

SE **Wine**

HD **Buyers' guide to Vintages: Oct 25th, part two**

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Chile's Fine Cabernets, Value Reds (and oh yes, Modernizing the LCBO)

by David Lawrason with notes from Sara d'Amato and John Szabo MS

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David Lawrason

A huge release of 154 new products awaits on Oct 25. Last week John Szabo penned an article about the Tuscany feature(<http://www.winealign.com/blog/2014/10/17/buyers-guide-to-vintages-oct-25th-part-one/>), and we also suggested some fine whites. This week we move on to the second, smaller feature - Chile, and we offer our thoughts on other good value reds as well. But as this is also an historic week that sets a new compass for the LCBO, I hope you will indulge a brief digression. Or you can skip to our reviews below.

Queen's **Park** announced this week it is ready to embark on the "modernization of the LCBO", based on a panel review headed up by TD Bank CEO Ed Clark. Premier Kathleen Wynne has accepted his report with gusto. The current LCBO retailing model is essentially a one-shop-fits-all system of neighbourhood stores - some larger, some smaller. A modernized LCBO would include Costco-like box stores, specialty boutiques, sales in grocery outlets and expanded private stores for Ontario **wine**. It all adds up to far more shelf space, so the end game should be vastly larger and on-going selection of both favourites and obscurities. I would set a goal of triple the selection that Ontarians now have - more in line with such radical locales as Alberta and **B.C.** We could also aspire to be like Chicago or New York but let's not go crazy.

I am disappointed that Kathleen Wynne won't really do the right thing for Ontario consumers and taxpayers - take on the Ontario Public Service Employees Union (OPSEU), sell off the LCBO completely and let the private enterprise do the modernization. I understand that a large constituency in Ontario still believes Ontario will make more money by owning the ship (rather than by licensing and taxing alcohol to collect as much as it needs). And that others believe alcohol is more safely retailed by government stores. But they are beliefs that ignore the facts. As witness I give you THE WAY IT WORKS IN THE REST OF THE WORLD, including five other Canadian provinces. But hey, if we have to take this baby step of "modernization" I am all for it, and for doing it well. So we need architects of modernization who will think big, far and wide.

Chile's Unique Cabernets

On October 30 Eduardo Chadwick of Errazuriz will be in Toronto for a **sold**-out VINTAGES-hosted gala dinner to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the Berlin Tasting, which pitted top Chilean cabernet sauvignon-based wines against the best cabernets of the world. Similar tastings then rolled out to major **wine** capitals around the world - **Hong Kong**, Dubai, London, Toronto (2006), New York and Beijing to name some. Throughout the ten-year project Chilean wines placed among the top three in 20 of the 22 tastings, achieving a remarkable 90 per cent preference rate by over 1,400 participating key palates from around the world. All of which would indicate that Chile is perfectly capable of making outstanding expensive **wine**.

But what about the less expensive \$12 **wine** that we open on Tuesday night or the \$25 bottle on Saturday night? I have recently had an opportunity in preparation of the Toronto Life Eating and Drinking Guide to taste a lot of Chilean **wine** at this level, and whenever I do that I come back to the same conclusion that the quality level is very high at any price point. And another recent experience with just one **wine** - a five year vertical of Santa Carolina's Reserva de Familia(
<http://www.winealign.com/wines/62834-Santa-Carolina-Reserva-De-Familia-Cabernet-Sauvignon-2011>) - proved that Chilean cabernet not only ages well, it shows quite distinct vintage variation. Just like that other region where cabernet thrives - Bordeaux.

There is a sense of purity and freshness and vibrancy to Chilean **wine** that is quite unique among New World wines, and it's based on Chile's intriguing position as a maritime region blessed with almost endless sun during the growing season. It's cool and bright at the same time, the fruit ripens well but does not lose its acidity. I find this particularly true and important for Chile's later ripening cabernet sauvignons and cousin carmenere, which are of course the backbone of Chile's **wine** industry. Yes, it can also be experienced in the emerging syrahs and the whites, but Chilean cabernet is to me among the very best in the world. Few other regions in the world capture cab's aromatic essence so well (I would include Coonawarra and Margaret River in Australia).

So Chilean reds are where we begin our picks this week, and I only wish the selection were larger.

Emiliana 2011 Coyam(<http://www.winealign.com/wines/59239-Emiliana-Coyam-2011>), Colchagua Valley, Chile (\$29.95)

John Szabo - I've long admired Emiliana; the majority of production is certified organic and biodynamic from vineyards stretching from Casablanca in the north to BÃfÃo-BÃfÃo 500kms further the south. Coyam is the top-of-the-line, Demeter-certified blend (2/3 Syrah and Carmenere, 1/3 Merlot and Cabernet Sauvignon, with a drop of Mourvedre and Malbec) that stands out for its complexity, appealing savouriness and **firm**, age worthy structure. Best 2016-2021.

David Lawrason - Coyam is a biodynamically grown blend from a single **property** in the heart of Colchagua. It captures that vibrant, juicy blackcurrant essence of Chilean cabernet perfectly; with less of the mentholated greenness found in Maipo versions.

Sara d'Amato - The word "coyam" refers to the oak trees which surround the **estate's** hand-harvested vineyards. This approachable and supple blend features lovely notes of violets and pepper a long with a local spice called "boldo" (aromatically, a cross between verbena and oregano).

MorandÃfÃ© 2011 Gran Reserva Cabernet Sauvignon(
<http://www.winealign.com/wines/68430-Morande-Gran-Reserva-Cabernet-Sauvignon-2011>), Maipo Valley, Chile (\$17.00)

David Lawrason - This is a Maipo classic from a cooler vintage, so expect a strong updraught of almost pine/balsam greenness around the blackcurrant fruit. MorandÃfÃ©'s main **site** is the Romeral **Estate**, a 50ha **property** in Alto Maipo, at higher elevation in the Andean foothills. The vineyards were only planted in the mid-2000s, indeed this modern winery was only founded in 1996.

John Szabo - This is a rare Chilean cabernet aged in large foudres rather than the more usual barriques, and is all the more fruity and savoury for it. This will appeal to drinkers who prefer earthy, resinous (old world style) wines over chocolate-vanilla-tinged examples. Yet it's still distinctly Chilean with its succulent fruit core. Best 2014-2019.

Miguel Torres 2010 Cordillera De Los Andes Syrah(
<http://www.winealign.com/wines/68448-Miguel-Torres-Cordillera-De-Los-Andes-Syrah-2010>), Maule Valley, Chile (\$19.95)

John Szabo - The reliable house of Torres has been in Chile since 1979, and today owns 400ha of vineyards on six properties. The Cordillera syrah is selected from Maule Valley fruit several hundred kms south of Santiago, and is crafted in a balanced and **firm**, typically smoky style, more savoury than fruity. Best 2014-2020.

Sara d'Amato - This sensual syrah from Torres' Cordillera line (small batch production with more careful attention to detail) exhibits cool climate elegance and very mild oak spice. Great finesse here for the price.

David Lawrason - One of the difficulties with Chilean syrah is that some are almost as green on the nose as cabernet or carmenere. This avoids that scenario, perhaps because the vines planted in the lee of the low coastal Cordillera in southern Maule. It shows nicely ripe lifted, grapy/blueberry fruit; good weight, density and acidity. Wanted a bit more length, but it is fair enough at the price.

Caliterra Tributo 2011 Single Vineyard Carmenère(<http://www.winealign.com/wines/49593-Caliterra-Tributo-Single-Vineyard-Carmenere-2011>), Colchagua Valley (\$16.95)

David Lawrason - This took a Judges Choice in the World **Wine** Awards of Canada offering very good value. One of the great attributes of carmenere is its complexity, and here the quite lovely fresh currant fruit is nicely fitted with spice, chocolate and a touch of fire ember smokiness.

Montes 2013 Outer Limits Sauvignon Blanc(<http://www.winealign.com/wines/68445-Montes-Outer-Limits-Sauvignon-Blanc-2013>), Zapallar Vineyard, Aconcagua Valley (\$19.95)

Sara d'Amato - The Outer Limits attempts to push boundaries in terms of viticulture - planted in a coastal area of Aconcagua, only 7 kilometers from the ocean, this unique **site** offers an intense freshness and appeal. Compounding that cooler climate is a cooler vintage. The **wine** feels like a classy Marlborough sauvignon blanc at a very competitive price.

Other Red Highlights

Henry Of Pelham 2012 **Estate** Cabernet/Merlot(<http://www.winealign.com/wines/65644-Henry-Of-Pelham-Estate-Cabernet%2FMerlot-2012>), Short Hills Bench, Niagara Peninsula, Canada (\$24.95)

John Szabo - One of the best cabernet-merlots from the Speck brothers in some time. The warmth and generosity of the 2012 vintage shines through, yielding an arch-classic, cool(ish) climate **wine** that hits all the right notes. Best 2014-2022.

Heartland 2012 Shiraz(<http://www.winealign.com/wines/68431-Heartland-Shiraz-2012>), South Australia (\$18.95)

David Lawrason - This is drawn from vineyards in Langhorne Creek and Limestone Coast, both cooler areas of South Australia, perhaps lending the very lifted, appealing aromatics of menthol and blackcurrant/blackberry fruit with well integrated pepper and oak. It's full bodied, dense, linear and vibrant with excellent focus and length, especially for the money.

Alpha Crucis 2010 Titan Shiraz(<http://www.winealign.com/wines/68497-Alpha-Crucis-Titan-Shiraz-2010>), McLaren Vale, South Australia, (\$23.95)

Sara d'Amato - Alpha Crucis is the "boutique" label of Chalk Hill winery (no relation to the California winery). There is some impressive depth here for the dollar and despite the **wine**'s big, unctuous profile, it remains balanced and varietally characteristic.

Domaine Des Bacchantes 2012 C  tes Du Rh  ne(<http://www.winealign.com/wines/68520-Domaine-Des-Bacchantes-Cotes-Du-Rhone-2012>), France (\$16.95)

John Szabo - Here's a keenly priced, organically-farmed, satisfying and authentic C  tes du Rh  ne to **buy** by the case to enjoy over the winter with comfort food like braised meat dishes and stews. Best 2014-2019.

Famille Perrin 2012 Les Christins Vacqueyras(<http://www.winealign.com/wines/68521-Famille-Perrin-Les-Christins-Vacqueyras-2012>), Rhone Valley, France, (\$24.95)

Sara d'Amato - A highly appealing, romantic southern French red that is sure to sweep you off your feet. Perrin has been hard at work attempting to define the quality appellations of the southern Rhone by making this line of appellation specific wines. Vacqueyras has begun to give its more esteemed neighboring appellation, Gigondas, a run for its money as of late and this is a terrific example of the finesse, restraint as well as the appealing peppery spice and garrigue offered by this fine region.

Ch  teau Rigaud 2012 Faug  res(<http://www.winealign.com/wines/68516-Chateau-Rigaud-2012>), Languedoc-Roussillon, France (\$17.95)

Sara d'Amato - Faugeres is a southern French appellation located just north-east of the city of Beziers and gets unfortunately overlooked in terms of quality appellations. Lucky for us, the prices remain extraordinarily reasonable for these schist grown wines that offer a surprising amount of complexity, depth and often exhibit a charming, meaty character. The 2012 Chateau Rigaud is certainly a find worthy of your attention.

Pelissero 2012 Munfrina Dolcetto d'Alba(
<http://www.winealign.com/wines/68522-Pelissero-Munfrina-Dolcetto-D%27alba-2012>), Piedmont, Italy
(\$18.95)

David Lawrason - This is one of the best dolcettos of recent memory - a fresh, **firm** and engaging youngster with fairly lifted, complex aromas of blueberry, pickled beet and black pepper, with a touch of smokiness. It's from a single **site** (Munfrina) planted in 1980 near the village of Treiso.

Quinta De Cabriz 2011 Seleccionada Colheita(
<http://www.winealign.com/wines/68527-Quinta-De-Cabriz-Seleccionada-Colheita-2011>), DÃfÃ£o, Portugal
(\$15.95)

John Szabo - I find touriga nacional-based blends from the DÃfÃ£o to be more floral and fresh than their Douro counterparts, and this example delivers the **business** at an attractive price. Tinta roriz (tempranillo) contributes its succulent acids and fresh red fruit, while alfocheiro adds its own savoury dark fruit. Enjoy over the next 1-3 years.

Andreza 2011 Reserva Douro(<http://www.winealign.com/wines/68526-Andreza-Reserva-2011>), Portugal
(\$16.95)

John Szabo - 2011 was a superb vintage in the Douro (a widely declared vintage port year), and this smart value will satisfy fans of big and impactful wines, with more power than finesse. Best 2014-2018.

David Lawrason - Ditto, great value!

Vega Escal 2008 Priorat(<http://www.winealign.com/wines/68532-Viticultors-Del-Priorat-Vega-Escal-2008>), Spain (\$21.95)

David Lawrason - Top Priorats can weigh in at five times this price; so at \$22 I was not expecting the great structure, tension and depth that makes Priorat so intriguing.

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