

CARMÉNÈRE CHILEAN GRAPE AND IMPORTANT FACTS



For a good wine tasting it is common to always be looking for new flavors and varieties to sophisticate the palate and trying to find the best specimens sooner or later it is inevitable to end up with the noble and tasty Carménère grape.

The Carménère grape is capable of producing one of the most interesting and aromatic wines of all vineyards. It has a unique history and characteristics and is a bestseller in the world.

The Carménère grape is a variety originating in the Bordeaux region of France and was part of the traditional Bordeaux cut before Cabernet Sauvignon emerged around the 19th century and Merlot emerged in the following century.

French vineyards were hit by the devastating phylloxera plague around the 1870s causing the Carménère grape to be declared extinct. However, specimens of the grape eventually migrated with Europeans to the South American continent and were grown in Chile amidst vineyards of the Merlot variety with which it was confused.

It was not until 1994 that the Carménère grape was rediscovered by experts and identified as the same Carménère from France. It is currently Chile's most emblematic grape and a success in sales and exports.

The Carménère grape survived thanks to the Chilean geographical isolation. The country is surrounded to the west by the Pacific Ocean, to the east by the Andes, to the south by the isolated Antarctic lands and to the north by the sands of the Atacama Desert.

Thus, the vineyards grow safely in the country, free from pollution and saved from exterminating pests such as phylloxera. Carménère grape is also grown in Italy, USA and in China is known as Cabernet Gernischt. However, the amount produced is not even comparable to that of South American lands.

Varietal wines made with only one grape variety produced by Carménère are usually wines with a striking flavor and a great deal of structure. Therefore, they are hardly indicated for immediate consumption, as this type of vineyard is considered one of the most potent, allowing the production of wines with excellent storage potential.

The fact is that, having been rediscovered in the 1990s, there are no Carménère wines that have more than 10 years of life. However, due to the potency of this variety, wines can last from 10 to 20 years if stored in perfect condition.



Despite the similarity and close characteristics some noticeable differences help in the identification of Merlot and Carménère vines. Thus, when young the leaves of the Carménère grape have a reddish tint underneath while the leaves of the Merlot grape are white.

Another reason that causes confusion between the 2 grapes is the proximity of the flavors, as both are known to have sweet aromas and soft tannins, but other important details distinguish one variety from the other.

Robust Carménère vines mature 2 to 3 weeks later than Merlot vines, and harvests are reduced so that the Carménère grape is well ripe at harvest time.

The well-matured Carménère grape produces rich, cherry-toned wines with notes of coffee and chocolate. However, the lack of water between winter and harvest can cause immature grapes to have aromas of green pepper and typical of poor soils.

The confusion of grapes has already resulted in damage to Chilean wine making, as before 1994 the Carménère grape was treated as a Merlot grape and as the ripening time is

different the Carménère vineyard was not properly treated and the wine consequently lost quality.

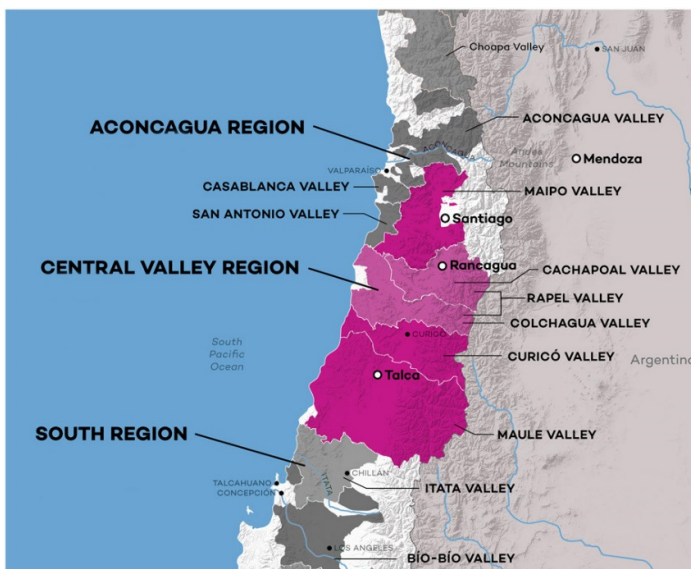
The mistaken production also made the Chilean Merlot often considered inferior to the French Merlot. However, from the discovery of the Carménère and the end of the confusion between the grape varieties, the production of South American wines has increased considerably.



The French name Carménère means carmine in English and is directly related to the skin color of this grape that exhibits a strong hue of an intense red and the characteristic color is easily transferred to wines made from the vine.

Carménère is a demanding and complex grape variety that found in Chilean soil the ideal climatic conditions to proliferate and to show its full flavor and potential and for being a very sensitive grape and take longer to mature compared to other varieties the vines need special attention.

Chile has approximately 117,000 hectares of planted vineyards divided into three main zones. The Aconcagua and Casablanca valleys, the central valley and the southern region. Aconcagua spans the main east-west valley to the north of the capital Santiago.



The Central Valley, where the wineries are concentrated, is divided into four valleys, Maipo, Rapel, Curicó and Maule. The most promising regions for Carménère are Maipo and Apalta.

The Maipo region has the highest temperature and is the smallest area of vineyards in the Central Valley regions and the area contains a high concentration of wineries. In the region, the wines

produced have floral notes of cherry, hibiscus and roses.

Aпта in the Aconcagua Valley is considered home to some of Chile's most famous producers and in addition to the Carménère Cabernet Sauvignon and Syrah varieties.

The Carménère grape is a complex and demanding grape variety and has found in Chile the ideal climatic conditions to proliferate and demonstrate its full potential and flavor. The Carménère grape is a very sensitive grape and needs special attention mainly because it takes longer to mature compared to other varieties. Thus, it was not always easy to produce wines with Carménère and when they wanted to make more ambitious wines producers had to use creativity with the variety. However, soon they were able to make bolder wines in combination with other grape varieties or varietal.

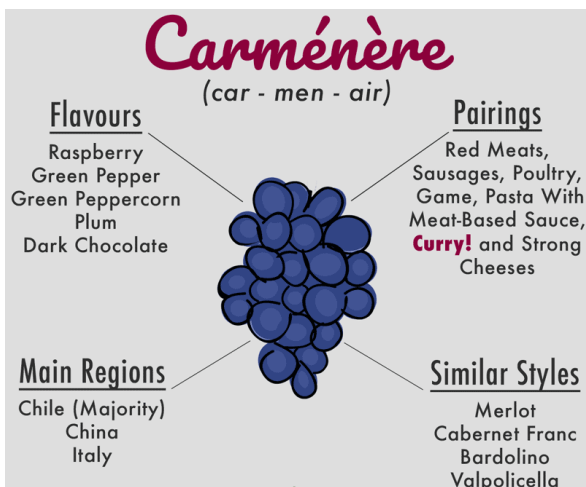


The Carménère grape produces unique characteristics to the wine and harvested at the exact moment the grape has freshness and depth that reminds aromas of cherries and plums and when removed from the vineyards in a late way its acidity is reduced. Thus, in general, the good varietal wines produced from the Carménère grape are dark and deep in color, elegant, well structured, with striking flavors, soft, silky and velvety tannins. Carménère wines have aromas reminiscent of ripe black fruits, moist earth and plenty of black pepper, and when they age in oak, they become complex and may have

hints of tobacco, vanilla and chocolate.

On the other hand, many producers think that Carménère is better when mixed with

other varieties of Bourdeaux and one of the varieties that is very well accepted in Chile is the blend of Carménère and Cabernet Sauvignon. The blend brings together the softness, strength, sweetness and acidity of black fruits and similar to what happens with Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot becoming a way to remember the history of Carménère in its homeland Bordeaux.



The wines made from the grape variety have shown great aging power and it is estimated that some bottles, if well stored, can last five, seven and even ten years.

Currently, other countries such as the USA, Argentina, Italy and, more recently, Brazil are also producing wines with the Carménère grape. However, in smaller dimensions than the main grape growing country Chile.

The Carménère grape wines are great on the palate and are ideal for accompanying pasta with spicy sauces, parmigiano-reggiano cheeses, low-fat and strong red meats such as lamb and game, and roasts in general.



Because of their higher acidity, wines often combine with acidic foods like sauces and pork. One benefit of using this wine for harmonization is the herbaceous flavor that goes well with roast meats like beef and chicken.

For those who want lighter options the drink can be paired with salads and Carménère wine can also be paired with cheeses such as mozzarella, olives, beef stew, roast turkey and others.