

# WINE News

*South America from mountain to sea:  
new wines, classic wines, pipeño wines.*



## March 2, 2015 Features

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## Getting the Picture in Chile and Argentina

By Joe Manekin

Just seven short months after our most recent newsletter foray into Chile and Argentina, we return again with a bevy of cool new discoveries and great values that run the gamut from entry level to bottlings worthy of long-term cellaring. As promised last year, I travelled to both countries to better understand what is happening there: what are the challenges facing winegrowers, how are people relating to their vineyards, how are they deciding what to plant, where and why, how are winemaking and cellar techniques evolving, and what are people's dreams and goals for their respective projects? And, how do we as a large, successful, family-owned independent retailer—one that is capable of selecting products we love and putting our reputations on the line to bring to market what we think are singular wines—fit into this picture? Last year, I mentioned some of what I believe are the

key advantages to Chilean and Argentinean wines: diverse soil types, widely ranging elevations and climates, and, perhaps most importantly, strong knowledge of and historical respect for agriculture. My recent travels certainly confirmed these beliefs. They also reminded me of certain vinicultural ties to the Old World (see "Chile's French Connection," page 3) as well as a strong interest in continuing to explore terroir and evolve in the cellar in order to create the best wines possible (see "Uco Valley," page 2). Clichéd as it may sound, terroir exploration and cellar technique are two touchstones in making wine; it is great to see both of these truly happening in Argentina and Chile. To hear more about our offerings, please email me at [JoeManekin@KLWines.com](mailto:JoeManekin@KLWines.com) and I will add you to my personal list.

**2011 Clos des Fous "Grillos Cantores" Cabernet Sauvignon Alto Cachapoal (\$14.99)** 92 points JS: "This is a Cabernet with dark berry, chocolate and hazelnut character. Full body, fine tannins and a delicious finish. Balanced. The wood and fruit are in harmony."

**2013 Ritual Pinot Noir Casablanca Valley (\$17.99)** 94 points JS: "A dense and wonderfully long and silky Pinot with strawberry, light hazelnut and hints of lemon peel. Full body, yet lively and wired. This gives competition to Sea Smoke Pinot but at half to one-third the price."

**2013 Montsecano "Refugio" Pinot Noir Casablanca Valley (\$29.99)** 93 points Wine Advocate: "I loved the 2013 Refugio Pinot Noir, which comes from purchased grapes in Lo Ovalle, the zone closest to the sea from Casablanca that is worked organically. This is superb for a second wine. It has a crisp nose of shiny red berries and just a hint of grass with a fresh, light-bodied palate, like a red cherry juice, with tension and acidity. Veeery drinkable, great Pinot Noir...These are some of the best, if not the best Pinot Noirs in Chile."

**2012 Luca Malbec Uco Valley (\$29.99)** 93 points, #19 Wine Spectator's Top 100 Wines of 2014: "Very suave and polished, with ripe, pure flavors of black-berry, hoisin sauce and black pepper. Finely textured, this is packed with tar and roasted plum notes, showing plenty of licorice snap and dark chocolate accents on the powerful finish. Best after 2020."



## The Future of the Uco Valley, Today: Stones, Bones and Cement

As you head south from Mendoza, capital city of the province of the same name, the weather gets noticeably cooler. Lujan de Cuyo, Agrelo, Chacras are all noticeably cooler during the day and especially at night, when one can especially appreciate this temperature differential after walking vineyards during the day! Proceeding further south, you enter the Uco Valley, and heading west towards the Andes and the Río Tunas, it is here that you will find one of the great terroirs in the valley, Gualtallary (wa-ta-ya-ree). Here is where Catena's Adrianna vineyard lies, source of impressive Malbec and perhaps even more impressive Chardonnay, growing in particularly stony and calcareous soils (this is where the "stones" and "bones" in our title come from—names of spectacular, distinctive, single-parcel Chardonnays made by Catena). Along with Altamira to the south, these are areas of high elevation, as high as 4,500 feet, where alluvial fans have formed and deposited lots of stones, many of which are dusted with a calcareous coating. There are also granite, quartz and clay interspersed in the soil strata as well, and there is a noticeable mineral imprint on Gualtallary wines, just as there is for wines from Altamira.

Nowhere was this distinction more clear than in a tasting of two 2014 tank samples of Zuccardi's "Alluvional" Malbecs, one from Gualtallary and the other from Altamira. Sebastian Zuccardi enthusiastically explained how he learned that Altamira's soils were formed, how they

are stony for being on the alluvial fan as well as calcareous (fossilized marine creatures are readily discovered). Sebastian is also very excited about the new family winery in Altamira, a concrete structure housing cement fermentation vats, locally made cement eggs and amphorae.

**2011 Zuccardi "Q" Cabernet Sauvignon Gualtallary and La Consulta (\$16.99)** Bright, slightly floral, crunchy red fruits also show a hint of Gualtallary calcareous mineral drive. Very tasty, serious Cab for the price!

**2012 Zuccardi "Q" Malbec La Consulta and Vista Flores (\$16.99)** Softer than the Cab, with supple dark and mixed berry fruits, this shows the warm, easy to love fruit of the 2012 vintage.

**2011 Catena "White Stones" Adrianna Vineyard Chardonnay Mendoza (\$79.99)** The yellow-fruited flavor intensity, bright acidity, minerality and length in this wine bring to mind the authority of Grand Cru white Burgundy.



*Sebastian Zuccardi digs deep into the Altamira dirt.*

## Old Wood, Old School: Two Pioneers in Lujan de Cuyo

Anyone who knows my tastes in this wide world of wine knows that I have a healthy appreciation of tradition, craft, and knowledge passed down through the generations. These things tend to dovetail with the type of consistent, steady approach, time-tested techniques, and complete refusal to risk upsetting the proverbial egg cart that produces wines which always reflect a house style, wines which adamantly resist trends and, depending on one's take on things, are either all the better, or worse, for this stubborn refusal to change. Many of you are familiar with some of these wineries: Mayacamas Vineyards (Napa), Lopez de Heredia (Rioja), Bartolo Mascarello (Barolo), Chateau Musar (Bekaa Valley, Lebanon), to name but a few. What connects these folks (besides well-used oak vessels), I believe, is a common ethos and spirit of intent, something that suggests not only "this is how we do things here," but perhaps, "this is how we do things and why would we do it any other way?"

Not surprisingly, I was really excited for my "traditionalist" day in Lujan de Cuyo. Given that this is the Mendoza district with the largest number of old vines planted, it somehow makes sense that two bastions of the old style are based here. The day started visiting with Hubert Weber at Bodega Weinert, a winery housed in an historic



*Hubert Weber checking out an older bottle.*

19th century building in Lujan de Cuyo. Hubert is from Switzerland, and first fell in love with Bodega Weinert wines while still living across the pond. Having tasted this incredible red, produced by Raul de la Mota, a legendary figure in Argentinean winemaking, Hubert shortly thereafter decided that he must work at this winery. And so he did, eventually becoming the winemaker, and, as I indicated earlier, the steward of strong traditions. According to Weber, the Weinert philosophy follows the guidelines of "traditional Bordelaise winemaking." Upon my prompting him to clarify that statement, Weber replied that winemaking at Bodega Weinert has its roots in post-Second World War Bordeaux. Grapes are fermented in concrete tanks, and the young wine is pumped over to large oak *toneles* made from Slavonian oak (not dissimilar from the *botti* of Piemonte) where it will rest for a

minimum of two years (much longer for higher end bottlings).

Carmelo Patti has definitely reached cult wine status in Argentina. Though his wines have not been particularly well known in the United States until recently, he is something of an international celebrity; while visiting he proudly showed off a t-shirt featuring the man himself, custom created for him by a loyal Carmelo Patti fan in Russia. While he produces a delicious old vine Malbec, Carmelo also makes



*Carmelo Patti, Malbec producer and a living legend.*

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## Chile's French Connection

As they have done nearly everywhere else in the New World, the French certainly have a noticeable footprint on the Chilean wine industry as well. Casa Lapostolle, owned by the same family that produces Grand Marnier, continues to put out a solid range of wines, the most famous of which, Clos Apalta, regularly receives high marks in the press. Almaviva (the joint venture of Concha y Toro and Baron Phillippe de Rothschild) is one of Chile's most collected luxury wines. Louis-Antoine Luyt has created quite a stir with his micro-cuvées from small growers in the Itata, Maule and Bio-Bio valleys (see "Big Country," page 4).

We are adding to that list two more names, Pedro Parra and Francois Massoc. These two are partners in a winery named Clos des Fous (see their Cabernet on page 1), a winery with the goal of exploring some of Chile's best terroirs, from alluvial terraces in Cachapoal to granitic sites in Cauquenes (Maule Valley), and presumably many more to come. Fous is French slang for crazy, and it is a tribute to their French education (both earned scholarships to study there) as well as a reminder of what so many people told them, that they were crazy to start their own winery.

Parra is sometimes referred to as "Dr. Dirt," for his unique understanding of soil types and their influence on wine; this is his consulting business. Having spent a day in the field with him, exploring a dozen different holes cut out between rows of vines, hearing him wax poetic about decomposed granite, and rejoice in what he calls "toblerones" (pieces of granite with multi-colored mineral specks which resemble toblerone chocolates), I can tell you that the man is passionate and commands attention from winery owners, vineyard hands and technical directors alike. He has a PhD in terroir, which he earned in Montpellier, France. Parra understands geology and soil types but as he says it, it is all in the service of great wine. This is what motivates him.

Francois Massoc is a consulting oenologist whose full-time gig is making the wines at Calyptra in the Alto Cachapoal district, about an hour and a half southeast of Santiago. Like Pedro, he was educated in

France, and also happens to be part French himself. Calyptra's owner wisely managed to convince Massoc to make the wines for him full time, a smart move as this man makes great wine. While Massoc will highlight the importance of Calyptra's beautiful vineyard sites, located on alluvial and colluvial terraces very close to the Cachapoal river, at over 2,900 feet of altitude in the foothills of the Andes, when pressed for details he will mention some techniques he tends to use in the cellar which are less commonly employed elsewhere in Chile. Another important point is that Massoc knows his barrels; he is a trained cooper and still single-handedly produces barrels from wood purchased from his favorite French cooperage, an unusual but highly effective arrangement.

**2012 Calyptra Sauvignon Blanc Gran Reserva Cachapoal Valley (\$39.99)** This wonderful Sauvignon Blanc shows lovely golden fruits and ripe citrus flavors, perhaps some starfruit, and well integrated toast as well. It is bright and mineral, a style somewhere at the intersection of barrel fermented white Rioja, Graves, and Sancerre.

**2010 Calyptra Chardonnay Gran Reserva Cachapoal Valley (\$32.99)** This is a large-framed Chardonnay with abundant acidity to balance the fruit. Ripe Meyer lemon flavors and well integrated spicy notes bring to mind a wine somewhere between Hanzell and good quality Meursault. 93 points RP.

**2010 Calyptra "Assemblage" Cachapoal Valley (\$34.99)** A blend of Merlot, Syrah and Cabernet Sauvignon, this shows pure cassis, mixed berry and blue-skinned fruit aromas, leading to a juicy, intensely flavored yet ultimately very purely fruited palate. Echoes of Ridge and the Santa Cruz Mountains?

**2009 Calyptra "El Zahir" Cachapoal Valley (\$79.99)** 80% Cabernet, 20% Merlot, aged for a little over two years in new barrels. The wine is, surprisingly, not incredibly oaky, a testament to the quality of the fruit as well as Massoc's knowledge of oak cooperage. Full of cherries and kirsch, with great intensity, persistence and length, this rivals some of Napa Valley's best. 92 points RP.

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a very well-regarded Cabernet Sauvignon and a blend as well. As is the case at Weinert, Patti uses concrete vats for initial fermentation and assembling final blends. Barrels are primarily used, and they are utilized for six years. These are classic wines, made in a style that, while still appreciated in Argentina, was certainly more prevalent perhaps 20 or so years ago.

**2009 Bodega Weinert "Carrascal" Mendoza (\$14.99)** This is perhaps the most traditionally made red wine in Argentina. It's awesome, I love it, our staff loves it, and I suspect many of you looking for something different from Argentina might love it as well. A blend of 45% Malbec, 35% Merlot and 20% Cabernet, this is a savory, dark cherry-fruited wine, with an excellent sense of individuality and style. Interestingly, the Cab and Merlot seem to stand out much more than the Malbec in this year's bottling. Fermented in concrete and then

aged in used Nevers oak, this is a distinctive wine that's very much its own thing—not much to do with what's going on in Mendoza right now. We love Weinert's wines for their intense fruit, earthy savor, and complete lack of new oak influence.

**2012 Carmelo Patti Malbec Lujan de Cuyo (\$29.99)** If you're curious about how to make a delicious, textbook Malbec, with all of the bursting purple fruit, a minimal amount of oak and no overextraction to distract from the wine's expression, here's how it's done. Start with terrific fruit (in this case from Pedriel in Lujan de Cuyo). Ferment with only native yeasts and age one year in concrete. Then age for another year in good quality, primarily used French oak barrels. Finally, another year of aging in the bottle. It's that simple, though when you taste the wine your thoughts will likely not be about winemaking, but wine drinking.

# Big Country: In Pursuit of Pipeño in the Maule, Itata and Bío Bío Valleys

*“When we’re out here in the coastal range, in the country, looking over the expansive valley here in Guarilhue, we immediately start humming the theme to Game of Thrones.” —Roberto Henríquez, Agricole Luyt*

**Chile’s wine business, by necessity, began and grew up around the vineyards immediately to the south of Santiago.** This is where much of the population resides, so why not seek out vineyards and winery operations nearby in the Maipo Valley, especially if the quality of the grapes ranges from good enough to very good, Cabernet Sauvignon in particular. So the Chilean wine industry historically grew up with a strong Maipo Valley Cabernet Sauvignon bias. Unfortunately, this came at the expense of those in other grape producing regions of the country, where grapes were sold to larger producers for very little money.

Things have changed. The south, and areas such as the Maule Valley, Itata and Bío-Bío valleys are very hip. Beautiful old Mission vines produce fruit that is often made into wine instead of distilled into brandy. Some of Chile’s largest players have hopped on the bandwagon, producing wines with critical and popular acclaim. That said, while there is a growing group of growers and winemakers doing great work to build up these southern valley regions, it took a Frenchman who studied in Beaune and worked with Marcel Lapierre to convince everyone of this region’s potential to produce delicious, characterful wines.

Louis-Antoine Luyt (LA for short) and his partners champion the work of careful growers in Maule, Itata, and Bío-Bío. They drive around in search of healthy, organic, dry-farmed vineyards, pay well for the fruit, and make delicious wines in their winery outside the town of Chillán. A recent focus of theirs is “pipeño,” loosely translated as “farmer wine,” the product of the most recent vintage, vinified simply with the goal of making a delicious, tasty wine that reflects the vintage and particular qualities of vineyard and region.

**Pipeño Pais “Coelemu” Itata Valley (1.0L \$15.99)** 100-plus-year-old Pais (Mission) grapes from the Coelemu vineyard, in the Guarilhue district of Itata, produce this generous, fresh, delicious young red.

**Pipeño Pais “Colonel de Maule” Maule Valley (1.0L \$15.99)** One of the more structured, masculine and grippy pipeño wines, from a warmer site in the Maule Valley. It is full of dark fruited, spicy personality, without sacrificing delicious fruit and drinkability.

**Pipeño Pais “Santa Juana” Bio-Bío Valley (1.0L \$15.99)** This particular pipeño is from the relatively cooler, damp Bío-Bío region, and is so light and refreshing, while still betraying the Mission grape’s somewhat wild personality and firm tannin structure.

## Cool and Coastal: Casa Marin by the Sea

**María Luz Marin started out as a bulk wine broker, and after having success on that side of the business, realized her dream to plant vines and make wine from her home village, Lo Abarca.** This is a very cool area, one with a much stronger Pacific influence than the Casablanca Valley. People thought she was crazy to plant here, but Marin stuck to her guns and now has created one of the most well respected projects in Chile. As much as I enjoy the wines, I have to respect María Luz even more so for showing some real *cojones*, and thriving in a predominately male, corporate environment. Her son Felipe makes the wines, his girlfriend Jamie handles export markets, and María Luz’ husband helps out with tours. It’s truly a family operation and, once you taste these wines, one that I think you will find easy to support!

**2013 Casa Marin Sauvignon Blanc “Los Cipreses” Lo Abarca San Antonio Valley (\$18.99)** Beautiful aromas of tangerines and pink grapefruits, as well as riper and rounder aromas of melons, lead to a palate of

great intensity. The citrus flavors and mouthfeel strike a pitch-perfect balance between rich, weighty texture, minerality and bright acidity. This is as eloquent an argument for Sauvignon Blanc grown on granitic soils as one could make.

**2013 Casa Marin Sauvignon Gris “Estero” Lo Abarca San Antonio Valley (\$21.99)** Rich golden fruit aromas, with some cantaloupe as well, lead to a palate that has an appealingly fatty, chewy quality, showing good structure and fine balance between sugar and acidity. This is an original wine.

**2013 Casa Marin Pinot Noir “Litoral” Lo Abarca San Antonio Valley (\$24.99)** Aromas of sappy, dark fruits and scruffy herbs in the background, leading to a muscular, dark-fruited expression of Pinot Noir, one that perhaps speaks as much to the cool climate and calcareous and granitic terroir as it does to the grape variety.

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