

# Coastal Chilean Pinot Noir

Outward-looking producers, more sustainable vineyard practices and maturing vines have helped take Chile's Pinots to the next level, says Peter Richards MW

PINOT NOIR IS a barometer of Chile's aspirations and its shortcomings. For a country often touted as a viticultural paradise, the story of Pinot in Chile reveals a different reality – perhaps a more credible, gritty picture, in which ambition, failure, expectation and frustration all play a significant part.

Historic plantings were often designed with sparkling rather than still wine in mind. Plant material was often poor, with virused vines a common issue. Ill-conceived planting, questionable site selection, misguided farming practices and a tendency to over-stress vines have all impeded the country's progress with this fickle grape.

Vine age is accepted as one of the keys to making great Pinot, but Chile's vines have often been in the wrong place or grubbed up prematurely. What's more, Chileans are (stereotypically) naturally risk-averse and haven't had easy access to the world's best Pinots to drink. To be a great pioneer, taking risks is an essential part of the process, as is an insatiable thirst to drink the best wines, and to learn from the best practitioners.

Happily, this is now changing. Gangs of inquisitive Chileans are now often to be found roaming around Burgundy or New Zealand. Open a winemaker's suitcase and it will be packed with wines to take home and taste with colleagues.

Sustainability is fast becoming a watchword in Chilean wine-growing circles and viticulturists now have a far healthier and more informed approach to Pinot plantings than before. Chile has long needed its Pinot obsessives and now, finally, they're appearing: winemakers like Francisco Baettig (Errázuriz), Rodrigo Soto (Veramonte), Felipe García and Constanza Schwaderer (García Schwaderer), Adolfo Hurtado (Cono Sur) and Viviana Navarrete (Viña Leyda).

## Diversity of regions and styles

When planted, tended and vinified sensitively, Chile's Pinot is starting to show real quality, in a wide range of styles. The best Pinots from Casablanca and San Antonio/Leyda marry substance with grace. Elqui is often understated but with excellent structure. Aconcagua Costa has beautiful scent and tension, features that are common in a lighter style in the best wines from southerly territories like Malleco and Bío Bío. New regions continue to emerge – Paredones, Atacama and Osorno are some – meaning the Chilean Pinot picture is constantly becoming more nuanced.

There is more to come, too. Consider the startling fact that 80% of Chile's Pinot Noir vineyard is under 15 years old, and 65% of it is under 10 years old. There is a sense of a tipping point being reached, as maturing vines in propitious sites coincide with winemakers growing in expertise, experience and confidence. The growing tendency to harvest early, trust instincts and forgo the



Map: Maggie Nelson

## Coastal Chilean Pinot Noir: know your vintages

**2015** Warm and dry conditions gave effusive, engaging wines for early drinking.

**2014** Spring frosts sent yields plummeting, but the best wines are tense and aromatic.

**2013** Bright acidity, fresh fruit and moderate concentration are the results of this cool, late, rain-affected vintage.

**2012** Torrid heat didn't make life easy for winemakers but there are some good results. Drink up.

**2011** A long, dry season yielded some top-notch, well-defined Pinot Noirs.

**2010** The year of the great quake was cool and dry, making elegant wines.

simplistic remedies of high alcohol and new oak is starting to pay dividends in increasingly intricate, elegant wines.

Much hard work lies ahead, but Chile is starting to make Pinots to excite the most exacting of Pinot-ophile palates. The barometer looks to be set fair.

## Coastal Chilean Pinot: the facts

**Total Chilean vineyard area** 137,592 hectares  
**Pinot Noir** 4,196ha – just 3.01% of the total  
**Pinot Noir growth since 1999** 839ha – or 500%  
**Regional plantings**  
 Casablanca 999ha, San Antonio/Leyda 786ha, Bío Bío 481ha, Limarí 153ha, Aconcagua 132ha, Elqui 30ha, Malleco 19ha, Osorno 4.8ha  
 Sources SAG catastro 2014, Origo

*Peter Richards MW is the DWWA Regional Chair for Chile and author of Wines of Chile >*

# The results

A very impressive performance all round, said our tasters – a line-up of wines to truly excite Pinot lovers that showcased stylistic diversity. John Stimpfig reports

THE LAST TIME this august and experienced panel of experts assembled at *Decanter* HQ to taste Chilean Pinot Noir was in 2013. That tasting was something of a landmark, with all three praising its progression. So how would this line-up of cool climate, mostly coastal Pinot Noirs measure up?

Impressively, they were just as positive. In fact, if anything, they were even more enthusiastic this time around. As Patricio Tapia pointed out: 'Based on this tasting, a number of producers are successfully moving out of the experimental into a more mature phase.'

DWWA Regional Chair for Chile, Peter Richards MW endorsed this view: 'There's a solid platform now and, encouragingly, we are starting to see more confidence and risk-taking. In the past, we've had good wines – even some excellent wines. But they haven't been the kind of wines that really excite Pinot lovers. Today's wines are.'

For Dirceu Vianna Jr MW, all the key factors were slotting into place. 'Pinot is the ultimate challenge for winemakers. It has to have the right clones and rootstocks, be planted in the right place, harvested at the right time and then handled with care. This tasting shows how much more progress has been made. Moreover, we saw exciting diversity – in terms of styles and price points – which is new and very welcome.'

Most of the top wines were from Casablanca, which consistently performed extremely well. As Richards commented, 'Casablanca has been on an upward trajectory of late, and is in a very good place right now.' Next came Leyda, Limarí and San Antonio, which all did well, albeit with more variability. One disappointment was that there wasn't more representation from the south of Chile. 'I would have liked to have seen more examples from Bío Bío and Itata – and sadly there was only one entrant from Elqui in the north.'

The wines were taken mostly from the 2013, 2014 and 2015 vintages. The tasters noted that some 2013s seemed

**'Producers need to be patient. These very young vineyards will get even better in time'** Peter Richards

a bit evolved, but were not particularly worried by that. They felt that most were ageing well and gracefully. There was no standout vintage; it was more a case of different styles within each vintage.

Indeed this was the most exciting aspect of the tasting. 'We saw a panorama of richer, more exuberant wines to more restrained, mineral and fresh examples. Some were more New World, others more Burgundian,' commented Vianna Jr. 'Generally, we saw good purity of fruit. Happily what we didn't see today was that big, broad, oaky, alcoholic style. There were only a couple with too much oak or alcohol.' Besides those heavy-handed wines, there were also some technically faulty wines due to Brettanomyces or reduction. Generally though, winemaking standards were high.

So what do Chilean Pinot Noir producers need to get to the next level and bring out greater regional definition? Our panel had plenty of encouraging suggestions. 'Essentially, more of the same', said Vianna Jr. 'Chile needs to carry on refining the wines with even less oak and extraction and more reflection of the fruit by picking earlier. That will bring out the terroir.'

They also need to be patient, because the vines need to age further. 'Some two thirds of all Chilean Pinot vines are under 10 years old. These are very young vineyards which will get even better in time,' commented Richards.

While the best is yet to come, this shouldn't stop consumers from getting to know Chile's best Pinots sooner rather than later. According to Richards: 'We're starting to see the crest of the wave for Chilean Pinot. And it's a very exciting time to be buying it.'

## The scores

76 wines tasted

**Exceptional**

0

**Outstanding**

4

**Highly Recommended**

14

**Recommended**

41

**Commended**

14

**Fair**

3

**Poor**

0

**Faulty**

0

**Entry criteria: producers and UK agents were invited to submit their latest-release Pinot Noirs (maximum two per producer) from Bío Bío, Malleco, Aconcagua Costa, San Antonio, Casablanca, Leyda, Limarí, Paredones, Elqui and Atacama**

## Outstanding 95–97pts



### Chono, Pinot Noir, Casablanca 2013

*Decanter* average score: 95/100pts **Individual judges' scores:** Peter Richards MW 95 Patricio Tapia 95 Dirceu Vianna Jr MW 95

£11.95 Ellis Wines, Vin Cognito

Chono was founded by Alvaro Espinoza in 2004 and was later sold to Colchagua-based producer Sútil, in 2011. The wines focus on specific terroirs for each variety. Winemaker Oscar Salas has been making Pinot Noir for more than a decade, and prioritises gentle extraction and a bit of barrel ageing, 'to let the terroir shine but with a multi-faceted profile'. A lifted, pure and focused mid-weight style with fine tannins.

**Peter Richards MW** Elegant, with light baked herbs and leafy notes, plus dried and fresh red fruit. Fine abundant tannin and classy maturity. Very focused, pure and savoury. Accomplished and elegant in age, but perhaps needs some food. Love this!

**Patricio Tapia** Evolved, but still with lovely tannin structure and vibrant acidity. Very attractive and enjoyable indeed.

**Dirceu Vianna Junior MW** Showing its age – at its peak of drinking – but the bouquet is elegant, restrained and complex akin to an old world wine. Lovely tertiary notes and silky texture.

**Drink** 2016-2018 **Alc** 13.5%



### Echeverria, Gran Reserva, Casablanca 2013 95 PR 95 PT 95 DVJ 95

£11.49-£12.95 Hallgarten Druiett, Harrods

This Curicó-based winery is one of Chile's more traditional names in wine; the family boasts both Basque and French heritage. The house style of Roberto Echeverría and son Roberto Jr combines a typical Chilean intensity with an unashamedly old-school elegance and ageworthiness. This coastal Pinot, though sourced far from the winery, is evidence of an assured hand, showing great development and charm.

**PR** Some malty development overlaying the dried and juicy fresh fruit. A foodie style, in an elegant way. A developed Pinot Noir that needs drinking with food – beautiful stuff.

**PT** Even though this looks and feels evolved, the tension of tannins is still there, giving life, light and strength to this old-school Pinot. Try it!

**DVJ** What sophistication! Refined and elegant with inviting aromas of red fruits, wet earth and leather. Quite evolved for its age but beautifully complex with an amazingly satisfying texture. Dry, crisp, fresh and savoury. Drinking beautifully now.

**Drink** 2016-2018 **Alc** 13.5%



### De Martino, Legado Pinot Noir, Limarí 2015 95 PR 95 PT 95 DVJ 95

£14.99 Averys, Highbury Vintners, Les Caves de Pyrène

The De Martino family – and winemaker Marcelo Retamal – have been leading lights in the drive towards elegant, terroir-specific wines in Chile. They recently abandoned what they perceived as 'standardising' forces in winemaking – overripeness, overextraction, new oak, cultured yeast – and their wines are more refreshing, elegant and unique as a result. This nuanced Pinot adds to their achievements in Limarí.

**PR** Enjoyable, baked red fruit and roasted floral notes. There is a touch of pea pod to it and roasted pepper that is succulent and juicy. There is an energy and latent spice that is very appealing. Complex and moreish, luscious yet fine boned, and with food-friendly firm tannin. Ageworthy.

**PT** Really interesting layers of sweet red fruit combined with a fine, soft texture. A very pleasing wine! This is certainly ready now and would be fabulous with a rich, flavoursome venison stew.

**DVJ** On the palate this wine shows impressive purity of dark fruits and a hint of spice. Very good concentration, leading onto a pleasant, silky finish. Excellent overall structure with great tension.

**Drink** 2017-2022 **Alc** 13.5%



### Errázuriz, Pinot Noir, Aconcagua, Costa 2015 95 PR 96 PT 95 DVJ 95

£16.20 Brooksby Wines, Define Food & Wine, Edencroft Fine Wines, Hailsham

Cellars, Kingsgate Wines, Stone Vine & Sun, The Leamington Wine Co  
A few years ago, head winemaker Francisco Baettig instigated a five-year project that has led to dramatic changes in Errázuriz's Pinot Noirs, hiring Burgundian consultants, harvesting earlier and conducting exhaustive research into the terroir of its Aconcagua Costa property. The results are plain to taste in the precision, elegance and ageworthiness of the Pinots since 2013.

**PR** Subtle red fruits with hints of earth and wild herbs. Very accomplished and classy indeed. A succulent wine with latent spice and energy. There is real focus and drive, making it ageworthy.

**PT** A lovely Pinot, this is light, refreshing and at the same time tense and with very polished tannins. Wonderful now, and it will age with grace.

**DVJ** Grace and elegance define the aromatics on this Pinot: forest fruits, spices and dark chocolate. It is truly round, smooth and deliciously creamy. Well made!

**Drink** 2017-2027 **Alc** 13.5% ➤

## The judges

### Peter Richards MW



*Richards is the DWWA Regional Chair for Chile and has published Wines of Chile and his own Chile Wine Brief. He is a guest presenter on BBC1's Saturday Kitchen and, together*

*with his wife Susie Barrie MW, runs a wine school and wine festival in Winchester.*

### Patricio Tapia



*Tapia is the DWWA Regional Chair for Argentina. He is the South American wine critic for Wine & Spirits, and also writes the annual Descorchados bilingual wine guide to*

*Argentinian, Chilean and Uruguayan wine.*

### Dirceu Vianna Jr MW



*Originally from Brazil, Vianna Jr (known as Junior) joined the wine trade in 1990 after moving to London. In 2008, he became the first South American male Master of Wine and is wine*

*director for Enotria & Coe in the UK. He is also a wine educator, consultant, writer and judge, as well as a broadcaster in South America.*

## Highly Recommended 90-94pts



**Montsecano, Refugio Pinot Noir, Casablanca 2014** 93 PR 94 PT 93 DVJ 93

£19.95 Fields Morris & Verdin, Highbury Vintners, Selfridges

Leaping aromatics! Amazing intensity and concentration of red fruits, fine herbs, wet earth, leather and pea pods. Engaging rustic wild abandon. Fab! **Drink** 2016-2018 **Alc** 14%



**Viña Tamaya, Reserva, Limari 2015** 93 PR 94 PT 94 DVJ 92

£10.99 Fine Wines Direct

Aromas are a little restrained, but this has juicy red fruit acidity, baked plum and redcurrant notes and slight earthy and mineral hints. A sturdy wine that is also light and delightful with great cogency and refreshment value. **Drink** 2017-2020 **Alc** 12%



**Undurraga, TH Pinot Noir, San Antonio, Leyda 2013** 92 PR 95 PT 90 DVJ 90

£12.50-£18.99 Eurowines, H2Vin, Ocado, The Wine Society, Vinea

Malty, tamed tertiary aromas: leather, earth and tar. Contained palate rich in spice, herbs and wild red fruit. Fresh and complex in an old-school style. **Drink** 2016-2020 **Alc** 13.5%



**Viña Arboleda, Pinot Noir, Aconcagua, Costa 2015** 92 PR 94 PT 91 DVJ 90

£17 Hatch Mansfield

Dark baked fruits, tar and earth nose flowing onto a juicy, gently bittersweet palate. Spicy notes balanced out by the thick layer of red fruit. A lovely wine with juicy acidity and fine tannins. **Drink** 2016-2021 **Alc** 13.5%

*'Pinot Noir is the ultimate challenge for winemakers. This tasting shows how much progress has been made'*

Dirceu Vianna Junior MW



**Bodega Volcanes de Chile, Tectonia, Bio Bio 2014** 91 PR 90 PT 92 DVJ 90

£14.99 Stone Vine & Sun, The Theatre of Wine

Ripe, rich cherry and redcurrant flavours, generous and complex spice. The wine feels fresh and crunchy with a grippy, tangy style that seems quite young. A powerful style of Pinot Noir. **Drink** 2016-2019 **Alc** 13.5%



**Luis Felipe Edwards, Gran Reserva, San Antonio, Leyda 2014** 91 PR 94 PT 92 DVJ 88

£9.52 GP Brands

Intriguing, smoky, wild herb and berry fruit aromas. The palate is a little angular but still with deep, elegant fruit. This has the graceful stance of a grown-up Pinot, but with grip from the young tannins. **Drink** 2016-2020 **Alc** 13.5%



**San Pedro, 1865 Single Vineyard Pinot Noir, Elqui 2015** 91 PR 94 PT 90 DVJ 90

N/A UK [www.sanpedro.cl](http://www.sanpedro.cl)

A piercing, engaging Pinot with aromas of coffee, spices and strawberry jam. The palate is also leafy and herby with creamy spice. Wild, with density and an appealing sweet-and-sour character. **Drink** 2016-2018 **Alc** 14%



**Viña Mar, Pinot Noir Reserva, Casablanca 2014** 91 PR 90 PT 91 DVJ 93

£10.95 Corney & Barrow

Tense and tight with lovely aromas of flowers, wet earth and sweet spices. Quite Old World in style, there is good concentration and energy here on the back of the savoury notes. A great food wine. **Drink** 2016-2018 **Alc** 14%



**Viña Ventisquero, Tara Red Wine 1, Atacama 2014** 91 PR 90 PT 92 DVJ 90

£39 Hedonism, The Wine Treasury

A clean, youthful and elegant wine with very pure red fruits. The palate is a little lean but it is aiming to be a lighter style and it has pleasant brambly fruit and slightly creamy, toffee notes. **Drink** 2016-2018 **Alc** 12.5%



**Viu Manent, Secret Pinot Noir, Casablanca 2013** 91 PR 92 PT 90 DVJ 90

£14.99 Bon Coeur Fine Wines, Stonewines

This seems quite evolved with distinct notes of leather, tobacco and wet earth backed by dried fruit and bittersweet plums; an intriguing wine that flows onto a silky finish. Drinking well now but would be interesting with some bottle age. **Drink** 2016-2019 **Alc** 13.5%



**Bisquitrt, La Joya Gran Reserva Pinot Noir, San Antonio, Leyda 2014** 90 PR 94 PT 90 DVJ 86

POA Molson Coors

The aromas are youthful and vibrant with a distinct resinous note. Bergamot and leafy tones are underscored by lively acidity. Orange blossom and spices layer over the top. Perhaps a little reclusive, but this certainly grows on you. **Drink** 2017-2021 **Alc** 14% ➤

## Highly Recommended (continued) 90–94pts



**Cono Sur 20 Barrels Pinot Noir, Casablanca 2014** 90 PR 92 PT 88 DVJ 91

£18.95 Concha y Toro UK, Harrods, Morrison's, Tesco, The Drinkshop, Waitrose

Smoky, charred notes intermingle with ripe cherries, plums and sweet spices. Strawberry, blackberry and gooseberry flavours with a silky texture and tannins that feel tight, adding grip and length. **Drink** 2016-2020 **Alc** 13.5%



**Cono Sur, Ocio, Casablanca 2013** 90 PR 93 PT 89 DVJ 89

£35-£39.95 Concha y Toro UK, Harrods, Slurp, The Wine Society, Wine Rack

Forward and expressive cherries, blackberries and delicate spice. Plush and modern but not over the top, it is harmonious and imposing on the palate with its voluptuous tannins and huge charge of fruit. **Drink** 2016-2022 **Alc** 14%



**Emiliana, Novas Gran Reserva, Casablanca 2015** 90 PR 91 PT 89 DVJ 90

£9.99-£10.99 Highbury Vintners, The Wine Factor, Welch & Co, Winearray

Shy, elegant nose of pure dark cherry fruit and ripe plums. The palate is peppery, earthy and gently bittersweet. Cloves and cinnamon coming through the tense structure. **Drink** 2016-2017 **Alc** 13.5%

## Recommended 86–89pts

Wine	Score	PR	PT	DVJ	Tasting note	Alc	Drink	Price	Stockists
Casas del Bosque, Gran Reserva Pinot Noir, Casablanca 2014	89	89	88	90	Very alluring notes of dark fruit, mint chocolate and spices that are brooding, woody and slightly animal. Interesting savoury cultured elements.	15%	2016-2018	£14.29	widely available
Concha y Toro, Marques de Casa Concha Pinot Noir, Limari 2014	89	92	88	87	Despite three years in bottle, this still feels fresh and rich in sweet spices. Drinking well now, with complex herbal and floral notes.	14%	2016-2019	N/A UK	www.conchaytoro.com
Lapostolle, Cuvée Alexandre Pinot Noir, Casablanca 2014	89	88	90	90	Gently fragrant and complex; the oak feels dominant but give it some air and you will see how the red fruits and leather hints unfold.	13.5%	2016-2017	£19.99	Berkmann, Hailsham Cellars
Luis Felipe Edwards, Marca, San Antonio, Leyda 2013	89	91	88	87	Pronounced aromas of dark fruits, earth and leather that are beguiling and complex. This is creamy, leafy and a resinous with malty development too.	14%	2016-2022	£14.99	Ministry of Drinks
Pacifico Sur, Reserva Pinot Noir, San Antonio 2014	89	90	90	87	A lovely expression of San Antonio Pinot; a little closed on the nose, but a really juicy, grippy palate of mint and dark cherry with earth and mushrooms.	14%	2016-2018	£8.30	Bacchanalia, Corks Out, D'Arcy Wine, Fullers Farm, Grape & Grain, Moorwine, North Coast Wine, Rodney Fletcher, Turton Wines
Santa Carolina, Reserva, San Antonio, Leyda 2015	89	87	90	89	Buckets of forest fruits with dried herbs and spice, giving smoky, leafy notes. A touch of ginger flows underneath the strawberry and blackberry fruit.	13.5%	2016-2018	£9.99	Ocado
Undurraga, Trama, San Antonio 2013	89	88	87	91	An evolved, restrained nose with subtle earthy red fruits, wild herbs and sweet spices. A wonderful silky texture on the palate with hints of mocha.	13.5%	2016-2018	POA	Eurowines
Casa Silva, Cool Coast, Paredones 2014	88	86	88	89	Evocative summer fruits on the nose, with slightly meaty, leafy hints. Perhaps a little angular, but it is succulent with voluptuous tannins.	14%	2016-2018	£15	Addison Wines, Andrew Darwin, Field & Fawcett, Peter Graham, Portland Wines, Whitmore & White
Casa Silva, Reserva, Paredones 2015	88	87	92	85	Candied, pale red fruits and leafy hints on the nose. Light in body with assertive spicy notes that are rich but balanced in sweetness.	14%	2016-2018	£11	Addison Wines, De Burgh Fine Wines, George Hill, Palmers, Satchells, Staintons, Wine Tasting Co, Winos
Loma Larga, Lomas del Valle Pinot Noir, Casablanca 2015	88	85	90	88	Dark cherry, nettle and dried herb aromatics flow onto a dry, black pepper palate. A little spiky somehow, but with a beautiful layer of bright fruit.	13.5%	2016-2017	£11.96	Berry Bros & Rudd
Maycas del Limarí, San Julian, Limarí 2014	88	89	87	89	Well-defined aromas of forest fruits, chocolate and exotic spices, which are slightly dominated by smoky oak but evened out by fresh acidity.	13.5%	2017-2021	£22	Bibendum PLB, The Wine Society
Maycas del Limarí, Sumaq Reserva Pinot Noir, Limarí 2015	88	89	89	87	Youthful and attractive with crunchy red fruits, blueberries and baked herbs. The moderate alcohol feels quite weighty but its an easy-to-drink style.	13.5%	2016-2019	£9	Bibendum PLB
Montes, Outer Limits, Aconcagua, Zapallar 2014	88	87	89	87	Juicy dark fruits are underpinned by malty, Marmite-like aromas. Lots of lovely spice on the palate, if not a little warm, complemented by fresh acidity.	14.5%	2016-2019	£19.99	Hay Wines, Liberty Wines, SH Jones, The Secret Cellar
Valdivieso, Single Vineyard Pinot Noir, San Antonio, Leyda 2013	88	87	87	90	A tamed, elegant Pinot that is a little hot and prickly but packs in ripe, imposing red berry fruit and floral aromas and flavours	14%	2016-2019	£9.99	Bibendum PLB
Viña Chocalan, Vitrum Pinot Noir, San Antonio 2014	88	87	92	86	Smoky, dark fruits with a lightly saline edge, plus earthy mushroom notes and a hint of animal undertones. Gently bittersweet with a bright, fresh finish.	14.5%	2016-2017	£17.99	D&V Wines
Viña Leyda, Reserva Pinot Noir, San Antonio, Leyda 2015	88	86	90	88	This is quite a heady Pinot – high toned and velvety with ripe plum and summer fruits on top of subtle earth and spice.	14.5%	2016-2017	£10-£12	Carruthers & Kent, Enotria & Coe, Vin Cognito
Vistamar, Sepia Reserva Pinot Noir, Casablanca 2015	88	94	85	86	A herbal, vegetal style of Pinot that is lively and expressive, with engaging aromas of ginger. Lean and crunchy palate and a nip of tannin.	12.5%	2016-2021	£8.99	Kingsland Wine
Apaltagua, Colección Pinot Noir, San Antonio 2013	87	87	83	90	Smoky tobacco notes and tertiary aromas on top of dried fruit flavours, enveloped in a well-knit texture. A little hot and spicy on the finish.	14.5%	2016-2018	£13.82	Anthony Byrne
Carmen, Reserva, San Antonio, Leyda 2015	87	84	88	88	A seductive and classy, commercial style of Pinot, spilling with raspberries, cherries and plums in harmony with spice and pressed herbs.	13.5%	2016-2018	£9.49	Hallgarten Druitt, Vin Cognito

Recommended (continued) 86–89pts

Wine	Score	PR	PT	DVJ	Tasting note	Alc	Drink	Price	Stockists
Casa Marin, Litoral Vineyard Pinot Noir, San Antonio 2013	87	87	85	89	Slightly reductive with bitter herb and curry-leaf notes intermingling with juicy red fruits. Somewhat worked, but a nice bittersweet element.	14.5%	2016-2018	£19.90	Alliance Wine, Carruthers & Kent
Casas del Bosque, Reserva Pinot Noir, Casablanca 2015	87	88	87	87	Great ripeness of fruit, with expressive chocolate and leafy aromas. The palate is a little loose knit, but the sweet fruit and spice are rewarding.	14.5%	2016-2018	£11.99	widely available
Garcés Silva, Boya Pinot Noir, San Antonio, Leyda 2013	87	90	83	89	Interesting and understated lifted aromas of forest fruit and a hint of wet earth and leather. Restrained, but exudes elegance and finishes smooth.	13%	2016-2019	£10.99	Camber Wines, General Wine Co
Matetic Vineyards, EQ, Casablanca 2014	87	89	86	86	Flavours of blackberry jam: an easy-to-drink style that is floral, tangy and super-ripe, making it alluring and engaging.	14%	2016-2018	£20	Armit Wines
Miguel Torres, Santa Digna Pinot Noir, Casablanca 2013	87	85	86	89	A textbook Pinot showing excellent varietal character. Modern and fruit forward with eucalyptus, sweet spice and ripe fruit but slightly drying tannins.	13.5%	2016-2017	£10.99	Fells, Italian Continental Stores, Mitchells Wine Merchants, Penistone Wine Cellars, Portland Wine Co
Montes, Alpha Pinot Noir, Aconcagua 2015	87	84	89	88	Ripe and exuberant, it has an opulent and creamy texture but perhaps lacks a bit of thrill. A firm net of tannins and a smooth persistent finish.	14%	2016-2017	£12.99	Hay Wines, In Vino Veritas, Luvians Bottle Shop, Valhalla's Goat, Whole Foods Market
Santa Carolina, Reserva Familia, San Antonio, Leyda 2014	87	87	85	89	Showing restrained notes of chocolate and sweet spices, with candied red fruit and cream flavours. A little short but simple and enjoyable.	14%	2016-2018	£15.99	Ehrmanns Wine
Tierra Alta, Reserva Especial, Casablanca 2013	87	90	84	87	The fruit flavours seem too evolved but there is a good layer of tannins to support that, with pressed herbs and toasty hints.	13.5%	2016-2018	£15	Peter Watts
Ventolera, Pinot Noir, San Antonio, Leyda 2014	87	88	85	87	Some cooked flavours with a lot of creamy vanilla and spiced oak. Could do with some more fruit but the savoury notes are appealing.	13.5%	2017-2020	£22.49	Bedales
William Cole, Mirador Selection, Casablanca 2015	87	88	90	83	Slightly tense and nervous tannin structure, but there's clove and bright red fruit on the palate, though maybe a little stewed.	14%	2016-2018	£9.49	Broadland Wineries
Aromo, Winemaker's Selection, Casablanca 2014	86	84	87	86	A distinct 'dusty old church' character to this Pinot - trying to be Old World - along with crisp and savoury notes plus dense and ripe fruit undertones.	13.5%	2016-2017	£8.65	Winedown
Carmen, Gran Reserva, San Antonio, Leyda 2015	86	86	86	86	Aromas evocative of mint chocolate chip: a tight, tense Pinot but with dense ripe dark fruit that is complemented by spicy notes.	14%	2016-2018	N/A UK	www.carmen.com
Chilcas, Chilcas Single Vineyard, Casablanca 2014	86	85	92	80	Quite unusual aromas of blue cheese, leaves and earth with bright red fruit coming through and a texture that is radiant and tight.	13.5%	2016	N/A UK	www.chilcaswines.com
Co-operative, Truly Irresistable 30° Pinot Noir, Casablanca 2015	86	86	84	87	Overly evolved for such a young vintage, but it is filled with spices, malty notes and crunchy yet ripe black fruit.	14%	2016-2017	£7.99	Co-op
Matetic Vineyards, Corralillo, San Antonio 2015	86	84	90	84	A vibrant version of Pinot Noir, though the dark berry fruits are a little stewed underneath the crunchy acidity and nerve.	14%	2016-2017	£16	Armit Wines
Montsecano, Pinot Noir, Casablanca 2012	86	89	83	85	Slightly restrained animal aromas with a sappy hint. The alcohol is a little exposed but the wine is engaging in its own wild, rustic style.	13.5%	2016-2017	£28.50	Berry Bros & Rudd
Morande, Gran Reserva Pinot Noir, Casablanca 2015	86	85	91	82	Strawberry and blackberry fruits underneath leafy, smoky ash notes that are a little chewy. This wine is ready for some beef carpaccio.	14%	2016-2017	£10.99	Barwell & Jones
Morrison's, Specially Selected Pinot Noir, Casablanca 2015	86	85	87	85	Creamy baked fruits swirl around the glass which fades to toffee flavours and a touch of resin. Very ripe, and a bit overdeveloped for a 2015.	14%	2016-2018	£7.99	Morrison's
Santa Ema, Aila Pinot Noir, San Antonio, Leyda 2014	86	85	87	86	Dark chocolate and spice envelope the nose, leading onto treacly, ripe dark fruit and sappy notes which finish slightly short.	13.5%	2016-2018	N/A UK	www.santaema.cl
Santa Macarena, Winemaker's Selection, Aconcagua 2015	86	82	88	88	A gentle Pinot: fragrant baked cherries, raspberries and rich notes of cloves and cinnamon. Could do with more acidity to balance out the sweetness.	14%	2016	£9.95	Alliance, Grape & Grain, Market Row Wine
Viña Casablanca, Nimbus, Casablanca 2013	86	86	84	88	A little loose but still a nicely made Pinot with ripe cherry and flecks of soured cream. The end needs bringing together, but an easy-drinking style.	13.5%	2016-2017	POA	The General Wine Co
Vinedos Terranoble, Vineyard Selection, Casablanca 2013	86	85	90	84	From a cool vintage in Casablanca, this feels tight and tense, with smoky, resinous sappy hints.	13.5%	2016-2017	£9.99	General Wine Co, Pimlico Dozen, Whitebridge Wines

Commended 83-85pts

■ **Apaltagua, Reserva Pinot Noir, San Antonio 2015** 85, 13.5%, 2016-2017, £10.79 Anthony Byrne ■ **Casa Marin, Lo Abarca Hills Vineyard Pinot Noir, San Antonio 2011** 85, 13.5%, 2016-2017, £34.90 Alliance Wine ■ **Garcés Silva, Amayna Pinot Noir, San Antonio, Leyda 2012** 85, 14.5%, 2016-2017, £22 General Wine Co, Soho Wine Supply ■ **Loma Larga, Pinot Noir, Casablanca 2015** 85, 14.5%, 2016, £16.95 Berry Bros. & Rudd ■ **Longavi, Pinot Noir, San Antonio, Leyda 2014** 85, 13.5%, 2016-2017, £17.95 Bancroft Wines, The Art of Wine ■ **Santa Rita, Secret Reserve, San Antonio, Leyda 2015** 85, 14%, 2016-2017, N/A UK www.santarita.com ■ **Vina Casablanca, Cefiro Reserva, Casablanca 2015** 85, 14%, 2016-2017, £8.99 (2014) James Nicholson ■ **Viña Leyda, Las Brisas Single**

**Vineyard Pinot Noir, San Antonio, Leyda 2014** 85, 14%, 2016-2018, £17-£19 Carruthers & Kent, Enotria & Coe, Vin Cognito ■ **Viña Ventisquero, Heru, Casablanca 2014** 85, 13.5%, 2016, £20-£25 Bibendum PLB, Fine Wine Co, Great Horkeley, Richard Granger, The Wine Centre ■ **William Cole, Bill Limited Edition, Casablanca 2015** 85, 14%, 2016, £17 Broadland Wineries ■ **Santa Ema, Reserva Pinot Noir, San Antonio, Leyda 2014** 84, 13.5%, 2016-2017, £9.99 Inverarity Morton ■ **Santa Rita, Gran Reserva Pinot Noir, San Antonio, Leyda 2013** 84, 14.5%, 2016-2018, N/A UK www.santarita.com ■ **Tabalí, Reserva Especial Pinot Noir, Limari 2013** 84, 2016-2017, 13.5%, £10.99-£11.99 Caviste, Peter Graham, The Wine Cellar ■ **Siegel, Special Reserve Pinot Noir, San Antonio, Leyda 2015** 83, 14%, 2016-2017, £9.99 Carson Wines

Fair 76-82pts

■ **Errazuriz, Estate Series Pinot Noir, Aconcagua, Costa 2015** 79 ■ **Tabalí, Talinay Pinot Noir, Limari 2013** 76

Poor 70-75pts

■ **Vinedos Terranoble, Reserva El Algarrobo, Casablanca 2013** 75

For full UK stockist details, see p127

Next month's panel tastings  
Chambolle-Musigny & South African Chenin Blanc

My top three

Peter Richards MW

■ **Errázuriz, Pinot Noir, Aconcagua Costa 2015** Errázuriz is in the front rank of the Chilean Pinot charge. Winemaker Francisco Baettig and team are dutifully studying the terroir of this coastal estate, aiming to make world-class Pinot. They are succeeding. **96 Drink** 2017-2027

■ **Undurraga, TH Pinot Noir, San Antonio, Leyda 2013** Rafael Urrejola made his name crafting elegant Pinots at Viña Leyda. Now he works his magic at Maipo stalwart Undurraga and the TH (Terroir Hunter) line is his calling card. This elegant, self-assured wine sees him revisiting his old stomping ground to brilliant effect. **95 Drink** 2016-2020

■ **Montsecano, Refugio Pinot Noir, Casablanca 2014** Not my top mark but it merits singling out for its joyful, vivid expression. Slightly rustic - not one to keep long - but André Ostertag and Julio Donoso manage to imbue their Pinot with a vigour, uniqueness and abandon. **94 Drink** 2016-2018

My top three

Patrico Tapia

■ **Errázuriz, Pinot Noir, Aconcagua Costa 2015** On schist soils close to the Pacific Ocean, Francisco Baettig crafts refined and refreshing Pinots like this light yet firm example filled with red fruit and spices. Try it now or save it for a couple of years. **95 Drink** 2017-2027

■ **Viña Tamaya, Reserva, Limarí 2015** The chalky soils of Limarí Valley, up in the north of Chile and towards the Pacific Ocean, tend to give tight and austere Pinot, but also brilliant and shiny examples. **94 Drink** 2017-2020

■ **Montsecano, Refugio Pinot Noir, Casablanca 2014** From the town of Las Dichas, the biodynamic project of former top model photographer Julio Donoso has consistently made terroir-driven Pinot like this creamy, round and earthy red, rich in acidity and tight, firm tannins. **93 Drink** 2016-2018

NB: the tasters' top wines are not necessarily their top-scoring, rather those which, on learning the wines' identity, they feel are the most notable given their provenance, price or other factors

Expert summary: Peter Richards MW

Consistency and value in Chilean Pinot Noir is as strong as ever, but the real excitement is the broad regional diversity from the far north to the deep south



Peter Richards MW is the DWWA Regional Chair for Chile and author of Wines of Chile

DECANTER'S LAST CHILEAN Pinot Noir panel tasting (in 2013) yielded just one Outstanding wine and a judges' verdict that more wines were needed to populate 'the pulse-quickening realms of the upper result echelons'. Gratifyingly, that is exactly what happened here - proof that Chile has moved up a gear in its Pinot performance.

Over the years, Chilean Pinot Noir has won many fans for its consistency and value for money. On the evidence of this tasting, these attributes are more solid than ever. Almost 78% of the wines were ranked 86 and above, while the average price of the four Outstanding wines is £13.50! Wines priced over £20 were rare.

And yet, for all Chile's laudable consistency and value, that's not why wine lovers prize Pinot Noir above almost all other varieties. Great Pinot inflames the passions, runs riot with your senses and appeals to the heart, not the head - and to hell with the price. Given the intense and varied nature of the panel's discussions, Chile is now starting to deliver on its long-stated potential for world-class Pinot. It's a bonus that most of these wines remain at remarkably accessible prices, so throwing caution to the wind won't hit you too hard in the pocket. This may change in the future.

There was notable diversity among the top results.

Casablanca and San Antonio accounted (in roughly equal measure) for more than three quarters of all the wines tasted. Yet the likes of Aconcagua Costa, Limarí, Elqui, Atacama and Bio Bio also featured among the gongs. While it was a shame not to see more wines from the deep south represented, it was heartening that the coastal north put in a strong performance. The future of Chilean fine wine, Pinot particularly, is looking like a diverse panoply rather than a monochrome slate. Marketers will tell you this is a confusing message. Nevertheless, Chile needs to focus on what it does best in each site within its gloriously chaotic geography. Good Pinot will always find a market - especially when it's not overpriced. Diversity here was most welcome.

This tasting marks yet another milestone in the rapid evolution in Chilean Pinot. Good producers seem to be maintaining standards across vintages and the best wines show clear capacity to age and develop. **D**

*'Chile is now starting to deliver on its long-stated potential for world-class Pinot'*