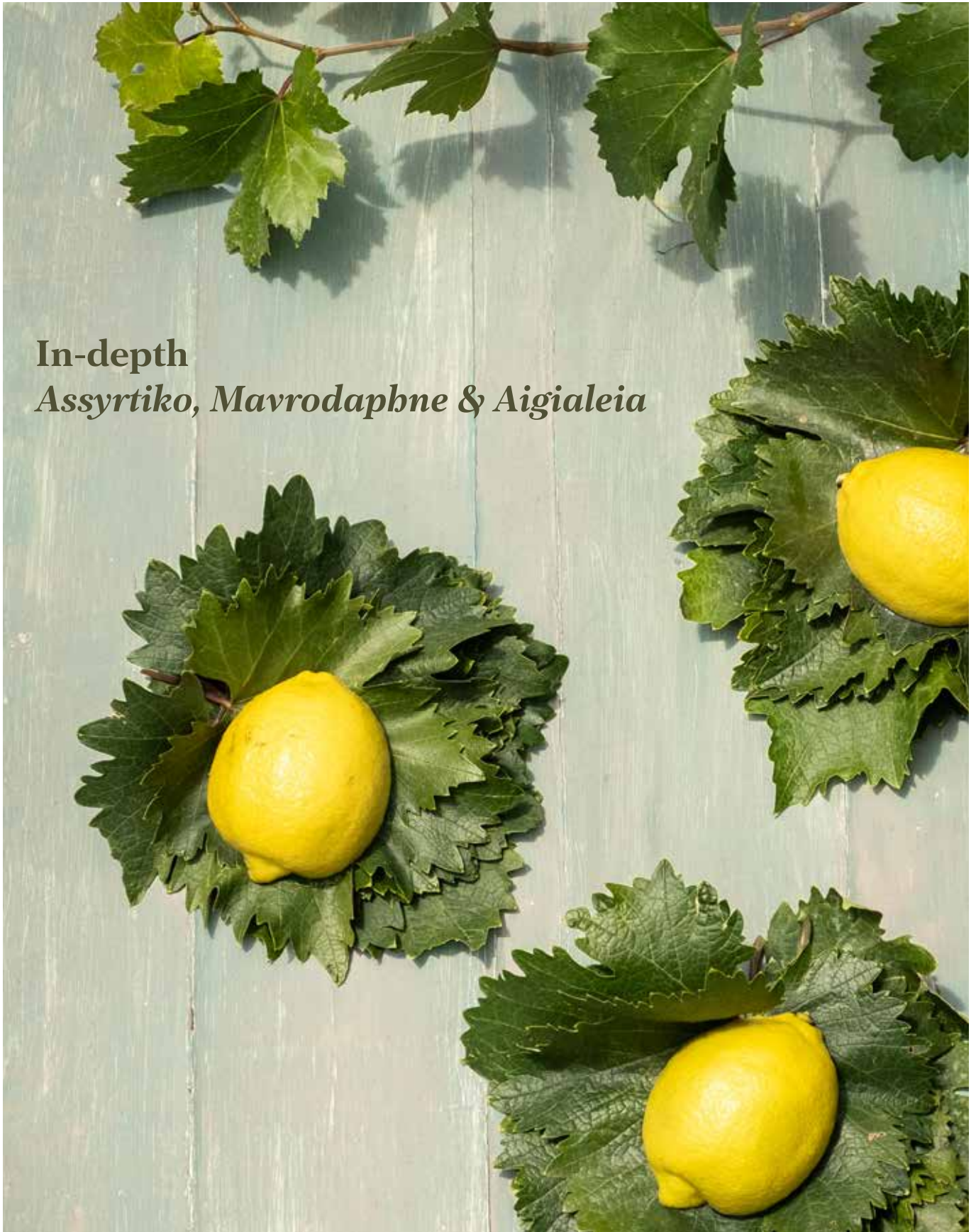


Yiannis Karakasis MW

Greek Wine **EXPLAINED**

20
24

In-depth
Assyrtiko, Mavrodaphne & Aigialeia



Greek Wine Explained 2024

In-depth Assyrtiko, Mavrodaphne & Aigialeia

Yiannis Karakasis MW

Contributing Author

Evmorfia Kostaki



Contents

Greek Wine Explained

● Section One	5
Editor's Note: The Long Journey of Greek Wine	6
Developments and News in Greek Wine in 2023	9
Hopes and Fears for 2024	18
● Section Two	21
Hot Topic: Old Vines	22
● Section Three	27
Vintage 2023 Overview	28
Factors influencing the Climate of the Greek Viticulture Regions	31
Why Were Spring Rainfalls so Devastating for the Greek Vineyard?	33
● Section Four	37
The People Behind the Labels – Nikos Karatzas on Greek Wine	38
● Section Five	42
New Wineries to Watch	43
Fastest Emerging Wineries	49
Superb Value for Money Wineries	54
Must-chase Wines	59

In Depth

● Section Six	64
Variety Focus 1: Assyrtiko	65
Variety Focus 2: Mavrodaphne	78
Regional Focus: Aigialeia, Peloponnese	91
● Section Seven	99
Quick Guide to Greek Wine	100



Greek Wine *Explained*

Sections 01— 05



Section One

- One 01.** Editor's Note: The Long Journey of Greek Wine
- One 02.** Developments and News in Greek Wine in 2023
- One 03.** Hopes and Fears for 2024



Editor's Note:

The Long Journey of Greek Wine

When I took my first sip of Greek wine back in the 80s, little did I know that it would mark the beginning of a lifelong fascination and love affair with the wines of Greece. Those were the days of semi-sweet wines, such as Allotino in Mateus-style bottles, and the big brands, like Demestica, which dominated the market. These wines sparked the first discussions about the rising quality of Greek wines and hinted at the potential for something much more to come.

As the years passed, I witnessed a remarkable transformation in the Greek wine scene. It was a shift from a winemaking culture heavily influenced by international varieties to one that embraced the richness of indigenous Greek grape varieties. The transition was nothing short of magical, as winemakers delved into their heritage, uncovering hidden gems among the 210 registered grape varieties in the Greek national catalogue. I was mesmerised by discovering these unique and authentic treasures, such as Chlora from Lefkada and Kolliniatiko from Peloponnese, which seemed to emerge with every passing week.

But what truly captivated me was the stories these indigenous varieties told through their wines. They were perfectly adapted to Greece's warm and arid climate, and each sip transported me to the region they originated from, painting a vivid picture of the land, its people, and its traditions. Whether it was the black olives and sun-dried-tomato notes of Naoussa, the richness and warmth of Cretan Liatiko and Vidiano, or the mildly aromatic, hint-of-fennel character of Robola from Cephalonia, every bottle was a window into the soul of Greece.

Beyond the irresistible draw of indigenous varieties, Greek wine offered another dimension I couldn't resist—the notion of terroir. Each region of Greece, with its vastly different landscapes and soils, brought forth wines with a unique sense of place. From limestone soils in Nemea and schist in Naoussa to the volcanic soils of Santorini and Lesvos, the diversity was exhilarating. Pair this with the magic of old vines, some dating back over a century in Santorini, and you have a symphony of flavours that speak of history, tradition and the enduring spirit of the land.

But Greek wine's journey doesn't stop there; a new generation of passionate vignerons and winemakers propel it forward. They are the composers, skilfully orchestrating the harmony of grape and terroir to create wines that surpass all expectations. With an emphasis on quality, exploration of biodynamics, and minimal intervention, they are crafting wines that feel pure, authentic and utterly enchanting.



Greek wine has come a long way from its past reputation of cheap Retsina and now delivers unparalleled quality and complexity. The whites exude tension, crystalline texture and minerality, while the reds boast a firm structure and a high level of freshness. Even the sweet wines have found their place among the finest in the world. Witnessing how Greek wine has matured into something truly extraordinary has been a revelation.

Navigating the distinct differences between all the regions can be challenging at this stage. A crucial aspect to consider before understanding the diverse regions is the relatively recent history of Greek wine. It is an evolving narrative being written as we speak. Winemakers and viticulturists dedicate themselves year after year to enhancing the quality of their wines, understanding their varieties and reword their terroir. Consequently, even if it is by almost imperceptible degrees, vineyard management and winemaking practices are evolving. Compounded by the inevitable climatic vintage variations, this equation becomes increasingly intricate.

The journey of Greek wine is not one without challenges, but it is a journey of hope, resilience, and the enduring power of tradition. Every sip reminds me of the road behind and the road ahead. As I listen to the song “Telegraph Road” by Dire Straits (Telegraph Road got so deep and so wide, Like a rolling river), I find myself hopeful for Greek wine; much like the changes along that road over the decades, the journey of Greek wine is a rolling river of progress and potential.

In today’s rapidly evolving global wine scene, an annually updated Greek wine report has become an indispensable necessity. With surging numbers of wineries, a plethora of new efforts being made and tremendous interest from international markets, the Greek wine industry is experiencing unprecedented growth and innovation. As the Greek wine landscape flourishes, staying informed and updated on the latest developments, trends, and achievements becomes crucial for industry professionals and wine enthusiasts.

An annual wine report acts as a comprehensive guide, offering valuable insights into the diverse range of Greek wines, highlighting emerging wineries, and developing insights into the country’s unique terroirs and grape varieties. Such a report serves as a vital tool for consumers, sommeliers, educators and investors alike, enabling them to make informed decisions, appreciate the richness of Greek wines, and contribute to this flourishing industry’s continued success and recognition on the global stage.

In conclusion, this report celebrates the triumphs and progress of Greek wine—a journey of personal discovery for me and countless others who have fallen under its spell. With each passing day, Greek wine reveals new layers of complexity and charm, and I am excited to witness what the future holds for this enchanting world of wine.

Yiannis Karakasis MW





Developments and News in Greek Wine in 2023

Developments

The first official register of grape varieties and clones

What had appeared to be an ongoing, endless discourse spanning several years, marked by indecision and inconclusive discussions, has, at long last, been officially endorsed by the State. On 16 March 2022, an authoritative decree from the ministry was promulgated, comprehensively detailing the officially registered grape varieties alongside their respective clones.

While the current tally stands at 210 indigenous varieties, the actual number may exceed this figure. Among these registered varieties, the following stand with their certified clones: Agiorgitiko, two clones; Aidani, one; Assyrtiko, one; Avgoustiatis, one; Vidiano, two; Vilana, one; Korinthiaki, one; Kotsifali, one; Kydonitsa, one; Limniona, one; Malagousia, one; Mavrodaphne, one; Monemvasia, one; Moschofilero, one; Xinomavro, one; Roditis, two; Savatiano, two. Like any grape variety register, but especially one for an ancient region with a huge diversity of hitherto unrecorded varieties, there are gaps. Upon a preliminary examination, I observed that while seven Asproudes varieties are documented, only one Mavroudi is accounted for. Notably absent are varieties like Melissaki and

Agripiotis, among others. While this first register must serve as a work in progress, it marks a momentous achievement for Greek viticulture, cementing the safeguarding and preservation of native varieties. It also underscores a commitment to disseminate this message globally. In light of the current climate changes worldwide, the exceptional heat tolerance and adaptability of Greek grape varieties in extreme conditions is becoming increasingly apparent and of great interest to the wider wine world.

PDO Santorini's new regulations

The recent revisions to the PDO Santorini technical file encompass three significant changes. Firstly, the minimum percentage of Assyrtiko in the blend has been raised from 75% to 85%. Secondly, a yield reduction from 56 hl/ha to 45 hl/ha has been implemented, marking a 19,64% decrease. Lastly, residual sugar can now be as high as 9 g/l when acidity levels read between 6–11 g/l.

While these advancements mark notable progress, it's important to highlight that more additions/changes could be introduced. For example, the updated file does not include the introduction of a dry red PDO Santorini wine featuring the distinctive Mavrotragano grape. Similarly, the consideration of



augmenting the PDO Assyrtiko blend by introducing additional grape varieties to enhance balance and complexity still needs to be realised. Furthermore, the term Nykteri remains ambiguous, covering all dry Santorini wines with over 13.5% alcohol by volume (abv) and a minimum of three months of oak ageing, consistent with its previous definition.



Nemea Lions, new Nemea classification

In a manner reminiscent of Hercules facing the Nemean lion, Nemea and its revered Agiorgitiko grape confront forthcoming challenges with determination. The culmination of a 40-year-long effort has led to a transformative consensus on the region's framework, as shared by Nikos Vlachos, President of the Nemea Wine Association.

The proposed technical file (awaiting a ministry decree for approval) introduces significant changes to the PDO classifications:

- Nemea PDO now mandates a minimum of six months of maturation, yields capped at 75 hl/ha, and a minimum alcohol content of 12% abv.
- Nemea Classic PDO sets a new standard with a minimum of 12 months of maturation, yields capped at 75 hl/ha, and a minimum alcohol content of 12.5% abv.
- Nemea Lions PDO highlights specific vineyards with vines aged at least ten years, requiring a minimum of 24 months of maturation, yields capped at 56 hl/ha, and a minimum alcohol content of 13% abv.

The Nemea Lions category (inspired by Hercules's first labour), positioned alongside the already existing Reserve and Grand Reserve classifications, is expected to gain prominence in the coming years. Moreover, Nemea Lions wines will feature a unique quality logo on the bottle capsule, which has been trademarked already. Nemea Lions signifies a forward-looking approach for Nemea, focusing on distinct terroirs (details and geographical references will be included on the back label) to unravel the region's intricate diversity. The category will adhere to stringent vineyard legality regulations, production processes, and ageing documentation. An independent committee will oversee the evaluation of these aspects, ensuring the integrity of the final product. This is going to happen in the upcoming vintage 2024.

New file for PDO Athens (Athina)

In a notable development, discussions are underway regarding the future submission of a technical file to the European Union for the PDO Athina, focusing on the indigenous Savatiano variety. This was confirmed in a communication with Andreas Gikas, president of the Union Wines of Attica. Interestingly, until 1992, the PDO Kantza was designated for the Savatiano variety, underscoring this grape's historical importance and potential in the region. PDO Kantza is now included in PDO Attica, which covers the homonymous administrative district and includes many indigenous and international grapes. PDO Athina will be a smaller, specialised PDO within Attica, where



three different expressions of Savatiano will be highlighted. However, according to Gikas, which training system will be favoured still needs to be decided.

Greek wine producers

finally join forces

The Greek wine industry has been reluctant to create regional associations, perhaps because producers have traditionally viewed their neighbouring wineries as competitors rather than collaborators. Contemporary market demands are changing this view. Producers in Cephalonia, Mantinia, and Santorini are joining the active associations of Crete, Peloponnese, Central and Northern Greece. We hope the collaborations will successfully represent and communicate the regions in the domestic and international markets.

The latest development is The Mantinians. In 2023, a pioneering new association of producers emerged in Mantinia, Peloponnese, marking a significant collaboration among 13 dedicated wine producers. With a collective commitment to showcasing the exceptional qualities of Moschofilero, these producers are united in their passion for this distinctive aromatic grape variety. The combined efforts of the association contribute to the cultivation of a vast vineyard landscape totalling 1,637 ha, of which 896.7 ha are dedicated to PDO Mantinia. This collaborative initiative not only underscores the importance of regional unity but also amplifies the potential of Moschofilero as a hallmark grape for the Mantinia appellation.

Greek varieties exploring the world

In light of climate change, winemakers worldwide are looking into their different options for creating sustainable vineyards. Because of their resilience and adaptation to hot, dry climates, indigenous Greek varieties are attracting the interest of researchers and producers worldwide. Assyrtiko is naturally the most talked-about variety. Following its increasing commercial success, it's being grown to make wine in the USA, Australia, South Africa, Lebanon, Turkey, Cyprus and Italy. And now that Portuguese varieties have been added to the Bordeaux AOC, could indigenous Greek varieties follow?

The Rise of Malagousia

Much talk in the Greek wine sector is about the shift towards indigenous varieties. Every year, there is a discovery. Sometimes exciting, other times not so much. Playing the devil's advocate, I suggest that perhaps there was a reason many of these indigenous grapes were abandoned from cultivation. Yes, phylloxera and the epidemic of new fungal diseases played a critical role in reducing the genetic diversity of vines; however, we can't ignore another factor. Some of these grapes were not good enough, and these hardships made it easier to shift focus to more qualitative grapes.

While this may be true for some semi-extinct grape varieties, others were unjustly swept under the rug. One of the biggest success stories in rediscovering and popularising a previously almost-extinct grape variety is that of Malagousia. Brought back to life in an experimental vineyard in Porto Carras in the



early 70s, it has since conquered the Greek vineyards and the minds of Greek people. Evangelos Gerovassiliou, who saved the variety, feels proud of its impact. He believes it's a great export tool and the second-most-known Greek variety after Assyrtiko. In his opinion, the increase in vineyard plantings will lead us to discover the grape's true potential. The appreciation for Malagousia is one of the reasons the Greek wine industry has been gearing towards discovering more indigenous grapes, with Kydonitsa possibly next in line.

While the rise of Malagousia started almost 50 years ago, it has yet to reach its potential. Such is the demand for the grape that between 2015 and 2020, its vineyard surface area increased by an incredible 41% – the highest planting rate for any variety during this period. The 750 ha of Malagousia may seem tiny from an international perspective, but Malagousia is now the 22nd-most-planted wine grape variety in Greece. The high oenological standards for the grape and the winemaker's passion can only mean that this is the beginning of the story for this beloved grape, and we can expect to see even greater things in the future.

Mavrodaphne redefined

The winds of change are ushering in a new era for Mavrodaphne, a Greek grape variety celebrated for its role in producing sweet wines mainly from Patra and Cephalonia. It has been traditionally used to make fortified sweet red wines but is now experiencing a rebirth due to producers' and consumers' interest in its dry wines.

A transformative shift is underway as winemakers increasingly explore Mavrodaphne's potential to thrive in dry wines, reshaping its identity and unlocking an array of exciting flavours. This emerging trend has ignited a resurgence in interest and experimentation, pushing the boundaries of what Mavrodaphne can offer beyond its traditional sweet expressions. National statistics show that it is planted on 520 ha, almost the same as the plantings of the white Malagousia grape. It is a variety with a long tradition in the southern part of the country, producing balanced, textural, and highly perfumed wines. Its classic aromas include mostly black fruit and Asian spices, laurel and sage. Structurally, it delivers moderate acid and tannin load, leading the way to a refined result that can be enjoyed in its youth but can also age.

There are complications regarding the name: Old laws of the 1970s forbid writing the name of the variety on the label, except for the two sweet wine appellations, Mavrodaphne of Cephalonia and Patra. Producers use innovative names which imply the variety used, such as Daphne, The Black Daphne, Laura Nera, Daphne Nera, Laura Nobile, Laurier Noir, XMD (Xinomavro, Mavrodaphne), Tsigello, etc. Producers in Cephalonia and Achaia have petitioned to change the sweet wines' appellation rules to include dry examples. It will probably happen with so many high-quality dry red wines on the market, but as with all bureaucracy, it will take time. (Until November 2023, no proposed technical file has been submitted).



The Islands shaping

Greek wine's future

Greek wine is undergoing a dynamic transformation, with a spotlight extending far beyond the renowned Assyrtiko of Santorini. Over the past decade, Santorini's Assyrtiko has garnered international acclaim, contributing significantly to Greece's growing recognition as a wine powerhouse. Yet, Greece boasts over 200 native grape varieties, prompting the question: what lies ahead for the country's evolving wine industry?

As the industry searches for its next star, regions like Crete and Cephalonia are poised for recognition. The rise of Crete's wine sector underscores its quality and indigenous grape varieties. Cephalonia presents premium, terroir-driven wines, though its production capacity remains limited. Paros and Tinos

emerge as island contenders, each with a unique story. Paros boasts a strong food culture and wines based on the local white Monemvasia. Tinos, on the other hand, has recently established itself as a premium wine region.

A collective solution emerges amid this quest for Greece's next wine star: THE ISLANDS. While no individual region can replicate the rise of Santorini's Assyrtiko, together, the Aegean Islands present a united front. Islands such as Crete, Cephalonia, Paros, and Tinos offer quality, name recognition, lifestyle, and gastronomy. This island-focused concept, aptly named "The Islands," becomes a compelling contender for Greece's next big wine success. These islands' shared attributes paint a collective narrative that captures the essence of Greek wine's evolution.



News

2023 a tough vintage; late-ripening reds are expected to shine

2023 was a year of extremes in the Greek vineyard. The growing season can be split into three periods: the cool and wet spring; the hot and dry summer; and the normal – (for the most part) – ripening period of the late summer and autumn. The increased disease pressure due to the spring rains and the summer heatwaves led to a 24.85% decrease in total yields (Greek Vine, Wine and Spirits Department). Ripening was delayed in general, which aided the acid retention for whites. The dry (for the most part) autumn favoured late-ripening reds, resulting in smooth, high-quality tannins.

[For more details, refer to the vintage chapter.](#)

The 2023 vintage in Greece presented considerable challenges, especially for early-ripening varieties. A pivotal stage in 2023 was flowering, which also commenced late, marking one of the most late-ripening years in the past five decades. For example, we witnessed Malagousia grapes harvested early in September versus mid-August and the Fokiano variety in Naxos reaching only 11.5% when it usually reaches more than 13% abv. Key characteristics of the vintage include a mild May without extreme temperatures, multiple rain events during critical periods in May and June, and an ensuing outbreak of downy mildew—a pervasive epidemic due to the perfect conditions of high rainfall and temperatures between 18–22 °C. Unprepared producers,

especially those cultivating susceptible varieties like Assyrtiko, faced immense or total destruction. A 10-day heatwave following the rains exacerbated the stress on already weakened vines, proving a stark illustration of climate change. A significant lesson learned was the resilience of dry-farmed vineyards, as they managed to withstand the challenges while others experienced losses over just two to three days.

Greek wine exports at (nearly) 100 million euros

Greek wine is enjoying its moment in the international wine trade. For many years, the global markets were flooded with entry-level Greek wines, which sometimes presented excellent value for money or could be disappointing. These wines targeted diaspora Greeks, who wanted a taste of home, or tourists looking nostalgic for their Greek holidays. The otherwise small Greek wine production was comfortable with this situation, as the popularity of bottled Greek wine was growing in the country, making it an easy and accessible market for quality wine producers.

In the past decade, however, the world economic crisis has shrunk Greek people's spending, reducing wine purchases. Shifting focus to the export markets was the only hope for many producers. This synergistic export-oriented strategy finally bore fruit. According to the Hellenic Statistical



Authority, 2022 marks the year when exports almost reached 100 million euros. Most notably, this is a trend, not a one-off event. In 2021, the exports reached an all-time high of nearly 85 million euros. Both years made history for Greek wine exports. 2023 seems quick to follow, with an increased export value for the same period at the time of writing (December 2023).

The current increase in Greek wine exports is fundamentally the result of the premiumisation of Greek wine in the export markets. Export volumes show an apparent decline from more than 35,000 tons before 2008 to less than 30,000 tons since 2019. The clear winner, however, is the average price per litre, which has increased from around 1.5 €/L in the mid-2000s to more than 3 €/L since 2021! The international wine audience is finally noticing quality Greek wine.

Boutari under new ownership

Boutari is one of the leading Greek wine companies, operating six wineries in key viticultural regions. Due to Boutari's increasing debts, it was purchased in 2022 by the investment company Sterner Stenhus Greece, a member of Premia Properties. The Georgiades Brothers, behind the investment company, foresee critical changes for the company and plan to invest up to 5 million euros until 2025. Interestingly, Sterner Stenhus Greece came to the rescue once again for the Greek wine industry by renting the vineyards of Tsantali, which did not produce wine in 2023 – the company is allegedly negotiating to acquire them. The purchase of a winery by an investment

company is pivotal for the Greek wine industry, which is significantly represented by family-run businesses.

Biblia Chora invests in Naoussa and the first winery in Therasia

Biblia Chora winery, a co-venture of Vangelis Gerovassiliou and Vassilis Tsaktsarlis, is investing in vineyards in Naoussa, aiming to release a Naoussa PDO label over the following years.

The successful duo is collaborating in more wineries, including Mikra Thira, Mikro Ktima Titos, and Dyo Ipsi, each producing approximately 20,000 bottles annually. Most notably, Mikra Thira is the first winery in Therasia, the small volcanic island across the crater from Santorini. The winery's first vintage was in 2019, after long bureaucratic battles to gain building and winery-operating permissions on the tiny island.



50 GGW: Synchronic Excellence

Greek wines are very much the talk amongst discerning wine-buying circles, with enterprising and ambitious wine merchants, sommeliers and importers all looking to seek out new and exciting wines to take on. This is where the 50 Great Greek Wines (50 GGW) can help identify the producers that wine buyers should seek out. Over the last three years, since we founded 50 GGW, we have witnessed the evolution of this idea as it has gained more and more attention year by year.

What makes 50 GGW different from wine competitions is the limited number of awarded wines and the following global promotional activities. Over the last three years, we've undertaken promotional activities in Spain, France, Italy, Poland, Serbia, The Netherlands, Hungary, Cyprus and Germany. Belgium is scheduled for January 2024. In addition, the 50 GGW has been featured in important wine magazines worldwide, from the US to Korea,

creating awareness and opportunities for Greek Wines. Most importantly, 50 GGW participated in the welcome reception of the 2023 Master of Wine Symposium, impressing an international audience of influential wine personalities.

The third edition of 50 GGW took place in September 2023, followed by a glamorous award ceremony, where the 50 winning wines were available for tasting by the audience. The wines selected from the list represented a snapshot of the most exciting – – great – – wines and styles on the Greek market right now. The wines are announced alphabetically, emphasising one of our core principles: “Greatness is not a Number”. As Greek wine producers embrace this vision, the number of wines that enter the blind tasting increases yearly. 609 wines were tasted by the international judges Julia Harding MW, Mark Andrew MW, Lenka Sedlackova MW, Wojciech Bońkowski MW, Caro Maurer MW, Demetri Walters MW, and Christophe Heynen MW.



50GGW Judges, Year 2023



High Elevation Vineyard in Naxos

The Wines of Naxos

Naxos, the largest of the Cycladic Islands, boasts an illustrious history and a thriving agricultural landscape. While the island's captivating Chora capital and its coastal retreats attract a growing number of visitors, Naxos maintains a distinct rural character within its interior. Despite Kitron, the local lemon liqueur, holding a stronger presence than local wines, the landscape of quality winemaking is gradually emerging, albeit on a modest scale. Amidst Naxos's well-preserved landscapes and vibrant historical narrative, its wines have remained a concealed treasure. The island's remarkable and untamed topography shelters many old vines, some perched upon steep terraces inaccessible by conventional means, with their age exceeding 120 years.

However, recent times have witnessed a burgeoning interest in bottled wines, a trend bolstered by establishment of new wineries

such as Ekho and Terra Grazia alongside the rejuvenation of Tranabelo winery. Moreover, Bordeaux winemaker Loïc Pasquet, from the controversial Liber Pater estate, recently released approximately 1,000 bottles of Aspro Potamisi from a 1.5-hectare old-vines vineyard.

Naxos, an uncharted vineyard realm, boasts a rich assortment of grape varieties mainly unfamiliar to the broader audience. Among them, Karaibram, initially recorded as a black grape in the bibliography, engenders intrigue as a white variety of uncertain identity. Potamisi, Aidani, and their diverse derivatives like Moscaidano thrive alongside the provocatively named Bastardiko and the enigmatic Tzemeris. These lesser-known gems coexist with more recognised names like Assyrtiko, Fokiano, and Mandilaria. Most of these are own-rooted bush vines, some sprawling along the earth's surface.



Hopes and Fears for 2024

As the year unfolds, the Greek wine industry stands at a critical juncture, teeming with hopes and fears that may shape its trajectory for 2024. Aspirations are buoyant, envisaging a future where Greek wines consolidate their strength domestically and make significant strides in the international market, building a firm and well-delineated brand identity. Simultaneously, there is a collective desire for legislative changes that could redefine the landscape, allowing certain varieties to flourish and adapt to contemporary trends.

Hopes

Strength in Global Presence

The foremost hope for 2024 is a surge in the international standing of Greek wines. The aspiration is for Greek wines to transcend their regional allure and develop a strong presence on the global stage. Increased exports will bolster the industry economically and elevate the reputation of Greek wines worldwide.

Legislative Synchronisation

A critical aspect of fostering growth involves legislative reforms. Enthusiasts and industry insiders hope for synchronised legislation facilitating innovation and quality improvement. This includes allowing dry Mavrodaphne to be produced, a shift that could open new dimensions for Greek red wine, and designating Retsina as a vintage wine, shedding its historical image to emerge as a refined and sought-after choice.

Embracing Modern Closure Options

Another optimistic expectation revolves around embracing modern closure methods. There is a desire to see the acceptance of screw caps for PDO (Protected Designation of Origin) wines. This shift would align Greek wines with contemporary preferences and ensure the preservation of flavours and quality, providing consumers with a reliable and consistent experience.

Preservation of Old Vines

Preserving old vineyards is a heartfelt hope for many in the Greek wine community. Old vines, some dating back over a century, are under threat due to urbanisation and changing agricultural practices. The industry envisions concerted efforts to protect these invaluable vineyards, recognising their role in preserving biodiversity and producing unique, characterful wines.



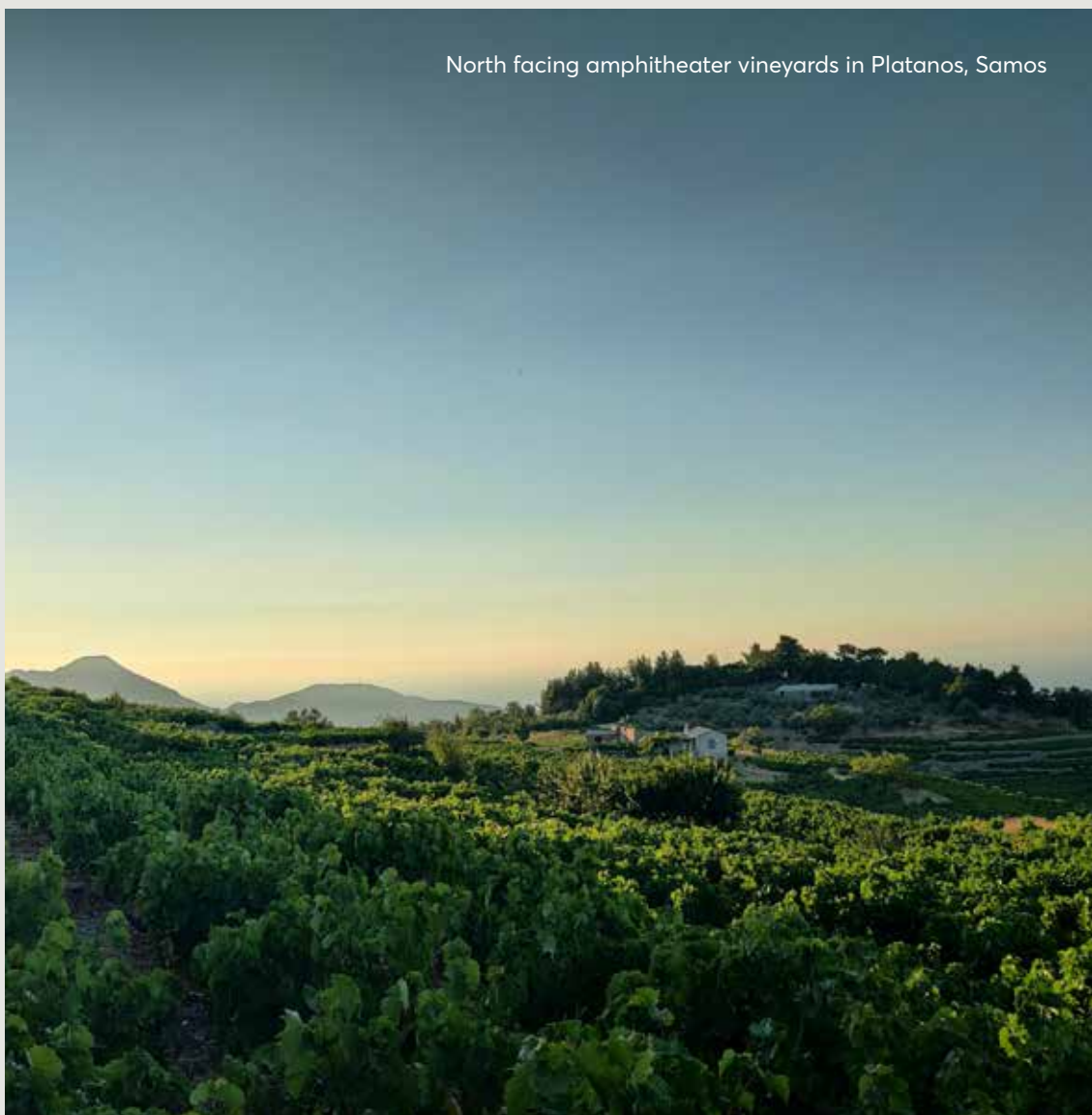
Varietal Protection

As the world becomes more interconnected, there is an urgency to safeguard indigenous grape varieties. The hope is for initiatives that protect and promote these varieties, ensuring they remain an integral part of Greece's winemaking heritage. Preserving the rich tapestry of grape diversity contributes to the uniqueness of Greek wines and the industry's resilience in the face of changing climates and consumer preferences.

Adaptation to Climate Change

With climate change posing an existential threat to agriculture globally, there is a collective hope for proactive measures within the Greek wine industry. Adaptation strategies, sustainable viticulture practices, and exploring climate-resilient varieties are essential to this vision. The industry aims to mitigate the impact of climate change and position itself as a leader in sustainable winemaking.

North facing amphitheater vineyards in Platanos, Samos





Fears

While hopes abound, the fears for Greek wine in 2024 are rooted in the potential disappointment if these aspirations remain unrealised

Stagnation and missed opportunities

The most prominent fear is that the anticipated growth and positive changes may not materialise, leading to a sense of stagnation. If the industry fails to capitalise on emerging opportunities, there is a risk of remaining confined to its current status, missing the chance to make a lasting mark on the global wine map.

Continued regulatory hurdles

The fears also extend to the persistence of regulatory obstacles that hinder progress. If legislative changes do not materialise or face prolonged delays, the industry's ability to innovate and meet evolving consumer preferences could impede it. Regulatory inertia poses a significant threat to the dynamism required for sustained growth.

Loss of old vines and grape growers

The fear of losing old vines and, possibly, indigenous varieties looms large. Urbanisation, changing land-use patterns, and inadequate conservation efforts may lead to irreversible losses. Moreover, the disappearance of old growers and their invaluable knowledge about indigenous varieties would diminish Greek winemaking's cultural and historical richness and compromise the industry's resilience in the face of evolving market demands.

Failure to adapt to climate change

Climate change is an ever-present concern, and the fear is that insufficient adaptation measures could result in diminished grape quality and yield. Failure to address climate-related challenges may lead to increased production costs, reduced competitiveness, and a potential decline in the overall quality of Greek wines.

In conclusion, the hopes and fears for Greek wine in 2024 encapsulate the industry's aspirations for growth, innovation, and sustainability, juxtaposed with the anxieties surrounding potential setbacks and unmet expectations. The coming year holds the promise of positive transformation, provided the industry can navigate and overcome the challenges.



Section Two

Two 01. Hot Topic: Old Vines

Two 02. Old Vines in Greece, the Answer to Climate Change



Hot Topic: Old Vines

Preservation of Old Vines

Greece's illustrious wine history spanning millennia and its claim as the cradle of wine culture naturally positions it as a prime locale for exploring wines from ancient vines. Notably, the acclaimed Santorini Assyrtiko, a jewel in Greece's vinous crown, originates in century-old vines. An intriguing vine of antiquity, the Pausanias vine, visited by the ancient traveller Pausanias in 172 AD, stands in the Prefectures of Achaia and Arcadia on the Peloponnese, just 140 km from Athens.

Within the enigmatic vineyards of Santorini, often compared to a "Jurassic Park" for vines, the exact age of the vines remains shrouded in mystery. Some may date back a century or possibly two! These steadfast vines have weathered the test of time, resiliently enduring winds, fires, and earthquakes. Notable vintages, such as the scorching and arid 2017 or the intensely windy 2019, which significantly impacted yields, failed to compromise the quality; the old vines played an essential role.

However, moving beyond the misconception that Santorini stands alone in Greece with its treasure trove of old vines is vital. From Macedonia (Amyndeo and selected Naoussa vineyards) to Rapsani and Central Greece, Attica (where numerous 50- to 60-year-old Savatiano vines thrive), to the heart of the Peloponnese (Achaia, Nemea, and Ilia), ancient vine plots abound. My homeland, Cephalonia, boasts a significant share of old vines, while Crete's Rethymno, Chania, and Sitia regions feature their patches. Other Aegean islands, including Tinos, Rhodes, and Samos, contribute to this rich tapestry. Ancient vines are a common thread woven throughout Greece, inspiring a cadre of winemakers to craft wines that genuinely resonate with their origins.

However, time is of the essence. The absence of comprehensive recording places these vineyards at risk, potentially leading to the loss of rare varieties, some perhaps still undiscovered. Heartrending stories of lost vineyards echo from Crete and Tinos to Naoussa and Amyndeo, where more prolific-yielding newcomers sometimes displace old vines. These venerable vineyards necessitate unique management practices. Experts such as Francois Dal and Marco Simonit, internationally respected figures in viticulture, advocate for decisions related to plant architecture and pruning methods that influence yield and longevity. Notably, Dal suggests refraining from pruning old wood, focusing solely on new growth.

Our collective responsibility is to rally behind this cause, preserve our heritage, exhibit reverence for life and nature, and further the discourse on authenticity and terroir. Greece's ancient



vineyards represent an underappreciated oenological treasure, their significance extending beyond the confines of Santorini's fame. This challenge carries the potential to enrich Greece's vinous narrative, aligning harmoniously with our diverse array of indigenous varieties. Eurostat says more than half of Greece's vines are over 30 years old, making it the highest percentage of old vines in Europe after only Cyprus, Romania, and Bulgaria—a testament to Greece's deeply rooted viticultural heritage.

Research has observed the active water preservation and drought tolerance of old vines in combination with a traditional training system. Here is a synopsis of a recent research paper stating: "In brief, the kouloura training system (a basket-trained form of vines, goblet-shaped with the canes woven around each other) maintained a less-stressed water status than VSP, while for both studied years during kouloura exhibited significantly higher photosynthetic rates and stomatal conductance. Regarding microclimate observations, we found that, especially during heatwaves, VSP's grapes were more exposed to higher temperatures during midday than kouloura and that the kouloura system protected against damage from heatwaves and strong winds compared to VSP."

Reasons to preserve and not replace old vines

Drought Resistance: Old vines have developed an extensive root system that enables them to adapt better to vintage conditions, especially drought. Old vines are shown to maintain more consistent yields, while younger vines struggle because they rely on shallow root systems, which are more affected by drought and heat.

Terroir Expression: Old vines have become one with their land. As a result, they produce wines with character, showcasing their terroir year after year.

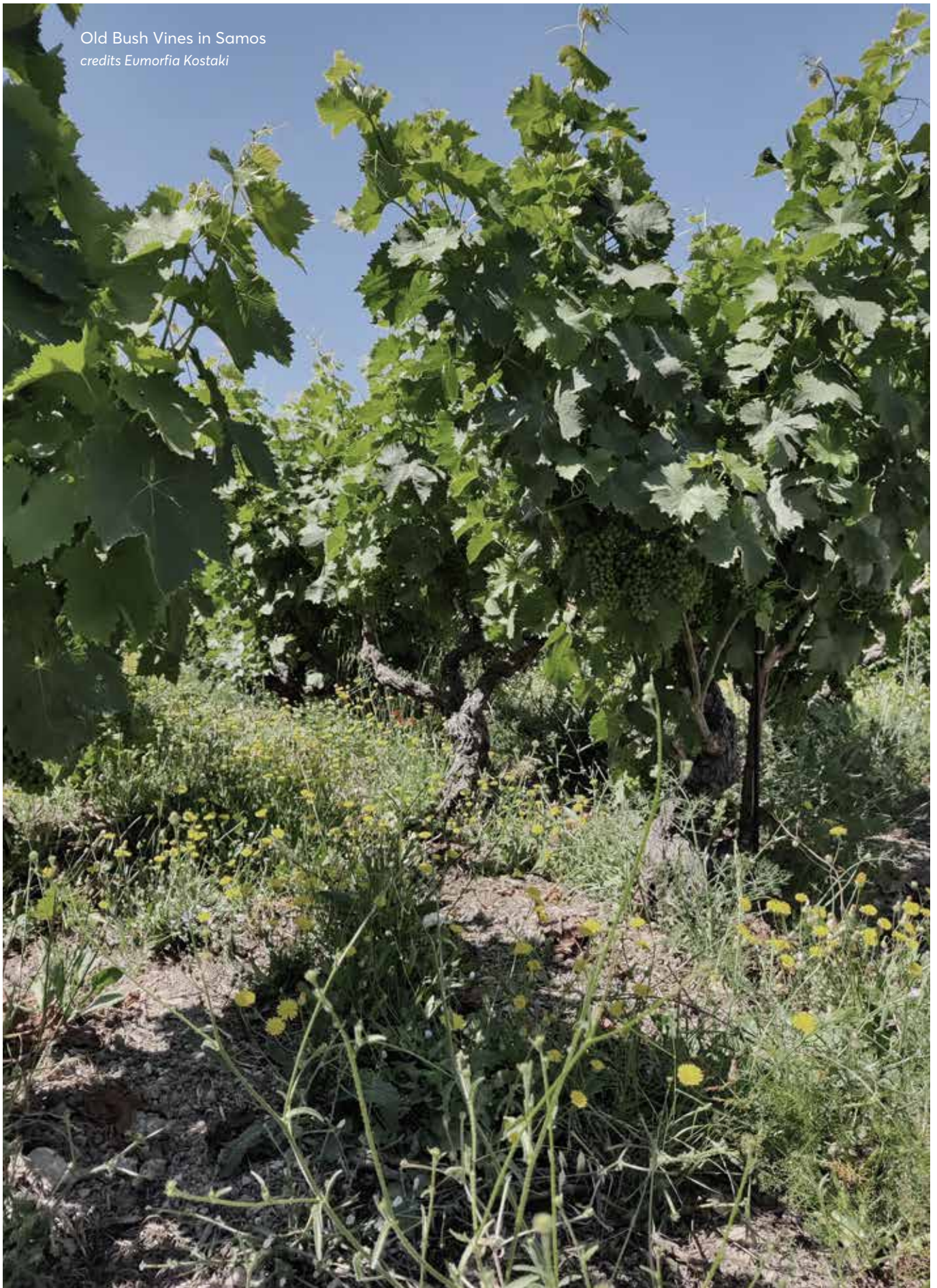
Sustainability: Rainfall in Greece is expected to decrease significantly by 2050. Maintaining the mentality that vineyards are productive for 15–20 years and then should be replanted requires high water use for vineyard establishment. Old vines are a sustainable approach to the future because they effectively preserve natural resources.

Heat Resistance: Most old vines use traditional training systems, like the goblet or the kouloura. Their expertly managed canopy creates an ideal microclimate for the bunches, protecting them from the hot Greek sun. This improves wine quality, preventing burnt aromas and preserving fresh flavours. Few new vineyards are trained in goblet, as it has higher labour requirements, which can compromise wine quality depending on the region.

Biodiversity: As the interest in Greek wine increases, so does research. Old vines are a great source of genetic material for Greek varieties. They offer opportunities to discover new clones as well as new varieties. Old vines are the future of Greek wine.



Old Bush Vines in Samos
credits Evmorfia Kostaki





Old Vines in Greece, the answer to climate change

by Professor Stefanos Koundouras

Water is the most precious of natural resources. Although most of the Earth's surface is covered by water, fresh water is only 2.5% of the total, much of which is trapped in the form of ice, leaving just 0.007% of the planet's total water readily available for man use. This available water (often referred to as "blue water") originates from either rainfalls or fresh surface and groundwater (i.e. lakes, rivers and aquifers).

Agriculture is by far the largest user of this water. Moreover, given the rapid rise in the world's population, agricultural production needs are expected to increase by almost 50% by 2050 compared to 2012 to meet the rising demand for food (mainly), fibre, and biofuels. As a result, the demand for blue water is expected to increase by 20–30 % until 2050. Under these conditions, and also taking climate change (which also increases the water demand) and pollution (which reduces the available blue water reservoir) into consideration, it is inevitable that there will not be enough water to irrigate the total agricultural area in the future.

Efficient water management in agriculture is, therefore, of the utmost importance. Crops have different needs regarding water. Broad-acre crops (corn, soybean, etc.) primarily depend on water. However, grapevines are considered more drought-tolerant. Irrigation (mainly for wine grapes) is not a traditional practice, especially in the Mediterranean basin.

However, although most vines are still dry-farmed, the acreage of irrigated vineyards is increasing. While it is true that recent viticultural research and practice has led to grapevine-specific irrigation strategies like PRD and RDI, even with fine-tuned irrigation management through drip pipes, the blue-water footprint of an irrigated vineyard is generally at least 100 times higher compared to a dry-farmed vineyard. Another drawback of irrigation in dry climates is that it can increase soil salinity, reducing vineyard soil's long-term suitability for cultivation. This effect is exacerbated when sewage or seawater is used after treatment.

But more important is the fact that irrigated vines do not develop a deep root system, which is the main adaptive process of vines to drought. On the contrary, non-irrigated vineyards can thrive through dry periods with roots that can reach far enough below the surface. Those vines progressively balance their growth dynamics accordingly and self-adjust to limited water availability with a lower vigour and lower yields (smaller bunches and berries).



While dry farming is believed impossible in places with highly arid climates (which may be partially true), the only way (if any) to establish a viable vineyard under extreme drought conditions is to make the right decisions when planning the vineyard such as low plantation density, the correct choice of rootstocks, deep ploughing before planting and limited or no irrigation. Possibly, during the first years after planting, young plants may occasionally require assistance with irrigation, but this would be the case only in extremely hot and dry summer conditions.

Obviously, the grape grower must correctly choose the target of the vineyard's production (whether this concerns the quality or price of the wines being produced). In more hostile environments, one has to choose red over white varieties, vigorous local varieties over international, drought resistant over less resistant rootstocks, lower than higher plantation densities, more severe spur pruning than cane pruning, and more... When none of this works, one must question the area's suitability for viticulture.

Santorini is the most emblematic vineyard of Greece and has survived in the area for thousands of years. The unique character of its wines (especially those from Assyrtiko) is tightly connected to these extreme conditions and the adaptations these own-rooted vines have developed over the years to adapt and survive. It would be unthinkable to talk about minerality or any of those wines' particularities (i.e. pH) if their roots were only distributed in the topsoil. This remark could be further explored to define the role of the roots in the expression of terroir in the wines.





Section Three

- Three 01.** Vintage 2023 Overview
- Three 02.** Factors influencing the Climate of the Greek Viticulture Regions
- Three 03.** Why were Spring Rainfalls so Devastating for the Greek Vineyard?



Vintage 2023 Overview

The 2023 vintage has been one of the most challenging vintages of recent decades. Looking at the yearly average data, 2023 looks like a typical year for Greece. Yet, the 2023 vintage has been marked by an alarming number of extreme weather events. A dry, warm winter was followed by a cold spring and a mid-summer heatwave, while there were also multiple intense rain events both early in the season and during harvest time, as well as sporadic hailstorms and fires. Not all wine regions have been affected the same, but the verdict is out. The 2023 vintage has been particularly challenging, and producers are seriously worried about the future. In high contrast, this is expected to be a top vintage for late-ripening red grapes like Xinomavro.

The 2023 vintage was, therefore, marked with extreme weather. Limited precipitation was noted throughout the country over the winter, with February marked with deficient rainfall. Following the warm winter, the vines had a slow start due to the cooler spring and abundant spring rainfall, but then grew quickly after June. The heat and increased humidity due to the moist soil created favourable conditions for developing powdery mildew (*peronospora*) – yet another battle the viticulturists had to fight.

At the peak of the summer, and while the early ripening grapes were still developing, growth and ripening halted due to the high temperatures of the summer. Greece was one of the European countries that experienced an extensive summer heatwave. Ripening could only continue after mid-August when temperatures returned to normal levels. Still, unfortunately, the heat has been detrimental for many vineyards, which experienced dehydration or sunburn, partially due to the compromised canopy from the downy mildew. During that time, wildfires spread all over Greece, from Thrace in the north-east to Peloponnese. Vineyards were not spared from the fires' wrath, but fortunately, no smoke taint was expected for the wines since most grapes were not past veraison at that time.

Just when viticulturists thought they had escaped the wrath of the weather, a severe rainstorm in early September called "Daniel" led to further destruction of the crop due to botrytis outbreaks. Producers waiting for phenolic maturity for reds opted to harvest some plots early and produce rosé wines to save part of their production in this demanding vintage. The regions most impacted were those of Thessaly and central Greece, even though it rained in most parts of the country.

Unfortunately, many vineyards were covered with floodwater, and wine cellars flooded. On a positive note, conditions improved afterwards, allowing the remaining healthy grapes to ripen on the vines.



Despite the hardships of the 2023 vintage, the little remaining fruit is expected to be high quality. First, downy mildew does not affect grape quality, just grape yield, as the affected berries are dehydrated. This can result in looser bunches, which can facilitate plant protection. Then, the heatwave may have stressed the vines, stopping photosynthesis and halting ripening, but that was a good thing for the vineyards that survived. This delay caused ripening to move later in the summer, with less heat, allowing them to benefit from the shorter days and cooler nights, resulting in a fresh fruit character. Old vines and indigenous Greek varieties were the heat- and water-stress champions, while international varieties fared better during the wet period. We can expect to find outstanding Greek wines made in the 2023 vintage.

Thrace

The beginning of the growing season was marked by cold, rainy weather, impacting vine health, especially for the indigenous varieties. Midsummer heatwaves halted ripening. The late-August fires at Alexandroupoli destroyed some vineyards in the region.

Amyndeio (Amyndaio)

The year started with warmer-than-usual weather over winter and into early spring. But spring turned rainy and cool, reversing the original predictions for an early harvest. The dry and hot summer led to severe water stress, and irrigation proved a saviour in the sandy soils of Amyndeio. Harvest began with the whites a week later than usual, at the beginning of September. Xinomavro is expected to show an exquisite character in 2023 due to an unprecedented phenolic maturity.

Naoussa

Naoussa was also impacted by significant spring rainfalls, which increased downy mildew pressure. Yields are down by 30–40%, but this is balanced by very high-quality crops, making it an exceptional vintage. It's not like any other vintage of recent years.

Nemea

The late start to the growing season along with rainy weather in May and June, led to *peronospora*, which reduced yields. Midsummer heatwaves postponed ripening, pointing towards a late vintage. However, high rainfall events in September led to a rapid harvest prompted by fears of botrytis developing in the tight Agiorgitiko clusters. Winemakers who did not adjust their extraction techniques may have some green tannins. However, due to the large size of Nemea, some great wines will be produced from carefully selected vineyards.

Mantinia

Budbreak came about ten days later than usual for the Moschofilero in Mantinia. The spring rainfall and overcast conditions aided the spread of fungal diseases. The high altitude moderated the summer heatwave in Mantinia, resulting in a high diurnal range. The good omens for a late



season were brutally interrupted in September when a severe rainfall event, accompanied by hail, destroyed a large part of the vineyard in the northern parts of the appellation. Harvest in Mantinia started after 15 October, a rare occurrence in recent years, favouring light-bodied wines.

Santorini

2023 was one of the most devastating years for the Santorini vineyard. In addition to the strong spring winds (which commonly cause broken shoots), hail impacted the young shoots on 23 April in the central viticultural region of the island. As a result, some vineyards lost all their crop, and the remaining grapes had to be protected from the unprecedented rainfalls of late spring. In addition, the extended July heatwave caused an additional decline in production. Only 30% of the average yield survived this catastrophic vintage.

Tinos

A rainy spring increased disease pressure in the vineyards of Tinos. The naturally cloudy Tinos terroir exacerbated the issue. The heatwave stressed the vineyards, most of which are relatively new. Harvest in September is typical for the island, yet yields have dropped to 40% of the average.

Cephalonia

Located in the western part of Greece, lacking the protective pain barrier of Pindos, Cephalonia received remarkably high rainfall at the beginning of the growing season for the region. Fruit set of the Robola vineyards was interrupted, and the *peronospora* outbreak that followed led to a 60% decrease in production.

Crete

The wet start of the growing season resulted in severe *peronospora* infections around the island, aided by high morning humidity. Midsummer heat halted ripening and pushed harvest back by about three weeks to late August. Overall, production is down 70% from the average volume. Late-ripening reds seem promising due to high-quality tannins.

Samos

Budbreak came earlier than usual for the Muscat á Petits Grains Blancs of Samos, yet the cool and wet spring led to slow growth and aided the development of fungal diseases. The midsummer heatwave paused ripening, pushing the harvest start back by two weeks into 20 August. Samos was spared from the September rainfalls, resulting in unhurried harvesting well into October for the higher altitudes.

Lemnos

The growing season started later than usual due to the spring rainfall. The summer heatwave impacted Muscat of Alexandria more than Limnio. Yields were down approximately 20%, and harvest began in mid-September. Limnio has achieved high quality with smooth tannins.



Factors influencing the climate of the Greek viticulture regions

Greece has, – for the most part, a Mediterranean climate with mild winters and dry summers subject to regional and local variations due to its physical diversity. The country has a long coastline, numerous islands, and mountainous terrain, creating different microclimates. These diverse climatic conditions are an essential part of the Greek terroir. The plethora of grapes grown in the various regions allows viticulturists to partner with the specific climate of each plot. Greece is located in the temperate zone of the Northern Hemisphere, between 34 and 42° N. This means that it experiences four distinct seasons, with longer days in summer and shorter days in winter. The sun's rays are more direct and intense in the south than in the north, creating a temperature gradient across the country, with vineyards in the north being, on average, cooler than those in the south.

The Mountains

Greece is one of the most mountainous countries in Europe, with about 80% of its land area covered by mountains. The mountains affect the climate of Greece by creating barriers to air circulation, creating rain shadows, and altering the elevation and exposure of different areas. The mountains also create diverse climatic zones, such as alpine, continental, and semi-arid climates, depending on the terrain's altitude, slope, and orientation. So complex is the terrain that one could consider each vineyard to have a unique terroir. Higher altitudes and/or north-facing orientations are home to some of the coldest Greek vineyards. The most significant mountain range is that of Pindos, which runs north to south across the Greek mainland and splits it in two. Most wine regions are located on the eastern part of the Pindus mountain range, which protects the rest of the country from the rains coming from the west.

The Sea

Greece is located in the eastern Mediterranean basin and is surrounded by three seas: the Aegean Sea, the Ionian Sea, and the Libyan Sea. These seas moderate the climate of Greece by providing moisture, cooling breezes, and precipitation. Interestingly, no part of Greece is beyond 137 km from the sea. As water temperature changes happen more slowly than land temperature



changes, the proximity to the sea results in cooler spring and warmer autumn temperatures than continental regions of the same latitude, while it also helps to moderate extreme winter and summer temperatures. The Greek climate is, therefore, mild due to the massive impact of the sea; however, it becomes progressively more continental inland.

The Wind

Winds are also a significant influence on the Greek climate. The sea that surrounds Greece enables winds to travel and gain high speeds. Once it reaches the land, it can be destructive, damaging the shoots of the vines, but it can also be beneficial as it improves air circulation. During winter, the northern winds from Eurasia bring cold, snowy and often freezing conditions to Greece. Yet, the northern winds that blow in the summer impact viticulture more. These are the *meltemi* (probably originating from the Latin “mal tempo”, meaning bad weather), which blow across the Aegean mainly in July and August, particularly during the day. The *meltemi* winds cool down the Greek vineyards during the hottest months and at the hottest hours of the day, preventing heat waves. *Meltemi* winds come in waves that last many days, and there can be from zero (highly unusual) to up to seven or eight waves in a season. Usually, more than half of the days of July and August are characterised by meltemi winds. Their duration, frequency, and intensity impact the growing season’s temperature. The regions affected are the Aegean islands, Crete, Eastern Peloponnese and the areas east of the Pindus mountain range. Western Greece and the Ionian islands don’t experience the *meltemi*.



Why were spring rainfalls so devastating for the Greek vineyard?

By Evmorfia Kostaki

Looking at the past year's climatic data, one may wonder how so little rain caused such a big problem with fungal diseases. To fully address this, we must investigate several factors that play a role in the Greek vineyard. These include the unfamiliarity with the situation, the highly fragmented vineyard land, unusually high demands for equipment and manpower, as well as the traditional vineyard establishment and training practices. Finally, we'll examine how current grape prices may have contributed to the damage. Considering the extreme conditions of multiple rainy days in a row and the resulting high humidity levels, it's evident that the heroic efforts of viticulturists around the country were the only reason not all grapes were lost this spring.

Unprecedented Conditions

Viticulturists had to respond fast to unprecedented conditions for the Greek vineyard. The Mediterranean climate of Greece usually provides ideal growing conditions for grapes. In normal conditions, the most common viticulture threat is powdery mildew. In most cases, it's not even severe, with some vineyards only requiring a couple of sulphur dustings during the growing season to produce excellent fruit. Most viticulturists in Greece, except perhaps those in the western and northern parts, have never needed a management program for downy mildew. Some didn't even know what it looked like on inflorescences and have only encountered it in books. It's fair to say they skipped the topic – I would have done the same! Coming from this background, viticulturists had first to overcome their panic and fear. They had to step up, read about downy mildew management or consult an agronomist. Then they had to take action, spraying in regular intervals, to save their crop – weather permitting!

Fragmented Vineyard Land

As if that's not enough, the Greek vineyard is highly fragmented, with the average vineyard holding 0.53 ha, which brings its own challenges. To put things into perspective, according to 2020 data from Euromonitor, France has eight times more vineyards than Greece, yet only half



the number of vineyard holdings. Also, while Greece and Germany have the same vineyard land, Greece has approximately five times more vineyard holdings. Having small vineyards and many viticulturists makes disease management much more demanding. First of all, a large number of these vineyards are cultivated by hobby viticulturists. Despite having the best intentions of applying the correct photoprotection protocols, most simply don't have the time to do it. This means that the overall disease pressure increased also for those vineyards cultivated by professionals. When a vineyard is infected by downy mildew, stopping the spread to the neighbouring ones is almost impossible. As a result, the mildew outbreak increased as time passed, affecting the vineyards of even the most careful owners.

The small vineyard holdings and the typically good Mediterranean conditions mean that there is no infrastructure to combat such conditions. Many growers still apply plant protection agents with labour-intensive, time-consuming hand-held sprayers. By the time they had sprayed their vineyards, chances are they had to start all over again. Perhaps it was even too late to do so. Viticulturists who manage larger vineyard surfaces generally do so with a tractor, but even tractors are limited by the number of hectares they can cover daily. When one adds to that the time spent travelling to and through all the different plots, the surface area that can be covered within a limited time period is small. Greek viticulturists have enough tractors for their land to maintain a spraying schedule in a typical year. Yet, this year, where the conditions demanded spraying applications in closer intervals, there was simply not enough machinery or manpower to protect the vines fully. If typical climatic conditions were different, viticulturists would usually equip vineyards with a higher ratio of tractors to planted hectares (as is done in Germany, where it's not uncommon to have three tractors to manage 20 ha of organic vineyards or one tractor per 10 ha of conventional vineyards). Going forward, difficult decisions may need to be made about investing in expensive tractors versus the cost of losing crops.

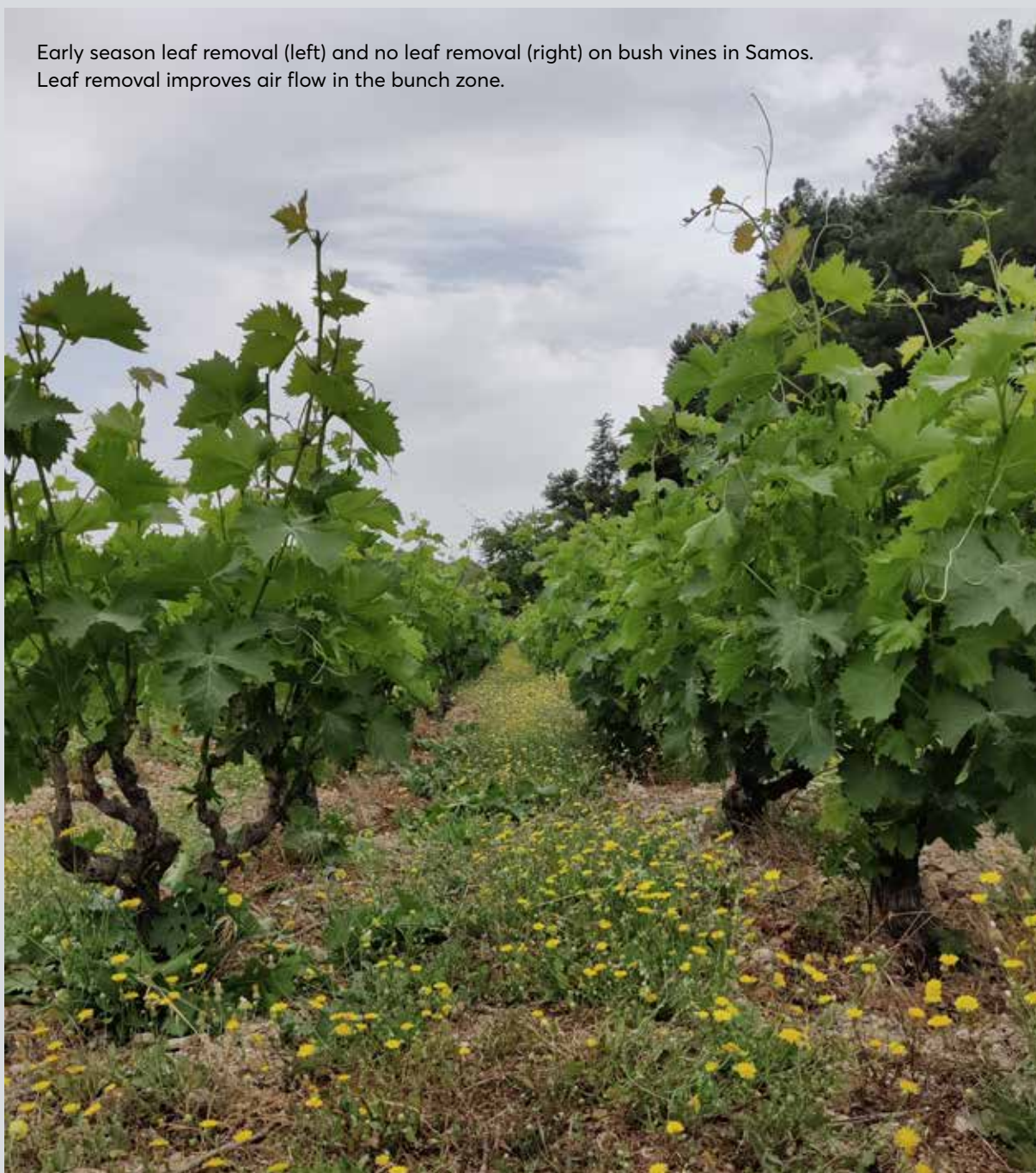
Traditional Vineyard Establishment

Another critical parameter to consider is the suitability of the Greek vineyard itself to withstand these spring rainfalls. According to 2020 data from Eurostat, more than 50% of the Greek vineyards are older than 30 years. This means the Greek vineyard is still governed by a tradition shaped by the Mediterranean climate. Bush-trained vines are, therefore, a common sight, and in many cases, this is combined with high planting densities. This is an advantage of the Greek vineyard in normal conditions, as the grapes remain shaded while photosynthesis rates are maximised. This is ideal for the vines in standard years, as viticulturists can avoid sunburn and reduce the plant's water requirements compared to a VSP vineyard. However, such a training system brings the opposite effect in wet conditions. The sheltered grapes stay wet for extended periods because wind and sun don't have easy access to the bunch zone. In addition, the sprayings are usually performed by hand due to the small plot size, terraced land or narrow



spacing. As a result, viticulturists don't often manage to spray in time, and spray coverage, even when performed with a tractor, is not as homogenous as with a VSP, giving the fungi spaces within which to spread. As if that's not enough, vineyards are generally planted in terraces rather than slopes to capture as much rainwater as possible and reduce runoff. This, however, also increases the humidity and further decreases air flow, especially for the vines closer to the walls, aiding the spread of downy mildew even more.

Early season leaf removal (left) and no leaf removal (right) on bush vines in Samos. Leaf removal improves air flow in the bunch zone.





Grape prices

Considering all these difficulties, we must also address the elephant in the room: grape prices. While many wineries farm their own vineyards and take every step to ensure vineyard health, no matter the cost, a large part of the grape production is sold to négociants or cooperatives. These entities determine the prices of the grapes, which remain almost too low to be profitable in typical vintages in most Greek wine regions. When considering the added cost of plant protection that vineyards required this spring, many viticulturists calculated they would experience greater financial loss by trying to save their vineyards than abandoning the crop for a year. However, by leaving these vineyards to their fate, disease pressure increased even further for those trying to protect their vines. As a result, those who managed to save their grapes had to pay inflated fuel prices and the exponential increase in fungicide prices. Combining that with an inevitable decrease in yield due to the spring rains, but also due to the intense heatwave of the summer, any price increases offered by the grape buyers did little to cover the added cost.

In summary

Overall, it has been a challenging year for Greek viticulture, not only in terms of yields produced but also because of the financial outcome for the viticulturists. 2023 was the vintage climate change that has become a reality for the Greek vineyard. While there are increasing concerns about future climate patterns, the passion and determination of many viticulturists will keep the Greek vineyard alive and thriving in years to come. Yet, the Greek wine industry and the international wine scene must understand that Greece is not a country that can compete in prices. The huge diversity in every layer of the Greek wine industry is its power and quality. It must be appreciated and celebrated for the Greek wine industry to flourish further. availability with a lower vigour and lower yields (smaller bunches and berries).



Section Four

Four 01. The People behind the Labels –
Nikos Karatzas on Greek Wine



The people behind the labels – *Nikos Karatzas on Greek wine*

The year 2023: your perspective

2023 was, in terms of viticultural challenges, a unique year. However, despite various challenges and setbacks, it could be considered, in certain aspects, an excellent year. It was a year of lower production for most of the country's vineyards. Nevertheless, early intense rainfall endowed the vines with water, aiding them in enduring the prolonged summer heat. This led to an exceptional vintage in regions like Naoussa, Rapsani, and Amyndeo. However, what concerns us is that a year with many challenges, which used to occur once every ten years, now seems to happen every year in recent times.

What things have changed since you became involved in Greek wine?

The truth is that many things have changed since I returned to Greece. Firstly, the wine industry has undergone significant transformations, with the number of wineries now being manifold compared to back then. The competition has evolved into a more refined form of rivalry, fostering easier collaboration and partnerships to promote Greek wine both within and beyond borders. Many second-generation individuals with a much deeper involvement in wine have emerged, surpassing the pioneers who initiated the renaissance of Greek wine.

If we delve deeper, we can highlight some of the changes. Specifically, there is a noticeable decrease in the heavy use of oak barrels. Initially, it was a global trend, and in Greece, statements like “we use 100% new barrels, and after one year, we discard them” were common. Now, more winemakers are experimenting with neutral materials such as clay and amphorae or using older, often larger barrels, seeking a more nuanced fruit expression.

I particularly appreciate the increasing investment in Greek grape varieties, resulting in delightful wines taking centre stage in the market. I see this as our great legacy for the future. Conversely, despite anticipated consequences of climate change, we observe more controlled alcohol levels compared to 15 years ago. Finally, one of the most significant changes occurring is in the realm of rosé wines. When I started, many producers did not prioritise rosé, considering it not to be “real wine.” It was often viewed solely as a by-product of red wine production for bleeding off to enhance red wines. Today, most producers have two rosés in their line-up, potentially risking oversaturation in this category.



What are the challenges in Greek viticulture?

The most critical thing is a profound understanding of Greek grape varieties through our work with them. There are exceptional examples of wines made from indigenous varieties today, but we still have a long way to go. We are improving in the vineyard, obtaining better raw materials, and evolving in winemaking.

Additionally, it is vital, even necessary, to study and adapt to the microclimate and soils of each region. In-depth work will reward us. Strict protocols should be avoided; there is no longer an agenda followed every year in the same way. The climate is changing, and our vineyards require us to be present at every stage to anticipate and respond promptly to any potential challenge. Nowadays, the challenges are numerous, and unfortunately, some are even devastating.

How difficult is it to work with contracted producers?

Less than at the beginning, for sure. When we started Oenops Wines, I travelled about 50,000 km per year. Our goal was to be in perfect harmony with our producers, to help optimise viticulture, blending our technical expertise with theirs and combining our passion with theirs. We had to convince them that we see collaboration as a long-term commitment rather than an occasional opportunity.

Today, it obviously takes less time. We are very close with our producers; they know what we want, and we always act proactively. With some of our producers, the relationship goes beyond collaboration; it's friendly and built on mutual respect. A special mention goes to Sakis Katsaridis, a person deeply connected to the vineyard, and we share the same values. I consider him and his family part of my own. This is a blessing in the evolution of this work.

What holds you back from investing in your own vineyards?

The truth is, nothing is holding me back in this aspect. I strongly believe in collaborating with producers, even though it costs us more than having our own vineyards. In a country where collaboration is sometimes taboo, we can achieve magical things when we believe in it. The success of Oenops Wines, recognised by international standards for its consistency and progress in the relatively short time we've been in the industry, primarily owes itself to collaboration. If one day we plant vineyards, we will likely become another producer collaborating with Oenops.

How do you view the challenge of old vineyards, and what is your comment on uprooting old vines because they are considered unproductive?

One of the reasons I wish I had started Oenops Wines earlier is precisely this issue. I know of at least three cases of good, old vineyards being uprooted just months before I visited an area. One of the first battles I fought in the industry was for a pre-phylloxera vineyard. A large local company pressured the producer to uproot it and plant new vines to achieve a yield of 2 tons



per acre. I proposed to pay him the same amount as if he were producing 2.5 tons per acre, even if he only yielded 200 kg. He didn't know me, and I didn't convince him.

Unfortunately, this is a dark aspect of our industry. The lack of protection for old vineyards due to production concerns. At some point, when we want to make a qualitative leap, the loss incurred by uprooting old vineyards will be realised beyond the historical value that could be studied and utilised in these old vines. I find it difficult to understand how vineyards preserved by our ancestors in a challenging century for the country have been uprooted so easily in the last decade.

How do you see Greek wine in 10 years?

That is an excellent question. The answer is challenging. I am optimistic. Our wines are getting better and better. New minds and new perspectives, combined with existing experience and the efforts already in place, give hope for an even better future. There will likely be an explosion in exports. Greece is the newest old country on the international viticultural map. We strengthen the movement abroad as we work on Greek varieties with respect for their authenticity. Through collaborations, we communicate our qualitative development abroad, convincing more and more that we can be the future beyond the past of the wine world. It's in our hands.

What wines do you want to produce?

The greatest reward and satisfaction from my relationship with Oenops Wines is that we produce wines with the character I desire. Authentic wines, faithful to the variety and the place they come from. Elegant wines with an emphasis on fruit and freshness. But above all, our concern is to have tasty, harmonious wines that can be enjoyed by the consumer either on their own or with a meal. At the same time, they should have the complexity and balance sought by a more "specialised" consumer.

Which indigenous variety stands out for you?

This is a tricky question. I can't answer it. I am impressed by Xinomavro for how elegant it can be, as well as Limniona, where the elegance is more apparent now. I love Vidiano and consider it one of the most important Greek varieties. I am intrigued by working with Kotsifali, as it requires exceptional management in the vineyard and careful attention to detail in the winery. Reditis, a variety we treated unfairly in the past, and Savatiano both challenge me. These are for the varieties of Oenops Wines. If we start with those we still need to get (yet) samples of, I could go on for a while.





Section Five

- Five 01.** New Wineries to Watch
- Five 02.** Fastest Emerging Wineries
- Five 03.** Superb Value for Money Wineries
- Five 04.** Must-chase Wines

The following price brackets broadly indicate the online retail price of the wines in Greece. They are only included as a tool to guide for context and are not recommended retail prices.

€ <15 € | €€ 16 – 30 € | €€€ 30 – 50 € | €€€€ >50 €



New Wineries to Watch



Kotsifali Vines in Temenia Village
credit Alexandros Katsikandarakis

Aori

This experimental project commenced in 2021 when Aimilos Andrei began the search for old Kotsifali vines. Eventually, he discovered them in the east Selino village at the foothills of the White Mountains, where the schist-based soils provided an ideal environment. Simultaneously, he was captivated by the Muscat of Spina. In 2021, a small batch of these two varieties was vinified, and, in collaboration with Dimitris Skouras, the focus shifted to the much-improved 2022 vintage. Moving forward, the upcoming vintages will be vinified in their dedicated space. The winemaking approach encourages spontaneous fermentation, and maturation involves a portion in porcelain vessels for Muscat. The Kotsifali clone, distinct from the one in Irakleio, boasts more elegance and smaller bunches. The winemaking process includes using whole bunches (50 to 100%) with extended maceration of up to 60 days, and only old oak barriques and *foudres* (large wooden vats typically containing 1,000 litres) are employed.

First Vintage: 2022

Production: 10,000-15,000 bottles

Highlight Wines: Muscat, Kotsifali

Price Range: €€



Ekho Wines – Naxos

Ekho Wines is the brainchild of talented oenologist Lefteris Anagnostou, who boasts extensive experience in Santorini wines. It is a new venture that deals with old vines from areas of historical significance. Ekho Wines is fundamentally dedicated to resurrecting forgotten varieties and terroirs, emphasising old vines. So far, wines have been produced from Naxos, Limnos and Santorini.

In Naxos, a staggering and wild landscape with a plethora of old vines (some of which are found on very steep terraces with absolutely no access and are over 120 years old), Anagnostou joined forces with Konstantinos Makridimitris, a figure well-acquainted with the island through his stewardship of Oenohoros wineshop and Tranambelo winery. The vineyards are located at high elevations, up to 700 m. At the same time, the grape line-up of Naxos reads like a harmonious blend of the unfamiliar and intriguing with varieties very little heard of, like Karaibrain. Other varieties used are Potamisi, Aidani, and an array of beguiling variations like Moscaidano, Bastardiko, Tzemeris, Assyrtiko, Fokiano, and Mandilaria.

Quantities are tiny. In 2022, Ekho Santorini produced just 1,300 bottles (and only 450 in 2023!). It comes from a vineyard in Megalochori. Fermentation and ageing occur in stainless-steel tanks, with 11 months on the lees. The logic of this approach is something Anagnostou experimented with on a small scale in previous years; grapes were harvested earlier than usual because the longer cycle, especially in 2022, favoured phenolic ripening, maintaining characteristic acidity at lower alcohol levels.

First Vintage: 2021

Production: appx. 5,500 bottles

Highlight Wines: Ekho Rosé (from Fokiano, is lively, infused with vibrant acidity and a gentle touch of tannins), Ekho White (a zesty and layered blend of Potamisi, Karaibrain and Aidani). Ekho Red from Limnio variety and an ancient vineyard on the island of Limnos is a rarity. At the same time, Ekho Santorini from the 2022 vintage is tight and very typical of the style Anagnostou presented.

Price Range: €€



Milia Riza – Peloponnese

Milia Riza is another captivating addition and a pioneering endeavour dedicated to producing sparkling wines from the exceptional terroirs of Nemea and Mantinia. At the helm of Milia Riza are Nancy Mazou and Stefano Stante, whose shared passion for wine led them on this journey.

Nancy (the granddaughter of Nemea pioneer Thanasis Papaioannou) and Stefano (whose wine journey encompasses Lisbon, Portugal, Conegliano at the heart of Prosecco, and Udine) joined forces for their inaugural harvest in 2020. They've reinvented Agiorgitiko as a blank canvas by diverging from traditional appellation boundaries. Their dynamic Moschofilero from Mantinia and a timeless Chardonnay and Pinot Noir duo further enhance their innovative project.

Their current production spans a few thousand bottles, with plans for future expansion. Cultivated organically, their own vineyards form the foundation of the wines. Among the five labels, a sparkling Agiorgitiko Blanc de Noir and Experiential Brut matured on lees for approximately 20 months stand out as particularly intriguing and promising expressions.

First Vintage: 2020

Production: 5,000 bottles

Highlight Wines: Agiorgitiko Blanc de Noirs, Experiential Brut

Price Range: €€

Moinoterra – Crete

Moinoterra, established by entrepreneur Nikos Stathoglou in 2021 in Archanes near Heraklion, is a recent addition to the fascinating Cretan wine canvas. The line-up includes an Archanes red blend consisting of 60% Kotsifali and 40% Mandilaria, a Vilana sourced from Vathypetro, a fragrant Muscat of Spina, an Assyrtiko and a rosé wine from Kotsifali and Muscat.

The Archanes red grapes are exclusively sourced from a single vineyard at Kefala, south of Archanes, at 650 m above sea level. This area has been nurturing vineyards for over 4,000 years. The 22-year-old dry-farmed vineyard boasts a meagre yield per hectare. The soil composition is rocky with a slight slope. As for their Vilana, the grapes also originate from a single vineyard located at the foothills of Mount Youchta, 700 m from the archaeological site of Vathypetro.

The wines show purity of fruit and focus, highlighting the Cretan terroir. Oenologist Grigoris Skopelitis produces the wines and has adopted spontaneous fermentation as of 2023 for the reds (whites to follow).

First Vintage: 2022

Production: 40,000 bottles for 2023 vintage

Highlight Wines: Vilana, Muscat of Spina

Price Range: €



Novus – Mantinia

Novus, a promising addition to the Peloponnesian wine scene, emerged in 2022 under Leonidas Nassiakos, former general manager of Semeli Winery. In its inaugural year of 2023, Novus swiftly introduced two labels, showcasing the winery's commitment to excellence. Two more are coming next spring, a single-vineyard Moschofilero and a blend of indigenous varieties – Agiorgitiko, Mavrodaphne and Mavrotragano. With 90,000 bottles in production, Novus aims for dynamic growth, anticipating a capacity increase to 250,000 bottles. At the core of Novus' winemaking philosophy is a dedicated focus on Moschofilero and indigenous grape varieties, reflecting a commitment to tradition and innovation in the vibrant Peloponnesian wine landscape.

First Vintage: 2022

Production: 90,000 bottles

Highlight Wines: Aquarella rosé from Moschofilero, Assyrtiko and Syrah, A Priori Mantinia

Price Range: €



Paros Farming Community – Paros

Paros Farming Community, formerly known as the Agricultural Cooperative of Paros, is embarking on a new chapter in its evolution, symbolising a progressive approach following the entry of Tethys (belonging to entrepreneur Nikolaos Vardinogiannis) into its share capital and the assumption of management responsibilities. Rooted in the fertile land of Paros, the cooperative is entering a new era of viticulture and winemaking, drawing inspiration from its century-old history. With a commitment to fortifying the identity and added value of the island's agricultural products, the cooperative has initiated a long-term investment plan totalling €7 million. This plan aims to upgrade winemaking and cheese-making equipment, develop wine and agricultural tourism, and establish sustainable agricultural and livestock development models.

Heading the implementation of the viticultural and winemaking vision is Hetero Wines, led by Dimitris Mansolas and Maria Tamiolaki. Paros Farming Community focuses on native grape varieties such as Monemvasia and Mandilaria, employing modern viticultural practices and advanced winemaking technology to produce wines with intense fruity characters and balanced palates.

First Vintage: 2022

Production: 450,000 bottles

Highlight Wines: Seiradi Monemvasia

Price Range: €

Terra Grazia – Naxos

This is a new, ambitious effort in Naxos from passionate Aggeliki Gratsia and her talented team, which includes viticultural consultant Stefanos Koundouras and oenologist Grigoris Skopelitis. They work with old, own-rooted vines around 60 to 70 years old and have already produced two wines from the 2022 vintage from purchased grapes. A white field blend and a rosé from Fokiano are harmonious and layered, while grapes from own vineyards will be used from the following vintages.

The rosé is made from grapes grown in mountainous areas of Naxos in sandy loam soil on slate subsoil and at 400–800 m elevation. The white Mosaic is a multi-varietal wine – a pricey yet exciting wine with impressive branding. Their 3.3 ha of vineyards focus on Assyrtiko (Skopelitis points out the great potential of the variety with pH 2.98), Mavtotragano, Fokiano and Mandilaria.

First Vintage: 2022

Production: 6,500 bottles

Highlight Wines: Rosé

Price Range: €€€



Tsililis Terres – Thessaly

Tsililis Terres is a brand-new boutique winery and distillery in Meteora, masterminded by Ioanna Tsililis, daughter of Makis Tsililis, previously involved with Theopetra winery (as of 2022, the Tsililis brothers separated the project). Drawing upon her extensive experience and scientific expertise in distillation and still and sparkling wine production, Ioanna has brought forth an exciting venture.

The vineyards on the slopes surrounding the iconic Meteora rocks and the historic Theopetra cave boast an arid terrain and gentle slopes at 300–350 m. Embracing this unique terroir, Tsililis Terres offers a captivating quartet of labels crafted from Limniona, Xinomavro, Assyrtiko, and Malagousia grape varieties and two more wines are to follow in spring—a promising effort to watch.

First Vintage: 2022

Production: 28,000 bottles

Highlight Wines: Limniona

Price Range: €€



Fastest Emerging Wineries

Wineries that in the last three years made waves and showed significant progress

Akriotou Winery – Boeotia

Akriotou Winery, led by owner and winemaker Kiki Akriotou, represents a compelling emergence in the Greek wine scene. After years of working as an oenologist for different wineries, Kiki ventured into her winemaking journey in 2015. Utilising family vineyards, her inaugural wine debuted the following year, and by 2017, she had transformed her grandfather's warehouse into a functional winery in Plataies. The heart of her enterprise lies in a remarkable 3.5-ha vineyard of Savatiano old vines, aged 40 to 70 years. These unirrigated vines thrive despite challenging climatic conditions, and Kiki's sustainable practices align harmoniously with the vineyard's resilience. The winery boasts diverse grape varieties, including Savatiano, Assyrtiko, Aidani, Mavri Koundoura, Pinot Noir, Grenache, and the recent addition of Cabernet Franc. Kiki's hands-on approach prioritises controlled fermentation temperatures and meticulous lees work, reflecting her unwavering commitment to crafting exceptional, characterful Greek wines.

Production: 60,000 bottles

Highlight Wines: The Wild Mountaineer Savatiano
(spontaneously fermented and matured with the lees, very complex and long)

Price Range: €

Anhydrous Winery – Santorini

Anhydrous winery is a relatively recent addition to Santorini's viticultural landscape, stemming from the transformation of Avantis Santorini. Founded by Apostolos Mountrichas and Lenga Gregoriadou in 2012, the winery's annual production gradually grew to 40,000 bottles. Evolving their winemaking approach, they've embraced spontaneous fermentations to explore Santorini's full potential. Apostolos's relentless dedication to conserving old vines and his ethos of balanced pricing in pursuit of quality exemplify the winery's ethos.

Production: 40,000 bottles on average (appx 25,000 in 2023)

Highlight Wines: Santorini, Santorini Icon, Grace rosé from Aidani and Mandilaria

Price Range: €€–€€€



Athanasίου Winery

The Athanasίου family traces its roots in Nemea back to the mid-19th century. The winery was established in 2007 when Mihalis Athanasίου, at 18, made a distinctive choice by investing exclusively in indigenous grape varieties, contrary to the prevailing international varieties trend. In 2008, the winery experimented with minimal intervention, releasing the 2015 Fysis sourced from old bush vines, the first 'natural' PDO Nemea.

The winery has a keen focus on preserving old vines and also has a gig for champagne. Therefore, after experimenting with *méthode ancestrale* and traditional method, he released the Fleurs d'Amour. With 17 vintages, the portfolio includes exceptional expressions of Moschofilero and Assyrtiko. Spanning 23 ha, the winery produces approximately 110,000 bottles annually, which are exported to nine countries. The hallmark of Athanasίου wines lies in the consistency and depth of fruit, showcasing a commitment to quality and tradition.

Production: 110,000 bottles

Highlight Wines: Thronos (*unoaked and pure Nemea*), Gi Fotos and Fleurs d'Amour.

Price Range: €–€€

Charalaboglou Wines – Macedonia

Charalaboglou Wines, nestled at the base of Mount Pangaion in Serres, Northern Greece, is a prominent figure in organic grape cultivation and wine production. Established in 1999 by the dynamic duo George and Argyri Charalaboglou, the company, now under the leadership of agronomist Anthi Charalaboglou, has reshaped its approach. Anthi and winemaker Matt Van Der Spuy are focusing on organic dry-farming techniques thanks to its forgiving climate, silty loam and rich clay soils, abundant spring rainfall, and access to underground aquifers, cultivating renowned international grape varieties alongside some of Greece's most captivating indigenous ones.

So far, seven wines have been produced, and a serious rebranding took place in July 2023, starting with the 2022 vintage. The Anthesis series (Malagousia, Assyrtiko and Koniariko are already in the market, while Vidiano 2023 will be released in 2024) along with two pet-nats and a white field blend from 100% hand-picked grapes. Two more field blends are coming up. Depending on wine style/variety, the approach to fermentation and SO₂ addition is different; Matt Van Der Spuy encourages spontaneous fermentation for non-aromatic textured whites and anything fermented in a barrel, but when aiming for aromatic expression and longevity, he believes it's crucial to select a specific trusted yeast strain.

Production: 34,000 bottles

Highlight wines: Malagousia in Anthesis (*textural and perfumed*), Assyrtiko in Anthesis, rare Koniariko in Anthesis

Price range: €



Monemvasia Winery – Peloponnese

Monemvasia Winery, nestled in the picturesque Lakonia region of Peloponnese, ushers in a new era with its recently established winery, situated a mere 10 km from the renowned Fort of Monemvasia. This new chapter is marked by the physical transformation of their winemaking facility, fresh brand identity, and the active involvement of a new generation, embodying the essence of innovation and continuity.

Elli and George's dedication to their dream finds manifestation through their family's deep engagement in the winemaking process. Their eldest daughter, Marialena, who initially joined as a student, has seamlessly integrated into the core of the winemaking team. Supported by her younger sister Anastasia and their youngest sibling Artemis, who is also pursuing studies in oenology, the Tsimbidis family stands united in their commitment. This devotion is reflected in their familial collaboration and the meticulous care and attention they invest in crafting their wines.

Production: 250,000 bottles

Highlight Wines: Malvasia-Monemvasia (*a sweet wine paying homage to the Middle Ages. Produced after thorough research and collaborations with industry experts*), Kydonitsa Mature (*a complex 4-year-old Kydonitsa*), and Voltes Agiorgitiko.

Price Range: €

Oenops Wines – Macedonia

An emerging effort by the ex-winemaker of Pavlidis focuses on fruit purity and adventurous winemaking. Nikos Karatzas's path is somewhat unconventional as the business model is based on finding exciting terroirs to work with. This philosophy is simple. As Karatzas puts it: "liberated from PDO and PGI regulations, we are looking for different terroirs that will bring out the character of the varieties, with minimal intervention in the winery. So, as you will see soon, our 2017 Xinomavro is a blend of Naoussa, Amyndeo and Rapsani. The only thing which counts, for me, is what a wine tastes like, and I am trying to express varietal character with as much validity as possible."

Production: appx. 200,000 bottles

Highlight Wines: Xinomavro (*elegant and fruity*), Roditis and Limniona (*silky with refined tannins*).

Price Range: €-€€



Rouvalis Winery – Aigialeia, Peloponnese

Established in 1990 by Angelos Rouvalis, Rouvalis has entered a new chapter under the stewardship of the second generation. Theodora Rouvali and Antonio Ruiz Panego are at the helm, infusing the winery with fresh perspectives and innovative expressions. Their approach is centred around native grape varieties, including Mavrodaphne and Lagorthi, which take centre stage in their portfolio, showcasing the highlands of Aigialeia. In addition to their dedication to indigenous grapes, they exhibit their craft with a delightful Riesling that adds a new dimension to their range.

Production: 180,000 bottles

Highlight Wines: Rouvali Linon Riesling, Rouvali Mavrodaphne Tsigello, Rouvali Mavrodaphne Dafnes

Price Range: €–€€

Troupis Winery – Mantinia, Peloponnese

Situated around 8 km from Tripolis in Fteri, Milia, the winery has undergone a transformative journey over the last years under the guidance of the Troupis and Koutsoumpos families with the winemaking skills of Dimitris Akrivos. Their resolute decision to pivot from their previous careers in their forties was anything but an impulsive leap. They converted an old apple warehouse into a thriving winemaking establishment in 2010. Guided by a progressive mindset, they skilfully reshaped Moschofilero's identity. By redefining rootstock, advancing harvesting strategies, optimising viticulture practices, and pushing the boundaries of winemaking techniques, they transformed Moschofilero from a light, aromatic white into a textured and profound wine.

Their cultivated vineyards currently span 10 ha, primarily featuring 90% Moschofilero and 10% Assyrtiko, with not-too-distant expansion plans reaching 13 ha. Commencing with a modest production of 60 tons, the winery has experienced remarkable growth, with projections reaching 170,000 bottles by 2022, including an array of 12 small-production labels. The commitment to continuity is reflected in the next generation, with their son Theodoris, armed with a Master's degree from Montpellier and hands-on experience from French harvests, poised to carry forward the legacy.

Production: 230,000 bottles

Highlight Wines: Ekato Moschofilero (*a skin-contact wine with 100-days' maceration*), Pitys Ritinitis (*a new wave Retsina from Assyrtiko*) and Hoof and Lur.

Price Range: €–€€



Pressing of Mavrodaphne Grapes
credit Kostas Koutsoubos



Superb Value for Money Wineries

Most wines under 15 euros in the domestic market



Aoton Winery – Attica

In the realm of Savatiano, where names like Papagiannakos, Mylonas, Markou, Frangou, and Kokotos often take the spotlight, there's an intriguing underdog making waves – Aoton. Aptly named after the ancient Greek term denoting the finest specimen of its class, Aoton is the brainchild of fourth-generation winemaker Sotiris Ginis. A dedicated oenologist committed to quality, Ginis stands out by adhering to a philosophy of uncompromising standards. Cultivating 10 ha of organic land (with certification underway), Aoton produces a modest 20,000 bottles annually. Ginis, a staunch advocate for the undiscovered virtues of Savatiano, favours a ripe, late-harvest expression, emphasising depth of fruit and complexity. He employs minimal intervention in the winery and opts for spontaneous fermentation, accentuating the grapes' crunchiness and freshness. Night harvest and skin fermentation contribute to the unique character of Aoton wines, with total sulfites maintained around 30–40 mg/l – a testament to Ginis' unwavering pursuit of expressing the true potential of Savatiano.

Production: 20,000 bottles

Highlight Wines: Savatiano and Retsina

Price Range: €



Diamantakis Winery – Crete

Founded in 2007, southwest of the city of Heraklion, outside the village of Kato Asites, Diamantakis winery is at the foot of Mt Psiloritis at 450 m altitude. The three Nikolaos Diamantakis' family members, Ioannis, Michael, and Zacharias, combined their expertise, and the first two are responsible for viticulture, Zacharias for winemaking. They cultivate varieties suited to the mesoclimate of their region, such as indigenous Vidiano, Liatiko, and Mandilaria. They own 15 ha of vineyards and work with another 5 ha of contracted vineyards. The 2.5 ha adjacent to the winery produces Mandilaria, Malvasia, Vidiano, Syrah, and Chardonnay, and further up at 600 m, Assyrtiko is planted. The rest of the vineyards are spread over 30 different sites around Heraklion. They farm sustainably, and all the work in the vineyard is carried out manually. The wines of Diamantakis winery play an increasingly vital role in shaping the future of Cretan wine.

Production: 150,000 bottles from 8 labels

Highlight Wines: Petali Liatiko and Petali Assyrtiko

Price Range: €



Douloufakis Winery – Crete

The Douloufakis winery is in Dafnes of Heraklion and was founded in 1991. However, the family has a long tradition of winemakers, starting with Grandfather Dimitrios Douloufakis, who started producing wine in 1930. His son George succeeded him; nowadays, Nikos Douloufakis, who studied oenology in Piemonte, has taken over the family business. He took it upon himself to restructure the vineyards; he changed pruning methods and harvesting dates, modernised the winery equipment, added a new section, and converted to organic farming. The vineyards are at 350–450 m on limestone soils. They are planted with the indigenous varieties Vidiano, Vilana, Assyrtiko, Muscat of Spina, Malvasia, Mandilaria, Liatiko, Kotsifali and some international varieties. Recently, he revived an old Cretan variety named Tahtas. They own between 22 and 25 ha; another 20 ha are contracted.

Production: 350,000–400,000 bottles

Highlight Wines: Dafnios white, Aspros Lagos Vidiano, Dafnios Grande Reserve (*requires cellaring*)

Price Range: €–€€

Lyrarakis Winery – Crete

Lyrarakis Winery was founded in 1966 and is situated at 480 m in the village of Alagni, which is in the Peza zone. From the onset, the family decided to focus on indigenous grape varieties of the island of Crete that were almost extinct, a task handed down to the second generation. The quest to find and regenerate old vines has become their trademark with the vinification of specific vineyard sites. Of the revived varieties, Dafni and Plyto were planted in the Psarades vineyard at the beginning of the 1990s and in 2011, Melissaki was planted in the Gerodeti vineyard. Other indigenous white varieties grown are Vidiano, Vilana, Thrapsathiri, Muscat of Spina and Assyrtiko, and the red varieties Mandilaria, Kotsifali, and Liatiko, together with Syrah. The winery owns 12 ha of vineyards and works with another 35 ha of contracted vineyards. The soils are varied: limestone and gravel, clay, clay loam, sandy loam, sandy clay, loam. Most vineyards are dry-farmed, with few receiving regulated deficit irrigation. The first bottlings were of the 1992 vintage. They make 21 labels.

Production: 400,000 bottles

Highlight wines: Melissaki Gerodeti (*skin contact, native yeast fermentation*), Dafni and Plyto Psarades, Armi Thrapsathiri, Aggelis Liatiko and Ippodromos Vidiano (*fermentation in 2nd and 3rd use oak, part oak aged*)

Price range: €–€€



Markovitis Winery – Naoussa

Markovitis Winery, nestled in the serene landscape of Pola Nera, Naoussa, is a testament to the philosophy embodied by Markos Markovitis. As part of the new generation of small-scale winemakers in Naoussa, Markos has reshaped the culture surrounding Xinomavro with hard work in the vineyard and the winery, especially regarding tannin management. Returning from oenology and viticulture studies in Germany, he took charge of the family-owned micro-winery. The estate encompasses a remarkable and primarily isolated ecosystem, featuring a 14-ha single-block vineyard initially planted by Markos's grandfather in 1972, marking Greece's first organic vineyard. Markos, a devoted advocate of monoculture, has diligently restructured the old vineyard, emphasising Xinomavro's qualitative characteristics. In 2012, the winery underwent a renaming from Château Pegasus to Markovitis under Markos's leadership.

Production: 90,000 bottles from two labels

Highlight Wines: Naoussa

Price Range: €

Mitavelas Winery – Nemea

With the family having owned vineyards since 1828, Mitavelas stands as one of the custodians of the Nemea tradition. The winery was established in the early 20th century. By the close of the 20th century, the family possessed about 10 ha of privately owned vineyards across various areas of the Nemea zone. Currently overseen by Kostas Mitavelas (5th generation), the winery introduced the innovative, inox-fermented Agiorgitiko “Red on Black” in 2,000 bottles in 2000, marking the first release of the first-ever stainless-steel-fermented Nemea wine in the Greek market. Simultaneously, Mitavelas crafted the red “Mitavelas Estate” from 40-year-old vineyards, ageing it for six months in French oak barrels. The winery remains dedicated to preserving tradition and old vines.

Production: 150,000 bottles

Highlight Wines: Ktima Mitavela, from vines over 40 years old with 6–8 months' ageing in French oak barrels, second and third use.

Price Range: €–€€



Nemea Vineyards in Achladias
credit Mitavelas Winery



Sant'or Wines – Achaia

Sant'Or Winery, nestled in the picturesque region of Santameri in Achaia, Peloponnese, emerges as a relatively new yet remarkable addition to the Greek winemaking scene. Founded by Panagiotis Dimitropoulos, the winery was the first to be certified as biodynamic. What truly sets Sant'Or apart is their unwavering dedication to producing wines that embody the essence of their terroir with a rare authenticity and honesty – all with very fair prices.

Panagiotis Dimitropoulos' philosophy centres on a natural winemaking approach, where minimal intervention allows the wines to communicate their unique personality. The winery's dedication to this principle is evident in their methods, including spontaneous fermentation and the addition of minimal sulphites – a mere 30 to 40 mg/l during vinification, meticulously applied in two doses. This gentle touch allows the wines to resonate with a subtle yet powerful voice, creating a profound impact.

Production: 30,000 bottles

Highlight Wines: Santameriana Orange

Price Range: €

Tetramythos – Aigialeia, Peloponnese

Tetramythos Winery stands out as one of the most promising names in the Greek wine scene, achieving something exceptional. Crafting captivating, terroir-driven wines with minimal intervention, this winery in the highlands of Aigialeia offers a pleasant reality check on pricing. While other wineries might strain budgets, the collaborative endeavour of the Spanos brothers, notably Aristos Spanos, along with the expertise of renowned winemaker Panagiotis Papagiannopoulos, remains accessible and consistently elevates its quality with each passing year.

Production: 330,000 bottles

Highlight Wines: The whole Nature Range, including benchmark Roditis, unique Sideritis, and rare Phelloe nature, plus Retsina Amphora.

Price Range: €



Must-chase Wines

Alpha Latypes Single Vineyard Malagousia 2022

I'm not the easiest person to get worked up regarding Malagousia, but this Alpha Estate Latypes single vineyard is another beast. Fermented with indigenous yeasts and matured for eight months in big 7,500 litre oak and Robolo casks (the latter is a white, tight pine tree found in Epirus). Textural and superbly balanced.

Argyros Cuvee Evdemon 2019

Textbook Santorini with tension and high energy, all in excellent measure. Quite an expressive nose with ripe lemon fruit and orange blossom. The chalky and textural palate is very concentrated yet steely and flinty. Persistent length, intense and layered. A very pure Assyrtiko with an almost alkaline feel to its massive minerality.

Athanasiou Fleurs d' Amour

A methode traditionnelle sparkling Agiorgitiko from Nemea that impresses with rose-scented toasty notes, lively red fruit, and a creamy, elegant profile due to 40 months of lees ageing. Sourced from the Asprokayos highlands at a 900-m elevation, it brings complexity and delicate effervescence, marking a new chapter in Nemea's winemaking journey.

Chatzivarytis Assyrtiko Flor 2021

This is a scarce wine but intriguing nevertheless, reflecting the creative mind of Chloi Chatzivaryti. Chloi took her Assyrtiko in a new direction when the fermentation of her classic Assyrtiko stopped in October. As the wine was half a barrel, she waited and saw flor (a film of yeast on the surface of wine) developing that consumed the sugar needed to feed it. The rest is history wrapped around a bottle of wine. With just 152 bottles available, it's a limited-edition marvel. It's a unique and layered experience that any adventurous wine lover would appreciate – you might even consider a trip to Goumenissa to snag a bottle.

Economou Antigone 2004

The product of a genius who is Yiannis Economou because who else in Greece would be capable of releasing an almost 20-year-old red, catapulting a movement of people head over hills in love with it? Smelling the wine transported me to Crete, sunsets, music and summertime – a burst of aromas along a satiny, sensuous texture summarised the wine – a harmonious and spherical wine providing food for thought for other winemakers and wine lovers. Great expectations were fulfilled.



Yiannis Economou in Sitia
photo Yiannis Karakasis

Gentilini Iris Vineyard Mavrodaphne 2022

Delightfully pure on the nose, just packed with delicious fruit. Soft and supple on the palate, this is a lovely example of the grape variety, very fresh and full of energy but retaining that dark fruit profile and dark mineral detail with a bay-leaf top note.

Karamolegos Pappas 2020

The essence of a single vineyard in Santorini. Individuality, character and persistence. It is a wine with attitude that unfolds in the glass, revealing layers of earthy, vegetal and stone-fruit aromatics. Refreshingly lemony and saline, as well as mouth-puckeringly fresh.

Karanikas Extra Cuvee de Reserve 2017

From the pioneer in traditional sparkling wines in Greece, Domaine Karanika, the zero dosage Cuvee de Reserve 2017 is an absolute jewel, crafted from 100% ungrafted Xinomavro vines thriving in the highlands of Amyndeo. With a minimum of 54 months on the lees, this bubbly beauty takes aromatic complexity and mousse quality to a whole new level.

Karavitakis Indigenous Yeasts Liatiko 2020

Another Liatiko in the must-chase wines from upcoming Nikos Karavitakis. This shows many layers of ripe red fruit along a silky texture and pinot noir elegance – pure and elegant star and a great food wine for hearty dishes.

Muses Unicorn Mouhtaros 2022

The second vintage of a truly unicorn wine sourced from the oldest, own-rooted Mouhtaros vines planted in the Muses Valley, Central Greece, more than 100 years old. Dark and gothic with remarkable aromatic intensity and many dark fruit and spice layers. The different choice of oak is evident, with less toast and bacon, compared to the classic Mouhtaros.



Mikra Thira TerraSea Santorini 2021

The first Santorini with grapes from Therasia Island shows oyster shells, wet stones, and lemon-peel aromas. Bright and very textural on the palate, displaying steely lemon, preserved lemons and lime-leaf background. This fantastic Assyrtiko is a gift of freshness and drinkability and draws the drinker back to the glass.

Oeno P Akulumbo 2021

Paris Sigalas offers a unique twist on the Nykteri style, opting for a process where the wine matures with the lees for 18 months in an amphora rather than oak. The result is a ripe, refreshingly vibrant wine beautifully layered – a true star in every sense.

Papagiannakos Honores Savatiano 2015

From Vasilis Papagiannakos, who has been a key figure in the new era of Savatiano, this is a fully mature, rich, nutty wine kaleidoscopic in complexity sourced from very old vines in Attica.

Rouvali Mavrodaphne Single Vineyard Dafnes 2020

This is the new single-vineyard dry Mavrodaphne from Rouvalis Winery, grown in the highlands of Peloponnese at 650 m elevation. Mavrodaphne was a variety known for its sweet wines, but nowadays, it is reinvented for its dry wines. The wine matures in a combination of oak and amphora, and it is perfumed but also dense with aromas of herbs and dark fruit.

Sclavos Metageitnion 2021

Matageitnion (a strange name to pronounce even in Greek) is a game-changing oxidative Vostilidi with the power of a Santorini Nykteri. It is produced from century-old vines in Cephalonia fermenting and maturing in foudres for 12 months. It captivates with high energy, concentration, and individuality, unfolding layers upon layers on the palate.

Tetramythos Phelloe 2020

Winemaker Papagiannopoulos has a connection to Ancient Phelloe (named Seliana nowadays), as he used to spend his summers there. At the Metochi site of the holy 16th-century Byzantine monastery, his family and other landowners cultivated the vineyards and gave the monks a proportion of their grapes. In 2004, Panagiotis re-planted the 0.3-ha vineyard with Agiorgitiko, local Black of Kalavryta and Mavrodaphne; of this, 30% are own-rooted vines. Low-intervention winemaking. Layers and layers of blueberries, black cherries, violets and Asian spice. More earthy and herbal notes evolve with time. Harmonious, detailed and sophisticated on the palate. A precious gem.



Toinos Mavrotragano Clos Stegasta 2021

Another stunning vintage from T-Oinos winery with 2021 showcasing black pepper and violets around a dark, seductive fruit core. Tannins on the palate are for a seminar; they are perfect, silky, and pixelated – a work of art by consultant winemaker Stéphane Derenoncourt and a world-class red.

Tranabelo Odd Blend 2022

This intriguing wine by Tranampelo in Naxos leans more towards a rosé wine than a white. The unconventional blend of white Potamisi, Aidani, Monemvasia, and red Fokiano offers a delightful and playful experience, yet it also impresses with its serious palate presence.

Tsimbidis Kydonitsa Mature 2019

The 2019 Kydonitsa from Monemvasia Winery continues to shine, displaying no signs of fatigue. Instead, it presents a vibrant expression of ripe yellow fruit and subtle herbal aromas, complemented by a delicate hint of roasted almonds. Its textured and exquisite palate indicates its potential to age for another 3–5 years.

Zafeirakis Terracota Limniona 2021

Christos Zafeirakis has always been a forward thinker for Limniona. Terracota is proof of that as it matures in a terracotta amphora, giving the wine a saline aspect next to the textbook-perfumed nature, the definition of silky elegance.



Zafeirakis Winery



In Depth

Assyrtiko, Mavrodaphne & Aigialeia



Sections 06— 07



Section Six

- Six 01.** Variety Focus 1: Assyrtiko
- Six 02.** Variety Focus 2: Mavrodaphne – she who must not be named
- Six 03.** Regional Focus: Aigialeia, Peloponnese



Variety Focus 1

Assyrtiko

Assyrtiko, is it worth the hype?

Assyrtiko (Ασύρτικο) is perhaps the first Greek grape variety that captivated the palates of international wine lovers who have been swept away by its vibrant acidity, rich textural profile and elegant nose. It has been an eye-opener for those previously unaware of the exciting things happening in the Greek wine industry. Assyrtiko's recent success has not gone unnoticed in Greece. Producers outside its homeland of Santorini – have quickly planted this versatile grape. In fact, in 2020, Assyrtiko was the 8th most planted grape in Greece, enjoying a 13% increase in surface area compared to 2015, or a more startling 20% increase since 2010. Indeed, more and more producers now have an Assyrtiko in their portfolio, and the diversity of Assyrtiko terroirs is expanding much further than Santorini worldwide. Having said all that, is Assyrtiko worthy of its success? Follow the next few pages to discover what makes Assyrtiko wines so exciting!

History

Assyrtiko's story likely begins on the island of Santorini. Since the dreaded pest phylloxera cannot survive on its volcanic soils, Santorini is one of the few places in the world still exhibiting high grape biodiversity. The people had to battle the elements constantly; strong winds and a semi-arid, hot climate have shaped viticulture over the centuries. As a result, the farmers have naturally chosen varieties that can handle these harsh conditions. In such a situation, Assyrtiko prevailed. With its mid- to late-ripening habit and high acidity, it produces wines that are stable due to their low pH, a critical factor back when limited equipment was available and winemaking was solely empirical.

Assyrtiko now covers more than 70% of the Santorini's vineyard surface. Astonishingly, the absence of phylloxera has allowed the vineyards to survive through time, and we now have an indispensable source of diversity within the variety, proving its strong connection to the island. In recent years, the interest of Assyrtiko has led to the identification of virus-free, high-quality clones, so we can only expect the quality to increase in the future.

Assyrtiko drew the attention of international winemakers early on, with the first producers beginning to experimentally plant the variety in the 80s, foreseeing its potential in a changing climate. Although it's still a big niche in the world's vineyards, Assyrtiko is now produced in over seven countries, including the USA, Australia, South Africa, Lebanon, Turkey, Cyprus and Italy.



Vineyard

Assyrtiko is a late-ripening, hardy, white grape variety grown extensively in Greece but also beginning its international journey. It is highly praised for its drought resistance and ability to preserve high acidity levels even in full ripeness.

Training Systems

Part of Assyrtiko's charm comes from Santorini's unique training system. The *kouloura* training system was developed empirically, likely over thousands of years, by the Santorini viticulturists seeking to protect their grapes from the wind and the scorching sun. Its characteristics are the low planting density (around 2,000 plants per hectare) coupled with the circular formation of its shoots and old wood. In Santorini, grapes can be sold at high prices due to the unique terrain. This makes the vineyard profitable despite the low yields and high farming costs.

Today, the *kouloura* is still one of the leading training systems of Santorini island. Yet, some of the most recent plantings are with VSP and triple the planting density, mainly due to labour shortages. While this favours mechanisation and can potentially produce a higher yield, it has been proven the *kouloura* system fares better against the wind, intense drought and heatwaves. Beyond Santorini and as Assyrtiko expands, the VSP is becoming the overall favoured training system, apart from some (mainly older) vineyards trained in goblet. VSP is naturally the best choice for vineyards in areas with higher humidity, yet it can contribute to sunburn and water stress in drier regions. However, grape growers prefer it due to the vineyard's economic sustainability, as yields are higher and farming costs are lower due to the possibility of mechanisation.

Diseases and Pests

Assyrtiko is a very hardy grape in the vineyard. It has limited sensitivity to fungal diseases, like powdery and downy mildew, compared to other *Vitis vinifera* grape varieties, making it a variety of choice for many viticulturists. In Santorini's dry summers, one or two sulphur dustings will be enough to produce healthy grapes in most vintages. In other regions where humidity is higher, more sprays may be required. Nonetheless, it's considered an overall sustainable variety to grow due to the limited use of fungicides and the reduced tractor requirements, saving human resources and fuel.

Its thick, tannic skin may contribute to the fungal resistance. Unfortunately, however, it's not immune to another significant pest, the European Grapevine moth. Most viticulturists consider this moth the biggest threat to the variety. Theoretically, the European Grapevine moth can easily be managed by pheromonal 'sexual confusion'; however, the structure of the Greek vineyard, with its many scattered plots, makes this approach inefficient in most cases. Viticulturists are often required to fight against the pests with precise and timely sprays. Fortunately, both conventional and organic pesticides are available.



Clones

Selecting clones from such an ancient variety as Assyrtiko is difficult. On the one hand, we are fortunate to have escaped the phylloxera epidemic in Santorini, yet we now possess an incredibly high biodiversity for the variety. Until 2022, no official clones existed in Greece for the grape, and thus most vineyards were planted with *massal selection*. Interestingly, the exact clone was approved in France in 2018, yet another four years passed before Greece officially welcomed it.

For the current stage of Greek viticulture, clones play a crucial role: they ensure the propagated material is virus-free. The first commercial vineyards with the approved clone (numbered 1281 in France and 004 in Greece) have been planted.

It's perhaps too early to start talking about the qualitative potential of the approved clone compared with the massal-selected vineyards. Yet, researchers are already looking into the winemaking potential of two Assyrtiko clones. Interestingly, some positive attributes appear to be a more defined organoleptic character and a reduced susceptibility to oxidation.

Only time will show the effects of this development. One thing is sure: the Greek wine industry is finally taking itself seriously, emphasising what matters the most: the vineyard.



Winemaking and Styles

Assyrtiko's charm does not stop in the vineyard. The low pH of the grape (often below 3.0), combined with alcohol levels higher than 13.5% and the dry style, support its microbiological stability. It's also less prone to oxidation than most indigenous Greek grape varieties. These factors alone could explain its popularity among winemakers, yet its advantages do not stop there.

Assyrtiko is often used as a clean slate – much like Chardonnay – to express the terroir and various winemaking techniques. It is usually fermented and matured in stainless-steel tanks, yet oak fermentation and maturation are not uncommon. In addition, winemakers are increasingly experimenting with unconventional vessels, ranging from concrete tanks and *amphorae* to acacia and Greek oak barriques.

Another qualitative factor of Assyrtiko is the high quality of its fine lees and the affinity to lees ageing. The rounded body and rich texture that lees can contribute to pair in a great way with the light aromatic intensity of Assyrtiko and its intense acidity. Producers may choose to perform *bâtonnage* (stirring of the lees) as often as three times per week or let it rest sur lie for a more subtle effect. To gain the full benefit of the lees ageing, some of the best wines are bottled more than a year after the vintage, allowing the wines to develop nicely in the bottle. You can read more in the vertical tasting below.

Aside from dry wines, many styles can be produced from the grape. Sweet wines from sun-dried grapes, notably Vinsanto from Santorini, are some of Greece's most highly praised wines. Assyrtiko has small round berries and relatively loose and small bunches, allowing the even dehydration of the grapes from the sun. The wines are naturally sweet, as fermentation stops on its own, so they are very stable during the oxidative barrel maturation.

Some winemakers are also exploring the limits of winemaking in Assyrtiko production. From refined Ritinitis (a.k.a. Retsina) and down-to-earth minimal intervention wines, the realm of Assyrtiko styles is still under exploration. In addition, Assyrtiko can also show its superior quality in traditional method sparkling wines.

Single-varietal Assyrtiko is considered a staple for Greek wines, but not too long ago, these bottles were hard to find. Before the increase of plantings in the 2010s, many old Assyrtiko vineyards, especially those from Santorini, were field blends. Varieties like Athiri and Aidani were often co-planted and harvested together. Today, the spotlight on Assyrtiko has driven winemakers to harvest it from these field selectively blends to get varietal wines bearing the Assyrtiko name. However, blended wines under the PDO Santorini are not that uncommon.

In addition to field blends, the powerful palate of Assyrtiko can be a great pairing with aromatic varieties. Indeed, Greek winemakers have perfected blends of Assyrtiko with the likes of



Malagousia, Muscat á Petits Grains Blancs or even Sauvignon Blanc. The focus of these blends may not be the expression of terroir – – at least for now – – but they offer a unique twist on the beloved aromatic grapes.

Assyrtiko is, therefore, a genuinely versatile variety as it can successfully produce all white wine styles. Yet, where it truly shines is in its ability to demonstrate the earth it came from. Whether it's the rugged volcanic terrain of Santorini or a fertile plain in Thrace, the terroir will always prevail, and that's why Assyrtiko is so special.

Assyrtiko in research

Because of its recent spread throughout Greece and vineyards worldwide, Assyrtiko is now increasingly used as a reference by Greek viticulture and oenology researchers. Researchers have been using Assyrtiko to investigate the impact of climatic, vineyard and oenological factors on the grape and wine composition and quality. It's perhaps the first time researchers nationwide can communicate using an indigenous grape variety. This is a ground-breaking step, leading to a better understanding of our terroir and the possibilities of the grape.

In the 1980s, the first generation of Greek winemakers often chose to plant international grapes. This was partly because they knew they could count on the ongoing research for these varieties. We can now hope the next generation of Greek winemakers will use Assyrtiko for this same reason. We can expect great things from the Greek wine industry of tomorrow thanks to the success Assyrtiko has gained today.

Terroirs

Assyrtiko's origins may lie in Santorini, but it's currently being planted throughout Greece. The variety's aromatic finesse and powerful palate allow it to settle nicely in many Greek wine regions and express unique profiles, representing the individual terroir. Our goal is to drive your curiosity to explore Assyrtiko to its fullest. Assyrtiko can guide you through more Greek terroirs than any other Greek variety can at this stage.

Greek Islands

Undoubtedly, the Greek Islands are home to some of the most intriguing terroirs in the world. What's so magical is that each grape-growing island presents a completely distinct terroir. Their location within Greece, the soils, the altitudes and people's attitudes all shape the final expression of the wines. Most of the islands in the Aegean Sea share a common denominator – Assyrtiko.



Cyclades and the Aegean

This is the home of Assyrtiko and where the most celebrated Assyrtiko's come from. Cyclades are a group of islands in the middle of the Aegean archipelago. Their strategic location means they were inhabited from prehistoric times, yet the harsh environment has constantly battered the people living there. This is true also for the vines. The climate of the Cyclades islands is true Mediterranean, with almost non-existent rainfall during the growing season and high-speed winds constantly blowing. Farmers had to use innovative ways to keep vines alive and productive in such a harsh environment. The development of the famous *kouloura* training system in Santorini and the *aplotaria* (crawling vines) in Paros have evolved out of these conditions. In addition, the traditional terraced vineyards with their dry-stone walls were built to make farmland a bit more welcoming for plants and humans alike in an otherwise hostile environment. Over the centuries, the vineyard of the Cyclades has become one with the people.

Today, vineyards in the Cyclades are expanding further than the traditional viticulture hotspots of Santorini, Paros and Naxos. Greek winemakers have been intrigued by the unexplored potential of many islands, such as Syros, Tinos and even Mykonos and Milos. Inspired by the tradition, these islands all champion the Assyrtiko grape alongside other indigenous grape varieties. One advantage the Cyclades have is that most islands are phylloxera-free. This means we can find ancient, ungrafted vineyards still in production, and it's one of the few places in the world where ungrafted vineyards can still be planted today.

From the volcanic soils of Santorini to the impressive granite of Tinos, the limestone base of Paros or the sandy vineyards of Syros, each island of the Cyclades has its own identity. The low soil fertility is the one common characteristic of all. Combined with the harsh climatic conditions, the outcome is a true Cycladic expression of Assyrtiko, with every island showcasing a unique undertone. You can expect dry white wines that are bold, with a rich texture and vibrant acidity, yet at the same time discrete, with an aroma profile filled with citrus fruit and crushed rocks. These wines are often labelled as PGI Cyclades.

Winery Recommendations: Akra Chrysos (*on the rise*) • Anhydrous (*age-worthy Icon and vertical Afoura*) • Argyros (*impressive Monsignori and layered Evdemon*) • Artemis Karamolegos (*good-value 34, Pyritis and single-vineyard Pappas a must try*) • Gaia (*Wild Ferment is a classic, Ammonite made waves*) • Gavalas (*Natural Ferment and Enalia supercuvée*) • Hatzidakis (*Skytali and rare, idiosyncratic Louros*) • Santo (*quality-oriented cooperative, Kontarades single vineyard*) • Koutsoyannopoulos (*good-value Xera Homata*) • Mikra Thira (*sole winery based in Therasia, TerraSea a star*) • Oeno P (*new-era Santorini by genius Paris Sigalas, pricey and fascinating Tria Ampelia and Akulumbo*) • Sigalas (*iconic Kavalieros*) • Tselepos (*age-worthy Santorini and single vineyard Laoudia*) • Vassaltis (*stunning Plethora*) • Venetsanos, (*classic Santorini is very good value*) • Volcanic Slopes Vineyard (*one label produced, Pure that can age for decades*).



*Credit Nikos Koustenis
Yiannis Karakasis, The Wines of Santorini*



Crete

Crete is the largest of the Greek Islands and the southernmost point of Greece and Europe. It is highly mountainous, with the two prominent mountains shy of 2,500 m. Its east-west orientation is favourable for viticulture, as it provides many north-facing vineyards, which not only shelter from the intense sun but also enjoy the northern *meltemi* winds. While most of the Cretan vineyards are cooler than one can expect, thanks to the southern latitude, they are some of the hottest vineyards in Greece.

In the hot Mediterranean climate of Crete, Assyrtiko is a new endeavour. Most Cretan wineries today offer a still, dry varietal Assyrtiko in their portfolio, but this was not the case ten years ago. The Assyrtiko vineyards are planted throughout Crete; however, most vineyards are centred in the Heracleion plateau. Even though Assyrtiko is new to Crete, the wines are distinguished by their naturally high acidity and mineral undertones, combined with hearty, fruity aromas of lemon and pear.

Assyrtiko is also often used in white blends in Crete with other indigenous varieties such as Vilana or Vidiano.

Winery Recommendations: Lyrarakis (*excellent, very good value Assyrtiko Voila*) and Economou (*avant-garde wines from Sitia*) both produce benchmark Assyrtiko. Diamantakis, Douloufakis, Haralabakis, Manousakis, Moinoterra and Paterianakis are all producing increasingly good Assyrtiko.

Other Islands

Winery Recommendations: T-Oinos (*cult producer in Tinos producing elegant but sharp Clos Stegasta and world-class Clos Stegasta Rare*) • Vryniotis (*Assyrtiko Sur Lies, a benchmark from Evia island*) • Syrou Winery • Moraitis.

Greek Mainland

Macedonia and Thrace

The fame of Assyrtiko has led to its expansion away from the islands into all the leading Greek vineyards. Those of Macedonia and Thrace are not an exception. Macedonia and Thrace make up the northern part of Greece. The terrain is varied. Some of the highest Greek mountains are located there; however, valleys are scattered throughout. As with most of Greece, the vineyards here are characterised by high diversity in terroir, including altitude, soil, exposition and degree of slope.

The climate also varies, with increasingly continental influences in wine regions further from the sea. In general, Macedonia and Thrace are colder than the rest of Greece, and they enjoy



frequent rainfall in the summer months. Yet, the high mountains often cause rain shadows, and precipitation is far from evenly distributed. The coldest viticultural region of Greece and one of the driest, Amyndaion, is in Macedonia.

Macedonia and Thrace are, therefore, set apart from the rest of Greece due to their cooler and wetter climate. In these conditions, Assyrtiko is away from its natural hot, dry island habitat –. Here, it can produce higher yields without overcropping, aided by the more fertile soil and higher rainfall. The cooler conditions result in wines that are more fruit-forward rather than mineral-forward. One thing is certain: acidity is still a driving factor for these wines. Yet, if we generalise, the wines here have a more substantial fruit character than the mineral touch in the islands.

What's great about the Assyrtiko in Macedonia is that producers could explore styles that had never been tried before. Traditionally, Assyrtiko was used for dry and dessert wines inspired by the dry, sunny conditions of the islands. Here, however, where ripening is pushed forward into September, and the grapes have naturally lower alcohol, the production of sparkling wines was a logical evolution for the variety. Assyrtiko's light, primary aromas and high acidity make it a perfect candidate for sparkling wines. Indeed, in the coldest regions, like Amyndeo, sparkling Assyrtiko made with the traditional method is nowadays a staple and one of the most iconic Greek wine styles.

The lower alcohol gives Assyrtiko an altogether different potential; because of this, the region produces some of the highest quality retsina wines. Like Savatiano, the subdued, lemony character integrates beautifully with pine raisins, giving the wines a unique touch. In contrast with traditional retsina wines, Assyrtiko-based retsina has a robust structure that can carry the intense aromatics well. Coupled with the constantly improving winemaking practices and precise resin addition, a new wave of retsina wines was born in northern Greece. Since then, they have inspired winemakers nationwide, and the premium "Ritinitis" category was born.

Winery Recommendations: Akrathos • Alpha (*cool climate and mineral*) • Anatolikos (*fine Assyrtiko*) • Biblia Chora (*mineral driven and age-worthy Areti and Ovilos, an oaked blend with Semillon*) • Charalamboglou • Chatzivariti (*natural-style Mi and super-rare Assyrtiko Flor*) • Costa Lazaridi • Karanika (*sparkling wines' leader*) • Kechris (*Tear of the Pine opened new roads for Retsina*) • Kir Yianni • Pavlidis (*Emphasis Assyrtiko*) • Wine Art (*complex, oaked Idisma Dryos*).

Thessaly and Central Greece

Life is far from easy in this part of Greece. Branded by the production of bulk wines, retsina base wines and wine for distillation, the wine regions in the heart of Greece need help to move from industrial to premium categories. That being said, they're a great source of excellent value-for-money wines. Assyrtiko from Thessaly or Central Greece is no exception.



The same rugged terrain of Makedonia and Thrace continues throughout mainland Greece. Yet the climate is a merge of the cooler northern elements combined with the warm, sunny conditions of the Cyclades as we move to the south. Here, the expressions of Assyrtiko are generally richer than those to the north, with higher alcohol content (often reaching 14% abv) but retaining a fruity and inviting profile.

Winery Recommendations: Dougos (*rich oaked Meth Ymon Acacia*) • Girlemis • Markogianni (*orange*) • Markou • Mylonas • Muses (*Crispy Assyrtiko*) • Navitas • Papagiannakos.

Peloponnese

In the far south of Greece, Peloponnese has traditionally been the workhorse of the Greek vineyard, with some of the largest viticultural regions located there, like Nemea, Patra or Mantinia. At the same time, Peloponnese is home to one of the regions of Greece with the highest elevation, the [Slopes of Aigialeia PGI](#). Overall, the western part of the Peloponnese receives more rain and is generally cooler, while moving east the climate becomes drier with a warm, sunny growing season.

Assyrtiko is planted through this tapestry of terroirs, as winemakers in the region are eager to experiment and explore the possibilities of the grape. In the west, the plains around Patra are a source of some excellent value-for-money options. In Nemea and Mantinia, you'll rarely see a varietal Assyrtiko. It is often a blending partner to aroma-driven varieties, such as Moschofilero. Interestingly, Assyrtiko has found its second home in the far south of the Peloponnese, Lakonia, where the climate is as harsh as it is in the Cyclades. There, the ability of Assyrtiko to hold on to its natural acidity is a blessing for the winemakers. As a result, it's not only produced as a varietal wine but also as a blend with the upcoming staple variety of the region, Kydonitsa.

Winery Recommendations: Athanasiou • Dio Ypsi (*Dialogos, a blend with Kydonitsa*) • Markogianni (*orange*) • Monemvasia/Tsimbidis • Papargyriou • Rouvalis (*exciting high-elevation interpretation*)



2023 Vintage

Only some things come easy for Greek winemakers, even when dealing with the hardy Assyrtiko grape. 2023 brought unprecedented challenges for vineyards all over the country. Let's discover how the 2023 vintage affected Assyrtiko and what to expect from this year's wines.

The warm winter led to an early start of the growing season; however, the very wet spring threatened all vineyards. Producers came face-to-face with *peronospora*, even in Assyrtiko vineyards. Due to the rarity of *peronospora* infestation, there were many cases where the response to the threat took time. Also, the challenge for organic vineyards was more significant. Inflorescences were affected by the fungus, resulting in a loss of yield.

Some Assyrtiko vineyards were also damaged by hail. The southern part of Santorini, where most of the vineyards are located, was hit by hail in spring, which damaged a lot of young shoots. This also contributed to the overall loss of yield.

For the remaining bunches, surviving the summer was no easy feat. Greece suffered intense heat waves throughout July, which subsided only in mid-August. The heat led the vines to stop photosynthesis and, thus, berry ripening. While harvest of Assyrtiko starts on average at the beginning of August in Santorini, this year it began mid-August.

This delay in harvest time led to implications in harvest management from wineries. While traditionally lower-lying vineyards were the first to ripen, and harvest progressed towards the higher altitude plots, this year, all the vineyards ripened at approximately the same time. Winemakers had to harvest faster than any other year and prioritise the best plots, although due to the lower yields, picking was quicker.

We have yet to see how this year will turn out once in a bottle. On a positive note, the grapes harvested at the end were healthy. However, the extended heat's influence on the aromas and flavours is yet to be observed. The first calls predict a qualitative vintage, relying on Assyrtiko's ability to handle the particularities of the Mediterranean climate – even in light of climate change.



Winery Profile

Venetsanos Winery

Vertical of Santorini Assyrtiko 2015–2022

At the heart of Santorini, overlooking the magnificent caldera, you will find one of the most historic wineries on the island – Venetsanos Winery. Founded in 1947, the winery is the first commercial winery on the island and is praised for its innovative architecture and gravity-flow design. Yiorgos Venetsanos, the founder of Venetsanos Winery, was a renowned chemist whom the Greek Union of Chemists also awarded for his contribution to the wine industry.

Yorgos Venetsanos designed the winery, which looks like it's been sculpted into the rock. He was more or less forced by the lack of electricity on the island to use gravity. As a result, the winery is built in four different layers. Grape reception is located on the roof, while the bottom of the tanks is 17 m below!

Overall, Venetsanos winery mirrors the wine history of Santorini, with its many ups and downs. From the beginning, Venetsanos focused on exports. Its location right above the port allowed the installation of pipes to load the ships directly. Due to the focus of the Santorini wine industry on the bulk wine trade, the small yields of the island, and the development of new world wine regions, the operation of the winery could have been more profitable in the 1980s (the winery closed in 1974). However, the reopening of the winery in 2014 and increased focus on producing quality wine now allow us to call Venetsanos Winery one of the most iconic wineries in Santorini.

In total, the winery now farms 15 ha of vineyards on the volcanic land of Santorini. Besides Assyrtiko, the vineyards are home to many varieties, such as its partners in Santorini wines Athiri and Aidani, the relatively unknown Platani, and the reds Mavrotragano and Mandilaria. An extensive portfolio of wines is produced from these grapes, yet the single-vineyard Santorini, made from 100% Assyrtiko, stands out. Produced in a style that makes it approachable in youth, the Santorini is barrel-free and has the right amount of bâtonnage. The concentrated, mineral palette from the Santorini Assyrtiko grapes allows the wine to mature in the bottle wonderfully.



Venetsanos Santorini 2022 *+**

Mid-lemon coloured with a developing nose showing ripe apple, orange zest and vegetal nuances. Full-bodied, salty and long.

A pure and elegant performer that is delicious now, better with age.

Venetsanos Santorini 2021 ***

Pale lemon green looks more youthful than in 2022, perhaps with increased SO₂ levels.

Lean and vertical, this one needs time to relax and show more complexity.

Venetsanos Santorini 2020 ****

Deep-lemon coloured. Honeyed and nutty with sea-breeze minerality.

At its peak and showing many layers of complexity.

It's a fabulous food wine, although I would drink this on every occasion.

Venetsanos Santorini 2019 **+**

From the tiny 2019 vintage that produced less than 1,000 tonnes, the Venetsanos Santorini with just 13% abv is fully flavoured and complete on the same beat as 2020, full-throttled without being heavy.

Venetsanos Santorini 2018 *+**

Very youthful colour with a Mediterranean nose full of herbs and citrus fruit.

This is at its plateau of maturity but will keep for the next 3–5 years. 13% abv.

Venetsanos Santorini 2017

Unfortunately, the bottle tasted was off. It was not rated.

Venetsanos Santorini 2016 *+**

With a 13.5% abv, 2016, regarded as a top vintage together with 2015, has started to fade but still shows the tell-tale Santorini signature: high acid and saltiness with the fruit becoming softer and mellow. To be drunk over the next two years.

Venetsanos Santorini 2015 ****

One of the best wines from the line-up, mature with honey, pears and toast over a core of stony minerality. Layered and very long, this is complete and delicious.



Variety Focus 2

Mavrodaphne

Mavrodaphne — she who must not be named

Mavrodaphne (Μαυροδάφνη) is a red Greek wine grape variety which came to fame from the homonymous sweet wines from Kefalonia and Patra. It has been traditionally used to make fortified sweet red wines. This style led to the spread of Mavrodaphne from its origins in Cephalonia to the Peloponnese. Mavrodaphne is now experiencing a renaissance due to interest in its dry wines by both producers and consumers. Proof is the increase of planting surface by 8.1% from 2015 to 2020, surpassing 5,500 ha. Plantings are still concentrated in the classic regions of Cephalonia and Northern Peloponnese, but producers are exploring northern Greek terroirs.

Origins and History

According to most sources, Mavrodaphne originates from the Greek island of Cephalonia. From there, it spread to Patra, where it became popular. Its name means Black Laurel. The word “mavro” is commonly found in the names of Greek varieties (e.g. Xinomavro), but it does not indicate genetic relations between the grapes; it only describes their black colour (mavro = black).

Mavrodaphne was initially used to produce dry and naturally sweet wines from sun-dried grapes in Cephalonia. It was made famous and exported widely by Ernesto Tool, who owned the largest winery on the island. Tool traded with his fellow German, Gustav Clauss, based in Patra, and they became good friends. Clauss, inspired by the modern winery and production methods of Tool and impressed by the high quality of the wines, started his winery in Patra, which he named Achaia Clauss.

He most likely imported clones of Mavrodaphne and Moscato from Cephalonia to the Peloponnese, as there is no historical mention of the two varieties in the region. When Clauss first produced Mavrodaphne, he claimed it was named after his lost fiancée, Daphne, who died at a young age, supporting the theory he brought the grape into the region. While this theory for the name persists, Mavrodaphne has been mentioned in Cephalonia since the 17th century, 200 years before Clauss produced his first wine.



Until the 1870s, the two styles of Mavrodaphne, dry and sweet, were equally present in the market. The devastating impact of phylloxera, downy and powdery mildew for the vineyards of the Douro Valley dedicated to Port wines, increased the demand for other port-style wines. In response, Tool and Clauss increased the production of the sweet fortified style to meet international demand. Over the following decades, it became one of Greece's most successful wine styles in the global market.

When the Greek PDO system was defined, the regulators looked into the wine styles with commercial volume and a long history to define the PDOs. Therefore, the two sweet Mavrodaphne wines were apparent choices and were formally granted PDO status (OPE in Greece). Despite the continuous production of dry Mavrodaphne on the island of Cephalonia, the style was overlooked because, thanks to the sweet production craze, it was mainly consumed on the island. Such is the Greek regulations that a change to include the dry style under the PDO regulations, both in Cephalonia and Patra, has not yet been made.

For many years now, demand for fortified wines has been in decline. Still, Mavrodaphne plantings are slowly increasing due to winemakers' high interest in using the grape for red wine production. The vineyard aspect and altitude are very important when making dry red wines. The aim is a long hang time to increase phenolic ripeness without gaining overwhelmingly high alcohol or raisin aromas. Mavrodaphne is now used to produce a range of red wines, from easy-drinking, chillable reds to rich, more extracted and structured wines. It is one of Greece's most qualitative red wines, and this is only the beginning of this new era of Mavrodaphne.

Vineyard

Mavrodaphne is found in the western part of Greece and is mainly grown near the Ionian Sea in Patra and Cephalonia. The region's climate is Mediterranean, with reduced rainfall in the summer months. Mavrodaphne, however, seems to be struggling with the sporadic rainfalls of the growing season, as it is sensitive to downy mildew. It's not, however, susceptible to botrytis because it has loose bunches and thick skins. When grown in drier conditions, like in the high elevations of Aigialeia or the north-eastern parts of Peloponnese, disease pressure is reduced, but another issue emerges: sensitivity to drought.

Vineyards in low-lying, fertile areas are generally used to produce sweet fortified wines. Due to the intensity of the wine style itself, grape concentration is not of key importance; therefore, producers often aim to increase the yields of these vineyards. However, Mavrodaphne is a variety with medium productivity, and producers in higher elevations with less fertile soils report yields of about 30–35 hl/ha.



The basal buds of Mavrodaphne are productive, so spur pruning is suitable. Budbreak occurs in the middle of April, and flowering follows on the first days of June. It is prone to *millerandage* (uneven fruit set), contributing to medium productivity. *Véraison* occurs in the first week of August in the higher altitude vineyards. Harvest occurs earlier in the low-altitude vineyards and becomes later, moving towards early autumn, with increasing altitude.

Clones

There is an extensive discussion regarding the clones of the variety. The common belief is that there are two primary clones, Tsigello and Renio. However, this has been disproved by Stavrakaki and Biniari, as Renio is shown to be a different variety using *genetic markers*. Tsigello is believed to be the true, high-quality expression of Mavrodaphne and is found both in Aigialeia and Cephalonia.

Clauss, the founder of Achaia Clauss, has planted a foreign grape next to his Mavrodaphne vineyards. Could the name “Renio” reference “Rhein”, where Clauss had many commercial interests? It seems Renio has been mistakenly replanted as Mavrodaphne after the phylloxera crisis. The planted area of Renio gradually increased as it is more productive than Mavrodaphne and, therefore, more profitable for the growers.

The Tsigello clone, or, better said, true Mavrodaphne, has looser bunches with smaller berries, more concentrated colour and finer aromas than Renio. It can also achieve higher alcoholic volume as it ripens more consistently. However, it is more drought-sensitive, and producers swapped it for Renio, which was easier to grow.

Given the large distribution in the Peloponnese and the many historical plantings, it is hard to differentiate the true Mavrodaphne (Tsigello) from Renio. Fortunately, the increased awareness about their differences and the clonal selection means that, nowadays, quality producers are planting Tsigello. We can expect to see a higher consistency of the wines in varietal expression and identity year by year.



Mavrodaphne Grapes
credit Markogianni winery

Terroirs

Cephalonia

The home place of Mavrodaphne is Cephalonia. It is one of the rainiest places in Greece because the Pindos Mountain Range on the east forms a cloud barrier, causing rain to fall on the west. This brings average annual rainfall above 1,500 mm, with about 300 mm falling during the growing season. High humidity, cool water-laden east winds and the surrounding sea result in a low daily temperature range.

Most Mavrodaphne is grown in clay soils that hold water well and are at lower elevations. Most of the older vineyards, however, are found at higher altitudes. The PDO Mavrodaphne of Cephalonia is produced here with the designated areas scattered around the island. Plantings are concentrated on the peninsula of Lixouri on the island's west side.

Cephalonia is home to some of the oldest plots of Mavrodaphne in the country, some ungrafted because phylloxera arrived only recently on the island. As a result, it can be the source of heirloom genetic material for Mavrodaphne. The potential for further exploration of the variety and its qualitative potential is excellent.



Northern Peloponnese

Most Mavrodaphne is grown in the Achaia region, around Patra. It was brought to the region from the island of Cephalonia. The high marine traffic of Patra, the third biggest Greek city, facilitated exports, so plantings soon increased around three main grape-growing areas which produce the famous PDO Mavrodaphne of Patra: one around Rio, north of Patra to the west of the city, and the last one at slightly higher altitudes.

Rainfall is high but lower than Cephalonia, with an average of 1,300 mm annually. Growing season rainfall, however, is closer to 400 mm, with more evenly dispersed rainfall in the summer. The region of Patra, and Northern Peloponnese in general, has a higher diurnal range than Kefalonia, reaching 15 °C in the summer months.

The higher rainfall of the growing season, combined with the higher daily range and more fertile soils of Patra, leads to lower alcohol levels in wine compared to Cephalonia. In the high-altitude vineyards of Aigialeia, alcohol rarely reaches levels higher than 13.5%.

However, we must consider that when discussing Mavrodaphne in the Peloponnese, it is hard to differentiate between Tsigello and Renio. Likely, most wines produced there are predominately Renio or a mix of the two unless specified by the producer. As a result, the organoleptic differences perceived between the two regions cannot be directly attributed to the influences of the two different terroirs.

Many ambitious producers have observed other regions' potential for Mavrodaphne. There are plantings in Naoussa and Amyndeio, two of the coolest wine regions in Greece. The wines there have higher acidity than in the coastal areas and slightly lower alcohol with more delicate, fresher flavours.



Oenological Characteristics

Sweet Fortified Wines

The main style produced from Mavrodaphne and the one described in the two appellations of Mavrodaphne of Cephalonia and Patra is a sweet, fortified red wine.

Interestingly, despite what the name of the two appellations suggests, sweet, fortified Mavrodaphne wines can contain up to 40% Korinthiaki grapes, the same type that's used for raisins. This second grape has higher yields and can achieve higher sugar levels much more effortlessly than Mavrodaphne, so producers used it to obtain the minimum potential alcohol of 17.5% vol. The Korinthiaki producers can get much higher prices for their crops if they sell their grapes for raisin production. Therefore, only the lower-quality grapes that are unfit to turn into raisins are used for the wines, damaging the wine's quality.

According to the regulation of the PDO Mavrodaphne of Patra, fortification occurs before the natural alcohol reaches 4% vol. The spirit is "neutral", with at least 96% alcohol. Wines must be aged for at least twelve months in oak casks, no greater than 1,000 litres. Reserve, Vieille Reserve and Grand Reserve can be used to describe the different age categories.

The PDO Mavrodaphne of Cephalonia has similar regulations. However, it is not being produced in commercially important volumes, as producers on the island focus on producing dry red wines from this variety.

Dry Red Wines

Mavrodaphne is a thick-skinned variety, so tannin management is vital for red wines. Complete destemming is almost always practised to avoid extraction of harsh tannins. Extraction time depends on the producer but varies from a week to a whole month!

As is expected, many different styles of dry red wine are produced. Lighter wines are made with gentle extraction and have 13% abv. Some producers prefer more voluminous wines and aim for 15% abv. The acidity of the variety is considered medium, and it doesn't drop as grapes become increasingly ripe. In any case, the high quality of the variety shines through.

Fermentation is typically performed in temperature-controlled stainless-steel tanks, which results in fresher aromas. Some wines are also matured in a tank for a short period and released early to market. These are some of the purest expressions of the grape and some of the most enjoyable, especially when chilled!

Vessel choice also plays a vital role in the variety's style. It's a variety sensitive to reduction, so it benefits from ageing in oxygen-permeable vessels, such as oak and clay. When using oak, producers prefer larger sizes of used oak, above 500 litres, since the heavier oak bouquet easily overpowers the delicate varietal aromas.



The dry red Mavrodaphne wines can age for a long time due to their considerable tannin concentration and balanced acidity. Ageing in large barrels usually lasts a year, while bottle ageing can last for decades.

Greek winemakers like to blend different varieties, and Mavrodaphne has been used in some of these blends. You can find it with other Greek grapes, like Agiorgitiko and Mavro Kalavritino in Peloponnese, Xinomavro in Nemea and even the white grape Vostilidi in Cephalonia. Its international partners are equally diverse, ranging from Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon and Syrah to the Italian Refosco. When blended, Mavrodaphne contributes round resolved tannins, dark ruby colour, delicate fruits and notes of Mediterranean herbs.

Rosé Wines

Following the variety's success in its dry red expression, producers are expanding the boundaries by creating rosé wines. Found mainly in Cephalonia island, the light-coloured rosés show high potential as another modern version of Mavrodaphne.





Mavrodaphne *the grand tasting*





Tasting 19 Mavrodaphne wines showed one thing: Mavrodaphne is a wine with many faces. It can produce polar opposite styles, making it a nightmare for blind tasting. At the same time, this diversity allows us to choose the wines that suit our style.

In a box, Mavrodaphne is characterised by red fruit, a savoury character, and a touch of dried herbs. On the palate, the wines have almost consistently 13% abv, with few exceptions going up to 14.5%. The tannins are high, often chalky and slightly drying, other times fine-grained. The acidity is consistently elevated and well-balanced, except in the higher altitude vineyards, where it's even fresher. The wines range from light-bodied and easy to drink to concentrated and age-worthy.

To increase the understanding of Mavrodaphne, we have created four broad stylistic categories as a helping hand for the reader to increase the transparency of the style and connect each bottle with the wine lover who will most fully appreciate it. The categories are: “Light and Fruity”, “Rustic and Savoury”, “Balanced and Approachable”, and “Rich and Concentrated”.

The style is mainly influenced by the philosophy of the winemaker rather than the terroir. Mavrodaphne proves that the (modern) history of Greek wine is now being written. Every year, wine production becomes even better than before, and the winemakers understand how to appreciate and showcase the “quirks” of their terroir rather than hide it behind a stylistic winemaking approach.

Light and Fruity

Haritatos, Mademoiselle 2022, Cephalonia — €

The branding as a chillable red couldn't be more apt. Prominent raspberry and cherry, alongside earthy undertones, fill up nose and palate alike. The first sip is surprising due to a light spritz, but the mouthfeel offers pleasant, refreshing acidity and low, soft tannins.

Koukos, Amphora Mavrodaphne 2022, Peloponnese — €€

Bright green herbal notes of laurel and fennel combine gracefully with game and leather undertones. The high tannins are drying but well balanced by the full body and rich extraction on the finish.

Rouvalis, Tsigello 2022, Aigialeia — €€

Earthy and peppery nose, which respects the red fruit. High yet smooth tannins surrounded by a round mouthfeel and a bright aroma intensity come together to compose this great, easy-drinking Mavrodaphne.



Tetramythos, Laurier Noir Nature 2022, Aigialeia — €€

Energetic, vibrant black cherry and raspberry in a dense wine without prominent oak influence. Highly concentrated, it offers a rich texture and chalky tannins. Clean and precise minimal-intervention wine.

Zaharias, Lexis M 2022, Peloponnese — €€

Juicy red fruit in a beautiful balance with sweet vanilla, cloves and garrigue notes. Tannins are fine-grained, and the alcohol is prominent on the finish – the heaviest bottle of the tasting.

Savoury

Margogianni, Dalion 2021, Peloponnese — €€

One of the deepest-coloured wines of the tasting. Low aromatic intensity, where meaty, undergrowth aromas overtake the cassis notes. While the body is generous, the high tannins lead to a drying finish.

Orealios Gaia, Nouvelle Epoque 2021, Cephalonia — €€

A Mavrodaphne where earthy and smoky characters dominate the nose. The medium, fine-grained tannins fill the palate initially, yet more concentration would be welcomed. It is a food wine with a rather sweet finish.

Sant'or, Krasis 2021, Peloponnese — €€

Medicinal and floral aromas define this biodynamic wine. The tannins on the palate are medium-grained, while the wine finishes with a balsamic touch. Terroir driven and exciting.

Sclavos, Orgion 2021, Cephalonia — €€

Gamey and intense, with floral undertones, this wine challenges and surprises the senses. On the palate, the tannins are velvety, and the body is rounded, in good balance with the vibrant acid.

Sclavos, Monambeles 2021, Cephalonia — €€€

Deep, dense nose with a meaty presence and layered dark fruit. The high, drying tannins, bright acidity and concentrated palate support bottle ageing.

Balanced and Approachable

Achaion, Laura Nera 2022, Peloponnese — €

Proof that Mavrodaphne can produce easy-drinking reds. Fresh cherry fruit meets delicate spicy notes, balanced by a light body and low chalky tannins filling the mid-palate – notably the only wine of the tasting under screwcap.



Achaion, Laura Nobile 2018 Magnum, Peloponnese — €

Beautifully matured, five years after harvest. Transports you to the Southern Rhône, with its garrigue character and bright strawberry palate. Medium-soft tannins and balanced, integrated acidity support also suggest that approachable Mavrodaphne can age.

Haritatos, Madame 2020, Cephalonia — €€

Dusty profile at the beginning opens up to bright red fruit, violet and laurel aromas. It is an elegant style without too much extraction, but the tannins are still high and fine-grained.

Parparoussis, Taos 2019, Peloponnese — €€

The medium intensity on the nose showcases Mavrodaphne's plum and minty aromas while surrounding them with clove and white-chocolate notes from extensive ageing in barriques. A vanilla-driven, long finish accompanies velvety tannins and a medium body.

Rouvalis, Tsigello Dafnes 2020, Peloponnese — €€

This high-altitude single-vineyard wine combines power with finesse. Elegant chalky tannins surround fresh cherry aromas and a high acid, light yet concentrated palate. The oak-dominant palate will integrate with bottle ageing, as promised by the bright, fruity finish.

Rich and Concentrated

Mercouri, Dapne Nera 2020, Peloponnese — €€

Rich and concentrated nose, with sour cherry, hazelnut and chocolate aromas. High, fine-grained tannins supported by expert oak management. A wine that can mature for another decade.

Papargyriou, La Reine Des Montagnes 2020, Peloponnese — €€

A full-bodied interpretation of Mavrodaphne, rich and concentrated, true to the winemaker's style, from high-altitude vineyards at 800 m elevation. Powerful and ageworthy.

Rira, Metavasis 2020, Peloponnese — €

New-world inspired, rich style, with ripe-fruit character and extracted palate. The vanilla characters complement the blackberry and sour-cherry aromas. Rounded tannins impress in this value-for-money Mavrodaphne.

Petrakopoulos, Mavro 2021, Cephalonia — €€

A concentrated wine that needs time to open up. Leather and undergrowth aromas give way to dark cherry notes. It offers high-quality velvety tannins as well as a long, concentrated finish.



Winery Profile

Petrakopoulos and MOV **Mavrodaphne Vertical 2021–2015**

Petrakopoulos Winery, nestled in Thiramona, approximately 15 km from Argostoli, is the brainchild of Nikos Petrakopoulos, an entrepreneur driven by a sincere passion for wine. Raised in the midst of winemaking, Nikos assisted his grandfather, Panagis Solomos, in crafting wine on the ground floor of the historic estate. Despite the house undergoing multiple demolitions and reconstructions due to earthquakes, its original function has remained largely unchanged, now serving as an integral part of the winery.

Nikos continues to embody his grandfather's winemaking spirit and maintains a profound connection to Thiramona village, with his enthusiasm growing stronger each year. In 2005, Kiki Siameli joined the winery team, dedicating herself tirelessly to crafting exceptional wines that showcase the diverse terroir of Cephalonia and its grape varieties. In 2021, a new winery was established, positioning itself as one of Greece's most sustainable wineries, incorporating solar panels for all energy needs, natural waste management, water treatment, and more.

Environmental preservation is a paramount concern for Petrakopoulos Winery. All their vineyards are certified organic, aiming to minimise unnecessary activities and inputs. Their contract growers also align with these beliefs, focusing on biodiversity promotion in the vineyards by allowing the growth of natural cover crops, attracting countless insects and serving as natural fertilisers, thus reducing the need for external inputs.

Old, dry-farmed, ungrafted vineyards are the cornerstone of Petrakopoulos Winery, representing a source of rich genetic diversity that they feel obligated to preserve and cherish. Only indigenous varieties are planted, with a strong emphasis on single-vineyard wines, particularly Robola, Zakyntino, and Mavrodaphne varieties.



Mov 2021 ***+

900 bottles, 14% abv.

Almost purple in colour with an impressive nose showing dark fruit along meat and spicy oak. Herbal as well and wild overall. Shows a deep and fleshy palate with bottle ageing required.

Mov 2020 ****

800 bottles, 14% abv.

Deep ruby coloured. Concentrated and complex on the nose with ripe fruit and mint aromas. Oak is very well integrated. The palate is packed with dark, juicy fruit, and the tannins are starting to relax. Very long and well-balanced.

Mov 2019 ****

800 bottles, 14% abv.

Deep ruby with a garnet rim. Red-cherry scented with smoke, leather and meat. Fascinating nose, Tuscan-like. Layered, ripe, and savoury on the palate with firm tannins, it still needs time to mellow. For the long run.

Mov 2018 ***+

800 bottles, 14% abv.

Garnet coloured. Smoke and earth over red cherries. Elegant palate, which is well-balanced and medium-bodied with fine-grained tannins that are getting mellow. Moderately long finish.

Mov 2017 ****+

800 bottles, 14% abv.

Garnet coloured. Fantastic nose, Brunello-like with blood oranges, smoke, leather and red fruit. Very pure on the palate, still firm but showing a lovely evolution and integration. Oak supports the fruit, which is already rewarding and appealing. Long, lingering finish and a wine that ticks all the boxes.

Mov 2015 ****

800 bottles, 14% abv.

Garnet coloured as well. Red-fruit-dominated nose with chocolate and coffee. Sweet fruit on the palate, relaxed and harmonious.



Regional Focus

Aigialeia, Peloponnese

The Place

History

The region of Aigialeia, situated in the northern part of the Peloponnese, has a rich history dating back to ancient Greece. It was inhabited by the Achaeans, who migrated from the Argolic plain after the invasion of the Dorians. Over time, numerous regions' cities became part of a federation known as the Achaean League, with Aigion as its common centre.

Pausanias, a second-century AD traveller, described the vineyards of Aigialeia as “artfully planted”, emphasising the strategic cultivation of vineyards. The northern slopes, overlooking the Corinthian Gulf, extend from the Aigialeia hills to the foothills of Mount Helmos. The vineyards, cultivated at elevations ranging from 300 to 1,000 m, have maintained an unbroken tradition since antiquity, tended by local winemakers committed to quality.

Aigialeia is also the home to the Mega (Megaló) Spilaio, a monastery that preserved the art of winemaking in its underground cellars during the years of Ottoman rule, featuring colossal wine barrels. The region cultivates ancient Greek varieties such as Roditis, Lagorthi, Mavrodaphne and Mavro Kalavrytino alongside international ones like Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc and Cabernet Sauvignon.

The PGI Slopes of Aigialeia was first established in 1994. However, the wines had to be made from blends you rarely see today. White wines had to have at least 60% Lagorthi and Chardonnay, with the remaining comprising other permitted varieties. For the rosés, Volitsa (a variety you rarely encounter today) had to be at least 60% of the blend. The reds had to include at least 40% Cabernet Sauvignon.

The dominance of international varieties in the regulations reflects the mindset of wine producers during that time. It is understandable, as most of the winemakers who were focusing on quality wine production had studied abroad – mainly in France – and were familiar with handling the French varieties. On the other hand, no research or meticulous note-taking was available for the indigenous grapes.

It was 2011 when the PGI regulations for Slopes of Aigialeia took their present form. Until then, because of the outdated regulations, many wines had to be labelled under the regional PGI Achaia or the even larger PGI Peloponnese. Now, producers can proudly display their regional



(and international) grapes on the label. This shift was aided by years of hard work, where the understanding and respect for Greek varieties grew. Today, we can observe an opposite shift, one towards indigenous varieties. The tapestry of well-acclimated international varieties and unique indigenous expressions makes the wines from the Slopes of Aigialeia worth seeking.

Vineyard

The region is semi-mountainous and mountainous and is characterised by its division into distinct vineyard plots shaped by deep ravines formed by rivers (Phoinikas, Meganitis, Selinous, Kerynitis, Vouraikos, Krios, Krathis) and streams draining the waters of the mountainous Peloponnese into the Corinthian Gulf. Vineyards are between 300 to 1,000+ m, while the soil is primarily limestone, fertile sandy loam with good drainage.

The north-north-eastern exposure of Aigialeia's slopes is desirable for Mediterranean vineyards, helping them avoid excessive sun exposure and utilise the cool breezes of summer. The region's overall Mediterranean climate is defined by humidity up to an elevation of 270 m, featuring a mild winter (average minimum temperature in the coldest January at 2.9°C). Beyond 800 m, the climate becomes wet with a cold winter (corresponding average minimum temperature in the coldest January at 0°C). In between, the vineyards enjoy a combination of cool winters and warmer summers, ideal for high-quality grape production.

These climatic features result from the geomorphological conditions of the area, including the high average elevation of Northwestern Achaia (862 m) and the slope of the region (35.5%). These high values indicate the presence of a robust relief, influenced by active seismic activity in the area over the past approximately four million years. This, together with the suitable geological material (mainly limestone from the Olonos – Pindus zone) and the appropriate meteorological conditions (rainfall index 600–1,000 mm – considerably above the average rainfall index in Greece), shape the unique characteristics of this region.

The total cultivated vineyard area is 5,200 ha, including 1,200 ha of wine-producing grape varieties. Roditis covers approximately 80% of the plantings. While some wineries own and farm many of their vineyards, the region is dominated by many small producers, some of whom are part-time viticulturists. On the one hand, this enables wineries to increase in scale since they don't have to use resources to farm the numerous tiny plots, but it makes management challenging.

Variety	Hectares	Variety	Hectares
Roditis	950	Cabernet Sauvignon	55
Lagorathi	17,5	Merlot	13
Chardonnay	30	Syrah	20
Sauvignon Blanc	30	Malagousia	20



Training Systems

The dominant training system is goblet (head-trained). This is, however, changing. 10–15 years ago, it might have been 90%, but its popularity is decreasing. Goblet is the ideal system for productive varieties such as Roditis, giving denser plantings simultaneously compared to cordon or guyot. Climatically, it involves a slower ripening process and a longer vegetative cycle, which is much desired in the area.



Diseases

Aigialeia is a sanctuary from vine diseases, owing to its strategic location near the Corinthian Gulf and high-elevation vineyards. This combination contributes to a mesoclimate that discourages the development of diseases, mainly due to high airflow. Despite this protective shield, a notable occurrence unfolded this year, with many producers encountering downy mildew for the first time. Surprisingly, this marks the second appearance in the last decade, primarily impacting international white varieties. Traditionally, the region relied on sulphur sprays, a method that had sufficed for years as the main disease was powdery mildew, emphasising viticulture's challenges and evolving dynamics.



Winemaking and Styles

Most white wines are made in a way that reduces contact with oxygen to a minimum and produce wines with light-bodied character and vibrant acidity with minimal to no recourse to oak. While there's a growing trend in skin-contact wines and sporadic experiments with oak, such practices remain exceptions rather than the rule.

Extensive oak utilisation takes centre stage on the red wine front, particularly with international grape varieties. However, this is not the case with indigenous Black of Kalavryta and Mavrodaphne, where the focus lies on accentuating fruit purity and aromatic nuances.

Trends

The region of Aigialeia is home to some of the most exciting Greek wineries, which push the winemaking boundaries yearly. As a result, producers are always looking out for exciting new varieties to experiment with. Sideritis is gaining traction due to its late-ripening nature, which can be a great tool to preserve the region's refreshing wine style as the years get warmer.

There is also an increased focus on single-vineyard wines. After careful observation for decades, the winemakers can confidently identify the vineyards that consistently produce top quality. These single-vineyard wines will help us better understand the microclimates of Aigialeia, eventually leading to more exciting wine discoveries.

Finally, there is a shift towards minimal-intervention wines in an attempt to put terroir before winemaking. The high-altitude vineyards are responsible for naturally high acidity and low pH, making the region a perfect candidate for this winemaking style. While the results may not always be ideal, some of Greece's best minimal-intervention wines come from Aigialeia.



Sideritis Vine
credit Tetramythos Winery



The Producers and their Wines

Benchmark Wineries

Cavino

one of the biggest producers in Greece, offers superb value-for-money wines but also higher-end wines from the Mega Spileo project

try exciting Orange from Roditis and Malvasia and perfumed Pinot Noir

Rouvali

a winery that made an intense comeback and now produces some of the most thrilling wines Greece has to offer

see more under [fastest emerging wineries section](#).

Tetramythos

see the detailed profile below

Upcoming Wineries

Acheon

Run by the Katsikosta family, Acheon winery emphasises indigenous varieties with specialities being Mavrodaphne, Roditis and Sideritis.

Edanos

Located between Akrata and Diakopto. It is a small family winery producing exciting wines from Malagousia, Black of Kalavryta, and Lagorathi.

Kanakaris

An upcoming winery with an exciting 10³ lineup coming from high-elevation vineyards of Roditis, Malagousia, Merlot and Agiorgitiko, the first two found in higher than 1000 m.

M20

A recent addition to the Aigialeia wineries.

Small-scale production is based on Roditis and Lagorathi.

Rira Vineyard

Offers good-value wines based on both indigenous and international varieties.



Winery Profile

Tetramythos

Vertical Tasting

The Tetramythos winery features the Spanos brothers and winemaker Panagiotis Papagiannopoulos, who are among the guardians of the tradition for mountainous Aigialeia in the Peloponnese. Established in 1999, the winery began its journey by producing 8,000 bottles. After buildings and equipment were burned down in a catastrophic forest fire, the team rebuilt and became stronger than ever. Now, 24 years later, it crafts 330,000 bottles exclusively from organic vineyards and exports them to 39 countries. Major markets include Canada, France, and the UK, with exports accounting for 85% of the total production. The winery produces 28 labels, 10 in the classic series and 18 in the Nature series. A 19th label featuring the Black Volitsa variety is set to be released in the spring.

Under the oenological guidance of Papagiannopoulos, the winery has embraced minimal intervention winemaking, producing crystalline, pure wines with a strong terroir fingerprint. Sustainability is among their primal concerns, including adopting 420 g bottles for the classical range and looking for ways to reduce their CO₂ emissions. PVC-free capsules are used, while many labels do not include synthetic derivatives. Solar energy panels cover part of their energy needs, and hybrid vehicles are used for employee transportation.





Tetramyθος Roditis Vertical

Roditis Nature 2022 ****

Medium lemon green, very youthful in appearance. The nose opens with apples and pears, and a strong, smoky mineral element elevates complexity. Lemon blossom as well.

Ripe and layered already with 13% abv, which, although you feel the crisp natural acidity, superbly balances it. It has a delicious salty finish. Can improve (4–6 years).

Roditis Nature 2021 *+**

Medium lemon colour, still youthful. Similar nose to 2022, less pronounced with intense sea-breeze minerality. Medium-bodied on the palate, well balanced with a moderate finish—12.5% abv. For earlier drinking (3–4 years).

Roditis Nature 2020 **+**

Lemon colour with an intense nose showing evolution. Along the citrus fruit, one can find nutty and earthy aromas. Herbal and mineral as well. Complex. An elegant performer on the palate, with bright acid and salty character leading the way to a long, lingering finish. Beautiful baby Assyrtiko style. 12% abv (6+ years)

Roditis Nature 2019 **+**

Lemon colour with a pronounced earthy and leathery dimension along honey notes. There is still so much primary fruit underneath. It is mouth-watering on the palate, very pure and sharp. With just 12% abv, the 2019 over-delivers. It has a super-long finish. (6 years)

Roditis Nature 2018 *+**

The colour starts becoming gold now, and the nose is fully developed and honeyed with a buttery note. Medium-bodied and gastronomical on the palate, the 2018 still gives a lot of pleasure but misses the energy of its youth. 12% abv (to drink over the next two years)

Roditis Nature 2016 **+**

Fantastic nose with toast and hazelnuts wrapped around a peach and apricot fruit core. Fully developed but glorious. Layers upon layers on the palate, medium-bodied with 13% abv well-hidden. Finishing very long. Can keep another 4–5 years. Impressive performance.



Section Seven

Seven 01. Quick Guide to Greek Wine



Quick Guide to Greek Wine

Greek Wine Statistics

¹ Wine Production (2023)	1598,3 thousand hectoliters 24,85% decrease on 2022 30,74% decrease on 5-year average
² Export Volume (2022)	29.870 tn
³ Export Value (2022)	98.972.279 €
⁴ Vineyard Area (2020)	64.409 ha
East Macedonia & Thrace	2.227 ha
Central Macedonia	4.735 ha
West Macedonia	2.636 ha
Epirus	867 ha
Thessaly	4.338 ha
Central Greece	6.958 ha
Ionian Islands	3.109 ha
Western Greece	8.828 ha
Peloponnese	10.009 ha
Attica	6.211 ha
Northern Aegean Islands	2.798 ha
Southern Aegean Islands	3.931 ha
Crete	7.762 ha
⁵ 10 Most Planted Varieties in Greece (2020)	
Savatiano	10.370 ha
Roditis	9.060 ha
Agiorgitiko	3.161 ha ↓
Liatiko	2.582 ha
Muscat of Hamburg *	2.240 ha ↑
Xinomavro	2.179 ha
Assyrtiko	2.166 ha ↑↑
Cabernet Sauvignon	1.845 ha ↓
Muscat Blanc á Petits Grains	1.703 ha ↑
Mavroudi	1.636 ha ↓

one arrow represents more than a 2% change to 2015 and two arrows represent more than a 10% change to 2015

¹ data: KEOSOE ²⁻³⁻⁴⁻⁵ data: Hellenic Statistical Authority. * Mainly used for distillation.



Greek Grape Varieties

Greece is home to many indigenous varieties. In this chapter, we have gathered 217 of them, some of them being synonyms. Many are registered with the official Greek Variety Database of the Ministry of Agriculture, which was recently revised. Others have been collected through the reference book *Wine Grapes* (2012, Jancis Robinson, Julia Harding, Jose Vouillamoz).

Most of these varieties are represented in the collections of Greek Universities and have been studied ampelographically. The genetic study is a work in progress, with the findings shared on the Greek Vitis Database. Interestingly, some varieties are registered on the government database, yet there is no record of them anywhere. What's more, some of these varieties are not on the government database, yet at the same time, they are recommended varieties in PDOs and Wine Regions.

We can expect more obscure varieties to appear on our radar as the years progress and more single-varietal wines to be produced from those with no commercial importance. At the same time, we can expect to uncover duplicate varieties used with synonyms in different parts of the country or even other countries. The connection between the different varieties will also be identified, showing their likely origin and history.

The Greek wine world is extensive, and we have yet to understand much of it. There is limited information on many of the varieties, and sometimes, the sources could be more credible, reproducing knowledge that new evidence has shown to be false. The quest of this report is to create a simple and accurate guide to Greek varieties. Please reach out if you have any information about the varieties mentioned or omitted.



A	Agianniotiko	Red variety found almost exclusively on the island of Chios. It is one of the varieties allowed for PGI Chios. Usually blended.
	Agiomavritiko	Found on the island of Zakynthos in the Ionian Sea and Larisa in Thessalia in the centre of mainland Greece. Comoutos on Zakynthos included it in one of their red blends.
	Agiorgitiko	Widely planted red grape variety found predominantly in Nemea. It can be used for both entry-level, fruity wines and high-quality expressions with ageing potential. Two clones are available.
	Agoumastos	White variety with no commercial importance.
	Agrioglykadi	White variety with no commercial importance.
	Aidani Lefko	White variety mostly planted in Santorini but can also be found in other Cyclades islands. Traditionally used in the sweet Vinsanto wines and the dry Santorini PDO. Adds floral character to the blend. One clone is available.
	Aidani Mavro	Rare red colour mutation of Aidani Lefko.
	Akominato	Rare pink-skinned variety found in Crete.
	Amfioni	Rare red variety planted in Corfu.
	Araklinos	Rare red variety from Western Peloponnese or Cephalonia. Mostly used as a blending partner to Mavrodaphne.
	Areti B	Very rare white grape, likely originating from Zakinthos. Its name means “virtue”. Areti was traditionally used in Verdea blends.
	Arkadino	A very rare white grape from the Ionian Islands, of no commercial importance.
	Armeletoussa	Rare red grape found in the Cyclades islands, specifically Andros.
	Askathari	Rare white variety found in Tinos, mainly blended and used for local wine consumption.
	Asprorobola	Rare white variety cultivated in the Ionian Islands. Not to be confused with Robola.
	Aspromantilaria	Likely a white mutation of Mandilaria, found in the Cyclades, specifically in Mykonos.
	Asprouda Kithnou	White variety likely originating from Kithnos.
	Asprouda Patron	White variety likely originating from Patra. Also known as Santameriana, it is currently vinified by one producer.
	Asprouda Zakynthou	White variety likely originating from Zakinthos.
	Asprouda Santorinis	Rare white variety of Santorini, found in old mixed planted vineyards.
	Asprouda Serron	White variety likely originated from Serres. Currently vinified by one producer, who played a pivotal role in its preservation.
	Asprouda Spetson	Rare white variety likely originating from Spetses.



Asproudes	Generic grouping of many white grape varieties under the name “whites”. It is used mainly in the south of Greece to identify white varieties. So far, the Greek government recognises six Asproudes as unique varieties, adding the place of origin to their name to facilitate differentiation.
Asprovertzamo	White variety, likely synonym of Vetrzami.
Assyrtiko	An increasingly popular white grape variety from the island of Santorini. It is praised for its high acidity and mineral character. Its plantings have now expanded throughout Greece. A clone is available. For more information, refer to the chapter dedicated to Assyrtiko.
Athiri	It is an old white grape variety, planted throughout Greece as it is considered easy to grow, but found mainly in the Aegean Islands. Often found in blends. It produces easy-drinking, fruity wines unless from old vines.
Athiri Mavro	Rare red variety, likely a mutation of white Athiri.
Atsala	Rare white variety of no commercial importance.
Avgoustiatis	Red grape variety, producing rich wines with soft tannins. It is named after August when it ripens. It is found in Zakynthos, western Peloponnese and, surprisingly, Samos. A clone is available.
B Bakouri	Rare red variety of no commercial importance. Current research shows high phenolic content, making it an interesting candidate for single-varietal wines.
Batiki	Unpopular white grape variety due to its low alcohol, acidity, and delicate aromas. Mostly used in blends or retsina wines. Scarcely planted in Central and Northern Greece.
Begleri	Synonym of the white variety Thrapsathiri in the Northern Aegean.
Bekari	Rare red variety originating from Epirus, used in blends. It can achieve high alcohol even in cool conditions. Often blended with Debina and Vlachiko to produce sparkling wines.
Belenes	No information currently available.
Bogialamades	No information currently available.
C Chidiriotiko	A rare red variety found exclusively on the island of Lesbos.
Chiotiko Krassero	Red variety exclusively found on the island of Chios. Used in blends with other local varieties.
Chlores	Rare white variety found in Lefkada, of minor commercial importance.
Chondromavro	Rare red grape variety grown in the mountainous vineyards of Siatista, Macedonia. Often blended with Xinomavro and Moschomavro because of its low acidity and tannins.
Chondrostafida	No information currently available.



D	Dafnato	Synonym of Dafni, a white variety found in Crete.	
	Dafni	Resurrected white variety from Crete. The name means “laurel”, inspired by the wine’s aromatic profile.	
	Debina	Red variety found in the Zitsa region of Epirus. It’s the only authorised variety for the Zitsa PDO. It produces lightly aromatic wines with low alcohol and high acidity. It’s also used for sparkling wine production.	
	Dermatas	Rare white variety found in Crete.	
	Dichali	Rare red variety found in Preveza, Epirus, which has shown better resistance to water stress than Debina. It has a deep colour and high tannins, yet it is only consumed locally.	
	Diminitis	Rare red variety found in the Dodecanese Islands, of little commercial importance.	
	Divromo	Rare white variety grown in Lefkada and Epirus.	
F	Draganitis	Rare red variety grown in Lefkada, of little commercial importance.	
	Fartsalo	Rare red variety from Macedonia, with rogue vines found in old vineyards of Goumenissa and Siatista.	
	Feidia	Rare red variety grown in Corfu. No commercial importance.	
	Fileri	Synonym of Moschofilero, although sometimes treated as a different variety.	
	Flaska	Rare white grape from the Cyclades. Not to be confused with Flaskassyrtiko. No commercial importance.	
	Flaskassyrtiko	Rare white grape from the Cyclades. Not to be confused with Flaska. No commercial importance.	
	Fokiano	Black grape, likely originating from the Cyclades, where it is called Giouroukiko. It is mainly growing in the Aegean islands and the Turkish coast. Skiadopoulo is likely the white colour mutation of Fokiano. It produces lightly coloured wines with low acidity and often has a tertiary character.	
	G	Gaidouria	Rare white grape variety, mainly found in the Cyclades. Its wines are moderately aromatic with medium acidity. The small berries result in low-yielding vineyards.
		Gaidouricha	No information currently available.
		Giouroukiko	Synonym for Fokiano in Cyclades.
Gkemero		No information currently available.	
Glykadi		Rare white variety grown in Santorini, found in field blends. No commercial importance.	
Glykerithra		Rare white variety, interestingly one of the permitted varieties for producing quality sparkling wines. No commercial importance.	
Glykopati		Rare red variety grown in Lefkada of no commercial importance.	



Goustolidi	White variety found in Zakynthos and Cephalonia islands. In Cephalonia, the synonym Vostilidi is used. It is most often used in blends, as it can be found in field blends. Key variety for the Verdea blend. Can achieve high alcohol.
K Kakotrygis	Rare white variety, mainly grown in the island of Corfu. The name means “bad harvest”, likely referring to the hardness of the stems. Can achieve high alcohol.
Kalloniatiko	Rare red variety exclusive to Lesvos vinified as a red, rosé and blanc de noir wine from the few wineries of the island. Often blended.
Karabramis	Red grape, likely from the Asia Minor. Found in Evoia, Naxos and Paros islands. Limited commercial importance; recently found a place in a field blend from Naxos.
Karapapas	Rare red variety found in Epirus and Thrace with intense red fruit and herbal aromatics.
Karnachalades	Rare red variety from Thrace. Mainly referred to in the singular “Karnachalas”.
Kartsiotis	Red variety traditionally found in Thessaly. Plantings decreased significantly due to phylloxera. Now producing distillates or local table wine.
Karvouniaris	Late-ripening red variety grown in Peloponnese and sometimes called Mavroudi.
Karystiko	No information is currently available.
Kastano	Rare white variety from Santorini, of little commercial importance as a single varietal. Typically found in field blends.
Katsakoulis	Red variety found mainly in Zakynthos. Productive with high acidity, yet sensitive to drought. Mainly used in blends.
Keratsouda	Rare white variety planted alongside the Strymonas river in Bulgaria and Greece. It is mainly producing easy-drinking wines. Its skins are white or pink, yet it is incorrectly mentioned as red in the Greek Variety Database.
Keserlidiko	No information currently available.
Koiniariko N	Red variety grown in Northern Greece, especially Serres. It likely originated from the coast of Asia Minor. Also referred to as Koniario and mainly blended as it possesses high levels of acid and tannins.
Kokkineli	Meaning “reddish” the term is used widely for easy-drinking reds, and rarely refers to a variety.
Kokkinostafylo	No information currently available.
Kokkinovostitsa	Rare red variety grown in Zakynthos. Of limited commercial importance.



Kolindrino	Rare red grape variety primarily found in Macedonia, is of limited commercial importance. Contributes firm tannins to the blends.
Kolliniatiko	Increasingly explored red grape, found in northern Peloponnese. It used to be hidden in rosé blends, but now one winery offers a varietal bottling.
Kontokladi	White variety found in Zakynthos and Central Greece. Mainly for blending or local production.
Koriostafylo	Very rare red grape, believed to be exclusive to Ikaria island. Used as a blending partner to Fokiano.
Korfiatis	Red grape found scattered in the Ionian Islands, which show an identical genetic profile to Kotsifaki.
Korinthiaki Lefki	White grape which is incorrectly believed to be a colour mutation of Black Korinthiaki, which is used for raisin production.
Korinthiaki	Red grape, seedless, traditionally used for raisin production. However, it has a dual nature as a wine grape, most commonly blended with Mavrodaphne to produce the sweet PDO Mavrodaphne of Patra. Used for its high sugar accumulation. A clone is available.
Korithi Lefko	Rare white grape, also referred to as Petrokoritho. Found mainly in the Ionian islands. Limited commercial importance. Likely not related to Korithi Mavro.
Korithi	Red variety found in Preveza but used as a table grape around Greece.
Koritsanos Lefkos	Early-ripening white grape. Likely not related to Koritsanos Mavros.
Koritsanos	Rare red variety found in Western mainland Greece. Likely not related to Koritsanos Lefkos.
Kosmas	Rare red variety from Central Greece. Currently vinified commercially by one winery, it shows a high level of tannins.
Kotsilina	Rare white variety found in Cephalonia and Ithaka. It is not of commercial importance for wine, but is used also as a table grape.
Kotselina	No information currently available.
Kotsifali	The second most planted red variety in Crete, where it also likely comes from. It has high alcohol yet low tannins, which is why it's traditionally blended with Mandilaria, which has a deep colour, low alcohol and high tannins. A clone is available.
Koukouli	Rare white variety found in Northern Greece, limited commercial importance.
Koumari	Rare red variety grown in the Cyclades, specifically Andros and Tinos. Limited commercial importance is mostly found in blends, as Koumariano provides structure.



	Koumiotis	Rare white variety found in Thessaly. Of limited commercial importance.
	Koutsoubeli Lefko	White variety mainly found in Zakynthos, which is considered to be its origin. Limited commercial importance.
	Koutsoubeli	Rare, pink-skinned mutation of Koutsoubeli Lefko.
	Kozanitis	Rare white grape found in the Ionian Islands. As the name suggests, it originates from Kozani, in Northern Greece, and is of limited commercial importance.
	Kranidiotiko	No information is currently available for this white variety. It likely originates from the Kranidi region of the Peloponnese.
	Krassato	Red variety with medium acidity and tannins found mostly in Thessaly. Important for the production of PDO Rapsani, where it is blended with Xinomavro and Stavroto.
	Kritiko	Rare white variety mostly found in the field blends of Santorini. As the name suggests, it could originate from Crete.
	Kserichi	Rare red variety grown in Cephalonia, of no commercial importance.
	Kydonitsa	White variety of increasing popularity, found mainly in the southern Peloponnese, especially by wineries in Monemvasia. Producers are currently exploring its ageing potential. A clone is available. Expressed by intense aromatics of quince and herbs along with fresh acidity.
L	Ladikino	Red variety found in the Heraklion region of Crete. It is said to originate from the Laodikeia region of Syria. Limited commercial importance.
	Lagorthi	White variety, rare in Greece yet known and planted in Italy (Puglia) as Verdeca, where it contributes to several DOCs. In Greece, it's grown in the high-altitude vineyards of Aigialeia, where it is also believed to originate. Known for producing low alcohol, refreshing acidity and light aromas.
	Liatiko	The most planted variety in Crete, producing pale, easy-drinking reds. It is currently experiencing a resurgence as producers are exploring more delicate wine styles. It is distinct from the Italian Aleatico.
	Limnio	Red grape variety originating from Lemnos island, likely cultivated since ancient times. Found in most of Northern Mainland Greece. Often used in blends with international grapes. Not to be confused with Limmiona.
	Limmiona	Rare red variety with increasing popularity. Likely originated from Thessaly but has travelled around Greece. Produces elegant wines expressed by red fruit and herbal aromas showing moderate acidity and solid ageing potential. A clone is available.



M	Malagousia	White variety with an exponential increase in plantings throughout Greece. It produces fresh wines with high aromatic intensity, moderate acidity, and zesty texture reminiscent of Viognier. Used in single-varietal wines and blends. A clone is available.
	Maloukato	Rare white variety found in the Cyclades, like Paros and Santorini. No commercial importance.
	Mandilaria	Red variety widespread in the Aegean Islands, known under many names, with Kountoura being the most popular synonym. Mostly used for blending, as its wines are highly tannic. Common blending partners are Kotsifali and Mavrotragano, or even the white Monemvassia.
	Marditsa	White variety, likely almost extinct, with mentions only at the vine collection of the Agricultural University of Athens.
	Mavro Arachovis	Rare red grape, also referred to as Mavroudi Arachovis, found around the town of Arachova. It has minor commercial importance.
	Mavro Kalavrytino	Rare red variety originating from Kalavrita in Peloponnese. Vineyards are often mixed plantings that include Xondromavro (big black) Kalavriton and Psilomavro (small black) Kalavriton. Has enjoyed significant commercial success in Aigialeia, producing elegantly structured reds.
	Mavro Messenikola	Rare red variety found in Thessaly, specifically used in the Messenikola PDO. There, it is blended with Carignan and Syrah, as the grape has naturally low colour intensity.
	Mavro Spetson	Red variety grown in southern Cyclades and Eastern Peloponnese, of limited commercial importance.
	Mavrodaphne	Increasingly respected red variety, likely originating from Cephalonia. It was traditionally used for sweet wine production in Cephalonia and Patra, but it's increasingly used for dry wines with deep colour, red fruit, and herbal character. A clone is available. For more information, refer to the chapter dedicated to Mavrodaphne.
	Mavrokorakas	Rare red variety scattered in the Cyclades and the Peloponnese. Limited commercial importance.
	Mavrostyfo	Red variety grown mainly in the Northern Peloponnese, currently vinified by only a handful of producers. Interest is rising due to the high tannins and full, rich body.
	Mavrotragano	Red variety from Santorini, which is increasing in plantings around Greece yet still remains minor. Praised for refreshing acidity and high tannins, which produce wines with high ageing potential. Interestingly, the most noteworthy examples are produced in Tinos and not Santorini.
	Mavroudi	A group of red varieties seemingly genetically unrelated. It may refer to the Bulgarian Mavrud, or other varieties local to the region.



Monemvassia	White variety found in Paros Island and around Monemvasia in Southern Peloponnese, likely historically important for its use in popular blends during the Middle Ages. It's unrelated to any Malvasia variety. It can achieve high alcohol with low acidity and low aromatic intensity full of spices. A clone is available.
Moschatella	White grape, likely part of the Muscat family, found in Cephalonia.
Moschato Alexandrias	<i>Muscat of Alexandria</i> A white grape with global reach, popular in Lemnos island, used for dry and sweet wines with high aromatic intensity. Known as Moschato Limnou. Less planted than Muscat á Petits Grains Blancs.
Moschato Ambourgou	<i>Muscat of Hamburg</i> A red grape part of the Muscat family. Mostly planted in Thessaly, around Tirnavos, where it is used largely for distillation. Known as Moschato Tirnavou. Not to be confused with Moschato Mavro.
Moschato Aspro	<i>Muscat á Petits Grains Blancs</i> The original Muscat grape likely originated in Greece. It is very popular around the country, where it was traditionally used for the production of sweet wines in Samos Patra, Cephalonia, Spina, and Rhodos. Currently also used for dry wines or as a blending partner to add aromatic complexity.
Moschato Mavro	<i>Muscat á Petits Grains Noirs</i> Red mutation of Muscat á Petits Grains Blancs, with limited importance in Greece. Producers in Samos are rediscovering the variety, planting vineyards from locally mutated vines. A pink-skinned mutation also exists.
Moschofilero	Pink-skinned variety used for aromatic and refreshing white wines in Mantinia. Producers are currently exploring skin-contact options, giving pink results. While the white style is popular in the Greek market, skin-contact wines are successful exports. A clone is available.
Moschomavro	Rare red grape mainly found in Northern Greece. Used for rosé wines with attractive fruity and floral aromas. Not to be confused with Muscat of Hamburg or Muscat á Petits Grains Noirs.
Moschopatata	Rare white variety, likely grown in the Aegean Islands.
Mouchtaro	Red grape of increasing popularity found in Central Greece. It produces dark wines in their most concentrated style, full of black-fruit aromas like juicy plum, tobacco, and chocolate, along with leather and herbs. Intense shades of smoke and an explosion of flavour in the mouth are characteristic.
Moudiatiko	Red variety found in Arachova in Central Greece. It always represented a small part of the vineyard and now has no commercial importance.



	Mouska	No information currently available.
	Mousteritsa	No information currently available.
	Mygdali	Rare white variety often grouped together with the Asproudes. It is found on Zakynthos Island and on the mainland across from Zakynthos. Used mainly in blends.
N	Negoska	Red grape planted in Macedonia. Important for the blend of the Goumenissa PDO, where it must be at least 20%. Used for its deeper colour, higher alcohol and firm tannins, which complement Xinomavro. Producers are experimenting with different wine styles, including rosé and carbonic.
	Neroproimia	No information currently available.
	Nerostafylo	Rare red variety found in the Cyclades, of no commercial importance.
O	Opsimo Edessis	White grape from Edessa (Macedonia), meaning “late-ripening”, mainly used as table grape.
	Opsimo Soufliou	White variety mainly used as a table grape. Also called Razaki Soufliou, and is grown almost exclusively in Thrace.
	Ortmanli	Rare red variety mainly found in Thessaly. Limited commercial importance.
P	Pamidi	Red grape popular in Bulgaria, where it’s known as Pamid. In Greece, it is planted in Thrace but is of minor importance.
	Papadiko	Red variety grown in Ithaka and neighbouring Cephalonia. It can be used both as wine and table grape. Limited commercial importance.
	Papas Kara	A rare red variety mainly found in Epirus and Thrace, it has limited commercial importance. Synonym of Karapapas?
	Pariano	Rare white variety found in the Cyclades and especially Mykonos. As the name suggests, it likely originates from the Cyclades. Note, that Pariano can be used as a synonym for the red Mandilaria.
	Patrino	Red variety found mainly in Lefkada, its neighbouring islands and the mainland. As the name suggests, it originates from Patra or the Peloponnese.
	Pavlos	Red grape, synonymous to Malvasia Bianca Lugana, is of minor importance in Greece. Found in Zakynthos.
	Petrokoritho	Rare white variety, originating from Kerkyra, but also found in Peloponnese and Evoia. Limited commercial importance.
	Petroulianos	Rare white variety located in Southern Peloponnese and Kithira, producing full-bodied wines with citrus aromas.
	Platani	White variety found in Santorini, genetically related to Assyrtiko. Found in field blends and included in Santorini PDO blends.



Platyracho	Rare white variety, mainly found in the Cyclades, especially in Serifos, where it is used from the local wineries. Mainly found in old vineyards and field blends.
Plyto	White variety mostly found in field blends in Eastern Crete. Increasing importance after it was produced as a single varietal due to its herbal aromas and naturally high acidity. Is the most promising Cretan variety among the trio of Plyto, Dafni and Thrapasathiri.
Potamissi	White variety found in the Cyclades, used in blends. Potamissi Mavro also exists; however, it may refer to a different variety.
Prasosyriko	A rare red variety found on the island of Kythnos, of no commercial importance. According to recent research, it can produce tannic wines with little colour intensity.
Prیکنadi	White variety with limited commercial importance found mainly in Thessaly and Macedonia.
Proniko	Pink-skinned variety found scattered in the Cyclades, with limited commercial importance.
Psara	No information is currently available.
R Razaki	White variety, widely successful as a table grape, but can also be used for wine. Found on wine labels as Rozaki. Displays low alcohol and an oily texture.
Ritino	Rare red variety found around the Northern Aegean. Mostly used in Ikaria as a blending partner to Fokiano.
Robola	White variety found mostly in the Ionian Islands. Qualitative due to its chalky texture and high ageability. Used exclusively for Robola of Kephallonia PDO. Not to be confused with Ribolla Gialla. A clone is available. Discretely aromatic with a fennel-like aroma.
Robola Kokkini	Likely a red mutation of Robola, with no commercial importance.
Roditis	Very popular pink-skinned grape, traditionally blended with Savatiano for Retsina production. Most vineyards are field blends of different clones of even different pink-skinned varieties. Today, its reputation is increasing, with the “Ale pou” clone being considered of higher quality. Produces refreshing white wines. Two clones are available.
Rokaniaris	White variety from Eastern Peloponnese, producing wines for local consumption.
Romeiko	Red grape popular in Chania (Crete). Produces early-drinking wines, as the colour quickly oxidises.
Rousaitis	Rare red variety mainly found in the Cyclades and Evoia. Also referred to as Retino Chrisaitis, which could indicate it is related or a synonym to Retino. Rousiko Kokkino is another synonym.



Rousiko	Rare white variety mainly found in the Cyclades, especially in mixed planted vineyards of Paros. The name could indicate a mutation of Rousaitis.
S Sani	Rare white variety found in the Cyclades. Black Sani is also available, although there is no evidence they are related.
Satin	Rare, pink-skinned variety found mainly in Evoia. Of limited commercial importance.
Savvatiano	White grape traditionally blended with Roditis for the production of Retsina. The most planted grape variety in Greece. Recently rediscovered for its quality potential, especially its bottle-ageing ability. A clone is available. (Also written Savatiano).
Sefka	Rare red variety mainly found in Macedonia and Thessaly, generally used in blends.
Serifiotiko	Although registered as red, this is a pink-skinned variety producing mainly white wines and a few orange ones—Grown in the Cyclades, mainly Syros and its namesake Serifos.
Sideritis	Pink-skinned, very late-ripening variety with increasing popularity in producing elegant white wines or perfumed rosés.
Skiadopoulo	White variety likely originating from Zakynthos, yet mostly growing in Western Peloponnese. Mainly used in blends, but with increasing production of varietal expressions, showing light, citrus aromas and vibrant acidity.
Sklava	Rare white variety found in North-Eastern Peloponnese. Mainly used in blends, adding freshness, although interesting varietal wines are starting to be produced. Not to be confused with Schiava.
Skopelitiko	Black grape, almost exclusively found in Corfu. Wines have a deep colour and moderate alcohol.
Skylopnichtis	Rare variety found almost exclusively in Zakynthos. Usually blended with other local grapes.
Soultanina	(Thomson Seedless) White variety mostly used for table grapes or raisins, but can sometimes be blended in entry-level wines. Two clones are available.
Stavrochiotiko	Rare red variety found in the Cyclades. Limited commercial importance.
Stavroto	Red grape found in Rapsani PDO, where it is an integral part of the blend with Krassato and Xinomavro, used for its lower alcohol and acidity.
Strofyliatiko	Rare white variety, almost exclusively found in the Cyclades island of Anafi. Mainly consumed locally.
Sykiotis	Black grape grown in Thessaly, mainly used for distillation.
Syriki	Red grape found around Greece, yet in small volumes and used for blends.



T	Tachtas	Rare white variety, found in Crete. The first commercial production was in 2021. Wines are soft and lightly aromatic with fruity and herbal character.
	Thiako Aspro	White mutation of Thiako Mavro, found in Lefkada
	Thiako Mavro	Rare grape found in Cephalonia, mainly used in blends.
	Thrapsa	Red variety grown in Southern Peloponnese, used mainly as a blending partner in rosé wines—one of the varieties likely used in the traditional Malvasia wines of the Middle Ages. White expression also exists, although genetic relation is unknown.
	Thrapsathiri	White variety found in many Aegean Islands and mainly used in blends. Genetically related to Vidiano, yet not Athiri, as the name would suggest. Also known as Begleri. Exotic and full-bodied.
	Tourkopoula	Rare pink-skinned variety, mainly found in Southern Greece and the Ionian islands. It has limited commercial importance and is mainly used in blends. Not to be confused with Roditis.
	Trampato N	No information available.
	Trinka	Rare red variety found in Serres, with limited commercial importance.
	Tryfera	A rare white variety found in the vineyards of Paros, it has limited commercial importance.
	Tsaousi	White variety is being rediscovered in Cephalonia, where more producers are interested in producing varietal wines. Currently produced mainly for locally consumed wines.
	Tsardana	Red grape, likely a synonym of the Cretan variety Romeiko.
V	Vaftra	Synonym of Mandilaria, mainly used in the Northern Aegean.
	Valaitis	Rare, forgotten white variety found in Western Crete and the Peloponnese. Of limited commercial importance.
	Vertzami	Red variety from Lefkada, producing deep-coloured wines with high tannins and acidity, producing wines with high ageing potential. In Cyprus, it is known as Lefkas.
	Vidiano	White variety from Crete, which is currently enjoying high popularity. Wines are refreshing with interesting stone fruit aromas and benefit from lees contact. It is also used in blends. Two clones are available.
	Vilana	The most planted white variety in Crete, included in many PDO regulations. It often produces light-bodied, simple wines, but wines become better with careful viticulture practices. A clone is available.
	Violento	A pink-skinned variety found in Zakynthos, used for white and rose wines for local consumption. Not to be confused with Roditis.
	Vlachiko	Red grape from Epirus, grown in the high-altitude vineyards of Zitsa. Used for red as well as sparkling wines, mainly blended with the other local grapes Debina and Bekari. Peppery and refined.



	Voidomatis	Rare yet widespread red variety, found in the Peloponnese, Crete and Islands of both the Aegean and the Ionian seas. Despite its extensive presence in Greece, it is not made as a varietal wine.
	Volitsa Lefki	Non-commercial white variety, unrelated to Volitsa Mavri.
	Volitsa Mavri	Red variety with minimal commercial importance, planted in Northern Peloponnese.
	Vossos	Rare white variety, found in Zakynthos. Of limited commercial importance.
	Votsiki	No information currently available.
	Vostilidi	Synonym of Goustolidi used in Cephalonia.
	Vradyano	Red variety found in Central Greece and Evoia, currently vinified by few wineries.
X	Xerichi Kokkino	Red variety mainly used as a table grape.
	Xerichi Mavro	Red variety mainly used as a table grape.
	Xeromachairouda	Rare red variety found in the Cyclades. The name indicates “Dull Knife”, likely due to its thick stem during harvesting. A white Xeromaxairouda is also mentioned, although genetic relations are not confirmed.
	Xinomavro	Red variety, gaining respect due to its qualitative, age-worthy reds and crisp sparkling wines. Found in Northern Greece and is an integral part of the appellations Naoussa PDO, Amyndaio PDO, Goumenissa PDO, and Rapsani PDO. It is known for its high tannins and high acidity, while the nose offers red fruit and herbal notes. It can be found as a varietal or blended wine. A clone is available.
Z	Zakinthino	White variety found in the Ionian Islands. It likely originates from Zakynthos but is more widely planted in Cephalonia, where it's gaining increasing interest from local producers.
	Zakivitiko	No information is currently available.
	Zoumiatiko	White variety grown in Macedonia and Thrace, but also in Bulgaria and Turkey, known as Damiat. The vineyard area is limited in Greece, and it's used mostly in blends. Efforts are made to introduce it in PDO wines.

Sources available upon request.



Author



Yiannis Karakasis **MW**

Yiannis Karakasis MW is a Master of Wine based in Athens, Greece. He writes, consults, and educates on wine. He created the blog www.karakasis.mw, which has been instrumental in communicating Greek wine to the world. In 2019, he founded [50 Great Greek Wines](#) and First Growth Wine School in Cyprus.

Yiannis is a consultant for several businesses in Greece and abroad. He is furthermore the author of *The Wines of Santorini* (longlisted for André Simon Awards).

Contributing Author



Evmorfia Kostaki **DIP WSET**

Evmorfia is a Stage 2 Master of Wine Student and owner of Kostaki Winery in Samos, where she focuses on producing Muscat á Petits Grains wines. She is passionate about organic and sustainable viticulture and enjoys exploring the endless possibilities of Greek Wine.



Greek Wine Explained 2024
In-depth Assyrtiko, Mavrodaphne & Aigialeia



Copyright © 2024
Yiannis Karakasis MW, P & J VERITAS IKE

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, distributed or transmitted in any form or by any means, including photocopying, recording, or other electronic or mechanical methods, without the publisher's prior written permission.

Author

Yiannis Karakasis MW

Contributing Author

Evmorfia Kostaki

Editor

Tamlyn Currin

Cover Photo

Manos Chatzikonstantis
manosch.net

Art Direction and Design

The Nomad Design Tribe