January 20, 2023: A Carnival of Carmenere

The Carmenere variety was a noble strain planted in Bordeaux until the plague of phylloxera* attacked France in 1860, causing their extinction. More than one hundred years after it had been forgotten, Carmenere revived again in a distant country – Chile – the variety's new origin. Thanks to Chile's four natural boundaries –the Andes Mountains, Pacific Ocean, Atacama Desert and Antarctic icefields— this country was the only place on Earth where Carmenere vineyards were safe from phylloxera

In the twentieth century, Carmenere in Chile was mistaken for Merlot. In fact, it was called the "Chilean Merlot", given its fruity, spicy aromas and sweet, gentle, and rounded tannins. Thus, Carmenere was harvested before it reached its ideal ripeness, which hid Carmenere's real winemaking potential.

In 1994 French ampelographer** Jean Michel Boursiquot, a speaker at the Sixth Latin American Viticulture and Enological Congress, held in Chile, identified this late-ripening Merlot clone as Carmenere. From then on, under its true name Carmenere burst upon the Chilean and world wine scene.

^{*} Phylloxera is an insect about two millimeters long that lives in the roots and leaves of vines, absorbing its sap and destroying the plant. It is a pest originating in America, which first appeared in Europe in 1853 and ended with a large part of European vineyards.

^{**} Botanist who specializes in grapevines

1. Santa Ema Select Terroir Carmenere Cachapoal Valley Reserva 2020 – \$12.99 Media

"Intense aromas of blackberries, blueberries and black plums alongside

generous black fruit flavors with a touch of tobacco and spice."

2. Natura Organic Carmenere 2021 \$13.49 Media

Notes:

"Smooth and full of dark fruit, blackberry, and black cherry. Some leather and tannin with a finish leaving you wanting more. Ok, think I will!" <u>"Went well</u>
with Chili"
Notes:
3. Vina Tarapaca Carmenere Maipo Grand Reserva 2019 \$17.99 Media
"Deep ruby red. Vegetal notes with ripe plums, blackberries, and black
cherries. Floral hints, like violets, with spicy notes like dill, cloves, black pepper, and vanilla. Great texture and silkiness with fine, smooth, and elegant tannins."
Notes:
4. Baron Philippe de Rothchild Escudo Rojo Carmenere Colchagua Reserva 2020 \$15.99 Media
"Aromas of black plums and raspberries, along with notes of graphite and smoke. Full bodied, with bright acidity and some soft tannins. Berry flavors on the palate are ripe and rich, with a dry, slightly chalky finish"
Notes:
 5. Baron Philippe de Rothchild Escudo Rojo 2019 - \$19.99 Franks Cabernet Sauvignon – 43% Carmenere – 39% Syrah – 9% Cabernet Franc – 5% Petit Verdot -4%
"A complex nose of mulberries, plums, dark cherries, dried flowers, and spices. Firm, chewy tannins and a fleshy texture" "Flavors of ripe blue and black fruits, as well as a note of pencil lead." Notes: