

# South American premium red blends

*The status of 'icon' has to be earned, but what exactly does a wine have to achieve in order to join this upper echelon of New World styles? Dirceu Vianna Junior MW explains*

Nineteen years ago, when Argentina was first making its mark with simple, juicy and easy-textured Malbecs, Nicolás Catena had the dream of creating an Argentinian wine that could compete with the world's greatest reds. He released the 1997 vintage of his Catena Zapata Cabernet Sauvignon in a series of global blind tastings, pitting it against other 1997s including Château Latour, Opus One, Caymus Special Selection and Antinori's Solaia. His wine regularly took first or second place.

In Chile, Errazuriz's Eduardo Chadwick feels a super-premium wine that carries the aspiration to become an 'icon' must convey a specific character that can only come from a unique terroir, as well as having an engaging story.

Chadwick is credited for altering the perception of Chile's premium credentials by hosting a series of blind tastings worldwide to pit his top Cabernets against some of the best Bordeaux, and later icon reds from California, Spain and Italy. The events began in Berlin in 2004, with his Viñedo Chadwick 2000 and Seña 2001 triumphing over Château Lafite Rothschild 2000 and Château Margaux 2001, among others, at a time when Chile was perceived as merely a source for fruit-driven, reliable and inexpensive wines.

## High achievers

Despite these solo triumphs, neither country had yet managed to build a convincing reputation as a source of super-premium, icon wines. Most 'premium' wines at that time were made solely with the aim of impressing through their power and concentration. The formula included excessively ripe fruit, lots of expensive oak

**'Greatness in wine is hard to define, as it is highly subjective'**

and packaging that often featured an extraordinarily heavy bottle – qualities that regrettably continue today, in some cases.

But these landmark tastings began to challenge the general perception, proving that South American wines could rub shoulders with the world's best reds – and show elegance too.

Understanding that their countries had the grapes, the terroir and the people able to produce premium wines had an effect beyond enhancing a sense of pride among fellow South American producers – it gave many the confidence and desire to prove their own credentials.

Fifteen years on, and this *Decanter* panel tasting is an opportune moment to assess just what has been achieved at the premium end of South American wines. It gives us the chance to compare the directions taken by each country and to judge whether these top-end South American wines really can be considered super-premium and worthy of icon status.

Greatness in wine, as in art, is hard to define, as it is highly subjective. A great wine exhibits multiple dimensions in aromatic profile as well as flavour. Whereas some aspects of quality are tangible, easier to grasp – such as concentration of fruit, harmony, complexity and persistence –

## ARGENTINA: KNOW YOUR VINTAGES

**2018** An excellent vintage: warm, sunny days and cool nights ensured perfect ripening.

**2017** Forward, exuberant and harmonious reds despite the long, hot summer.

**2016** One of the coldest vintages in a decade, resulting in lighter wines with notably crisp acidity.

**2015** A long harvest yielding attractive, juicy reds – especially fresh and vibrant for those who picked early.

**2014** Low-yielding harvest and wines with assertive acidity that are ageing well.

**2013** A notoriously cool vintage. The top-end wines are ageing gracefully.

**2012** Low-yielding harvest due to frost. Those who escaped made ripe, juicy, concentrated reds.

## ARGENTINA WINE GRAPE PLANTINGS

**Total cultivated area**  
220,848ha

**Malbec** 42,999ha; **Cabernet Sauvignon** 14,666ha; **Syrah** 12,247ha; **Merlot** 5,306ha; **Cabernet Franc** 1,146ha; **Petit Verdot** 652ha

Source: INV-Database

## CHILE: KNOW YOUR VINTAGES

**2018** Favourable conditions, with moderate temperatures resulting in a promising vintage of harmonious reds.

**2017** Abnormally hot vintage including severe wild fires. Despite an early harvest, the wines are marred by the heat.

**2016** An excellent vintage, especially for those who opted to pick early.

**2015** Noticeably warm vintage yielded ripe, exuberant and succulent reds.

**2014** The season started with a frost and finished warm and sunny, resulting in generally good-quality reds.

**2013** One of the coolest vintages in recent memory, giving long-lived, sophisticated reds.

**2012** A challenging, warm vintage, abnormally humid. Most wines should be drunk now.

## CHILE WINE GRAPE PLANTINGS

**Total cultivated area** 137,375ha  
**Cabernet Sauvignon** 41,156ha; **Merlot** 11,703ha; **Carmenère** 10,250ha; **Syrah** 7,738ha; **Malbec** 2,249ha; **Cabernet Franc** 1,578ha; **Petit Verdot** 863ha

Source: Wines of Chile

other parameters are harder to evaluate as they include, among other things, the ability of a wine to stimulate not only our physical senses, but our intellect.

**Dirceu Vianna Junior MW** is the first South American to become a Master of Wine. He is a writer, educator, consultant and judge ➤

# The verdict

*The judges found impressive longevity among Chile’s top Cabernet blends, and finesse and energy in many of the Argentinian Malbec-based wines, finds Dirceu Vianna Junior MW*

Considering that all the wines in this tasting were at a super-premium level, the judges were justifiably expecting something special. The strike-rate was impressive, with more than half rated Outstanding or Highly Recommended. Overall there was an admirable degree of consistency, and there was plenty to get excited about.

Most wines displayed excellent concentration and fruit purity with refined texture, depth and complexity. The majority exhibited sophisticated structure with little over-extraction, and good balance despite alcohol levels at 14.5% or above.

Oak use has improved significantly, though there were examples of wines displaying excessive oakiness, and the majority of wines were polished and overt, capable of giving pleasure on their own but also with adequate structure to accompany food, especially hearty meat dishes.

In general, Chilean producers seem more reluctant to take risks (see ‘*Top 30 Chileans under £25’, p80*), so some wines were more predictable, less exciting. Argentinian producers, on the other hand, are finally getting the message that freshness and restraint are vital to achieve finesse in a fine wine. On the evidence of this tasting, producers here seem more open to pushing boundaries by picking earlier

– these wines demonstrated more energy and tension, and were considerably more appealing.

For Peter Richards MW, some of the most exciting wines of the tasting came from Uco Valley. Paz Levinson agreed, highlighting the sub-regions of Altamira and Gualtallary. While Levinson highlighted Cachapoal and Maipo as her best-performing areas in Chile in this tasting, Richards found it harder to draw conclusions as quality seemed to be more dependent on the producer, and he was disappointed that there were so few wines from the Puente Alto area.

In fact, the absence of many of the big names from Chile was noted by all the judges. It is a shame that some producers are happy to enter comparative tastings with wines from around the world, but much more reticent to be judged against their own peers. Hopefully this will change in the future – for everyone’s benefit.

In Argentina, the tasters agreed that blends of Malbec and Cabernet Sauvignon worked well. Richards was particularly impressed by blends featuring Cabernet Franc as well as Malbec-Syrah combinations; Levinson praised Malbec-Cabernet Franc blends, especially from Gualtallary.

In Chile, as expected, the vast majority of blends were driven by Cabernet Sauvignon with additional elements of Bordeaux varieties and

‘Producers seem to be working harder than ever to express their terroir’

rare appearances of Syrah. Some of these older vintages of Cabernet-based Chilean wines (2013, 2011 and 2010) showed well and are ageing gracefully in comparison to Malbec-based Argentinian wines, which seem more rewarding to enjoy younger.

In an impressive tasting, quality overall was consistent. South American super-premium red blends are no longer just about exuberant fruit and power. We are seeing a concerted move towards elegance, and producers seem to be working harder than ever to express their terroir. This must be encouraged and producers must not be afraid of taking risks in search of freshness, elegance, subtlety and enhanced complexity.

Despite the high price-tag, many of these wines can be considered bargains, especially when compared to super-premium red blends from Bordeaux, California and Tuscany.

**THE SCORES**  
95 wines tasted  
**Exceptional** 0  
**Outstanding** 4  
**Highly Recommended** 46  
**Recommended** 37  
**Commended** 4  
**Fair** 1  
**Poor** 0  
**Faulty** 3

**Entry criteria:**  
producers and UK agents were invited to submit their latest-release, super-premium red blends with availability in the UK or US markets

## OUTSTANDING 95–97pts



### Escorihuela Gascón 1884, MEG, Uco Valley, Argentina 2017

Decanter average score: 96/100pts Individual judges’ scores: Paz Levinson 96 Peter Richards MW 96 Dirceu Vianna Junior MW 96

N/A UK [www.escorihuelagascon.com.ar](http://www.escorihuelagascon.com.ar)  
The oldest winery in Mendoza city is in Godoy Cruz, and was a pioneer in wine production in the area. In 1993, the winery was bought by Nicolás Catena, who by 2009 had built a new, modern winery outside the city in Agrelo, Luján de Cuyo. MEG is 60% Malbec, 40% Cabernet Sauvignon, the grapes sourced from climatically varied vineyards in Agrelo and Cordon El Cepillo. Aged for 16 months in French oak barriques.

**Paz Levinson** Lovely floral aromas like violets, with black fruits, cassis and blueberries. The palate is textured, with freshness, pure fruit, black, concentrated and chalky tannins. This is a wine to age.

**Peter Richards MW** Positively leaps out of the glass and fills you with joy. Fine firm tannins, elegantly made, with lovely crunchy fruit layers and well integrated oak. A brilliant wine. The new Argentina in a glass.

**Dirceu Vianna Junior MW** Wonderfully aromatic, uplifting, vibrant, with sophisticated structure and a lively and refreshing finish.

Drink 2019-2027 Alc 14%



### Kaiken, Obertura Cabernet Franc, Mendoza, Argentina 2015 95 PL 94 PR 96 DVJ 94

£25.16-£31.99 Carruthers & Kent, Eton Vintners, Exel, Liberty Wines, Nickolls & Perks, Slurp, The Fine Wine Co

Founded by Chile’s Aurelio Montes in 2001 and now headed by his son, Kaiken wines is located just south of Mendoza city, cultivating grapes in Vistalba, Agrelo and Vista Flores. Cabernet Franc for the Kaiken Obertura come from the Vista Flores vineyard, located at 1,350m on rocky, pebble soils. Aged in third-use French oak barrels for 12 months.

**PL** A ripe nose with aromas of dark fruits, blueberries and blackberries. On the palate, the tannins are quite firm and the oak quite dominant. However, this wins on the ever-present fruit.

**PR** This seems ripe, slightly raisin, powerful with fine tannins and grip. Serious, quite high-octane style and flirts with being OTT, but nonetheless impressive and well grounded. Lovely fine-boned tannin.

**DVJ** On the nose it combines aromas of dark fruits with hints of leather, dark chocolate, cedar, cigar box and exotic spices. It’s round with juicy fruit, dark chocolate and savoury complexity. Powerful, showing well.

Drink 2019-2025 Alc 14.5%



### Catena Zapata, Nicolás Catena Zapata, Mendoza, Argentina 2013 95 PL 95 PR 96 DVJ 95

£63.50-£67.20 Bibendum, Exel  
Bodega Catena Zapata is revered by many as the pioneer of high-altitude wines and the re-emergence of the Malbec grape. The Mayan styled winery nestles in the foothills of the Andes at Agrelo. This is a blend of 75% Cabernet Sauvignon and 25% Malbec, grown on La Pirámide (950m), Nicasia (1,095m) and Adrianna vineyards (1,450m), in Agrelo, Altamira and Gualtallary; aged 18 months in French oak barrels.

**PL** Elegant aromas of cedar, tobacco and earthy nuances. Medium-bodied, elegant. The Cabernet gives length and good acidity to the wine, while the Malbec offers juicy plummy fruit.

**PR** Real freshness and lift here. It’s fundamentally a mid-weight wine, and so much the better for it: long, precise, savoury and complex. Not typically Argentina, but brilliant stuff: a lighter, *mezzoforte* style. Love it!

**DVJ** There are buckets of red and dark fruit still apparent despite its age. It also displays notes of dried herbs, chocolate, sweet spices and beautifully leafy notes. On the palate it’s ripe and juicy, combining cedar with beautiful savoury notes, finishing savoury and persistent.

Drink 2019-2028 Alc 13.5%



### VIK, La Piu Belle, Cachapoal, Chile 2011 95 PL 95 PR 95 DVJ 95

£49.95-£52 Corney & Barrow, Slurp

Set up in 2004 by Norwegian billionaire Alexander Vik, the winery is 150km south of Santiago and focuses on three types of red blend, using only Cabernet Sauvignon, Carmenère, Syrah, Merlot and Cabernet Franc. La Piu Belle is the goddess of VIK, representing everything about the winery. This blend is 51% Cabernet Sauvignon, 34% Carmenère, 8% Cabernet Franc, 6% Merlot and 1% Syrah, aged in oak for 21 months.

**PL** A very elegant Bordeaux style wine showing smoky, leathery characteristics, topped with dark dried fruit. Very well balanced and long, it is a complex wine that can rival many top Bordeaux.

**PR** Smoky dark fruit aromas make this expressive and engaging. It has savoury elements too and the age renders it complex and rounded. Very accomplished and serious. Big-boned, but very impressive.

**DVJ** Aromas are mature, developed and still very classy including hints of cedar, earth, tar and dark chocolate as well as some balsamic notes. Fully mature, with attractive complexity and freshness.

Drink 2019-2027 Alc 14% ➤

## THE JUDGES

### Paz Levinson



Master Sommeliers’ advanced sommelier certificate, and won the ASI and APAS Best Sommelier of the Americas in 2015.

Levinson is currently head sommelier at Virtus in Paris and works between France and Argentina as a consultant and educator. She was the first Argentinian to pass the Court of

### Peter Richards MW



He is the DWWA Regional Chair for Chile and, with his wife Susie Barrie MW, he co-hosts the acclaimed annual Wine Festival Winchester.

Richards is an award-winning broadcaster and writer, with more than a decade on BBC1 television and four books including The Wines of Chile and his own Chile Wine Brief.

### Dirceu Vianna Junior MW



male to obtain the title of Master of Wine. He is now working as a wine writer, educator, technical consultant and competition judge.

Originally from Brazil, Vianna studied forest engineering and law, before moving to London, where he began to work in the wine trade in 1990. In 2008, he became the first South American



**HIGHLY RECOMMENDED** 90–94pts



**Son Vida, Alegría, Paraje Altamira, Argentina 2015**  
94 PL 95 PR 95 DVJ 93  
£29.49–£42 [Gaucho Wine Shop](#), [Latin Wines Online](#)  
Brooding dark fruit on the nose, subtle black pepper and floral notes. Beautifully structured with refined tannins, crunchy acidity, and all carried off without being too heavy. An utter pleasure to drink. **Drink** 2019–2029 **Alc** 14.5%



**Valle Secreto, Profundo, Cachapoal, Chile 2011**  
94 PL 95 PR 95 DVJ 92  
£53.75 [Scatchards](#)  
Age is evident, but it doesn't detract from the quality. Notes of mushroom, tar, charred wood and pepper, and a complex palate of forest floor and black tea leaf. A classy wine with a persistent finish. **Drink** 2019–2027 **Alc** 14.5%



**William Fèvre Chile, Chacai, Maipo, Chile 2015**  
94 PL 93 PR 95 DVJ 93  
N/A UK [www.williamfevrechile.com](#)  
A graphite element gives this wine chemistry. Aromas of black fruit, bell pepper, dried herbs and spices offer energy on the palate too. The elegant complexity of Bordeaux with a New World generosity. **Drink** 2019–2028 **Alc** 14.5%



**Andeluna, Pasionado Cabernet Franc, Gualtallary, Uco Valley, Argentina 2015**  
93 PL 93 PR 93 DVJ 93  
£31.50–£38.49 [Exel](#), [Great Wines Direct](#), [Hallgarten Wines](#), [Strictly Wine](#)  
Sweet, creamy cocoa oak, forest fruits and a hint of leafiness. A refreshing style, showing good varietal character and a pleasant savoury note on the finish. **Drink** 2019–2026 **Alc** 13.5%



**Trapiche, Iscay Malbec-Cabernet Franc, Mendoza, Argentina 2013**  
93 PL 94 PR 93 DVJ 92  
£39.50 (2012) [Great Western Wine](#)  
Bright, red fruit aromas with a nice urgency on the palate. Its age does not show, with a vibrancy to its fruit: blackberry, dark cherry and violets, purity and freshness. A really rewarding example. **Drink** 2019–2028 **Alc** 14.5%



**Bemberg, Pionero, Gualtallary, Mendoza, Argentina 2013**  
92 PL 93 PR 91 DVJ 91  
£120 [Top Selection](#)  
A classy Bordeaux blend with aromas of baked dark fruit, blackberry, cassis, dark plum, earth and cedar. This all combines beautifully on the palate with a persistent and dominant length. Built to last. **Drink** 2020–2026 **Alc** 14.5%



**Casarena, Icono Blend, Mendoza, Argentina 2011**  
92 PL 91 PR 94 DVJ 92  
£60 [Frederic Robinson](#)  
Toasty, smoky bacon aromas show it's quite oak-derived from the onset. This may lull you into a false sense of security, but fear not – the palate is intense, with juicy dark fruits, cedar, chocolate, wet earth and liquorice sweet spice. **Drink** 2019–2028 **Alc** 14.5%



**Corazon del Sol, Soleado, Uco Valley, Argentina 2014**  
92 PL 92 PR 92 DVJ 91  
N/A UK [www.corazondelsol.com](#)  
Fruit-forward aromas with notes of black cherry and plum, along with hints of roasted herbs. The palate is refined, tannins firm – a wine that shows great energy, persistence and freshness. **Drink** 2019–2028 **Alc** 14.5%



**Errazuriz, Don Maximiano Founder's Reserve, Aconcagua, Chile 2016**  
92 PL 91 PR 93 DVJ 91  
£43.50–£54.17 (ib) [Christopher Keiller](#), [Farr Vintners](#), [Lay & Wheeler](#)  
Opulent, yes, but what's special is the freshness, beautifully balanced with its acidity and concentration of fruit. A big wine with elegance. **Drink** 2019–2027 **Alc** 14.5%



**Finca Ferrer, Doscumbres, Tupungato, Argentina 2012**  
92 PL 91 PR 93 DVJ 92  
N/A UK [www.fincaferrer.com](#)  
Toasty, spicy black pepper aromas with dried floral hints coming through. A peppery vivacity dominates the palate, offering spice and mouthwatering freshness to the finish. **Drink** 2019–2026 **Alc** 14.5%



**Morandé, House of Morandé, Maipo, Chile 2014**  
92 PL 93 PR 93 DVJ 90  
£34.99 [Grapes of Worthing](#), [Hailsham Cellars](#), [La Vino](#)  
Plush, inviting aromas. Cedar wood and ripe dark fruit, creamy hints. There's mint and eucalyptus mixed in with a leather palate, topped with mushroom notes too! A wine that can age graciously. **Drink** 2019–2028 **Alc** 14.5%



**Pyros, Special Blend, Pedernal Valley, Argentina 2013**  
92 PL 90 PR 94 DVJ 93  
£33–£35 [Hard To Fine Wines](#), [Wines With Attitude](#)  
Green pepper aromas, Mediterranean herbs, sweet spice and menthol dominate the nose, followed by an urgent wild berry acidity, offering a welcome lift to a well-structured, persistent finish. **Drink** 2019–2025 **Alc** 14%

**HIGHLY RECOMMENDED (Continued)** 90–94pts



**Siegel, Unique Selection, Los Lingues, Colchagua, Chile 2015**  
92 PL 93 PR 90 DVJ 92  
N/A UK [www.siegelvinos.com](#)  
A classy wine full of layers. Dark tea leaf, tobacco and cedar box are replicated on the palate, balanced by exotic spices dominating the long finish. **Drink** 2019–2027 **Alc** 14.5%



**Susana Balbo Wines, BenMarco Expresivo, Gualtallary, Uco Valley, Argentina 2016**  
92 PL 91 PR 92 DVJ 92  
£37.75 [Cheers](#), [Good Wine Online](#), [Selfridges](#)  
Well-defined aromas of dark fruits, toast and roasted herbs. Black pepper complemented by a smoky element throughout. Will gain in nuance over time. **Drink** 2019–2027 **Alc** 13.5%



**Viña Valdivieso, Caballo Loco Number 17, Central Valley, Chile NV**  
92 PL 94 PR 91 DVJ 90  
£30.97–£33.65 [Bibendum](#), [Exel](#)  
Real exuberance of fruit here, along with roasted pepper, fresh and dried fruit too, but also cedar, mushrooms and chocolate. A crowd-pleaser. **Drink** 2019–2026 **Alc** 14.5%



**Bodega Norton, Gernot Langes, Luján de Cuyo, Argentina 2014**  
91 PL 89 PR 92 DVJ 91  
£85 [Berkmann](#), [Hailsham Cellars](#), [La Vino](#), [M Wine Store](#)  
Enticing aromas of cassis, blackberry, floral notes and a hint of spice. The palate is ripe and juicy, acidity bursting through on a persistent finish. Classic style. **Drink** 2019–2026 **Alc** 14.5%



**Bodegas Caro, Caro, Mendoza, Argentina 2016**  
91 PL 92 PR 91 DVJ 90  
£44.99 [The Oxford Wine Co](#)  
A promising nose of leafy, herbal redcurrant that follows on to blackberry, cassis and sweet spice. The palate is fresh and not ashamed of being on the lighter side. A refreshing finish for a perfect ending. **Drink** 2019–2025 **Alc** 14.5%



**La Luz, Gran Callejón del Crimen, Uco Valley, Argentina 2015**  
91 PL 93 PR 91 DVJ 89  
N/A UK [www.callejondelcrimen.com](#)  
Elegance and opulence. Inviting aromas of pepper and cream lead to black fruit, blackberries, and even graphite. It's fresh and finishes with depth, length and attractive savoury complexity. **Drink** 2019–2025 **Alc** 14.5%



**Luigi Bosca, Finca Los Nobles Cabernet Bouchet Field Blend, Luján de Cuyo, Argentina 2011**  
91 PL 92 PR 90 DVJ 90  
£39.68 [Armit](#), [Bancroft](#)  
Dried fruit, prune, cream and tobacco. Good evolution on this, offering refined tannins, complexity and old-school charm. It would suit a nice steak. **Drink** 2019–2023 **Alc** 14.5%



**Miguel Torres, Manso de Velasco Cabernet Sauvignon, Curicó, Chile 2013**  
91 PL 89 PR 93 DVJ 92  
£37.99 [Dylans](#), [Fareham Wine Cellar](#), [Taurus Wines](#)  
Eucalyptus and minty green bell pepper dominate the nose. Expressive and engaging on the palate however, with juicy acidity, and complex notes of tobacco and cigar box. Lots left to give. **Drink** 2019–2029 **Alc** 14.5%



**Odfjell, Cauquenes, Chile 2014**  
91 PL 93 PR 89 DVJ 91  
N/A UK [www.odfjellvineyards.cl](#)  
Offers minty cassis and plum aromas, followed by beautiful, juicy dark fruit balanced by firm tannins, spices and elegant leafy notes. It's young and bold, showing power and finesse. **Drink** 2022–2025 **Alc** 14.5%



**San Pedro, Sideral, Cachapoal, Chile 2017**  
91 PL 93 PR 89 DVJ 90  
N/A UK [www.vsptwinegroup.com](#)  
A lovely example of a red blend with a very expressive nose of berries, mint, eucalyptus and graphite. A cut above, with great purity on the finish. **Drink** 2019–2026 **Alc** 14.5%



**Santa Rita, Triple C, Maipo, Chile 2014**  
91 PL 90 PR 92 DVJ 91  
£30 [Santa Rita Estates](#)  
Very good balance between the Cabernets Franc and Sauvignon. It's layered and complex with a beautiful earthy freshness. Green bell pepper and eucalyptus combine with cassis and dark fruits, providing an impressive finish. **Drink** 2020–2027 **Alc** 14.5%



**Tarapacá, Gran Reserva Etiqueta Azul, Maipo, Chile 2016**  
91 PL 91 PR 90 DVJ 92  
N/A UK [www.vsptwinegroup.com](#)  
Expressive, ferruginous – in a way, quite bloody. Ripe dark stewed fruits with a touch of mint, aromas of cassis, cherry and blackberry, as well as floral notes and a hint of leafiness. Lots of wine here. **Drink** 2019–2027 **Alc** 14% ➤

**HIGHLY RECOMMENDED (Continued)** 90–94pts



**VIK, Milla Cala, Cachapoal, Chile 2014** 91 PL 89 PR 93 DVJ 90  
£39 Copestick Murray, Slurp  
Despite its age it still shows exuberance of ripe dark fruits, and includes notes of roasted peppers, chocolate and sweet spices. The palate is very promising, layered and juicy, complex and refined. **Drink** 2019–2026 **Alc** 14%



**7 Colores, Cabernet Sauvignon, Maipo, Chile 2013** 90 PL 92 PR 90 DVJ 88  
N/A UK [www.7coloreschilewine.cl](http://www.7coloreschilewine.cl)  
Classy, vivacious and elegant. Very ripe, dark fruit, cassis and blueberries. The palate is ripe and juicy with a full body, creamy texture and pleasant finish. **Drink** 2019–2026 **Alc** 14.5%



**Aristos, Duque d’A, Chile 2011** 90 PL 89 PR 94 DVJ 87  
£59.68 Justerini & Brooks  
Tobacco and cedar, dried fruit and resinous hints. Spicy, energetic palate with some lovely bittersweet juicy fruit at its core. Vibrant, effusive, winning. **Drink** 2019–2025 **Alc** 14.5%



**Bisquertt, Tralca, Colchagua, Chile 2012** 90 PL 93 PR 87 DVJ 90  
N/A UK [www.bisquertt.cl](http://www.bisquertt.cl)  
A lovely nose of tobacco leaf, cedar wood and forest floor; the fruit is there as well, with cassis and blackberry leaf too. Ripe palate, juicy, with a pleasant silky texture and a warming, persistent finish. **Drink** 2019–2025 **Alc** 14.5%

‘Most wines displayed excellent concentration and fruit purity, depth and complexity’



**Bodega Atamisque, Assemblage, Tupungato, Uco Valley, Argentina 2016** 90 PL 88 PR 92 DVJ 89  
£33.25 Bottle Apostle, Hennings, Highbury Vinters, Vinoteca  
Bright red cherry, chocolate, hint of spice. It’s powerful, ripe and juicy, with good fruit concentration. Upfront, varietal faithful example in an engaging, lifted style. **Drink** 2019–2022 **Alc** 15%



**Bodega Garzón, Balasto, Maldonado, Uruguay 2016** 90 PL 92 PR 90 DVJ 89  
£65.65–£84.99 Exel, Liberty Wines, Nickolls & Perks, Slurp, Vinvm  
Attractive and inviting aromas of blackberries, ripe plums, dark chocolate. It’s refined with sophisticated structure and firm, fine-grained tannins and a pleasant savoury finish. **Drink** 2019–2026 **Alc** 14.5%



**Buscado, Vivo o Muerto El Cerro, Gualtallary, Argentina 2017** 90 PL 92 PR 89 DVJ 89  
N/A UK See Facebook  
Subtle aromas displaying dark fruits, hints of violet, wet earth and tar. What’s impressive is its concentration and flesh. Mouthwatering freshness delivers a long, chalky sensation on the finish. **Drink** 2019–2026 **Alc** 14.5%



**Concha y Toro, Gravas Rojas, Puente Alto, Chile 2016** 90 PL 89 PR 91 DVJ 89  
POA Concha y Toro UK  
Still showing exuberant, ripe dark fruits and notes of roasted pepper, chocolate and sweet spices. The palate is very promising, layered and juicy. Complex and refined. **Drink** 2019–2025 **Alc** 14.5%



**Decero Amano, Remolinos Vineyard, Agrelo, Mendoza, Argentina 2014** 90 PL 91 PR 90 DVJ 89  
£37.86–£46.99 AG Wines, Abasto Wine, Corking Wines, Grape & Grain, Hailsham cellars, Windsor Wine  
Notes of ripe plums, blackberries, cassis, chocolate and spices give promise on the palate. Dark fruit and plums persist with a long length, true to its origin. **Drink** 2019–2026 **Alc** 14.5%



**Don Melchor, Puente Alto Cabernet Sauvignon, Puente Alto, Chile 2016** 90 PL 92 PR 89 DVJ 88  
POA Concha y Toro UK  
An austere start on the nose with pencil shavings and dark black fruit, cassis and blueberries. There’s a nip of tannin and a creamy finish, dominated by refreshing acidity. **Drink** 2019–2026 **Alc** 14.5%



**El Enemigo, Bodega Aleanna, Gran Enemigo Gualtallary Cabernet Franc, Tupungato, Argentina 2014** 90 PL 88 PR 94 DVJ 88  
£65.88 Alex Marton, Atlas Fine Wines, Cru, Laytons  
Ripe dark fruit, hints of dried flowers, dried herb tones. Oak fairly dominant through its chocolate and coffee. Pure, not overdone but complex. Delicious. **Drink** 2019–2024 **Alc** 14%

**HIGHLY RECOMMENDED (Continued)** 90–94pts



**El Enemigo, Bodega Aleanna, Gran Enemigo Blend, Tupungato, Argentina 2014** 90 PL 90 PR 91 DVJ 89  
£49.87 Alex Marton, Atlas Fine Wines, Cru, Laytons  
Leafy, woody hints with mashed red fruit. Exuberant, upfront style with blackberries and hints of violets. Vibrant and refreshing, ending with a bitter finish. **Drink** 2019–2024 **Alc** 14%



**Flechas de los Andes, Gran Corte, Mendoza, Argentina 2012** 90 PL 92 PR 88 DVJ 89  
N/A UK [www.edrh-wines.com](http://www.edrh-wines.com)  
Blackberry and a touch of mint initially, more maturity on the palate: tobacco leaf, forest floor, figs. Powerful and full-bodied but still displays freshness. **Drink** 2019–2024 **Alc** 14.5%



**Lapostolle, BoRoBo, Colchagua, Chile 2015** 90 PL 89 PR 93 DVJ 89  
POA Berkmann  
Lifted, inviting aromas. Ripe red and black fruit, almost a touch floral too. Herbs are present and combine nicely with its intense body of chocolate, cedar and luscious plump fruit. Impressive. **Drink** 2019–2027 **Alc** 14.5%



**Los Clop, Blend of Terroirs, Uco Valley, Argentina 2015** 90 PL 92 PR 88 DVJ 90  
N/A UK [www.clopwines.com](http://www.clopwines.com)  
A modern, overt style displaying aromas of dark fruits, prunes, stewed fruits, vanilla and nutmeg. Powerful palate, ripe and juicy fruit with a silky texture and balancing freshness. A monster of a wine. **Drink** 2019–2026 **Alc** 14.5%

‘Many of these wines can be considered bargains’



**Piattelli, Arlene Series Blend, Cafayate, Salta, Argentina 2015** 90 PL 88 PR 91 DVJ 91  
N/A UK [www.piattellivineyards.com](http://www.piattellivineyards.com)  
Dense, dark and brooding with hints of warm leather. Fleshy and sinewy, with stewed fruits, sweet spice and dried herbs. Impressive concentration and complexity. A fruit bomb that will explode! **Drink** 2019–2026 **Alc** 15%



**Salentein, Numina Gran Corte, Uco Valley, Argentina 2016** 90 PL 90 PR 88 DVJ 91  
POA Matthew Clark Bibendum  
On the nose, the first message is oak, some cocoa and chocolate, then dark fruit emerges from the depths to show cassis and blackberry. There’s focus, grip and length here on the finish. **Drink** 2019–2025 **Alc** 13.5%



**Undurraga, Altazor, Maipo, Chile 2015** 90 PL 91 PR 91 DVJ 89  
£60 Eurowines  
Grassy, leafy, resinous nose opens up to cassis, red bell pepper, spices, clove and nutmeg. A very typical style, with a crunchy palate and lovely freshness. Ageing would be desirable for this example. **Drink** 2019–2023 **Alc** 14%



**Viña Casas del Toqui, Leyenda del Toqui, Cachapoal, Chile 2013** 90 PL 90 PR 92 DVJ 87  
£60 Frederic Robinson  
Cassis, black fruit, blueberries – there’s tons of ripe fruit, but showing lovely freshness as well. The palate has intense, grained tannins with a little bit of leather on top. The finish is long and ageworthy. **Drink** 2019–2027 **Alc** 14%



**Viña Hacienda Araucano, Gran Araucano, Colchagua, Chile 2015** 90 PL 92 PR 88 DVJ 89  
POA Condor, Nickolls & Perks, Slurp  
First impressions of intense paprika, red bell pepper and dried spearmint, fulfilled on the palate further with cassis, blueberries, fine tannins and great purity, underpinned by pleasant freshness. **Drink** 2019–2022 **Alc** 14.5%



**Viña Haras de Pirque, Albis, Maipo, Chile 2016** 90 PL 88 PR 91 DVJ 92  
£46.99 Berkmann, La Vino, The Drink Shop  
Classy and gently perfumed with aromas of ripe blackberries, cassis, earth and fresh herbs. Some incipient complexity and will improve over time. **Drink** 2023–2026 **Alc** 14%



**Von Siebenthal, Montelig, Aconcagua, Chile 2011** 90 PL 91 PR 92 DVJ 86  
£45.50–£46.99 New Generation, The Cellar Tasting House & Wine Merchant, Worth Brothers  
Intense dark fruit aromas, a minty character, tobacco, blackberry jam, dried tobacco leaf. It’s giving so much now, but has much more potential to age. **Drink** 2019–2023 **Alc** 14.5% ➤



**RECOMMENDED** 86–89pts

Wine	Score	PL	PR	DVJ	Tasting note	Alc	Drink	Price	Stockists
Antucura, Grand Vin, Vista Flores, Argentina 2013	89	89	88	91	Ripe damson and plum aromas with more sophisticated notes of chocolate, cedar and spice. On the palate it is ripe, juicy, and a bit grainy on the finish.	14.5%	2019-2024	N/A UK	www.antucura.com
Bodega Norton, Lote Negro Malbec-Cab Franc, Uco Valley, Argentina 2016	89	92	87	88	A combination of freshness from the Cabernet Franc and a floral character from the Malbec. Dark fruit and black pepper notes are evident. Will improve.	14.5%	2019-2024	£30.49	Abasto Wine, Hailsham Cellars, Loki Wines
Casadonoso, Perla Negra, Maule, Chile 2014	89	91	88	88	Expressive aromas of blackberries, chocolate and sweet spices, mature notes of cedar and mushroom. Tannins are moderate; crisp, refreshing finish.	14.5%	2019-2025	N/A UK	www.casadonoso.cl
Cuvelier Los Andes, Grand Vin, Mendoza, Argentina 2012	89	90	87	89	Nose of dark fruits, tar, earth, leather. On the palate it is ripe, juicy with a big mouthful of fruit. This is a big and powerful wine that is ageing gracefully.	14.5%	2019-2023	POA	Amathus Drinks
Diam Andes, Grande Reserve, Mendoza, Argentina 2014	89	90	90	88	Appealing, modern style, plums prevalent. Complex spice, tobacco, cedar, anise, cardamom and liquorice. An opulent wine, may not be for everyone!	14.5%	2019-2025	N/A UK	www.diamandes.com
Enclave, Cabernet Sauvignon, Maipo Andes, Chile 2014	89	90	87	91	Leafy earth and cigar box. Good complexity, with black olives, chocolate and exotic spice on the palate. Good acidity, but tannins need time to mellow.	14.5%	2019-2026	£50	Cambridge Wine Merchants, Corking Wines, Davy's, Soho Wine Supply
Finca el Origen, PHI, Uco Valley, Argentina 2012	89	89	90	88	Intense, ripe and dried black berry nose. Cream and ginger add complexity to a serious flavour profile. Great with food but equally good without!	15%	2019-2025	£48.60	Colombier Wines
Finca Perdriel, Perdriel Vineyard Selection, Mendoza, Argentina 2010	89	92	87	89	Considering its age, it's displaying complex and meaty characters. Dark cherry fruit with a myriad of tertiary aromas give a young touch to this blend.	14.5%	2019-2022	£44.99	Abasto Wine, Berkmann, La Vino, Oakham Wines
Finca Sophenia, Roberto Lo, Tupungato, Argentina 2015	89	90	88	90	Roasted pepper notes followed by cherries, blackberries, violets and sweet spice. Balanced, with generosity of fruit in the mouth and a persistent finish.	14.5%	2019-2026	N/A UK	www.sophenia.com
Montes Alpha, Colchagua, Chile 2015	89	89	87	90	Classic Chilean Cabernet: blackberry and stewed cassis with minty tones. Generous and exuberant, concentration of fruit, fine tannins and freshness.	14.5%	2019-2027	£44.99	Liberty Wines
Rutini, Encuentro, Uco Valley, Argentina 2014	89	89	90	87	Slightly shy to start, but it opens up to an array of flavours: blackberries and forest fruits racing around a leafy green component giving nice freshness.	14.5%	2019-2025	N/A UK	www.rutiniwines.com
Santa Rita, Casa Real, Maipo, Chile 2015	89	88	90	88	A sleek and modern style with warm, ripe, dark fruit transcending down to a firm and generous structure which oozes dark fruits and oak. Rewarding.	14%	2019-2022	£40	Santa Rita Estates
Susana Balbo Wines, Signature Brioso, Agrelo, Argentina 2016	89	89	90	89	Fresh dark fruit, herbal hints and creamy tones make way for some green bell pepper, cassis and wet earth. Full-bodied with a pleasant, smooth finish.	14.5%	2019-2025	£39.50	Good Wine Online, Selfridges
Valentin Bianchi, Enzo Bianchi, San Rafael, Argentina 2015	89	90	89	89	Plush ripe fruit, creamy toffee hints. Ambitious, could dial back the extraction a bit and promote elegance, but lots to admire on an opulent, juicy palate.	14.5%	2019-2025	POA	Carruthers & Kent
Viña Casas del Toqui,Codigo del Toqui, Cachapoal, Chile 2014	89	88	88	90	Spicy eucalyptus character, real intrigue. There's exceptional concentration of fruit that makes it seem so young and vibrant. A real explosion in the mouth.	14%	2019-2020	£44.95	Frederic Robinson
Viña Los Vascos, Le Dix de Los Vascos, Colchagua, Chile 2015	89	90	87	89	Well defined, with dark fruits, cedar, leather and wet earth beginning to show complexity. Oak is evident through its spices; cinnamon, cloves and anise.	14.5%	2019-2026	£43	Waddesdon Wines
Bodega Sottano, Judas, Mendoza, Argentina 2014	88	88	87	88	Reminiscent of a Bordeaux style with notes of creamy cassis. Green pepper notes emerge, but an earthy, savoury note persists to the refreshing finish.	14.5%	2019-2023	£64.99	Amps Wine Merchants, Old Chapel Cellars, The Good Spirits Co, Vindependents
Carmen, Gold Reserve, Maipo, Chile 2015	88	89	88	88	Aromas and flavours of cassis and blueberries, exemplifying great fruit purity. A powerful example, more action on the mid-palate rather than the length.	14%	2019-2025	£50	Santa Rita Estates
Casadonoso, 1810, Maule, Chile 2016	88	88	88	89	Minty black fruit, eucalyptus, blackberry, blueberry, coffee, toasted aromas, charred wood. Ripe and juicy palate with good freshness and silky tannins.	14.5%	2019-2025	N/A UK	www.casadonoso.cl
Clos Apalta, Apalta, Colchagua, Chile 2015	88	91	85	88	Strong clove notes leap out, followed by hints of chocolate, dried herbs, cedar and sweet spice. Firm but refined palate structure; will develop quite nicely.	14.5%	2019-2024	£110.00	Fareham Wine Cellar, Hailsham Cellars, Handford Wines, The Drink Shop
Erasmus, Maule, Chile 2013	88	88	88	87	A bouquet of dark fruits, chocolate, leather and spices. Expands on the palate with intense strawberry. Tobacco leaf appears on the modest finish.	14.5%	2019-2026	N/A UK	www.erasmo.bio
Finca Sophenia, Synthesis The Blend, Tupungato, Argentina 2015	88	89	86	89	Graceful, attractive aromas of dark fruits, leafy notes and wet earth. Dense and powerful, great texture and Cabernet-influenced length. Will age well.	16%	2019-2026	N/A UK	www.sophenia.com
J Bouchon, Granito Cabernet Sauvignon-Carmenère, Chile 2015	88	90	85	89	Seductive aromas, cassis and blackberry combining with earthy chocolate. It's ripe and subtle with lovely juicy fruit and a strong, savoury note. Persistent.	14.5%	2019-2023	£29.95-£34.99	Slurp, The Oxford Wine Co
Luigi Bosca, Icono, Mendoza, Argentina 2010	88	90	87	87	A wine showing a lot of evolution with its dried fruits, prunes, dried herbs and forest floor, champignons. Nice complexity and texture too, but drink soon.	14.5%	2019-2025	POA	Bancroft Wines
Pelleriti Selection Grand Reserve Blend, Uco Valley, Argentina 2013	88	90	87	87	On the nose the wine has black fruit, ripe cassis and some plums, graphite and cedar. A fruitcake flavour follows on the palate with a modest, warming finish.	14.5%	2019-2024	£41.99	Bedales, Starmore Boss
San Pedro, Altaïr, Cachapoal, Chile 2015	88	87	90	86	Expressive bold blackcurrant and blackberry. Intense, minty, eucalyptus and green bell pepper. Velvety texture core but finishes with a warm aftertaste.	14.5%	2019-2023	N/A UK	www.vsptwinegroup.com
Viña El Principal, Memorias, Maipo Andes, Chile 2015	88	89	86	88	Buckets of ripe juicy fruit combine with delicate complexity of leather, wet earth, liquorice and hints of exotic spices. Freshness is welcome on the finish.	15%	2019-2024	£33.36	Philip Von Nell
Dos Almas, Apogeo Icono, Apalta, Colchagua, Chile 2015	87	89	88	85	Youthful aromas despite its age; floral initially, with nutmeg and cinnamon. Exuberant dark fruits on the palate, with a touch of bitterness on the finish.	14.5%	2019-2025	£37.15	Zonin UK

**RECOMMENDED (Continued)** 86–89pts

Wine	Score	PL	PR	DVJ	Tasting note	Alc	Drink	Price	Stockists
El Porvenir de Cafayate, El Porvenir, Salta, Argentina 2014	87	90	85	87	Fairly evolved, with notes of tobacco, dried grass and fruits. It's ripe and juicy, with a pleasant silky texture showing beautiful complexity. Drink soon.	15%	2019-2023	£34.99	Champion Wines, Dvine Grapes, Good Wine Online, Slurp
Gauchezco, Gran Corte, Mendoza, Argentina 2012	87	88	87	87	Aromas of forest floor, sweet fruit and cassis. The palate is powerful, but lacks some life and vivacity.	14.5%	2019-2020	£49.99	Slurp, The Surrey Wine Cellar, Vagabond, Whalley Wine Shop
La Gran Revancha Blend, Beau Lieu, Mendoza, Argentina 2013	87	89	84	87	Black fruit aromas make way for a spicy blockbuster in the mouth. Cinnamon, nutmeg and tobacco leaf complement well-balanced acid and tannins.	14.5%	2019-2022	N/A UK	www.revanchavinos.com
Proemio, Grand Reserve, Mendoza, Argentina 2014	87	85	89	88	Grassy, smoky plum aromas. Heady ripe fruit emerges. Fine, fleshy, firm palate profile. Spicy! Quite serious and firm-structured; would work well with food.	14.5%	2019-2026	N/A UK	www.proemiowines.com
Rutini, Antología XLIV, Uco Valley, Argentina 2014	87	89	86	85	Walnuts and mixed spice give an explosion on the senses. Cassis, strawberry and some fig on the palate, although it lack some freshness and precision.	14.5%	2019-2021	N/A UK	www.rutiniwines.com
Vinos de Potrero, El Debut, Gualtallary, Argentina 2014	87	87	88	86	A malty, creamy, high-toned and slightly raisin character. There's jammy fruit on the palate too, making it dense and oaky with limited freshness.	14.5%	2019-2022	£33.49	Latin Wines Online
Bodega Vistalba, Corte A, Mendoza, Argentina 2016	86	88	85	86	Voluptuous and attractive, with dark fruit, cherries, spices, cloves, cardamom, chocolate and dried herbs. Excellent concentration with a modest finish.	14.5%	2019	£35	Bibendum
Cheval des Andes, Mendoza, Argentina 2015	86	86	83	89	Aromas are enticing and complex: dark fruits, mocha, dried herbs, cedar and sweet spices. Lovely ripe juicy fruit with beautiful savoury notes.	14.5%	2019-2023	POA	Moët Hennessy UK
MontGras, Intriga Máxima, Alto Maipo, Chile 2015	86	86	87	86	Distinctive aromas, almost floral, blackcurrant and kirsch. Some savoury, meaty notes. A blockbuster with intense ripe, juicy fruit, and generous oak.	15%	2019-2023	POA	North South Wines

**COMMENDED** 83-85pts

■ Agostino, Familia Gran Reserva, Mendoza, Argentina 2015 85, 14.5%, 2019-2021, N/A UK [www.fincaagostino.com](#) ■ Familia Schroeder, Blend, Patagonia, Argentina 2013 85, 14%, 2019, £40.75 Carruthers & Kent, Ellis of Richmond ■ Filus, MCC, Mendoza, Argentina 2016 85, 14.5%, 2019-2020, £39 Gourvid ■ Cousiño Macul, Lota, Maipo, Chile 2010 84, 14.5%, 2019-2020, £52 Amazon UK, Gales of Llangollen, Raffles Fine Wines

**FAIR** 76-82pts

■ Benegs Lynch, Old Vines Blend, Mendoza, Argentina 2012 83

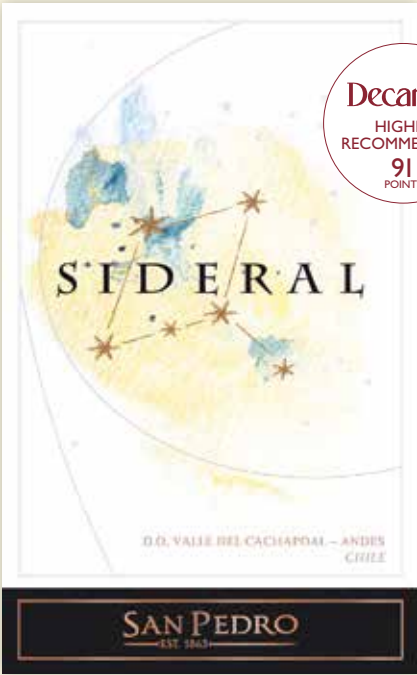
**FAULTY**

■ Algodon, Premium Reserve Cabernet Franc-Malbec, Mendoza, Argentina 2013 (VA) ■ Mauricio Lorca, Inspirado Blend, Mendoza, Argentina 2013 (not clean) ■ Viña El Principal, Andetelmo, Maipo Andes, Chile 2015 (TCA)



**Decanter**  
HIGHLY  
RECOMMENDED  
90  
POINTS

**Decero Amano,**  
Remolinos Vineyard,  
Agrelo, Mendoza,  
Argentina 2014  
Contact:  
stephanie.morton-small  
@decero.com  
UK Importer:  
Berkmann Wine Cellars  
[www.berkmann.co.uk](#)  
US Importer: VINTUS  
[www.vintus.com](#)



**Decanter**  
HIGHLY  
RECOMMENDED  
91  
POINTS

**San Pedro**  
Sideral 2017  
Contact: Daniela Traviesa Olivari  
[dtravie@vsptwinegroup.com](#)