

# Top 30 Chilean wines under £25

The Chilean wine scene is buzzing with innovation and development, but it can be hard to know where to look to find the best examples of what's new and exciting. Peter Richards MW has his finger on the pulse, here highlighting 30 of the best-value whites and reds on UK shelves today

COGNITIVE DISSONANCE IS defined as an uncomfortable mental state resulting from conflicting cognitions (notions, beliefs, thoughts). It's usually resolved, Collins cheerfully informs us, 'by changing some of the cognitions'.

Chile is a victim of cognitive dissonance. The entrenched perception of Chile is of a country providing keenly priced, reliably decent, consistent wine at the value end of the spectrum. The dissonance (and resulting unease) comes when looking beyond these narrow parameters into the realms of more challenging, esoteric, offbeat – dare I say it, fine – Chilean wine styles, which are increasingly abundant and visible, especially to those who visit the country regularly or taste widely. But it's interesting how often people seem to find this problematic, and simply revert to the former perception. Cognitive dissonance resolved.

The outstanding Andrew Jefford touched on this in a recent *Decanter* column when he criticised Chilean wine for having a repetitious 'Chilean cast', which he says mutes regional and stylistic diversity.

This struck me as odd. But then, I'd just returned from one of my regular trips to Chile, tasting hundreds of wines from all kinds of producers across the country, from traditional to modern, in heartlands to hinterlands. While perhaps absolute quality can still be defined as a work in progress, diversity was evident in abundance. Highlights included flor-aged Riesling grown at breathless Andean altitude, white País for which the vines grow wild up trees, amphora-aged Mourvedre and a fortified, barrel-aged Cabernet-Merlot-Syrah blend. Sameness was the last thought in my mind.

The problem for Chile lies in quantity, not just quality. Not enough of these wines are

finding their way out of the country and into prime markets – maybe just enough to challenge preconceptions, but not enough to change entrenched cognitions. Jefford, for example, was explicitly relating his comments to what he had tasted at the Decanter World Wine Awards. That's one prism. Another, bigger prism is your local (or national) market. The issue here is market gatekeepers.

Researching this piece, it became clear that the excitement and diversity evident on the ground in Chile simply isn't being well reflected or represented in mainstream channels in a major market like the UK.

My brief was to find high-street Chilean wines I'd recommend under £25 (mostly red, ideally with wide availability). Frustrating doesn't begin to cover it. There was an endemic predictability to the selections of the big players, symptomatic of a desire to play things safe, not risk challenging perceptions, perhaps to keep Chile in a niche that serves both suppliers and retailers. Hence the paucity of wines in big retailers in my selection (albeit with a few, notable exceptions).

For now, independents are the best place to find the real Chile. It may not be quite as convenient, but they deserve your support and it's worth it – there are some beautiful wines here, outstanding value for money in the global context, wonderfully characterful and diverse. Of course, Chilean producers still can do more in the ongoing quest for ever-greater quality and diversity (and Jefford is absolutely right to encourage this). But, in the meantime, we also need to be ready to embrace some cognitive dissonance – and be prepared, if given sufficiently delicious evidence, to change our perception of Chile. Who knows, in doing so we may even be able to convince the big retailers to do the same.

*'There are some beautiful wines here, outstanding value for money in the global context'*



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## ① Matetic, Coralillo Carmenère, Colchagua 2016 94

£15.50-£15.74 Armit, Banstead Vintners, Exel

Top performer in a recent Carmenère panel tasting, this energetic blend (with Syrah) is peppery, vibrant and engaging. There's a touch of tobacco and it's just so effortlessly drinkable and elegant. **Drink** 2019-2022 **Alcohol** 14%

## ② Ventisquero, Herú Pinot Noir, Casablanca 2015 94

£22.10-£23.99 Corking Wines, Soho Wine Supply

A wine that stops you in your tracks. It's different, daring even. The fruit is pure and vibrant but it's so much more than that – tense, grippy, floral, earthy, vivid, savoury, spicy. It works with all kinds of dishes we throw at it, from dolcelatte risotto to stir-fry. This is smart, classy Pinot Noir, and a bargain at the price. Try it. **Drink** 2019-2025 **Alc** 13.5%

## ③ Viña Leyda, Single Vineyard Neblina Riesling, Leyda, San Antonio 2015 94

£13.60-£14.95 Great Western Wine, Exel

Talking of great value, Riesling lovers should tuck into this ageworthy, complex and hugely rewarding dry Riesling from Leyda. The vivid, dry, mouthwatering structure is softened by honeyed age. Food-friendly, serious and beautifully rendered. **Drink** 2019-2031 **Alc** 13.5%

## ④ Lapostolle, Vigno Carignan, Maule 2016 93

£24.99 Abasto, Noble Green, Quaff

A captivating expression of Carignan – and a sign of the truly great things that can and will be achieved with these old vines in Chile. Vivid floral, wild berry scents and a wonderfully poised, dense, moreish flavour profile. **Drink** 2019-2025 **Alc** 13.5%

## ⑤ Viña Ribera del Lago, Laberinto Las Cenizas Sauvignon Blanc, Maule 2018 93

£15.47-£17.99 Great Wines Direct, The Fine Wine Co

This very special, secluded corner of Maule makes a very particular style of Sauvignon Blanc. It's flinty and invigorating, all bristling acidity and pure, crystalline flavours and nuances. It's like walking through a silent pine forest after rain. Electric, and thrilling. Benefits from age, too. **Drink** 2020-2028 **Alc** 12.5%

## ⑥ Aresti, Trisquel Series Altitud 1,245 Merlot, Curicó 2016 92

£15.99 Majestic

Curicó is far from being Chile's sexiest wine region, but a recent visit confirmed encouraging results from producers' hard work. This is a great example – from a high-altitude vineyard in the east, the first vintages were coarse and virulently green, but the 2016 gets spot-on balance: tense, refined, refreshing, with a beautiful herbal lilt and tannic finesse. **Drink** 2019-2025 **Alc** 13.5% ➤







⑦ **Maycas del Limarí, San Julián Pinot Noir, Limarí 2017** 92

£25 (2016) **The Wine Society**  
I remember visiting this blustery, arid vineyard before it was planted – winemaker Marcelo Papa was excited even then. Limarí is sunny, but while this is a muscular, dark-fruited, effusive style of Pinot, it's also fine-textured, graceful, grippy and savoury. Think: Chile's answer to Central Otago. **Drink** 2019-2024 **Alc** 14%

⑧ **Ventisquero, Vertice, Apalta, Colchagua 2015** 92

£22.10-£22.50 **Corking Wines, Soho Wine Supply**  
An unashamedly extrovert wine whose effusive, creamy, ripe-fruited aromas belie the elegant, food-friendly palate profile that follows. It can come across as a blockbuster style, but it's not: dense, elegantly bittersweet dark fruit and savoury woody spice, together with fresh acidity and fine-grained tannin, render it moreish and fine. **Drink** 2019-2027 **Alc** 14.5%

⑨ **Veramonte, Ritual Chardonnay, Casablanca 2017** 92

£15 **Bonafide Wines, Carruthers & Kent, Mr Wheeler**  
Veramonte benefited hugely from winemaker Rodrigo Soto's guidance; though he's now left, this wine is typical of his oeuvre – tense, full of life, complex and savoury. The oak and lees work is deftly done, imbuing the wine with toasty, savoury complexity and textural elegance. **Drink** 2019-2023 **Alc** 14%

⑩ **Aquitania, SOLdeSOL Pinot Noir, Malleco 2012** 91

£16.50 **Lay & Wheeler**  
As you'd expect from the deep south, this is a fresher, lighter-bodied take on a classic Chilean Pinot. Tense and grippy, with a lovely sappy intensity in its pale yet insistent way. **Drink** 2019-2023 **Alc** 13.5%

⑪ **Morandé, Gran Reserva Sauvignon Blanc, Casablanca 2018** 91

£15.99 **Czerwick Food & Wine, Partridges, The Bottle List, The Drink Shop**  
Head winemaker Ricardo Baettig is not afraid to take risks and push stylistic boundaries – his top Sauvignons are a case in point, marrying taut citric structure with complex smoky, woody, mineral tones. This one has shades of Pessac-Léognan. Great value. **Drink** 2019-2026 **Alc** 12.5%

⑫ **Ventisquero, Kalfu Kuda Pinot Noir, Leyda, San Antonio 2017** 91

£12.75-£13.99 **Baythorne Wines, Drink Finder, Frontier Fine Wines, Tivoli Wines, Vivino**  
This little brother to Herú (wine No2, on previous page) reflects similar characteristics: a focus on freshness, elegance, varietal character and that very particular Pinot Noir tannic grip. It's earthy, a touch warming on the finish (reflective of the warm vintage) with creamy notes still evident, but it's wonderfully urgent, tense and food-friendly. **Drink** 2019-2024 **Alc** 14%



⑬ **Veramonte, Ritual Pinot Noir, Casablanca 2016** 91

£15 **Carruthers & Kent, Cork & Bottle, Soho Wine**  
The oak and puppy fat is still in evidence, but underlying is a beautifully poised, elegant, well-grounded Pinot made with sympathetic hands. Brambly fruit flavours mingle with a gently grippy tannic texture and a refreshing, lifted finish. **Drink** 2019-2024 **Alc** 13.5%

⑭ **Casa Silva, Cool Coast Sauvignon Gris, Paredones, Colchagua 2017** 90

£15 **Arkells, Duncan Murray, Field & Fawcett, Whitmore & White**  
Sauvignon Gris is becoming a wonderful, if slightly niche point of difference for Chile. It tends to have a bit more richness than Sauvignon Blanc. This is a lovely blend of fresh, herbal and citrus fruit expression, with succulence and breadth that make it flow seamlessly across the palate. **Drink** 2019-2022 **Alc** 14%

⑮ **De Martino, Vigno by De Martino, Maule 2016** 90

N/A UK **www.demartino.cl**  
This one's a slow burn – you need to give it time in the glass. It's deliberately made in a mid-weight style (rather than the more bruising Carignans out there). Refreshing, juicy, upbeat, it delivers its dark-fruited Carignan character in a gently rustic, food-friendly way. **Drink** 2019-2024 **Alc** 13.5%

⑯ **Errazuriz, Aconcagua Costa Pinot Noir, Aconcagua 2017** 90

£15.50-£18 **Bakers & Larners of Holt, Banstead Vintners, Cheers, DeFine Food & Wine, Noble Green, Noel Young, The Oxford Wine Co, The Bottleneck**  
Francisco Baettig is a leading light in Chile's quest for Burgundian levels of precision and elegance in its Pinot Noir. His Pizarras wines are outstanding (but expensive). This is a relative bargain way to gain an insight into the kind of refinement, purity and tension he prizes. **Drink** 2019-2023 **Alc** 13%

⑰ **Morandé, Gran Reserva Pinot Noir, Casablanca 2017** 90

£15.99 **Czerwick Food & Wine, La Vino, The Drink Shop**  
Plummy, smoky, earthy – this is a multi-faceted and rewarding Pinot that shows as well on the dining table as it does on the tasting bench. Complex and lively. **Drink** 2019-2024 **Alc** 13.5%

⑱ **Morandé, One to One Estate Reserve Gewurztraminer, Casablanca 2018** 90

£12.49 **Grape & Grain, The Drink Shop, Vino Faversham**  
An antidote to all the over-the-top Gewurz out there, this version is undoubtedly aromatic and floral but manages to be refreshing, mouthwatering and moreish at the same time. Consistently excellent and great value. **Drink** 2019-2021 **Alc** 13% ➤



⑲ **Viña Indómita, Co-op Irresistible Pinot Noir, Casablanca 2018** 90

£8 **Co-op**

Chilean Pinot Noir is exciting not just because of what it's starting to achieve at the top end, but also because it can deliver some of the best value in the world. This is a simple but perfectly pitched Pinot, full of moreish summer fruit and herbal notes. It's refreshing, with a touch of succulence and mint, and an engaging bittersweet twist on the finish. Outstanding value for money. **Drink** 2019-2020 **Alc** 13.5%

⑳ **Caliterra, Single Vineyard Pétreo Malbec, Colchagua 2015** 89

£17.90 **Field & Fawcett, Hailsham Cellars, The Whalley Wine Shop**

Sourced from the best blocks of hillside Malbec in the Colchagua estate, this is a scented, juicy, elegantly dry Malbec that doesn't try too hard and is all the more rewarding for it. **Drink** 2019-2021 **Alc** 13%

㉑ **Chilean Grape Group, The Long Coast Cabernet Sauvignon, Maipo 2017** 89

£9.99 **Majestic**

A bright, engaging style that offers great value to those partial to a typical Maipo Cab. It works because it's made in a deliberately fresher style, with notes of red pepper and blackcurrant. Perfect pizza wine. **Drink** 2019-2020 **Alc** 13%

㉒ **Cono Sur, 20 Barrels Limited Edition Pinot Noir, Casablanca 2016** 89

£16-£19.99 **Tesco, Waitrose, Waitrose Cellar**

A perennial favourite whose price has risen over time, but which still delivers excellent bang for your buck. Toasty, dark-fruited and refreshing despite the complexity – this is classic Chilean Pinot at its best. **Drink** 2019-2022 **Alc** 14%

㉓ **Errazuriz, Aconcagua Costa Syrah, Aconcagua 2015** 89

£15.99-£18.15 **Edencroft, Ocado, The Oxford Wine Co, Z&B Vintners**

Vivid, dark, peppery and spicy – this is expressive, edgy cool-climate Syrah, complete with swagger and attitude. **Drink** 2019-2023 **Alc** 13%

㉔ **Undurraga, Cauquenes Estate Carignan, Maule 2016** 89

£8.95 **The Wine Society**

An excellent-value, cherry-scented, dense but refreshing take on old-vine Maule Carignan. Bundles of character but doesn't lapse into excess: upbeat dark fruit with a nip of tannin and creamy complexity. **Drink** 2019-2022 **Alc** 14% ➤





25

**25 Veramonte, Ritual Merlot, Casablanca 2016 89**

£15 Carruthers & Kent, Mr Wheeler

The eastern end of the Casablanca Valley is just about warm enough for longer-season varieties made in an elegant style. This Merlot is beautiful proof: fresh, peppery and leafy with a wonderfully elegant mid-weight palate profile and a savoury, fine finish. Food friendly and well judged. **Drink** 2019-2023 **Alc** 14%

26

**26 Bouchon Family Wines, País Viejo, Maule 2018 88**

£11.99-£12.95 Caviste, Connolly's, Great Grog, The Good Wine Shop, Vinos Latinos, Yorkshire Vintners

Joyful wine. Very pale, with scents of warm earth and summer berries, it comes alive on the palate with a juicy, moreish, upbeat character. Not super-complex, but has so much life and vigour.

**Drink** 2019-2020 **Alc** 12.5%

27

**27 Casa Marin, Cartagena Sauvignon Blanc, Lo Abarca, San Antonio 2017 88**

£11.99 Waitrose, Waitrose Cellar

This spicy, tangy, invigorating Sauvignon is packed full of fennel, green pepper and gooseberry individuality. Complex and rewarding. **Drink** 2019-2020 **Alc** 13.5%

28

**28 De Martino, Old Vines Cinsault, Itata 2016 88**

£11.99 Waitrose Cellar

Lots goes on in this glass – but there's no excess. It's a pale, upbeat red with hints of woodsmoke and candied strawberries. On the palate it's juicy, with crunchy fruit, uplifting flavours and commendable vigour. Lovely line and texture. Not the most complex, but a joyful wine. **Drink** 2019-2020 **Alc** 12.5%

29

**29 Viña San Esteban, In Situ, Signature Chardonnay-Viognier, Aconcagua 2017 88**

£12-£15.35 Bread of Heaven Haslemere, Chamberlain Wines, Cheshire Smokehouse, David Alexander, Drinksman, Dronfield Wine World, Grape & Grain Crediton, Old Butcher's Wine Cellar, TN17 Food & Wine, Stop & Save Tunbridge Wells, The Jolly Vintner, The Solent Wine Experience, Whitmore & White, Hitchin Wine Co

Based high in the Aconcagua Valley, San Esteban has been making excellent progress of late by focusing on drinkability and elegance. This toasty, peachy, succulent white is very well judged, striking the right balance between savoury, oaky complexity and fruit freshness. **Drink** 2019-2020 **Alc** 13%

30

**30 Aldi, Exquisite Collection Sauvignon Blanc, Leyda, San Antonio 2018 87**

£5.49 Aldi

A good-value, expressive take on Leyda Sauvignon that's a great introduction to the region's defining freshness, perfume and purity. **Drink** 2019-2020 **Alc** 12.5% **D**