



10 Must-Visit Vineyards Around Chile's Colchagua Valley

Specialized wineries, endless vineyards and the unique Carménère variety will leave you thirsty for more



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Photo courtesy of Jillian Dara

SAVE TO MY LISTS



Only two hours from Santiago lies Colchagua Valley; Chile's paradise of red wine. The long and hot summers, cooling mountain breezes and moderate spring rains produce the ideal growing conditions for stressing vines and petite grapes. The wineries are particularly known for producing Carménère, a bold red wine whose grape variety was first mistaken for Merlot when it was discovered in Chile.

It is actually one of the six original red varieties from Bordeaux, France but due to an outbreak of phylloxera in 1867, the grape was thought to be extinct as the climate in France didn't allow for many vines to regrow and reproduce. However, the Carménère survived in Chile due to the country's natural barriers, its strict agriculture laws and the temperate conditions in the Central Valley. Chile recognized the variety in 1998 and quickly became the world's top producer of this distinctive, full-bodied and peppery wine.

With vineyards everywhere you turn, this populated valley may be difficult to navigate. Here are 10 wineries that you can't miss. If you can't get to Chile anytime soon, these vineyards export the majority of their wines internationally, so scope out your local wine stores for these labels and possibly discover a new favorite bottle for wine Wednesdays.

5 Viu Manent



Photo Courtesy of Jillian Dara

At this family-owned vineyard, a horse and carriage whisks you around the property to show you the oldest and newest blocks of vines, stops for a tour around the storage room and brings you back to the courtyard for a rather extensive tasting. Whether you choose the ICON or standard tasting, you receive healthy pours of five or seven wines, so be prepared to take some notes and drink up. The ICON line includes El Incidente Carménère and Viu 1 Malbec, while the standard tasting includes the family's famed Secreto line, consisting of 90 percent one variety and 10 percent a 'secret' mixture of other varieties.

- **Personal Recommendation:** Viu 1 Malbec is a vintage red, unique to the area, since most Malbec is found in Argentina.