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Garagiste Winemakers of Chile: Introducing MOVI

If I were Hugh Johnson or Jancis Robinson, I could clear my throat and begin my story with a distinguished pronouncement about how I've watched several wine regions around the globe evolve from their infancy to later stages of maturity. But I lack the perspective of someone who's been a professional observer of the industry for decades. While I may not be able to tell you how, exactly, I do know that wine regions evolve over the course of their history, and that Chile finds itself in a particular stage of evolution that most regions probably encounter after a few decades of solid growth.



MOVI

Chile has recently entered the age of the garagiste winemaker. For those unfamiliar with the term, it originated in the Bordeaux region of France in the mid-1990's, where at the time it was a slightly derogatory term for winemakers who usually purchased grapes from other growers and made small lots of wines in equally small production facilities, which, in some cases, were garages. These upstart winemakers were controversial at the time, not only for breaking out from the traditional chateau model of winemaking (i.e. ownership of vineyards and making wine from a very specific place) but for styling their wines more towards the emerging California style of rich, ripe reds.

These days, garagiste can refer to any small winery operation, whether it be someone who has made the transition from being a hobbyist to selling their wine commercially, or more commonly, a well established winemaker who, in addition to their day job making wine for someone else, may be making a few thousand cases of wine under their own label.

For the most part garagiste has lost any negative connotation it might have once had, and in places like California, such wine operations have become more than commonplace, fueling a whole industry of custom crush facilities that exist to help such people make their wines. That doesn't mean, however, that some who adopt the moniker, or merely resemble it, don't still struggle for acceptance and visibility in their wine industry, wherever that may be.

Which brings me to a recently formed group in Chile called **MOVI: Movimiento de Viñateros Independientes** (Movement of Independent Vintners). Established on the first of June, 2009 through the launch of their website and a **public constitution of their purpose**, this group has staked out a position outside the conventions of the modern Chilean wine industry. But in addition to their philosophical stance as smaller, independent wineries in an industry dominated by big players, they also represent the beginnings of a natural diversification that was likely inevitable in Chile's wine industry.

While small winemaking projects have occurred before in Chile (indeed some of the bigger players in the industry began that way) there have never been a significant number of smaller wineries, and especially few that owned no vineyards themselves. Likewise, few Chilean winemakers have struck out on their own and created their own labels. Indeed, this is not only uncommon, it is seen as threatening by some in the mainstream Chilean wine industry. At least two of the founding members of MOVI have been fired from their jobs as winemakers for larger wineries for their participation in the group, and several more have gotten somewhat cold receptions to the news.

While some in the Chilean wine industry have welcomed, or at least made peace with the existence of MOVI, the fact that even a few might see the desire of a talented winemaker to make their own wines as a threat seems particularly backward. Especially when all over the world there are plenty of examples pointing to the value of letting winemakers do their own thing. Not only does it keep the winemakers happy (and less likely to be looking elsewhere for work) their success with their own projects often brings attention (and sales) to their employer's wines. Of course, there will be examples of superstars whose success will allow them to leave their employers and work only for themselves, but that's just the way things go with capitalism.

MOVI, above all, represents the maturing of the Chilean wine industry. While I'm not sure that a movement or an association was wholly necessary, certainly the diversification and experimentation that MOVI represents is very necessary to the evolution of Chilean wine.

I first heard about MOVI from importer [Joe Dressner](#), who suggested I look them up on my trip to Chile, and not 48 hours later I was sitting in the hotel lounge with Max Morales, who runs the popular and comprehensive site [AndesWines.Com](#) and he brought them up in the course of our conversation about the current state of the wine industry, and mentioned that he knew them. Five days later, about two dozen bottles showed up at the hotel, and the last thing I did before I left the country was taste through all the wines.

But before we get to the tasting notes, the folks at MOVI were kind enough to answer some of my questions by e-mail, via Derek J. Mossman Knapp, who owns and runs Garage Wine Company, and holds the title of Director of MOVI.

Vinography: Can anyone be a member of MOVI?

MOVI: Movi wants to embrace, not exclude, independent projects. Lord knows we are all very small, and the Goliaths of the Chilean wine business are very, very large. It is a tall order to convince the world we exist, let alone be found on the shelf and find our way to the dinner table in our industry. We need to get to a critical mass if we pretend to create some gravity with consumers.

Vinography: What makes a winery suitable for membership?

MOVI:

Wineries that are:

- small, quality-oriented
- make wine personally, on a human scale.
- craft wine to reflect a particular vision, beyond origin and terroir (which are a given)
- not Fortune 500 companies, not economic groups, and not patrons of convenience.

At our pourings there are no 'promotoras' (read: smiling Barbie-like-bimbos). The owner-maker pours. Above all the owner must have a quintessential passion for the endeavors of growing grapes and crafting fine wine.

To apply for membership a winery must meet the above criteria and send samples that are then tasted by the directors of our organization. Upon entry to the group, each project extends an invitation to receive all of the members at their winery, as a gesture towards cementing themselves into the group. Movis know Movis personally, and we also know and believe in each other's wines.

Movi's twelve founding members (we are now 16) stem from widely differing histories and more than a half-dozen wine-making countries. We are steadfast against homogeneity and insist Chile is anything but stock and standard. Give us some time!

Vinography: What has been the reaction to the creation of MOVI in Chile?

MOVI: Movi launched at an annual wine event at the W Hotel and briskly became a sensation. We didn't do anything so radically different. The idea that wineries could crank up some good tunes, show pictures of their families helping in the bodega (perhaps the photos of our dogs eating grapes was a little over-the-top), share pouring tables, help each other, and get people tattooing the Movi logo on their arm did, however, cause a stir. That tasting was the first time that the public could find many of the wines. Long story short: the restaurants, hotels and sommeliers had a chance to try all of the Movi wines and this was terrific for the lesser known projects in the group. Several hotels and restaurants now have a section of their wine lists devoted to Movi.

Afterwards, Movi was the darling of the Chilean wine press for a stretch, but Movi intentions are long-term and much more profound than the Chilean press let on. They tried to re-coin us as Vinos de Autor and a rather fresh Brazilian tried to ride our shirt-tails naming his distribution company "the association of chilean boutique wineries" or some such nonsense but he is all wet. Movi is the one and only. We are here to stay and we are only just beginning.

The press also reported about two winemakers being fired for being members of the group, amongst other minor scrapes. Movi is not out to play victim nor to create a schism in the wine trade. Movi aims to complement the works of the big trade and trade marketing associations like Wines of Chile, with everything we have: quality, personality, diversity, and that much needed dose of irreverence to complement the consumer's appreciation of Chile. We want the world to know Chilean wine does not come from mega projects alone. The industry needs smaller projects and we Movis are patient people -- otherwise, what would we be doing in wine.

Vinography: Why did the Chilean wine industry need MOVI right now?

MOVI: Movi is a breath of fresh air in a healthy but comfortable and conservative industry known for blue blazers, grey flannels, incessant profit, and industry concentration. That is not the whole truth about Chilean wine and we are here to prove it.

Movi will contribute positively to the Chilean wine trade and most of all, complement existing projects and missions with our own personal signatures and our energy keenly focused, albeit sometimes irreverently, on what consumers want: quality, diversity and personality.

The Chilean wine press, in particular, needs needs a push -- some impetus to dedicate more space towards opening up wine to new wine drinkers. They need to take the stuffiness out with the trash. Chile needs to tell more stories. Movis make for great stories.

Vinography: What is MOVI hoping to accomplish?

MOVI: Simple. We want a space on your table. (Well, not your table precisely, Alder, since you probably receive free samples, but definitely your neighbors' tables). We want people to open their minds about Chile. Investigate Chilean wine on the Internet. Read blogs, follow tweets, and find the *whole* Chile -- including the mavericks amongst the saints. And once in their lifetime, everyone should all come and see us on their airline miles.

Vinography: Are MOVI members' wines different from other wines produced in Chile? If so, why?

MOVI: Movi does not pretend to have any exclusive taste. That would be arrogant and fallacious. And there is certainly no uniformity whatsoever amongst the wines of Movi. Generally speaking, Movi wines surprise-- but only because people have not tried enough Chilean wine.

Are they less commercial? Perhaps. Is this because these are wines created by a person and for personal reasons and that person only found a market for them afterward? Perhaps. Are they generally well-rounded yet not in a manipulated way? Perhaps. The jury is out. You tell us. Ever so slowly people are taking interest. The consumer will have the last word.

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And so now, the tasting notes. It's worth noting that the staff at the W Hotel in Santiago did a particularly lousy job keeping track of the wines that were left for tasting, and we (myself and my two fellow journalists on the trip) suspect that some of the wines may never have made it to us. But here's what we did receive and taste through before we jumped on a plane back to the United States. Many thanks again to Max Morales and Andes Wine for making it happen.

POLKURA

Winemaker Sven Bruchfeld started this small Syrah project in 2002. After a career making wine for other people he says, "It may sound cliché but I wanted to make my own wine, walk my own vineyard, see it grow and make a living from all of that." Pokura means "yellow stone" in the native Mapuche language and references the yellow granite found in the Marchigue region of the Colchagua Valley where the wine comes from. Bruchfeld also makes a Sauvignon Blanc called Aylin from the Leyda region of the San Antonio Valley. Between the three wines (Aylin + the two syrahs) Polkura makes about 5000 cases annually. The wines are imported by Wine Markets International in New York.

2009 Aylin Sauvignon Blanc, Leyda, San Antonio Valley, Chile

Pale blond in the glass, this wine has a nose of warm hay, citrus zest, and fresh apples. In the mouth the wine is brisk with citrus and apple and pear flavors that linger in the finish. Good acidity, but some slight heat on the finish makes the wine end awkwardly. Score: between **8** and **8.5**. Cost: \$14.

2007 Polkura "Block G1" Syrah, Marchigue, Colchagua Valley, Chile

Inky garnet in color, this wine has a nose of blackberry and cassis, with hints of blueberry. In the mouth it is rich, broad and beautifully textured, with velvety tannins, and flavors of blackberry, blueberry, and cassis that linger in a long finish. Unfiltered as far as I can tell. Lovely, if a bit brawny. Score: around **9**. Cost: \$40.

2007 Polkura Syrah Marchigue, Colchagua Valley, Chile

Dark garnet in color, this wine smells of black cherry and cedar, with hints of blackberry. In the mouth it offers cassis and blackberry flavors with an underlying earthiness and leathery flavor which is echoed in the texture of the tannins. Moderate finish. Score: around **8.5**. Cost: \$22

FLAHERTY

Winemaker Ed Flaherty spends his days working at Viña Tarapaca, but at night he comes home to a front yard full of Tempranillo and his wife Jennifer Hoover, who sometimes he may find in their carriage punching down their latest creation. While they are a commercial operation (just barely -- selling their 500 case annual production in Brazil and Chile) Flaherty Wines started when their home winemaking experiments turned serious in 2004. In addition to the fruit they can harvest from their front yard, they buy Syrah and Cabernet Sauvignon from the Manzur vineyard in the Aconcagua Valley.

2006 Flaherty Red Wine, Aconcagua Valley, Chile

Dark garnet in color, this wine has a nose of barnyard, cedar, and dried cherries. In the mouth it offers dried cherry fruit, light tannins and a dirt and leather sort of flavor as the wine finishes. Score: between **7** and **7.5**. Cost: \$25

GARAGE WINE CO.

An unusual project that literally did start in a garage, Garage Wine Co. is the product of winemaker Pilar Miranda, cellar chief Derek Mossman, and co-owner Dr. Alvaro Peña. Miranda's day job is as a flavoring consultant to the cocktail industry, Mossman spent more than a decade in marketing for Chilean wineries, and Peña is a research scientist focused on anti-oxidants and the effects of oak on wine. Initiated by Mossman as a "kind of personal anti-dote to the disappointment of working with Chilean marketing." 20% of each vintage is pre-sold as futures to folks who then get a chance to come help out in the cellar. The wines are made almost entirely naturally, and fermented in oak. The grapes come from long-term contracts with growers, and include enough fruit for about 400 cases of wine. The wines are not yet imported to the United States.

2008 Garage Wine Co. "#18" Cabernet Carignan, Chile

Dark garnet in the glass, this wine smells of gamey meat, huckleberries, and cassis. In the mouth it offers huckleberry, cassis, and cedar flavors with lightly bitter, faint tannins that linger into the finish. Score: around **7.5**. Cost: \$25.

VINA VON SIEBENTHAL

Located basically just across the street from Errazuriz in the Aconcagua Valley, Viña von Siebenthal was started in 1998 by Mauro on Siebenthal, a swiss lawyer who left a 25-year career to start a winery. The first vintage was 2002, from the estates 60 acres of vineyards. Winemaker Stefano Gandolini, who also makes the Viña Carmen wine (across the street at Errazuriz), makes the roughly 12,000 cases of production, split across six different red wines. Imported by Vindino Wines in San Diego, Puerto Viejo Wines in Florida, and JC Imports in Rhode Island.

2007 Viña von Siebenthal Carmenere Reserva, Aconcagua Valley, Chile

Medium to dark garnet in the glass, this wine smells of cherries and camphor wood. In the mouth it is lean and taut with cherry, cedar, and oiled leather flavors. Moderate leathery tannins emerge on the surprisingly long finish. Score: around **8.5**. Cost: \$19.

2005 Viña von Siebenthal "Monthelig" Red Wine, Aconcagua Valley, Chile

Dark garnet in color, this wine has a nose of wet earth, sweet cassis, and aromatic cedar. In the mouth it is intense, with cherry, cedar, tobacco, and high-toned notes of berries and a very long finish that I can best describe as a long dusty road. Excellent. Score: around **9**. Cost: \$55.

2006 Viña von Siebenthal "Toknar" Red Wine, Aconcagua Valley, Chile

Dark garnet in the glass, this wine has a perfumed nose of sweet cherries, flowers, and raspberry aromas. In the mouth the wine is beautifully composed with bright cherry and raspberry fruit, supple tannins and bright acidity, and a long lingering finish that sweeps in notes of vanilla and sour cherry. Really lovely. Score: between **9** and **9.5**. Cost: \$115.

CLOS ANDINO

Started in 2007 as a personal project by José Luis Martin-Boquillard, Clos Andino produces about 1000 cases of wine, starting with its inaugural vintage of 2006 Cabernet. Martin-Boquillard spent nearly 20 years working as a winemaker for "big conglomerates" before leaving that all behind to focus on Clos Andino. The wine is not yet imported to the United States.

2006 Clos Andino "Le Cabernet Sauvignon" Reserva, Chile

Medium to dark garnet in the glass, this wine has a nose of sweet stewed cherries and chocolate aromas. In the mouth it offers sawdust, dried cherries, and lightly floral flavors with a long finish. Lacks some freshness that would make it a better wine. Score: between **8** and **8.5**. Cost: \$ not given.

GILLMORE

Gillmore is now in its second generation of ownership as a small family-run winery. Owner and patriarch Francisco Gillmore made his first vintage of Cabernet Franc in 1993, but since 2001 his daughter Daniele Gillmore and her husband, winemaker Andres Sanchez have been shaping the raw materials provided by Gillmore into something truly tremendous. Those raw materials include family vineyards of dry-farmed 20+ year-old vines in the Valley of Loncomilla. Sanchez is a talented winemaker and consultant, whose career has included and continues to include much international work in places like Tuscany and India. The winery produces a miniscule 2000 cases annually, of which a small amount is imported by Schneider Selections.

2006 Gillmore Carignane Riserva, Loncomilla Valley, Maule, Chile

Medium to dark garnet in color, this wine smells beautifully of violets, mulberries and blueberries. In the mouth it is juicy and bright with wonderful fruit flavors of mulberry, blueberry, and raspberry. Lightly grippy tannins emerge on the finish which is long and, again, gorgeously lush with fruit. Great balance and exquisitely juicy acidity makes this wine a fantastic pleasure to drink. Score: between **9** and **9.5**. Cost: \$28.

2003 Gillmore "Cobre" Gran Reserva, Loncomilla Valley, Maule, Chile

Medium to dark garnet in the glass, this wine has a gorgeous nose of cherry and cola and cedar. In the mouth it offers restrained but darkly complex flavors of cherries, tobacco, and wet wood. Perfectly balanced with excellent acidity and a nice dark earthiness that lingers along with floral qualities into a long finish. 13.8% alcohol. Outstanding. Score: between **9** and **9.5**. Cost: \$28.

2006 Gillmore Cabernet Franc Reserva, Loncomilla Valley, Maule, Chile

Dark garnet in color, this wine has a nose of cherry, leather, and hints of raspberry. In the mouth it has grippy, leathery tannins with cherry and wet earth flavors but not as much dynamism as it should. Good acidity and long finish with a touch of alcoholic heat. Score: between **8.5** and **9**. Cost: \$28.

2006 Gillmore Cabernet Sauvignon Reserva, Loncomilla Valley, Maule, Chile

Dark garnet in the glass, this wine has a very nice nose of ripe cherry and black cherry fruit with notes of pencil shavings. In the mouth it is expansive and bright with nice acidity and fine grained tannins that support a core of cherry, black cherry, and wet earth flavors. Refined and juicy, this is a very tasty wine. Score: around **9**. Cost: \$28.

CALIBORO

Francisco Marone Cinzano is better known in Tuscany than in Chile. There he owns the famous Col d'Orcia winery in Montalcino. In the early 1990's he decided to begin work on a project in Chile because of the potential he saw there. The winery produces a single wine, made by consultant winemaker Maurizio Castelli (who consults on projects in California and Italy), from a single vineyard planted in 1998. This dry-farmed vineyard in the Maule Valley has a mix of Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, and Cabernet Franc that we're specifically imported from Europe for the project. About 8000 cases of a single wine, Erasmo, are produced each year, some of which are imported to the US by Palm Bay Imports.

2006 Erasmo Red Wine, Maule Valley, Chile

Medium garnet in color this wine has a nose of mixed fresh herbs, fennel seeds, and dried cherries. In the mouth it is bright and unusual in flavor with a mix of leather, cedar, sour cherry, and raspberry flavors. Good acidity balances very grippy sandpaper tannins and moderate finish. Score: between **8.5** and **9**. Cost: \$30.

2005 Erasmo Red Wine, Maule Valley, Chile

Medium garnet in the glass, this wine has a nose of black cherry and cedar aromas. In the mouth it offers sour black cherry, wet earth, cedar, and hints of licorice on the finish. Fine grained but aggressive tannins emerge as the wine finishes. With a few years this will mellow and be even better. Score: around **9**. Cost: \$30.

Posted by: [Alder](#) on January 23, 2010 11:37 PM

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