

Rising Stars of the Wine World - Domingo Ruiz

In my opinion, an innovative winemaker is one that makes fun, delicious, quality wines that appeal to an increasingly diverse population of drinkers. The winemaker that stood out as having those qualities, was Isabel Mitarakis from Concha y Toro.

A good knowledge and familiarity with classic and modern winemaking is necessary in order to break new ground. Mitarakis's bona fides include a degree in Agricultural Engineering specializing in Enology from the Catholic University in Chile, assisting winemaker Enrique Tirado in producing Chile's iconic Don Melchor, participating in the harvest and vinification at Chateau Mouton Rothschild in Pauillac, France, as well as stages and training in Mendocino and Franciacorta, Italy. At Concha y Toro, Mitarakis is in charge of the terroir-specific Gravas line, which shares a modern concern for exploring the diverse soils and climates in the New World rather than solely focusing on the varietals, vinification and cellar work.

In his 7 February 2022 article in the New York Times, Eric Asimov deplored how millennials are consuming less wine than previous generations and gravitating more towards beer and spirits. Attempting to reach out to that generation lost to wine is Unrated Wines, a new brand by Concha y Toro with Mitarakis at the helm. According to her, Unrated is not for wine snobs, but for those who don't connect with wine world's rules and sophisticated rituals; it is a disruptive wine that provokes new consumers and challenges the traditional wine industry.

It would be easy to dismiss Unrated Wines as a marketing ploy, but the wine speaks for itself. The fruit in its Xtra Cab comes from some of the best Cabernet estates in Maipo, Maule and Cachapoal. In its vinification, Mitarakis tries to be as hands-off as possible so the varietal can express itself clearly; the clay-rich soils of Maule contribute power and energy to the blend, while Maipo's loamy alluvial soils bring elegance and finesse in its tannins. The wine is aged for 12 months using mostly French oak. The label is provocative in showing a leather clad woman showing her back in the front label and conversely, her front in the back label.

I'm very excited to see what else Isabel Mitarakis adds to the Unrated Wines label. Maybe a Carmenere or a cool climate Chardonnay from Casablanca? Stay tuned for more.