

Napa Valley Register

Meet some coastal Chilean winemakers who are redefining wine

Allison Levine May 25, 2018

Chile is a place to pay attention to for Pinot Noir and Chardonnay. Meet some of the winemakers who are redefining Chilean wine with their Coastal Chardonnays and Pinot Noirs. These winemakers are friends and colleagues who have studied together and worked together over the years. They are each focused on cultivating a distinct sense of place in the wines they produce. And, they share the common belief that if one succeeds, they all will succeed.

Rodrigo Soto of Veramonte, Ritual, Primus, Neyen

"We need to focus not on what is new, but what is really good," Rodrigo Soto explained. I met Rodrigo last year and had written a story about him finding a sense of place in Chile. Well-spoken and insightful, Rodrigo is the president of Veramonte, Ritual, Primus and Neyen wines.



Rodrigo Soto of Veramonte inspects compost.



Soto took the position of head winemaker in 2012 after working at Fetzer and Benziger in California, Wither Hills in New Zealand and Matetic in Chile. Under his direction, Rodrigo converted Veramonte from a conventional winery to a biodynamic winery. His interests in organics began at university and ultimately became the topic of his thesis. To Rodrigo, biodynamics *"is the best way to achieve quality and longevity"* in wine. In addition, both organic and biodynamic farming practices lead to terroir-driven harvests. As the perception of Chilean wine shifts from value to distinctive regionality, Rodrigo said that individual brands should be connected to one appellation. *"Appellations need to be consistent. We need to establish them and be good at what we do."* Of the four labels produced by Veramonte, Ritual Wines are made exclusively from selected plots from the organic vineyards in Casablanca.

WINE TO LOOK OUT FOR:

Ritual Chardonnay 2016, Casablanca Valley (\$18)

With notes of pineapple, crisp red apple, citrus, spices and ginger, your tongue will tingle from the acid and then your mouth will water wanting more.

