

The Specifics

Wine Details

Wine Name:	Cordillera de los Andes Carmenere
Vintage:	2022
Varietal(s):	100% Carmenere
Appellation:	Peumo (Cachapoal Valley)
Country:	Chile
Alcohol:	14%
Production:	12 months in French oak



What Is It

Carmenere is an ancient, dark-skinned grape originally from Bordeaux, where it was used as a blending varietal (much like Petit Verdot) until the phylloxera (that's a nasty little insect) plague of 1867 nearly destroyed all of the Carmenere vineyards in Europe. Thankfully, Carmenere was introduced to Chile by European winemakers in the mid-1800s, before the phylloxera epidemic. Where things get interesting is that the Chilean Carmenere was quickly mistaken for Merlot (they look very similar on the vine), leaving the winemaking world to believe the varietal was all but extinct. It wasn't until 1994 that oenologists (wine scientists) discovered that almost half the Chile's Merlot was actually Carmenere. It is the now the flagship red varietal of Chile.

The Cordillera de los Andes Carmenere is medium- to full-bodied, very intense crimson in color, with an aroma of eucalyptus and leather. The palate offers up blackberry, raspberry marmalade, bay leaf, clove, and faint oak. Pair with roast lamb, dry-rub barbecue, and beef spiced with aromatic herbs, especially cumin. This is a wine that can easily age for another decade.

Who Made It

Miguel Torres is revolutionary within the wine world. A fourth generation winemaker from Spain, he, upon joining the family business in 1962, introduced modern winemaking techniques, including French grape varieties, to what was a very traditional Spanish wine scene. In 1979, he became one of the first European winemakers to invest seriously in Chile, shifting the country's wine focus from quantity jug wines to high quality varietal wines. He is also a strong supporter of environmental responsibility, co-founding the International Wineries for Climate Action to push to industry-wide decarbonization.

Doug's Deep Thoughts

In Chile, there are, essentially, three wine regions - the cool, coastal areas influenced by the Pacific Ocean, the warmer inland valleys, and the high elevation sites along the eastern Andes. Cordillera de los Andes comes from the inland Peumo Valley at an elevation of 500 feet above sea level. The label actually represents that, as the vineyard is situated between the two peaks on the crest. The confusion with Merlot stems from their similar appearance, not because they ripen at the same time (Merlot ripens earlier) or even have similar flavor profiles. This is a wine that is simultaneously juicy and spicy. It's gloriously herbal letting it pair with virtually any strongly seasoned meat. We're lucky it was rediscovered.