Chile is relatively new to US consumers, with imports only becoming very well distributed here in the 1990's. But the history of winemaking there goes back to the Spanish in the 1550's. Chile is one of the rare wine regions that doesn’t suffer from the deadly Phylloxera louse. The country wants to keep it that way and, until recently, strict vine quarantine laws made it difficult to bring in new grape clones and to widen the range of varietals. With careful monitoring this has begun to change, as the fine Tabali Syrah we provided to Club members last year demonstrated. However this month, we will showcase wines from Viña MontGras, made from traditional Bordeaux grapes. These varietals arrived in Chile as early as 1830, before Phylloxera devastated Europe. Our Top Value members will get to try a delicious four-grape blend, and Smart Buy members a classic, Chilean Cabernet Sauvignon-Carménère blend. So what's the Napa Valley connection? Keep reading!

Colchagua Valley: The Colchagua Valley, which forms the southwestern half of the larger Rapel Valley, is one of Chile’s most promising wine regions. Located 80 miles, southwest of Santiago, the vineyards -- planted from approximately 650 to 3,110 feet above sea level -- are naturally protected by the Andes to the east and the Coastal Range to the west, where the Cachapoal and Tinguiririca Rivers flow. The terroir is influenced by its Mediterranean climate: warm, breezy, and dry. Soils are a mix of granite, volcanic, clay and schist. With no smog, the air is exceptionally clear, and the region is noted for its extraordinarily luminous sunshine. Average rainfall, which occurs mostly in the winter months of May to August, is about 24 inches. Humidity is low, and frost is unknown.

(continued on page 4)

Last month I attended an Italian wine tasting at a supplier warehouse in Sodo. I am glad I did because I met some of the Italian winemakers, and found several nice gems for our club. One of the fun things about the club is getting to introduce you to wines you probably wouldn’t buy on your own, because of lack of familiarity. This is one of those producers … a winery from the lesser known Italian wine region of Emilia-Romagna.

Emilia-Romagna lies just north of Tuscany, a sprawling area that, as the name suggests, was once two distinct regions. Within the region are distinctly different climates and soils, from Emilia’s rolling hills in the west, influenced by the Apennines, to Romagna’s plains to the east of Modena and Bologna. Viticulture began here in the 7th century, when vines were introduced by the Etruscans. It is hard to characterize the wines of this region, except to say that the region is unique in its sheer diversity.

Emilia’s best-known wine is Lambrusco, the much-misunderstood delicate bubbly red whose best examples are seldom found abroad. In its native region it is enjoyed as a dry wine that is exceptional with local cuisine. Contrastingly, Romagna DOC’s best wines are largely based on the red Sangiovese grape. Earlier examples were relatively light, but modern versions have great depth and flavor and are capable of ageing majestically. Our Top Value members will be receiving a Sangiovese Riserva which I think you will enjoy immensely. Foreign grape varieties perform well in the region, with frequent plantings of Cabernet Sauvignon and the Pinots which are responsible for some stylish modern wines. Nonetheless, many producers, including Poderi Monni … our chosen producer, are keen to exploit the potential of indigenous grapes in this varied region. One of these is Longanesi, also known as Burson, a delicious wine which our Smart Buy members will be receiving. The Longanesi grapes, from which you obtain Burson, makes a structured, full bodied red rich in aromas of wild fruit, spices and licorice, and with quite a high alcohol content. The grape is cultivated in the heart of Romagna, out in the plain near the town of Bagnacavallo, in the province of Ravenna. Longanesi grapes were rediscovered by Antonio Longanesi in the fifties, having seen a vine climbing up an oak tree. This makes us consider the habits of the beginning of last century, when vines where grown all together, and grapes were blended and vinified together, so that it was not unusual to ignore the existence of singular vine varieties among the vineyards.
**Viña MontGras**

MontGras, a leading wine producer from Chile’s Colchagua Valley, was established in 1993 by brothers Hernán and Eduardo Gras, together with their business partner Cristián Hartwig, with the goal of producing estate-grown Chilean wines of exceptional quality and originality. Santiago Margozzini serves as head winemaker.

The Gras family, of Catalan origin, has a long history connected to wine. Under the influence of his father and grandfather, who worked as wine merchants upon arriving in Chile, Hernán studied at the Catholic University of Chile, receiving degrees in Agriculture, Viticulture and Enology, and at École de Enologie in Bordeaux. He worked in the Canadian wine industry for over 20 years and is the Technical Director of the winery. Eduardo Gras founded one of the most important real estate companies in Chile. Originally from Colchagua, Cristián Hartwig has his MBA from McGill University in Canada and serves as President of the winery.

MontGras celebrated the opening of its new $15 million winery and visitor center in March 2003. Located 2.5 hours from Santiago, the facility is built in the classic Spanish colonial style and surrounded by landscaped gardens, yet outfitted with ultra-modern technology. Appealing to tourists, visitors can harvest during the vintage, blend their own wine, participate in blind tastings or ride horseback through the vineyards. I’m not sure any Napa Valley winery has this degree of options! MontGras has amassed several thousand acres of vineyards in the Colchagua and surrounding regions, but the pride of the company is the Ninquén estate.

Ninquén (nin-ken), which means “Plateau on a Mountain” in a native dialect, literally describes its topography. The plateau is a remnant part of the Coastal Range at 985 feet above sea level. The soil is of volcanic origin and has rocky ravines and varied native vegetation that is home to many species of birds. Montgras’ policy has been not to alter nature but rather, become part of it to conserve the value of its natural state. Vines are carefully planted in accordance with existing slopes to avoid excessive ground movement or erosion.

The estate’s 247 acres include Syrah, Cabernet Sauvignon, Carménère, Cabernet Franc, Grenache, Carignan and Pinot Noir. The blocks face mainly northward, towards the Equator. Thanks to the luminosity, diurnal variation between day and night temperatures and stressed soil conditions, these vines produce very low yields of complex, concentrated fruit. From this special vineyard come Ninquén Cabernet Sauvignon, Antu Cabernet-Carménère and Antu Syrah.

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**Top Value - Chilean Wine**

**Viña MontGras**

**MontGras Quatro 2012**

Quatro means “four” in Spanish, and this wine is the outcome of four outstanding grape varieties: Cabernet Sauvignon (35%), Syrah (30%), Carménère (25%) and Malbec (10%).

All of the fruit was handpicked from selected Colchagua Valley vineyard blocks on clay and alluvial stony soils. The Malbec was harvested on April 1; Syrah on April 15; Cabernet Sauvignon on April 20, and Carménère on May 3, 2012. The grapes were cold soaked for 3 days. The wine oak aged in 75% French, 25% American, 30% new barrels for 11 months.

**Tasting notes**: Dark red with purple notes. A noticeable eucalyptus/ menthol aroma at first, that mitigated a bit with additional air, overlying black fruit, cinnamon, cedar and toast. As the eucalyptus aromas found in some California and still a number of Australian wines indicate proximity of the trees to the vineyards, it would be interesting to know if this is the case here. Medium to full bodied with consistent dark fruit, licorice, vanilla, and a bit of chocolate on the finish. Finishes long with firm but smooth tannins.

**Rating**: This wine scored 90-91 points in Chilean publications. Frankie and I felt 88 points was more in line.

**When to drink**: Now through 2019; serve at 61º-64º F.

**Food pairing**: Frankie’s Meat Lover’s Calzone, grilled steak salad, braised lamb shanks with red wine and fennel, and hard cheeses.

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**Smart Buy - Chilean Wine**

**Viña MontGras 2012**

**Antu Ninquén Cabernet Sauvignon–Carménère**

Antu, which in the Mapuche or “People from Earth” language means “Sun”, is MontGras’ new range of wines inspired from this ancestral tribe, renowned for its perseverance. So Antu Ninquén - “Sun of the Mountain” - is a premium wine that best sums up winery’s philosophy: “Create and show only the best from our land.”

The blend is 70% Cabernet Sauvignon and 30% Carménère from the Ninquén estate. The soil is a shallow cover of clay overlying volcanic rock, and the vineyard uses the vertical shoot positioning (VSP) trellis system, where the vine shoots are trained upward in a vertical, narrow curtain with the fruiting zone below. For example, VSP trellising is commonly used in the North and Central Coasts of California, but not in Washington State where spur-pruned bilateral cordon trellises are preferred.

Cabernet grapes were selected and handpicked between the April 15 and May 5, 2012; Carménère grapes on May 11, 2012. The grapes were cold soaked for 4 days. Fermentation was between 84º-89º F. Total skin contact: 30 days. The wine was aged for a total of 14 months in 85% French oak, 15% American; 50% new barrels, 50% second use. (continued on page 4)
Podere Morini:

Natale Morini, a well-known aviculturist and breeder, turned his idea for a successful winery into reality thanks to the enthusiasm, commitment and perseverance of his son Alessandro, and his wife Daniela, who put their body and soul into the project of producing quality wines: researching and highlighting the local varieties with the purpose of making his dream come true: the promotion and enhancement of the land of Romagna.

Alessandro Morini is a dynamic winemaker. He is always going 100 mph and his desire to experiment and find new ways to express his volcanic creativity is remarkable. But what amazes is the passion that binds him to his land, which results, as well in numerous art initiatives mainly related to the Faenza’s pottery, in a production that deals almost exclusively on Romagna native grapes (there is a little bit of Merlot in the Nadel, but nothing else). The winery is situated among the hills of Oriolo dei Fichi, above Faenza, an area that over the years has earned a deserved reputation, thanks to the supple elegance of the Sangiovese made here.

Forty hectares of vineyards, growing on Faenza’s gently sloping hills around the Oriolo Tower, lies the heart of Poderi Morini, the heart of wine-making Romagna. The town of Faenza is historically attested since at least 898. In 1017, Emperor Henry II assigned it to Arnaldo II, Archbishop of Ravenna. Forty years later, Archbishop Henry II built a castle, which throughout the Middle Ages was disputed between the city of Faenza, Forlì and the Church of Ravenna.

Morini is a young estate that is proud of their land, and therefore they chose to make wine to best celebrate its value, tradition and culture. “We give value to the Romagna we love”: these words suitably describe the motivation underlying their entrepreneurial and very personal project.

Morini started production in 1998 and their first wine was made from the most representative grape of the land in Romagna: the Sangiovese. The first bottle produced was a Sangiovese Superiore Riserva and it was baptized “Nonno Rico” in memory of Alessandro Morini’s paternal grandfather. Over the years, this wine has given them much satisfaction and has received several prestigious acknowledgements.

The fertile soil of Poderi Morini lies on a rocky hillside and enjoys a ideal microclimate benefiting both from the Adriatic breeze and the winds coming from the Apennine between Tuscany and Romagna. These special conditions are the starting point for an important phase of this quality project. They believe that being a wine producer means making some important choices right from the beginning: focusing always and at any cost on quality; maintaining an emphasis on local indigenous varieties; rely on highly qualified co-workers; and support production through the most recent technology.

The red wines usually age in 500 liters Slavonian oak barrels, which make the wines crisper and less woody. In addition to the classic Sangiovese, they have a good production of Centesimino, Albana, Trebbiano and Longanesi (the grape used to make the Burson—our Smart Buy selection), a big, brawny, tannic wine perfect for grilled meat and sausages.

Podere Morini

‘Nonno Rico’ Sangiovese Riserva 2010

This was the first wine ever produced by Morini. The Sangiovese grapes are grown on ten to twenty year old vines near the tower of Oriole Faenza in clayey soil at an altitude of about 550 feet.

Vinification and Ageing: After vinification in stainless steel, the wine is aged for 12 months in tonneaux, followed by 18 months in bottle prior to release.

Tasting Notes: Ruby red color. The wine has intense aromas of violets and spicy fruits. I really enjoyed the juicy fruitiness of the palate. Full-bodied and dry, yet approachable.

Rating: I could find no ratings on this wine. I (Frankie) rated it an 89.

When to Drink: Best now through 2017.

Food Pairing: Florentine steak, grilled meats, aged cheeses. Serve at 18 °C

Podere Morini

‘Augusto’ Burson 2008

This is a niche wine, still amazing and with an intensity that needs at least two year of oak ageing, plus one year in the bottle. The grape being spoken of is Longanesi, or Burson, a native grape from Romagna. It’s a red, massive, piercing, fruity wine that will get along beautifully with all your grilled meat.

The grapes are grown near the tower of Oriole Faenza in clayey soil at an altitude of about 400 feet.

Vinification and Ageing: After vinification in stainless steel, the wine is aged for 18 months in tonneaux, followed by 18 months in bottle prior to release.

Tasting Notes: Dark ruby red color with an intense, herbaceous bouquet with notes of leather and spices. The taste is rich, full-bodied and intense, with flavors of dark fruit and tobacco. A tannic and persistent finish.

Rating: This wine is not rated. I (Frankie) rate it 91 points.

When to Drink: Best now through 2020.

Food Pairing: T-bone steaks, ribs with Kansas City barbecue sauce, grilled sausages or a sausage pizza.

Top Value—Romagna Wine

Smart Buy—Romagna Wine

Oriolo Tower in a watercolor of Liverani (1840)
**The “Napa Valley of Chile”** (from pg. 1)

Colchagua is often compared to the Napa Valley for a few reasons. It resembles Napa Valley with its ubiquitous vineyards, valley-floor river and tree-studded foothills. Warm-weather red varieties thrive here, including Cabernet Sauvignon, Carménère and Syrah, with some Malbec, Merlot and Petit Verdot as well. And, most of the region’s modern wineries have been constructed with wine tourism in mind. In 2002, Wine Enthusiast magazine named Colchagua Valley "the next Napa".

**Carménère**

Carménère is a dark-skinned grape variety originally from the vineyards of Bordeaux. As with Malbec in Argentina, Carménère is both now scarce in France and has become the signature grape of its new home, in this case Chile. A late-ripening variety, for a long time Chilean growers thought it was just a different clone of Merlot, as the vines were often mixed in the field. The leaves of Merlot and Carménère vines are so similar that the error was not discovered until 1994, when an amelographer in France found that the grape was actually Carménère. As a stand-alone varietal, it is rich in berry fruits and spice -- think blackberries and black pepper -- with smooth, well-rounded tannins.

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**November 2015 Re-order Pricing:**

- **Podere Morini ‘Nonno Rico’ Sangiovese Riserva**
  - 2 bottles: $38 ($19 per bottle)
  - 6 bottles: $108 ($18 per bottle)
  - Case of 12: $204 ($17 per bottle)

- **Podere Morini ‘Augusto’ Burson**
  - 2 bottles: $55 ($27.50 per bottle)
  - 6 bottles: $159 ($26.50 per bottle)
  - Case of 12: $306 ($25.50 per bottle)

- **Viña Montgras ‘Quatro’**
  - 2 bottles: $27 ($13.50 per bottle)
  - 6 bottles: $78 ($13 per bottle)
  - Case of 12: $144 ($12 per bottle)

- **Viña Montgras Antu Ninquén Cabernet Sauvignon–Carménère 2012**
  - 2 bottles: $35 ($17.50 per bottle)
  - 6 bottles: $99 ($16.50 per bottle)
  - Case of 12: $186 ($15.50 per bottle)

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**Viña MontGras** (continued from pg. 2)

**Antu Ninquén Cabernet Sauvignon–Carménère 2012**

**Tasting notes:** Deep ruby red. Aromas of black currants, plum, toasted oak, with a touch of herbaceousness and savory smokiness. The palate is full and concentrated with some gripping tannins and overall medium acidity, and more of the blackcurrant fruit and smoky oak flavors. With time -- and air -- this becomes more complex with some decidedly dark chocolate and dark roast coffee notes complementing the fruit. Medium long finish.

**Rating:** Wine Enthusiast rated the wine 88 points, but Frankie and I scored it an 89.

**When to drink:** This wine definitely became more interesting on the second and third days after opening, so I would decant it for near term drinking, and would consider cellaring the bottle for up to 5-6 years. Serve at 61º-64º F.

**Food pairing:** Pollo (chicken) en mole Poblano, lamb burgers with goat cheese, pepper steak, or carrot & cashew crisp on a bed of hot lentil & dill salad with orange & cardamom sauce.

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**Photo of Romagna hills where Poderi Morini is located.**