy style with fresh acidity and flinty minerality. Multi-dimensional and long.	13.5%	2012	£9	Sainsbury's
O Fournier, Alfa Centauri, Leyda Valley 2009	15.75	Prominent oak, tangerine, lemon meringue pie and vanilla bouquet. Round and spicy palate: creamy vanilla oak and fresh acidity supports the concentrated fruit.	14%	2012	£18.85–£19.95	Butlers Wine Cellar , Great Grog
Sainsbury's, Taste the Difference, Casablanca Valley 2011	15.75	Sweet confectioned nose of herbs, peach, apricot, citrus and blackcurrant leaf. Fresh mineral intensity and a long finish. Good acidity, long and easy-drinking.	13.5%	2012	£6	Sainsbury's
Viu Manent, Secret de Viu Manent, Casablanca Valley 2011	15.75	Herb, nettle, lime, green mango and passion fruit bouquet. Fresh acidity frames dense, juicy, herbal fruit. Well made, but not a style for everyone.	13.5%	2012	£10.99	Peckhams , The Wine Cellar , Davys , Halisham Cellars , Slurp
Tutunjian Wine Brands, Pacifico Sur Reserva, San Antonio Valley 2011	15.63	Elderflower, nettle, coriander, minerals and lemon zest bouquet. Light, easy and pleasant with a decent, crunchy fresh fruit flavour. Multi-dimensional.	13%	2012	£8.99	Barton Brownsdon & Sadler
Errázuriz, Single-Vineyard Sauvignon, Casablanca Valley 2011	15.5	Reductive nose which should lift with time. A pithy, zesty wine which is pretty, sweet and ripe. Long, fruity, grippy and fresh. Lovely stuff.	13.5%	2012	£9.99–£12	Majestic , Slurp
Santa Camila, Tierra Alta Sauvignon Reserva, Casablanca Valley 2011	15.5	Ripe grapefruit, new oak and vanilla. Elegant, sweet and tangy in a Bordeaux style. Has delicate use of oak to support high acidity and the ripe fruit.	13.5%	2012	£10	Peter Watts Wines
Berry Bros & Rudd, Casablanca Valley 2011	15.33	Light citrus, lychee, cherry, papaya and mineral nose. It has restrained, delicate citrus and blackcurrant flavours. Quite a simple, pleasant and direct wine.	13%	2012	£7.95	Berry Bros & Rudd
Concha y Toro, Terrunyo, Casablanca Valley 2009	15.33	Flint, mineral, graphite and earthy aromas. Zingy style with flavours of lemon sherbet, grapefruit and a touch of residual sugar. Fairly long. Attractive and fresh.	14%	2012	£13.99	widely available via UK agent Concha y Toro UK
Misiones de Rengo, Reserva, Casablanca Valley 2011	15.33	Rich, ripe plum, mineral, pepper, elderflower and floral aroma and palate. Loose-knit, tart and fresh style. Integrated with a persistent length.	13%	2012	N/A UK	www.misionesderengo.cl
Tarapacá, Gran Reserva, Leyda Valley 2011	15.33	Asparagus, apricot, lemon, minerals, pear, earth and nutty aroma. Full flavoured with structure and zesty acidity surrounding lemon rind and green apple fruit.	13.5%	2012	£12.99	Laithwaites
Anakena, Single Vineyard, Leyda Valley 2011	15.25	Minerals, spice, nuts and greengage bouquet. Simple but good with sweet 'n' sour greengage and citrus notes and a long zesty finish. Wakes you up!	13.7%	2012	£8–£8.50	Fountainhall Wines , Old Butcher's Wine Cellar , Shenfield Wines
Cono Sur, Reserva, Casablanca Valley 2011	15.25	Light citrus, pea, honey and herbal aroma. Attractive lemon and blackcurrant leaf palate. Agreeable wine – not the densest or the most complex but classic.	13%	2012	£9.99	Tesco Wine Club , Waitrose , Your Favourite Wines
William Cole, Alto Vuelo, Casablanca Valley 2011	15.25	Confectioned bouquet of pineapple, nettles and grassy herbal notes. A riper style with hints of banana. It is soft, juicy and loose-knit. Varietally correct.	12.5%	2012	£9	Coe Vintners
Los Vascos, Casablanca Valley 2011	15.13	Light aroma of lime, lemon sherbet and blackcurrant leaf. Delicate mineral, citrus and asparagus palate which is gently refreshing. Bright and long – pretty good.	13.5%	2012	£9.95–£10.95	Alouette , Avery's , Bon Coeur , Bucktrout , Laithwaites
Viña Leyda, Reserva, Leyda Valley 2011	15.13	Honey, lemon, fennel, pea pod, passion fruit and mineral nose. Fresh, round wine with a crunchy palate of lemon and minerals. Fragrant and lifted.	13.5%	2012	£7.95	Great Western Wine , Harper Wells , Stony Wine Emporium , South American Wines On Line
Cono Sur, Vision, Casablanca Valley 2011	15	Ripe fruit bouquet of gooseberry, passion fruit, green tea, herb and apple. Fresh attack, good acidity and juicy palate. Not as acidic as some; quite weighty.	13%	2012	£9.99	Mathew Clark
Emiliana, Novas, Gran Reserva, Casablanca Valley 2011	15	Sherbet, citrus, mandarin and green mango aroma. A leaner style with delicate citrus fruit and a vibrant character, yet a bit flabby at the end. Quite phenolic.	13%	2012	£9.99	Flagship Wines , D Byrne
Luis Felipe Edwards, Marea, Leyda Valley 2011	15	Inviting notes of green pepper, honey, grapefruit, fennel, nuts and gooseberry. Intriguing, compelling benchmark style. Starts sweet but ends quite savoury.	14%	2012	N/A UK	www.lfewines.com
O Fournier, Centauri, Leyda & Casablanca 2010	15	Engaging sweet citrus, tangerine and oak nose. Oak dominates the palate but it works, though the fruit lacks density and is missing some typicity. Different style.	12.5%	2012	£13.50–£14.50	Slurp , Great Horkesley Wine Centre
Quintay, Clava, Casablanca Valley 2011	15	Delicate aromas of dried herb, minerals and tropical fruit. Restrained style with a flinty, struck match note. Varietally correct and perfectly fine.	12.5%	2012	N/A UK	www.quintay.com
Amayna, Leyda Valley 2010	14.88	Very ripe nose of mango, stewed fruit, honey, chalk and lemon. Overripe apricot character with a hot, creamy, toffee finish. Succulent but lacks freshness.	14.5%	2012	£14	Cheers Wine Merchants , Wine Direct , Worth Brothers
De Martino, Single Vineyard, Parcela 5, Casablanca Valley 2010	14.88	Restrained vegetal aromas. A more herbal style with fresh acidity. The oak flavour is there but is not dominant. It is bright, elegant, fresh and long. Good.	13%	2012	N/A UK	www.demartino.cl
Luis Felipe Edwards, Family Selection, Gran Reserva, Leyda Valley 2011	14.88	Aromas of nuts, minerals, lemon, apple and passion fruit. Elegantly composed, mineral, herbal and lemon palate framed by moderate acidity. Appealing taste.	14%	2012	N/A UK	www.lfewines.com

Chilean Sauvignon Blanc

3-STAR WINES Recommended (continued)

WINE	SCORE	TASTING NOTE	ALC	DRINK	PRICE	STOCKISTS
Cono Sur, Organic, San Antonio Valley 2011	14.75	Ripe nose of pineapple, lemon, mineral, gooseberry, apple, earth, herb and pear. Easy drinking yet the flavours last and the acidity is crunchy. Nice but short.	13%	2012	£8.99	The Co-operative, Your Favourite Wines
Laroche, Punto Niño, Casablanca Valley 2011	14.75	Honey, mineral and citrus aromas - rather neutral. More restrained mineral style than most. Green vegetal notes dominate but sweet tropical fruit underpins.	13.5%	2012	£10	Liberty Wines
Morrisons, Casablanca Valley 2011	14.75	Pineapple, white currant, nettle and lychee nose. It has a sweet and sour profile, a soft texture and juicy, plump fruit. Easy drinking, light and fruity but a bit watery.	12%	2012	£6.30	Morrisons
Odfjell, Armador, Casablanca Valley 2011	14.75	Vegetal, minerals, citrus and herb nose. Juicy and succulent; smooth textured. It has lovely harmony, balance and structure. Good but a touch reduced.	13.5%	2012	£9.99	Cambridge Wine Merchants
Viña San Pedro, 1865 Single Vineyard, Leyda Valley 2011	14.75	Honey, peas, grapefruit and mineral nose. Sweet stone fruit on the attack yet it is a cool-climate style with nice typicity. Disjointed sweetness on the short finish.	13.5%	2012	N/A UK	www.sanpedro.cl
William Cole, Bill, Casablanca Valley 2010	14.75	Soap, cream, nuts, grapefruit and floral perfume. Nicely sharp and pleasant with fresh acidity, rose and grapefruit characters and a pithy finish. Unusual but good.	12.5%	2012	£22	Fine Wine Sellers
Anakena, Indo, San Antonio Valley 2011	14.63	Sweet nose of nettle, fennel, earth, mineral and pineapple. Round and balanced with decent herb, citrus and bubblegum tones and moderate acidity.	13.5%	2012	£7.50-£9	Majestic, Old Butcher's Wine Cellar, Shenfield Wines, Ye Olde Bottoms Up
Errazuriz, Estate, Aconcagua Costa 2011	14.63	Ripe, almost confected nose with mineral, nettle and green tea notes. Slightly sweaty palate with ripe melon and crunchy herb flavours. Lacks a little freshness.	13.5%	2012	£9.99	Waitrose, Majestic, Wine Rack, Peckhams, Partridges
Viña Mar, Reserva, Casablanca Valley 2011	14.63	Lime zest, pineapple and mineral nose. Tart, fresh and pleasant palate that is also creamy with flavours of baked lemon cheesecake and citrus sorbet.	14%	2012	£9	Corney & Barrow
Viña Ventisquero, Queulat, Gran Reserva, Casablanca Valley 2010	14.63	Tropical fruit, citrus, pea pod and gooseberry nose. Ripe tropical fruit with hints of minerals and a cloying finish. Weighty and full-flavoured. Good but simple.	13.5%	2012	£9.50-£11	widely available via UK agent PLB Group
Canepa, Finisimo, Casablanca Valley 2011	14.5	Minerals, green herbs and dusty green pepper aromas. Bright, mineral attack, refreshing acidity and restrained fleshy citrus notes.	13%	2012	£9.99	Naked Wines
Mont Gras, Reserva, San Antonio Valley 2011	14.5	Pea pod, herb, chalk, lemon, asparagus and grassy nose. A leafy, and bright wine with a nice tart taste. It has some typicity but needs more structure.	13.5%	2012	£9	Waitrose
Viña Mar, Reserva Especial, Casablanca Valley 2011	14.5	Restrained nose of herb, cream, asparagus and lemon. Fresh, simple wine with hints of bubblegum and asparagus. Has some pithy likeability, albeit a bit stodgy.	13.5%	2012	£9.99	Corney & Barrow

2-STAR WINES Fair 12.5-14.49

■ Carmen, Reserva, Casablanca Valley 2011 (14.38)
 ■ Chono, Reserva, Casablanca Valley 2011 (14.38)
 ■ Emiliana, Novas, Limited Selection, Casablanca Valley 2010 (14.25) ■ Indomita, Nostros Reserva, Casablanca Valley 2011 (14.25) ■ Viña San Pedro, Castillo de Molina, Casablanca Valley 2011 (14.25) ■ O Fournier, Urban, Leyda Valley 2011 (14) ■ Valdivieso, Reserva, Leyda Valley 2011 (14.13) ■ Errazuriz, Aconcagua Costa Single

Vineyard, Aconcagua Costa 2011 (14) ■ Santa Carolina, Reserva, Leyda Valley 2011 (14) ■ Los Boldos, Momentos, Casablanca Valley 2011 (13.88) ■ Mont Gras, de Gras Reserva, San Antonio Valley 2011 (13.75) ■ Loma Larga, Casablanca Valley 2010 (13.63) ■ Emiliana, Adobe, Casablanca Valley 2011 (13.38) ■ Terra Andina, Reserva, Leyda Valley 2010 (13.25) ■ Amayna, Barrel Fermented, Leyda Valley 2007 (13.17) ■ Viña Siegel, Crucero Reserva, Leyda Valley 2011 (12.63)

Next month's panel tastings:
 St-Emilion 1GCC & Médoc CC 2002
 and Chablis 1er cru 2010

For full UK stockist details, see p135

Expert summary: Peter Richards MW

Casablanca did submit more than half the wines for this tasting, but its raft of high-scoring wines – especially from 2011 – prove this once-ailing region is back to its best



Peter Richards MW is the Decanter World Wine Awards Regional Chair for Chile and author of *The Wines of Chile*, shortlisted for the André Simon Award

GIVEN THAT SAUVIGNON Blanc is the grape behind some of Chile's most exciting wines, it might be reasonable to expect better results. Overall, however, this was no train crash. Two Decanter Awards, 12 four stars and 50 recommendeds meant an approval rate of 80%.

It's also worth noting the context. This tasting was just for wines from Casablanca, San Antonio, Aconcagua Costa and Leyda – the heartland of modern, quality-driven Chilean Sauvignon. So no Limarí, no Elqui, no Huasco, no Maule, no Alto Cachapoal and no coastal Colchagua – areas starting to make some outstanding whites.

It's good to see Casablanca back on form. Inconsistency and dreary winemaking has dogged this coastal region but lately there's been a revival, spurred on by its big-hitting neighbour San Antonio. Both Awards, as well as eight four-star wines, came from Casablanca – a commendable result (though 44 of the 80 wines submitted came from here). It was also interesting to note that many of the best-performing Casablanca wines were sourced from the cool, hilly coastal west of the region, a real quality hotspot.

San Antonio (including Leyda) gave a decent if variable performance. There may be a danger that this trendy appellation is over-reaching itself, having had something of a gold rush in the past decade. Now everyone, it seems, has a San Antonio Sauvignon Blanc in their portfolio.

Aconcagua Costa was variable, as might be expected of an emerging appellation. But it was heartening to see Zapallar, one of the newest territories to be colonised by the vine in Chile, being given four stars (via Montes' Outer Limits). Sauvignon is a key variety in helping to expand the geographical frontiers of Chilean winemaking.

At producer level, Casas del Bosque was the headline act, with one Award and two highly recommended wines. Livewire Kiwi winemaker Grant Phelps has really come into his own at this coastal Casablanca winery, which benefits from some excellent hillside plantings, and he is to be commended on his masterly craftsmanship.

The 2011 vintage showed well, accounting for all but two of the four- and five-stars, though 2010 also gave sound results. In general, apart from specific styles (eg, successfully oak-aged) and high quality producers, older vintages of Chilean Sauvignon are still to be treated warily.

“It's good to see Casablanca back on form. Both Awards and eight four-star wines came from this coastal region”