

# AN INTRODUCTION TO CHILE

## **Aconcague**

This is the most northerly of Chile's wine regions. Named for the Aconcagua River, this is one of Chile's hottest, driest wine regions. Soils are mainly alluvial and the region is most noted for the production of red wines. Errazuriz is located near Panquehue which has a gentler, more intermediate climate as does the coastal region.

## **Casablanca Valley**

Located west of Santiago just a few miles from the Pacific Ocean, Casablanca is widely recognized as Chile's best region for cultivating Chardonnay and Sauvignon Blanc. The long, cool growing season features foggy mornings and sunny afternoons. The northern portion of the Casablanca dry but temperate with average annual rainfall of just 10 inches; summertime daily high temperatures average 86 degrees with a daily temperature variation of 25-35 degrees which favors superior acid and sugar development.

## **Colchagua Valley**

Like the Maipo Valley to the north, the Colchagua has well-drained, clay-loam soils. The growing season is relatively long and dry. The valley is best known for the cultivation of Merlot and Cabernet Sauvignon. This region is part of the Valle Central appellation. The Coastal Mountains, forming the western boundary of the region, are quite low in this part of Chile, allowing maritime influences to moderate the climate. The area is well supplied with steady flow from the Cachapoal, Claro and Tinguiririca rivers. Soils are alluvial loam, well-drained and very fertile and appear particularly well-suited to red grape varieties. The region averages 28 inches of rainfall per year falling mostly during the winter months. Strong southerly breezes during the summer months provide cool evening temperatures.

## **Maipo Valley**

Maipo is Chile's most famous wine region. Just south of the capital, Santiago, Maipo is one of the smallest regions. A wide range of red and white grapes grow here. Annual rainfall is about 12 inches a year making irrigation a necessity. The clear skies result in excellent ripening and much lower problems with rots and mildews. As a result, modern wineries may only have to spray 6 times in comparison with up to 30 times in wetter regions of Oregon and California.

## **Rapel**

This is a red wine region. Cachapoal and Colchagua are official subregions. Cabernet Sauvignon flourishes here. The region is slightly hotter than Maule to the immediate south and the region is home to wineries such as Santa Rita, Undurraga and Montes.

## **Maule**

This is one of the more important wine regions, with designated sub-regions of Curico, Talca, Cauquenes, Linares, Lontue and parral. Well to the south of Santiago, the climate here is significantly cooler thanks to the maritime influence of the Pacific. San Pedro and Miguel Torres have their headquarters here.

## **Bio-Bio**

The southernmost wine region and the most extensive in its plantings. More open than Maipo and Rapel, Bio-Bio gets more rain because there are fewer mountains to block the rain. This area produces much of the wine for domestic consumption.