

featured flight of the month

pedro parra, valle de itata, chile
\$25 per flight + \$20 per cheese pairing



Pedro Parra is a man obsessed with terroir. Born in Itata, a small, remote wine region in the Bio Bio area of southern Chile, Pedro has spent his adult life learning about the soils that make great wines the world over. Pedro holds a PhD in terroir from the Paris Center of Agriculture, with six years experience in French terroirs. As a highly respected consultant working in several countries and terroirs [Chile, Argentina, USA, Italy, Canada, France, Armenia], Pedro brings an open mind and vision to winemakers and viticulturists alike. Pedro has been described as the leading figure of the ‘New Chile’ movement by the international press, in part because of his constant endeavor to bring a new vision to the Chilean wine industry, searching for quality terroirs and developing new plantings throughout the country. Today, he brings this focus on unique terroirs to his home on Itata’s granite slopes, hoping to give them the global profile they deserve. Within the granitic areas, Pedro prefers to focus on the sandy quartz granite soils, as they force roots deeper than clay soils and therefore express the terroir better. Pedro says that Itata reminds him of places like Galicia, Barolo, and Morgon: places with a long standing tradition of winemaking, but relatively unknown to the world until recently. With this project, he hopes to also help the local farmers who have protected their old vines from industrial wine producers who would have them tear out their Cinsault and Pais in favor of the glut of Bordeaux varietals that have come to dominate the Chilean wine market.

Soil consists of both inorganic and organic particles that together provide the structure that supports a plant's growth [its housing, so to speak] as well as the nutrients a plant needs to grow [its daily meals]. Soil is a complex ecosystem of living organisms, like earthworms and insects, as well as flora and fauna too small for us to see, such as fungi and bacteria. Farming influences the health of the soil because it can impact the balance of the microorganisms living within it.

Dirt, on the other hand, is inert. It's the stuff that covers your clothes and hands after a day of gardening or follows your favorite pet into the house on its messy paws after a walk through the park. The ground that falls downhill during a landslide, or the truckload you move into your front yard for landscaping are both mounds of dirt, but they're no longer soil. A pile of dirt can have its own structure—such as sand, silt, clay, or gravel—but because it was displaced, it no longer has the organized ecosystem that makes it soil. Dirt plus nutrients and living organisms become soil over time.

Soil is formed over time. Geological parent material [such as granite, limestone, schist, or volcanic rock] is one of the starting points of soil. Through weathering and erosion, these rocks are broken apart and transformed into smaller particles that eventually can combine with living organisms to create soil. The characteristics of the parent material influence the properties of the soil it eventually forms. And, the mineral composition of the original rocks influences the fertility of the resulting soils. Vineyards grow in soils from all sorts of rock types but the four most common are *granite*, *basalt*, limestone, and schist/slate.

Granite is a lighter colored, coarsely textured rock that weathers into grainier soils such as rough sand. Granite includes significant portions of feldspar, mica, and quartz. As a result, it tends to be high in potassium and sodium. Because granite is also very hard, it takes a long time for it to break down into smaller particles. The structure of granite-based soils can mean less water holding capacity and lower soil fertility. The result can be vines that need to either push roots deeper to capture the moisture and nutrients needed, or smaller vines and lower yields. Common wine regions: Stellenbosch in South Africa; parts of the Dão and Douro Valleys of Portugal; the Northern Rhône; Alsace; Muscadet in the Loire Valley; the coastal mountains of Chile.

Basalt forms as a darkly colored, volcanic rock that is high in iron, magnesium, and calcium but low in potassium and sodium. It forms with very small crystals and weathers more easily than harder materials such as granite. Basalt becomes finer particles of powdery silt and clay, and as a result, basalt-based soils can have very good moisture retention as well as more abundant soil fertility. The result can create higher vigor and yields in vineyards growing in basalt-based soils. Common wine regions: Canary Islands; Madeira; Mount Etna, Sicily; the Rocks District of Walla Walla Valley; parts of the Willamette Valley; the Yarra Valley in Australia.

featured flight of the month

2021 país 'soulpit' grown in black basalt

\$21/\$76



The País grape has a dark past in Chilean wine's history. Miseducated for years, history made us think that it produces uncolored, diluted, simple and rustic wines. Despite being the variety that opened the doors of viticulture for Chile, more than 500 years ago, it has never been properly appreciated. País grapes are difficult. They need a particular terroir, almost like a perfect mathematical formula, but they also need a special interpretation, far from modern extractive oenology, in addition to a bit of magic and energy. When all of the above is given, País can be the Chilean wine with the greatest character and typicity.

Soulpit is a new wine from Pedro Parra's expanding operation, with the 2021 being only the 2nd vintage made from old-vine País planted in 1895 on black basalt soils in Ñepas close to the winery. Volcanic and intense, it's a subtle, perfumed, whole bunch-fermented red with floral top notes, raspberry and pomegranate fruit & stemmy freshness.

The wine was fermented with 60% stems for 18 days, macerated for 30 days in cement, followed by 11 months in oak vats. The fairly ripe, bold nose features sour cherry jam, hints of earth and refined fruit flavors, and cherry red in the glass. In the mouth, it's compact with fine, active tannins [not as tight as those in granite], hints of ash, a little chalk and precise freshness before the fruity finish.

94pts from Wine Advocate / 93pts from James Suckling

featured flight of the month

2021 cinsault 'imaginador' grown in quartz granite

\$17|\$61



Cinsault is one of those grape varieties whose impact tends to be far greater than its less-than-famous reputation might imply. Its most well-known use is as a blending grape in red wines because of its lower tannins and lifted aromatics, or as a sole variety for rosé. This is why it's so special to see Pedro showcase it on its own. Cinsault boasts red berry and cherry notes, as well as hints of minerality and flowers that can run the gamut from roses to violets. With vineyards benefitting from the cooling Pacific Ocean and the cool winds coming off the Andes, where Bordeaux grape varieties were once the main focus of Chile, they are now re-discovering old plantings of Carignan and Cinsault.

The 2021 Imaginador was produced with Cinsault from five vineyards on granite soils in Guarilhue. It fermented with 100% full clusters and indigenous yeasts at low temperatures for 15 days, with 12 days of maceration, and matured in oak and concrete vats for 11 months. They are all pale, there's no extraction, no pigeage [*aka press down* or the process of breaking up the layer of skins, stems, and seeds that forms at the surface of fermenting red wine, and submerging it during fermentation to extract color, tannins, flavor, and aromas from the grape solids], no remontage [*aka punch down* or the process of submerging the skins so that carbon dioxide is pushed to the surface of the must and released], only the cap gets wet, and the result is stunning. The palate is light to medium-bodied, the tannins are super fine and the wine is ethereal, elegant, tasty and long, clean and pure.

featured flight of the month

2021 cinsault 'newk' grown in quartz granite

\$29|\$104



The single-vineyard Cinsault 2021 Newk is one of the new additions to his Jazz series and was named for musician Sonny Rollins Newk, for Parra, the wildest jazz musician of recent times. He says he finds the wine wild, full of energy and minerality. He likes to use the analogy of a musician to terroir. A musician can perform the same piece over and over, but each time with will be a little different. Every year presents a new opportunity for a terroir to perform the same song again.

It was produced with grapes from an old vineyard in Guarilhue that is worked by horse, from vines planted on decomposed and rocky granite soils with some iron and a sandy and silty texture. It fermented with 100% full clusters after four or five days with native yeasts and a total maceration time of 55 days, then the wine matured in an oak vat for 11 months. It has 13.5% alcohol and is austere and sharp, mineral and stony. It's a bit reductive and opens up to notes of fresh blood and iodine, a little Gonon with that herbal side. The palate is phenomenal; it's deep and has grip and is mineral and intense with energy, direct and not shy.

97pts from Wine Advocate / 96pts from James Suckling