

# CHILEAN WINES among the best in the world

For many years the world saw Chile as a source of cheap and cheerful wines, but Eduardo Chadwick has almost single-handedly changed that perception. **Stephen Quinn** reports from London

**E**duardo Chadwick initiated blind tastings of fine Chilean wines around the world, starting at the Berlin Tasting in 2004. Do you remember that event? (Read *Steven Spurrier's firsthand account on page 12*). Like the famous Judgement of Paris in 1976 that showed the quality of Californian wine, the Berlin Tasting in 2004 also benchmarked Chilean wine against the world's best.

Steven Spurrier, at the time running a fine wine shop in Paris, organised the Judgement of Paris. Wines from California were tasted blind against their French equivalents, and American wines came top. At the time this was a seismic event in the wine world and probably the first time the supremacy of French wine had been challenged.

Hollywood made the 2008 movie "Bottleshock" about the event. Chadwick invited Spurrier, by then consultant editor at *Decanter* magazine, to host the 2004 event because of his experience at the Judgement of Paris. At the Berlin Tasting against First Growth Bordeaux and the best Italian Bordeaux blends, Chilean wines came first, second and fourth out of the 16 wines judged.

This year Chadwick's company marked the tenth anniversary of that now-famous event, publishing a book and organising a range of dinners. The book is called *The Berlin Tasting: Uncorking the potential of Chile's terroir*. Since 2004 Eduardo Chadwick has repeated the Berlin format at another 22 blind tastings in the world's major wine capitals, the most recent in mainland China (Xiamen and Shanghai).

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The process begins with an educational seminar on Chilean terroir in the context of other great terroirs followed by a blind tasting.

Since 2011 events have also been designed to test the potential of Chilean wines to age gracefully via vertical tastings. Multiple vintages of one of Chile's great wines, the *Seña*, were tasted blind against multiple vintages of other iconic wines from France and Italy, including the famous First Growths of France.

Chadwick's initial foresight has been vindicated via those tastings. Spurrier, chairman of the *Decanter* World Wine Awards, noted after the London tastings of 2012, "What Eduardo is proving now with his vertical tastings of *Seña* is that as his wines and similar vintages of Bordeaux age, his wines are still up there, judged equal, if not superior." Peter Richards MW agreed, "... in 10 or 20 years time, since wine aficionados around the world have finally got the message that Chile produces great fine wine, Eduardo will be recognised as the pioneer who changed their perceptions." Jeannie Cho Lee, MW, congratulated Chadwick for taking the risk of putting Chile's wines into blind tastings against the world's best Bordeaux-blends and "forging a legacy for the wines of Chile".

**I**n an interview in a London hotel in May 2014 Chadwick described Chile's wine industry as "sleepy" for more than a century before providers began "tooling up" in the 1980s. "A decade later [in the 1990s] we decided on a policy of growth and expansion through exports. The main difficulty was proving the quality of Chilean wine after years of it being seen as 'value for money'."

That was a reason for his proposing the Berlin Tasting and later events. Chadwick has plans to expand further into Asia.



**Above: Tasting of Viña Errázuriz wines from Chile at The Ledbury hotel in London. Left: Eduardo Chadwick, visionary owner of Viña Errázuriz and champion of Chilean wines**

In terms of the monetary value of wines sold, his products are second in the South Korean market and third in Japan and China. He plans to move into India, and has just started selling in Vietnam.

Don Maximiano Errázuriz founded the Viña Errázuriz estate in 1870 in the Aconcagua Valley. It has remained a family-run operation. Eduardo Chadwick graduated as an industrial engineer from the Catholic University of Chile and joined his father Alfonso Chadwick-Errázuriz at Viña Errázuriz in 1983 at the age of 23. Five years later he created Don Maximiano Founder's Reserve, the first ultra-premium wine from Viña Errázuriz. He also began experimenting with new clones and varieties such as Carménere and Syrah.

In 1995 Chadwick formed a partnership with Robert Mondavi and his family in California with the aim of creating the first Chilean icon wine. *Seña* was launched in January 1997. The company is converting the *Seña* Hillside Vineyard into a biodynamic estate, and introducing new grape varieties.

Chadwick is very interested in wine education and has been a principal supporter of the Institute of Masters of Wine since 1999. In July 2005 *Decanter* magazine included him among the 50 most influential people of the wine industry, and described Viña Errázuriz as the "quality benchmark from Chile". ♦