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## Wines of Chile – 1



Chilean wine is wine made in the South American country of Chile. Chile has a long viticultural history for a New World wine region dating to the 16th century when the Spanish conquistadors brought *Vitis vinifera* vines with them as they colonized the region. In the mid-19th century, French wine varieties such as Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot were introduced. In the early 1980s, a renaissance began with the introduction of stainless steel fermentation tanks and the use of oak barrels for aging. Wine exports grew very quickly as quality wine production increased. The number of wineries has grown from 12 in 1905 to over 1,000 today.

Chile is the largest exporter of wines in the world, and the ninth largest producer. Chilean wine exports are valued at \$1.5 billion, midway between that of California and Argentina.

### History.

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ignored the instructions, preferring their domestic production to the oxidized and vinegary wines that didn't fare well during the long voyages from Spain. They were even so bold as to start exporting some of their wines to neighboring Peru with one such export shipment being captured at sea by the English privateer Francis Drake. When Spain heard of the event rather than being outraged at Drake, an indictment was sent back to Chile with the order to uproot most of their vineyards. This order, too, was mostly ignored.

In the 18th century, Chile was known mostly for its sweet wines. To achieve a high level of sweetness the wines were often boiled which concentrated the grape must. Following his shipwreck off the coast at Cape Horn, Admiral John Byron (Grandfather of the poet Lord Byron) traveled across Chile and came back to England with a glowing review of Chilean Muscatel comparing it favorably to Madeira. However, a prominent wine writer of the time was not as impressed, comparing Chilean wines to a "potion of rhubarb and senna."

Despite being politically linked to Spain, Chile's wine history has been heavily influenced by French, particularly Bordeaux, winemaking. Prior to the 19th century, Chilean wine was heavily influenced by their visitors from the Rioja wine region. The Chilean wine industry was transformed by bringing their experience and technical knowledge to Chile.

Political instability in the 20th century and high taxes tempered the growth of the Chilean wine industry. The vast majority of Chilean wine was considered low quality and mostly consumed locally. As awareness of Chile's favorable growing conditions for viticulture increased, so did foreign investment. This period saw many technical advances in winemaking as Chile earned a reputation for reasonably priced premium quality wines. Chile began to export extensively, becoming the third leading exporter into the United States by the turn of the 21st century.

Source: Adapted from Wikipedia

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