

[Back to all articles](#)

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TASTING ARTICLES

GREECE



Arrivals from Greece

TASTING ARTICLES GREECE



Some great, often unconventional wines, from one of our favourite wine-producing countries.

Julia writes Fortunately, bottles arriving from Greece don't need to self-isolate or take PCR tests, so while travel from the UK continues to be a pipe dream, I can still report on

these recent releases from Greece. Since these were kindly sent to me by the producers, they comprise a rather mixed bag not an orchestrated collection.

However, they include some lovely wines. From Hatzidakis on the island of Santorini, for example, the fabulous but rare Hatzidakis Skitali Barrel 2017 (in magnum, cellar door only) and the more widely available but still excellent Familia 2020, evidence of how well the late Haridimos Hatzidakis's family, and their two female winemakers, are carrying on his legacy. Also on Santorini, more precisely on the island of Therassia right next to it (administratively, as well as volcanically, part of the bigger island), the partnership between local winemaker Ionna Vamvakouri plus Vangelis Gerovassiliou and Vasilis Tsaktsarlis of Gerovassiliou and Biblia Chora continues to show great promise.

Further south in the islands, Lyrarakis and Douloufakis are both great ambassadors for the reimagined wines of Crete, with an emphasis on local varieties such as Vidiano and Liatiko.

Yannis Lambrou, owner and winemaker of Methymnaeus on the Aegean island of Lesbos, follows his own unique path, magically creating white, light-red and orange organic wines from the same, rare Chidiriotiko variety grown on volcanic soils. (Some years ago I rather naughtily gave ace taster and Europhile winemaker Matt Thomson of New Zealand's Blank Canvas a blind tasting of Yannis's wines. He seems to have forgiven me.) This selection confirmed how interestingly these wines age, particularly those that are orange in colour even though they are not fermented on the skins.



Chidiriotiko vines on the island of Lesbos

Yannis sent the photo above of one of his two vineyards on Lesbos and these observations on how 2021 is shaping up:

'I believe you may see from the picture that growth this year is rather robust. Consequently I think that production of my vineyards in 2021 may be even 20–25% more than last year, and 2021 should end up being excellent in terms of quality, too. This is because we had sufficient rain and snowfall in the winter and early spring. The earth has therefore been irrigated well. On the other hand it has been rather dry since budding, so our vines are at this moment entirely disease-free. I believe harvest in 2021 will take place earlier than in 2020 – last year we harvested in early September. This is because, even though budding in 2021 took place in late April – and this is late for Chidiriotiko – it has been rather warm since budding and, judging from my previous experience, I believe this summer will keep on being dry, warm and therefore entirely disease-free. Hence I look forward to a very good 2021 harvest.'

Much further north, in Amyndeon and close to the border with North Macedonia (see this [overview map of Greece](#)), Alpha Estate continues to refine their site-specific reds and whites, giving the exact GPS location on the label. More regrettably, they continue with their huge and very heavy bottles.

In between these geographical extremes, in central Greece, brother and sister Thanos and Louisa Dougos made an outstanding wine from the Rapsani appellation in 2018 (a traditional blend of Xinomavro, Krasato and Stavroto), refined and elegant with great tannic finesse, quite a contrast to their big Opsimo blend of mostly international varieties. The Dougos Assyrtiko, aged in acacia barrels, forms a strong contrast with the typical Assyrtiko from Santorini, richer and spicier. An object lesson in not pigeon-holing a wine based on its variety.



Iron-rich schist in the organically farmed Dougos vineyard in Rapsani, at 550–700 m (1,800–2,300 ft) on the north-eastern slopes of Mt Olympus

Thanos Dougos is optimistic about the quality of the forthcoming 2021 vintage in his region after a late start:

'Budbreak this year came up to 15 days later in Rapsani. April's spring frost caused no damage in the semi-mountainous and mountainous PDO zone of Rapsani, May came relatively warm with two rainfalls accelerating the growth rate of the vines. By 9 June Xinomavro flowering had taken place, about a week later than usual. The fact that no disease has yet made its appearance on the vines is impressive. Hoping that it stays like this and in combination with a normally

warm summer, then it can be said that the 2021 vintage will be the third great vintage in a row, after those of 2020 and 2019.'

The Slopes of Egialia (also spelt Aigialeia) in Achaia in the northern Peloponnese is not the most well known PGI so I was happy to taste a range of wines new to me made by Kanakaris, especially their very good Roditis. (New Wines of Greece's website has useful, interactive maps showing all of Greece's PGIs and PDOs, as in this example of the [PGIs of the Peloponnese](#).)

If tasting wine can give you a thirst for travel, these wines made me feel decidedly parched.

The 44 wines are grouped by colour and then ordered alphabetically by producer but you can change the order within the groups.

Select sorting option ▼

Whites

Alpha Estate Sauvignon Blanc 2020 PGI Florina

16.5

Full bottle 1,487 g. Two vineyards on the Amyndeon plateau. Destemming, optical grape sorting and light crushing. Skin contact for 4–8 hours, controlled alcoholic fermentation in stainless-steel tanks with cooling jackets, kept on the lees for four months with regular stirring. TA 6.37 g/l, pH 3.34, RS 1.7 g/l.

Vibrant pea-pod and citrus aroma with a touch of passion fruit. There's still a hint of the pear-drop smell of young wine. Equally vibrant on the palate too, with those crisp flavours well matched to the very slight grip in the texture, plus the creamy roundness in the mouth from the lees. Intense without being overly pungent, and impressively persistent. I think it will be even better with a few more months in bottle. (JH) 13%

Drink 2021 – 2023

Imported into the UK by Maltby & Greek

Alpha Estate, Kaliva Fumé Sauvignon Blanc 2019 PGI Florina

17

Full bottle 1,632 g. Horribly heavy embossed bottle with massive punt. Single vineyard planted in 1999. Destemming, optical grape sorting and light crushing. Skin contact under inert atmosphere at low temperature, controlled alcoholic fermentation by indigenous flora isolated from the specific block, in fine-grain,

white-toasted Tronçais oak barriques with regular stirring on fine lees for 7 months. Maximum 7 months following vinification in the same oak casks. TA 7.09 g/l, pH 3.26, RS 1.5 g/l.

The oak influence is definite but well modulated with the aromatic fruit, giving light nutty and spice notes but not losing the variety's trademark citrus and herbal fruit. Already integrated fully on the nose. On the palate, intense, mouth-watering fruit and a lovely creamy texture that takes off all the edges but does nothing to reduce the freshness. Long, tangy finish. I'm sticking my neck out a bit with this long drinking window but it seems to have the build for more bottle age than most Sauvignons. (JH) 13%

Drink 2021 – 2025

Imported into the UK by Maltby & Greek

Alpha Estate, Turtles Vineyard Malagousia 2020 PGI Florina

16.5

Full bottle 1,491 g. From a large (36-ha) single vineyard on the Amydeon plateau. Destemming, optical grape sorting and light crushing. Skin contact, controlled alcoholic fermentation in stainless-steel tanks with cooling jackets, kept on the lees for two months with regular stirring. TA 5.76 g/l, pH 3.45, RS 1.9 g/l.

Open and scented with floral, peach and pear aromas and that hint of pear drops of very young cool-fermented whites. Pretty but not too flowery. The floral character is there on the palate too, balanced by a rich, lightly spicy and almost savoury depth. The lees influence seems a great moderating partner to this highly aromatic variety. Full and generously fruited in the mouth, with notable persistence and sufficient freshness for harmony. (JH) 13%

Drink 2021 – 2022

Imported into the UK by Maltby & Greek

Chatzivaritis, Migma Petnat 2020 Wine of Greece

16.5

Certified organic. Crown cap. Co-fermentation of equal parts of whole-bunch-pressed Malagousia and Muscat given 36 hours' skin contact. The wine is bottled before completion of fermentation and is given six months on lees before being manually disgorged. Crown cap and presumably necessarily heavy bottle.

Muscat very much dominates the nose. Orange blossom and pale marmalade flavours. I thought this was going to be heavy and oily but I was wrong. It's a miracle of delicacy. Just wafts away on the palate! Really clever, clean, fresh

winemaking by Chloi Chatzivaritis and Tobias Tullberg. A hint of elderflower.

11.5%

Drink 2021 – 2023

£25 Maltby & Greek

Chatzivaritis, Vre 2020 Gouménissa

17

Certified organic. 100% Malagousia grown on sandy clay soil. Spontaneous fermentation in tank and four months on lees. Very low SO₂ additions.

Deep amber. What a lot of fun this is! Tastes of barley or at least definitely some grain with a hint of malt. Firm finish after distinct amber fruit and definitely not too much astringency – just a little kick of texture in fact. These Greeks are pretty smart! Long and satisfying. It's so great to have the spectrum of wine flavours widened like this. Throbs on the finish. 13.5%

Drink 2021 – 2026

£23.50 Maltby & Greek

Dougos, Meth'imon Acacia 2019 Wine of Greece

17

Full bottle 1,361 g. 99% Assyrtiko, 1% Sauvignon Blanc. Vine grower Thanos Dougos, winemaker Louiza Dougou, consultants Andreas Pandos, Dimitris Kyritsis. Vineyards in Prosilia, Rapsani, Mount Olympus, planted 1991 and farmed organically (certified) at 450 m. Hand-harvested 22 September. 'The soil consists mainly of iron-rich schist. The iron in the soil is an important quality factor, since it regulates the water capacity of the soil. The soil is poor in organic substances. Its structure enables the penetration of the roots into the subsoil, so that the vine does not suffer from lack of moisture during the summer. The subsoil is sandy-clayey.' Whole bunch 30%. Skin-contact fermentation for 4 days at low temperature, 22 days' alcoholic fermentation in 300-litre acacia barrels (20% new) with regular stirring. 10 months' maturation on all lees in the same barrels. TA 6 g/l, pH 3.29, RS 2.1 g/l.

Mid gold. Rich, deep aroma, deeply spiced and smelling of gold, with notes of clementine and apricot. The light but definite tannins give structure and balance the ripe fruit flavours, as does the determined acidity. A very distinctive style of Assyrtiko, so don't expect anything like Santorini Assyrtikos. This is richer and fuller in the mouth, with riper, more golden flavours. Firm, spicy and long. A big wine even at a reasonable alcohol level. That spiciness and the slight grip in the

texture takes it to a long finish. Moreish, even a little chewy on the finish. (JH)

12.5%

Drink 2021 – 2025

Douloufakis, Dafnios Vidiano 2019 PGI Crete

16.5

Vidiano is one of Crete's top white varieties and Douloufakis is one of the producers responsible for its revival. From the Dafnes region south of Heraklion, at about 350 m. Fermented in tank. TA 6.6 g/l, pH 3.37, RS 3.6 g/l.

This is pale gold, a bit darker than I expected. Fabulous and already has a complex aroma of spice and cedar (not oak derived as there is no oak here, as far as I know), a lovely woody sort of freshness. On the palate, this isn't bone dry and in fact it tastes sweeter than I expected but it is still a relatively dry food wine. Intense, deep and flavourful. This is a fine example of the sort of quality that Crete is capable of today. It is spicy, golden, full bodied but not heavy. Flavours of apricot and orange but also the tangy freshness of quince. Concentrated and mouth-filling and still beautifully fresh. Beware of the very slight sweetness if you like your wines bone dry but I find this powerful, well balanced and delicious. (JH) 14.3%

Drink 2020 – 2024

£15 (2020) Maltby & Greek

Hatzidakis, Familia 2020 Santorini

17

Full bottle 1,430 g. 100% Assyrtiko. Vines in Pyrgos, mostly organically farmed. Fermented with ambient yeast in tank at 17–18 °C then spends five months in tank on lees. Bottled unfiltered. Vegan-friendly. TA 6.38 g/l, pH 2.99, RS 1.8 g/l.

Very pale gold but darker than many an Assyrtiko. Unusual note of hay combined with a more intense salty, mineral character, with a hint of citrus fruit and herbs, almost a little cedary, though this wine is as much about Santorini as about the fruit. Stone-dust quality as it opens up on the day after opening. Tastes bone dry and crisply fresh yet impressively full in the mouth, and here it seems to be the depth of fruit that carries the wine. Distinctive, intense, long. With a salty, mouth-watering finish. (JH) 14%

Drink 2021 – 2024

Hatzidakis, Skitali 2018 Santorini

17.5

Full bottle 1,426 g. The name means 'baton', as in passing on the baton from one generation to the next, from the late Haridimos Hatzidakis to his three children. Vineyards in Pyrgos and Megalochori. Fermented in tank with indigenous yeast at 17–18 °C and then aged 12 months on lees in tank and 10 months in bottle before release. Unfiltered. TA 5.9, pH 3, RS 3.6 g/l.

Very slightly more golden than the Familia and definitely more richness and creaminess on the nose. Still a lovely mineral character but here it is deeper and more spicy, less stony. Powerful, rich, magnificently full of flavour and texture, all intertwined. There's citrus but also riper fruit flavours, almost apricot but more sour than that. Super-fresh and yet rounded and full in the mouth, deep and very long. (JH) 14%

Drink 2021 – 2027

Hatzidakis, Skitali Barrel 2017 Santorini

18.5

From magnum. 180 bottles produced and available only from the winery. 100% Assyrtiko from Pyrgos and Megalochori. Ungrafted, unirrigated vines, 40–80 years old. Fermented with ambient yeast in tank, aged 12 months on lees in tank and then 12 months in barrel. Unfiltered. TA 6.2 g/l, pH 3.07, RS 2.5 g/l.

Gleaming mid gold (crystal clear even though it is unfiltered). Another step up in richness from the unoaked Skitali. Aroma that makes me imagine burnished gold: spices with a hint of quince, lemon zest and orange pith. Rich, powerful and yet beautifully balanced, the flavour and deep texture reaching right to the back of your palate and filling your mouth. Glorious depth of fruit and spice. Extremely persistent. So rich, the acidity of Assyrtiko is perfectly matched by the richness of flavour and texture. Fabulous wine. (JH) 14.5%

Drink 2021 – 2030

Kanakaris, 10³ Malagousia 2020 PGI Slopes of Egialia

16

Full bottle 1,291 g. The Slopes of Egialia (spelt Aigialeia on the label) are in Achaia in the northern Peloponnese. Vines at 1,000 m. Hand-harvested. Pre-fermentation maceration for 36 hours at a temperature of 8 °C and subsequent pressing to yield the free-run must. Fermentation at low temperatures of not more than 15 °C and kept on the fine lees. It is bottled under inert gas.

Perfumed in a lightly exotic way with both flowers and fruit. Highly aromatic. Scented on the palate too with yellow plum, peach and something a little like honeysuckle, lightly spicy. Spreads across the palate despite its modest alcohol.

Roses on the aftertaste. The freshness balances very well all that aromatic richness, which is sometimes too much in this variety. (JH) 12%

Drink 2021 – 2022

Kanakaris, Gris Moschofilero 2020 PGI Peloponnese

16.5

Full bottle a wonderfully light 1,233 g. A wine in their Novelty to Basics range. From the high plateau of Mantinia in the Peloponnese. Moschofilero is a reddish (or else gris) grape variety with a rich, distinctive and very typical varietal aroma. The producer writes: 'To exploit this aromatic potential at a high degree, one steps on the colour of this grape variety, as both the aroma and the colour are found in the grape skins and pulp. In an effort to yield the most of its aroma, we have decided to create a GRIS wine (in Greek ΓΚΡΙ) making use of the technique of the "vin saignée" wines. Hand-picked grapes are refrigerated for 24 hours. Afterwards the grape juice with the skins are put in stainless-steel tanks. 50% of the must is separated (the first "bleeding") and transferred for the production of another wine. The grape must that remains in the tank stays in skin contact at 6 °C for eight hours. When the extraction is completed, the second "bleeding" follows, where the grape must is removed from the skins without any pressure. The fermentation takes place at controlled temperature between 12 and 14 °C and finally the wine is quickly bottled under inert gas atmosphere.'

A slightly pinky/grey colour here but pale. Fabulous aroma that is classic Moschofilero, especially the rose-petal character. Intensely so on the palate, so floral but with the freshness to make it not OTT. More rose petals than even stereotypical Gewürztraminer. Not sure what I would drink this with but the producer suggests it would be an ideal companion to fish, white meat, pasta in aromatic herbal sauces (like basil pesto), sweet-and-sour Asian cuisine and seafood. Delicate but intense. (JH) 11.5%

Drink 2021 – 2022

Kanakaris, 10³ Roditis 2019 PGI Slopes of Egialia

16.5

Full bottle 1,317 g. From mountainous vineyards at 1,000 m of the Slopes of Egialia (spelt Aigialeia on the label) in eastern Achaia (Peloponnese). This is the Alepou clone of Roditis – the reddish clone (Alepou means 'fox'). The grapes are chilled for 24 hours and afterwards they are slowly pressed to receive only the most aromatic part of the must and with the highest acidity. The fermentation takes place at low temperature of not more than 15 °C. After the cold vinification the wine stays on its

fine lees for two months.

Lemon, light spice and a marked savoury character, and a leesy richness, giving a complex aroma. More spicy with air – if I had tasted this blind, I might have thought there was some subtle big/old oak influence. Bone dry, slightly grippy texture and excellent freshness. Structured and filled with fresh citrus. Pure and persistent and not simple. The best of the Kanakaris wines I have tasted in this selection. (JH) 12%

Drink 2021 – 2024

Kokotos, Barrel Fermented Savatiano 2017 PGI Attiki

16

Full bottle 1,212 g. Savatiano from northern Attica. Grapes are picked by hand in small crates which are then placed in cold storage overnight at 6 °C. Grapes are then destemmed and gently pressed in a pneumatic press, followed by static settling. Alcoholic fermentation in acacia (80%) and oak (20%) barrels at a controlled temperature of 16–18 °C for approximately 15 days. First inoculated with Torulaspora delbrueckii yeast and then with Saccharomyces cerevisiae. Aged 5 months sur lie in new acacia barrel. Stirring twice per week for two months and then once per week for the following three.

Interesting aroma that I think is more to do with the ageing process (the acacia) than the variety though there is that rosemary/herbal character I often find on Savatiano (more famous as the base wine for Retsina). A slight note of drains but don't give up because it gets more interesting! Woody rather than oaky and needs time to open in the glass. Broad and woody/cedary on the palate.

Interesting in a good way. Surprisingly persistent, too. Take your time with this as it may not appeal immediately but it gets more interesting as it opens up, and especially so on the palate. It's quite good value for such a distinctive wine and should continue to age well. I imagine this will develop a more resinous character (without any resin having been added to the wine) with time in the bottle.

Beautifully fresh, distinctive and complex. **QGV** for anyone looking to step outside the mainstream. (JH) 12.5%

Drink 2021 – 2024

£14.50 Maltby & Greek

Lyrarakis Vidiano 2020 PGI Crete

16

Full bottle 1,295 g. From Heraklion, central Crete. Clay-loam soil at 450 m. Dry-farmed. Harvested by hand, macerated almost uncrushed for 8 hours. Fermented at

16–18 °C in tank. Vegan friendly. TA 5.8 g/l, pH 3.24.

Fresh, lemony herbal aroma and a hint of pears. More herbal than citrus on the palate, dry, lively, and easy-drinking white with decent length and a harmonious roundness in the mouth to balance the freshness. A good all-rounder that is fresh but also has depth of fruit. Persistent, too. A good advert for Vidiano. Great label.

(JH) 12.4%

Drink 2021 – 2023

Methymnaeos Chidiriotiko 2020 PGI Lesvos

16.5

Full bottle 1,343 g. Certified organic. Fermentation at 16 °C. Early bottling, at the end of October 2019.

Intense aroma that is both sour and fruity: quince, lemon, grapefruit, stones and hay. The grapefruit-like freshness dominates the palate. Mouth-watering, bone dry and then on the finish a contrast between an unexpected rounded citrus sweetness (not actually sweet at all) and rather a sour flavour. Distinctive and vibrant but I think some might find that pithy bitterness too austere on the finish.

(JH) 13.5%

Drink 2021 – 2023

Methymnaeos, Orange Chidiriotiko 2020 PGI Lesvos

17

Full bottle 1,255 g. Organically certified. A return to the use of selected yeast but fermented as in the past without temperature control (though the cellar is cool) and with no skin contact. In this vintage, unusually, fermented without the pulp (the juice is cooled and settled). Vintage was similar to 2019, but with less rainfall until early spring, giving lower production, and therefore more concentrated wines. This is owner Yannis Lambrou's favourite among the last four harvests. RS 0.7 g/l.

Pale orangey gold. Inviting aroma of apricot and orange with a hint of spice. Highly fragrant. The note of dried grasses is less obvious than in some vintages but there is that slight mineral dustiness. Bone dry but surprisingly full in the mouth with lovely freshness and very dry texture, only gently tannic – without any skin contact. Marked mineral character on the finish. Elegant and distinctive. Persistent, too. Likely to become more complex with bottle age. (JH) 13.5%

Drink 2021 – 2029

Methymnaeos, Orange Chidiriotiko 2019 PGI Lesvos

17

Full bottle 1,310 g. Certified organic. Fermented with selected yeast (unlike 2018) and no temperature control in the cool cellar, without the skins but with the pulp. At the last moment producer Yannis Lambrou decided to add to the must for this orange wine part of the pulp of the white-wine must, which he had intended to throw away – because, when the pulp of the white wine was removed, he found that it had wonderful, flowery aromas and an acidity lacking in the rest of the orange wine must. A very interesting year, according to Lambrou. Plenty of rainfall until early spring, and generally smooth temperature until harvest. RS 2.7 g/l.

Coppery gold colour. The aromas seem a little more profound than in the 2020. Still some orange and apricot but more multi-faceted, particularly intense on the day after opening. Firm and lightly chewy on the palate yet rounded too but also with a fruit sweetness that was not so evident on the 2020. I wonder if there's a few grams of residual sugar here? (Just 2.7 g/l, apparently.) Smoother and more rounded than the 2020 after an extra year in bottle. Has the same stone-dust and dried grasses quality even though there was no skin contact. Lightly chewy and satisfying on the finish. Slightly richer than the 2020, more rounded in the mouth but still fresh. Persistent and complex. (JH) 13.5%

Drink 2021 – 2026

Methymnaeos, Orange Chidiriotiko 2018 PGI Lesvos

16.5

Full bottle 1,285 g. Certified organic wine. A very hot year. Grapes harvested in early August for the first time. Fermentation without temperature control and without selected yeasts (unusually and only in this vintage), without skin contact in their cool cellar, but with pulp. (A main difference between the orange wine and the white wine ever since the orange wine was created back in 2010 has been that white wine must rests at 12 °C for 24 hours after skin removal, so that pulp mixed in the must forms a sediment at the bottom of the tank, and then this pulp is removed by racking before the rest of the wine ferments. In the case of the orange wine this pulp is not removed and ferments with the must and no temperature control, whereas the white wine ferments at 19 °C.) RS 2.3 g/l.

Deep orangey gold, a bit darker than the 2019 and much more orange than the 2017. Intense aroma of apricot, baked and fresh, as well as orange. If I didn't know this wine, I'd have thought from the aroma that there was some botrytis influence. An aroma of something like barley sugar (a type of hard candy) gives you the impression this might be a sweet wine but it tastes bone dry, with a lightly tannic texture rounded out by rich, fresh apricot and orange flavours. Spicy, too. Long and complex with an impression of fruit sweetness and oranges on the

finish. Deep and satisfying, more obviously 'orange' than the 2017. Perhaps the spontaneous fermentation led to more oxygen exposure during the ferment? Broader and a little more rustic than the other vintages with a very slight bitterness on the finish. (JH) 13%
 Drink 2021 – 2027

Methymnaeos, Orange Chidiriotiko 2017 PGI Lesvos

16.5

Full bottle 1,343 g. Organically certified. Fermentation with selected yeast, without temperature control and without skin contact but with the pulp in their cool cellar. What owner/winemaker Yannis Lambrou describes as 'an ordinary year'. RS 2.2 g/l.

Deep gold but without the orange colour of vintages 2018–2020. Very different aroma too: honeyed (but not sweet) apricot and spicy. Rich and golden on the palate. Not as immediately fresh as the 2020 but rather deliciously decadent in its breadth and length. This had opened and blossomed considerably when I tasted it on the day after opening. There's a freshness at the very end from the slightly sour (in a good way) aftertaste. (JH) 13.5%
 Drink 2019 – 2024

Mikra Thira Assyrtiko 2019 Santorini

16.5

A joint venture between Vangelis Gerovassiliou, Vasilis Tsaktsarlis and winemaker Ioanna Vamvakouri. Assyrtiko on volcanic soils on the little island next to Santorini. Vinified exclusively in a tank as a classic white fermentation and remained with the lees for 4 months. The temperature of the fermentation was 16–18 °C. TA 5.8 g/l, pH 3.06, RS 2.2 g/l.

Intense lemon freshness, cool and stony and full of pure citrus, perhaps a hint of bay leaf. Relatively lightweight on the mid palate but it is long and there's a fine stony texture. Tastes bone dry and almost chalky. Vibrant lemony acidity and good length. This builds in the mouth to greater power than I at first perceived. Really persistent. The flavours open out and coat the inside of your mouth even though it felt quite light at first. Intriguing shape on your palate, leaving a stony/peppery texture on the finish. Don't rush this. (JH) 13.3%
 Drink 2021 – 2024

Mikra Thira, Terrasea Assyrtiko 2019 Santorini

17

Full bottle 1,582 g. From the island of Therassia that is part of Santorini. 50% of the wine was vinified in a stainless-steel tank and the other 50% in second-use French oak barrels and remained there with the lees for 5 months. The temperature of the fermentation was 16–18 °C, both in tanks and in barrels.

The extremely subtle oak seems to have highlighted the stoniness of this wine and reduced the immediate fruit impact of their straight Santorini Assyrtiko. There's still a definite citrus aroma and just a touch of spice. On the palate the oak influence is a little more obvious, not in oak flavour but in the rounded and fuller texture, more volume in the mouth. A lovely combination of dry freshness and impressive length and a wine that is both mineral and citrusy. Lovely balance and creamy finish. (JH) 13.3%

Drink 2021 – 2027

Moschopolis, Aióra Assyrtiko/Xinomavro/Malagousia 2019 Wine of Greece

16

65% Assyrtiko, 20% Malagousia, 15% Xinomavro. Blend unfiltered, aged on lees.

Really rather well-judged blend with light grapiness and excellent freshness. Very lively with lime fruit and broad peachiness too. No shortage of personality! Well done. 13%

Drink 2020 – 2023

£16.49 M J Wine Cellars

Moschopolis Assyrtiko/Xinomavro 2018 Wine of Greece

15.5

Full bottle just 1,260 g. 90% Assyrtiko, 10% Xinomavro matured for six months in French barriques. Winery address is Thessaloniki. No obvious appellation.

Pale golden straw. The steel of Assyrtiko shines through, though it's a bit masked in spicy oak. But the acidity is good, even quite insistent. But I wouldn't mind a bit more fruit definition on the mid palate. Finishes a bit short. 13.5%

Drink 2020 – 2022

£21.99 M J Wine Cellars

Rosés

Alpha Estate, Hedgehog Vineyard Rosé Malagousia 2020 PGI Florina

16.5

Full bottle 1,432 g. 100% Xinomavro, hand-harvested. Destemming, optical grape sorting and light crushing. Cold soak at 8 °C for two hours. Alcoholic fermentation in stainless-steel tanks with cooling jackets at gradually increasing temperatures. Kept on the lees for three months with regular stirring. Saignée procedure. TA 6.73 g/l, pH 3.31, RS 1.8 g/l.

Very pale orangey pink – provençal style. Subtle red fruits on the nose and palate. The aroma is not particularly striking but the richness and depth in the mouth is impressive for such a dry wine. Rounded, generous and fresh. A substantial but not in the least heavy rosé with a long finish. (JH) 13.5%

Drink 2021 – 2023

Imported into the UK by Maltby & Greek

Chatzivaritis, Migma Petnat Rosé 2020 Wine of Greece

17

Certified organic (which all Chatzivaritis wines are, NB). A collaboration between Chloi Chatzivaritis and Tobias Tullberg whereby 70% Negoska and 30% Xinomavro grapes are macerated for a few hours in the press before co-fermentation. The wine is bottled before completion of fermentation and is given six months on lees before being manually disgorged. Crown cap and presumably necessarily heavy bottle. Store upright for 24 hours before serving – and be sure to cool it a bit; that light mousse is keen to escape.

Very pale orangey-ruby. Lively, fruity nose. Really quite frothy but light and fresh without too much sugar. Medium dry at most, in fact, with a lively apple-peel dryness on the end. What a totally charming drink! It's even quite persistent. So authentic and refreshing. 10.5%

Drink 2021 – 2023

£19.50 Maltby & Greek

Kanakaris, Winemaker's Selection Notos Rosé NV Wine of Greece

15.5

Full bottle 1,193 g. From the mountainous vineyards of the winegrowing region of Aigialeia, in the north-west of the Peloponnese. Roditis and Mavro Kalavritino. The grapes are hand-picked. They are put in refrigeration for 24 hours and are vinified together. After the co-extraction at very low temperature reaching up to 8 °C for 24 days, the must is separated from the skins with mild pressure. The fermentation follows at low temperature up to 15 °C. Bottling under inert-gas atmosphere. Screwcap.

I cannot find a vintage on the label but I guess it must be 2020. Light candy pink.

Fresh, scented with red fruit and the pear-drop note of cool fermentation. Bright-fruited and fresh, perfect for a sunny terrace. Not terribly long but certainly thirst-quenching and dry-tasting. (JH) 11.5%

Drink 2021 – 2022

Reds

Alpha Estate, Axia Syrah/Xinomavro 2017 PGI Florina

16

Full bottle 1,251 g. A 50/50 blend of hand-harvested grapes. Destemming, light crushing, cold soak – skin contact, alcoholic fermentation at gradually increasing temperatures, on lees for seven months with regular stirring. 12 months in French oak. TA 6.17 g/l, pH 3.41, RS 2.3 g/l.

Deep cherry red. Intense fruit, both red and black from these two varieties that work well together, but also just a touch of something raisined, overripe and not fully ripe at the same time, which I have found before in the Axia, so I think it is a style choice, perhaps the Xinomavro is just very ripe. Lots of spicy, earthy fruit sweetness as well as high acidity. The Xinomavro aromas of dried and spicy red cherry and a touch of umami – dried tomatoes – seem to dominate at the moment though there's a touch of peppery freshness from the Syrah. On the palate, this is ready for earlier drinking than the majority of Alpha reds: the tannins are still a little grainy and chewy but without edges, rounded out by the oak. Packed with fruit and flavour and finishes fresh for a full-flavoured wine but it's a bit rustic. The oak is in the background thanks to the generous fruit. Just a little bit of that raisiny character on the finish. I find this wine perplexing because it has both the slightly raisiny flavours as well as plenty of freshness. I worry it will not age so well in bottle. (JH) 14%

Drink 2021 – 2023

£15.75 Maltby & Greek

Alpha Estate, Hedgehog Vineyard Xinomavro 2018 Amydeo

16.5 ++

Full bottle 1,492 g. Destemming, light crushing, cold soak – skin contact, alcoholic fermentation at gradually increasing temperatures, on the lees for eight months with regular stirring. 12 months in French oak. TA 7.32 g/l, pH 3.23, RS 2.6 g/l.

Mid to light, bright cherry red. Vibrant aroma of sweet red cherries and red plums. You can sense that this is going to become more leathery and more marked by umami-like savouriness as it ages though this has barely started. Herbal notes

and incipient complexity and yet the fruit sweetness dominates at the moment. An excellent portrayal of vibrant Xinomavro: high acidity, dry, definite tannins with distinctive red-fruit flavours and lots of potential for ageing in the bottle. This definitely needs food and will be better in a couple of years if you can wait. Long, chewy and authentic while also being polished. Extremely moreish and mouth-watering on the finish. (JH) 14%

Drink 2021 – 2028

£18 Maltby & Greek

Alpha Estate, Vieilles Vignes Reserve Xinomavro 2017 Amyndeo 17.5 +

Full bottle, with a huge punt, 1,637 g. As ever, far too heavy. Single vineyard called Barba Yannis, 3.71 ha, on Amyndeon plateau, 40°40'45.88"N, 21°41'35.93"E, at 647 m/2,128 ft, north-western exposure, facing mount Vora. Planted ungrafted in 1919. Hand-harvested. Destemming, light crushing, cold soak – skin contact, alcoholic fermentation by indigenous flora isolated from the specific block, at gradually increasing temperatures, on lees for 24 months with regular stirring. 24 months in new French oak casks, medium grain, white-toasted and 12 months in bottle before release. No treatment or filtration before bottling. TA 7.48 g/l, pH 3.15, RS 1.8 g/l.

Mid ruby. Inviting and complex aroma that is so clearly Xinomavro – the untoasted oak is chosen to soften the grape-derived tannins but not add oak flavour. The aroma is similar to that of the Hedgehog Xinomavro 2018 just tasted but also more subtle and elegant, fresher and more piercing. There's sweet red fruit and a herbal lift, as well as a lightly leathery, dried-cherry note. Still relatively primary. A powerful and remarkably fresh wine in the mouth. Intense, chewy and attention-grabbing without being overly heavy or rich. Structured, very dry but not drying tannins. Nowhere near ready to drink, nowhere near attaining its potential for complexity, even though it's balanced. Masses of potential. The aromas already seductive. (JH) 14%

Drink 2021 – 2028

£23.50 Maltby & Greek

Alpha Estate, Vrachos Tannat 2016 PGI Florina 17.5 ++

Full bottle 1,652 g, with a massive punt, horribly heavy. Vines planted 1998. Hand-harvested. Destemming, light crushing, cold soak – skin contact under controlled conditions, alcoholic fermentation by indigenous flora isolated from the specific

block, at gradually increasing temperatures with punching down, wine kept on the lees for 12 months with regular stirring. 18 months in untoasted French oak. No fining or filtration. TA 6.2 g/l, pH 3.41, RS 1.3 g/l.

Very dark with purplish rim. Gorgeous spicy dark aroma, seductive and rich and peppery/spicy. Not much sign of its bottle age. On the palate, big, compact, assertive but not tough tannins. Firm and chewy even though they are partly rounded by the oak. Moreish and mouth-filling yet fresh enough to balance. There's a spiciness that seems to have infiltrated the texture as much as the flavour. A long way to go but you could just about approach it now with some big meaty flavours. Better to wait at least another five years if you can. (JH) 14%

Drink 2022 – 2030

Imported into the UK by Maltby & Greek

Chatzivaritis, Carbonic Negoska 2020 PGI Slopes of Paiko

16.5

Full bottle 1,290 g. Carbonic maceration of whole bunches in anaerobic conditions for 10 days. After the extended maceration the grape clusters are pressed, and the remaining sugar is transformed into alcohol through normal spontaneous alcoholic fermentation. The wine remains in contact with the lees for six months and, like other Chatzivaritis wines, is unfinned and unfiltered, with low SO₂ additions before bottling. Designed to be served cool. Pre-release sample.

Pale blackish crimson. Pure crushed mulberries with an attractive bite of light tannin on the dry finish that follows an opulent palate. Most unusual and pleasing. Quintessential picnic wine? But take your ice pack. 12%

Drink 2021 – 2023

£23.50 (2019) Maltby & Greek

Chatzivaritis 2017 Gouménissa

17

Full bottle a moderate 1,265 g. Blend of 70% Xinomavro and 30% Negoska. Two days' cold soak with the temperature allowed to rise gradually for the alcoholic fermentation to take place during the extended maceration. After the alcoholic fermentation is completed, the wine remains in contact with the lees for eight months before being transferred to French oak barrels where aging continues for an additional 12 months.

Mid ruby with a pale rim. Beautifully mellow nose. Really quite soft on the palate with only the finest of dusty tannins in evidence. Firm spine of something like

iron. Already a very pleasing beaker of the warm south. Rich but not heavy. Quite enough acidity to keep it lively. 13.5%

Drink 2020 – 2027

£24 Maltby & Greek

Dougos, Meth'imon L Limniona 2019 Wine of Greece

16.5

Full bottle 1,365 g. Limniona from Prosilia, Rapsani, Mount Olympus. Planted in 1991 – organic, non-irrigated, at 580–630 m. Soil consists mainly of iron-rich schist. The subsoil is sandy-clay. Manual harvesting. 70% whole bunch. 13 days' skin contact under controlled conditions in open-topped tank, spontaneous alcoholic fermentation at gradually increasing temperatures, maturation on lees for 8 months in old barrels of 300 litres with regular stirring. No treatment or filtration before bottling. TA 6.1 g/l, pH 3.31, RS 2.1 g/l.

Looks older than 2019 with some brick in the lightish garnet. Smells more mature too – of leathery red berries, tangy more than sweet, and the alcohol seems to show more than I would expect for a 13 percenter. It benefits from being served cool, as this highlights the red fruit and also the light herbal character from the whole bunches. A fine peppery note. Not as fruity or light on its feet as the 2018, it seems. On the palate, great freshness and edgy tannins that call out for food – perhaps the whole-bunch has given that edginess though it shows in freshness not in any sort of stemmy character. Chewy on the finish without any make-up in terms of oak or over-extraction, with a sour-cherry aftertaste. Lively but definitely needs food. Even though it seems older than its years, I think it should continue to age well for a few years in the bottle. (JH) 13%

Drink 2021 – 2024

Dougos 2018 Rapsani

17 +

Full bottle 1,318 g. Vine grower Thanos Dougos. Winemaker Louiza Dougou. Consultants Andreas Pandos and Dimitris Kyritsis. 40% Xinomavro, 40% Krasato, 20% Stavroto grown in Prosilia, Rapsani, Mount Olympus. Planted in 1989 at 520–580 m. Manual harvesting 27 September. The soil consists mainly of iron-rich schist. The iron in the soil is an important quality factor, since it regulates the water capacity of the soil. The soil is poor in organic substances. Its structure enables the penetration of the roots into the subsoil, so that the vine does not suffer from lack of moisture during the summer. The subsoil is sandy-clay. 20% whole bunch. 13 days' skin contact under controlled conditions, alcoholic fermentation at gradually

increasing temperatures, maturation on lees for 12 months in 300-litre American oak (20% new) with regular stirring. No treatment or filtration before bottling. TA 5.9 g/l, pH 3.45, RS 2.3 g/l.

Much lighter in colour than the Opsimo, but then Xinomavro is not usually particularly dark in colour. Brick rim. Gorgeous fragrance of both fresh and senescent red fruit, with definite floral notes, even though it is also savoury, like perfumed umami if that is possible. The aroma is so complex and intriguing it is hard to move on to actually taste the wine – so much pleasure in the aroma. Dry tannic finesse, so much more refined than the Opsimo. Fresh, almost delicate, even with all these mature flavours just starting to show. Better balanced than the Opsimo too in terms of lower alcohol. The Greek equivalent of Nebbiolo, perhaps, though very much its own person. The dry tannins on the finish, the track record of this appellation, and the overall harmony suggest long ageing potential. (JH) 13%
Drink 2021 – 2028

Dougos, Meth'imon Opsimo 2015 Wine of Greece

16.5 +

Full bottle 1,314 g. 40% Limniona, 30% Syrah, 30% Grenache, planted in Prosilia, Rapsani, Mount Olympus, in 1991 at 520–580 m and farmed organically. Unirrigated. Iron-rich schist and sandy clay. Harvested by hand. 26 days of skin contact under controlled conditions, alcoholic fermentation at gradually increasing temperatures, maturation on lees for 33 months in new French oak barrels of 300 litres, with regular stirring. No treatment or filtration before bottling. TA 16.3 g/l, pH 3.34, RS 3.2 g/l.

Deep garnet with smudgy rim. Spicy black and red fruit, there's oak sweetness in the aroma but it does not dominate. Leathery and complex, peppery too, even a touch floral, unfolding its complexity in the glass. The alcohol is higher than on the Limniona 2019 just tasted and adds weight but is just in balance – best to drink it very slightly cooler than you might think. On the palate, powerful, chewy, savoury but the alcohol shows up only on the finish, at the back of the throat. Long, full in the mouth, firm, dense tannins and surprisingly fresh. Likely to reach a good old age. More refined than the 2013 and 2008 vintages just tasted, more tannic finesse. Needs decanting at the moment, and definitely needs food. (JH) 15.4%
Drink 2019 – 2025

Dougos, Meth'imon Opsimo 2013 Wine of Greece

16 +

Full bottle 1,504 g. Syrah, Grenache, Limniona, planted in Prosilia, Rapsani, Mount Olympus in 1991 at 520–580 m and farmed organically, and certified organic wine. Unirrigated. Iron-rich schist and sandy clay. Harvested by hand. Two years in French and American oak (unlike the 2015, which is all French oak).

Deep browning garnet. Even more complex in aroma than the 2015, the aroma not impeded by the alcohol, though it is a bit higher than ideal. There's something minty but it is mainly leather and leaf mulch, a little bit of vanilla sweetness, even if the dark and red and spicy fruit is still lurking behind those tertiary characters. Full-bodied, powerful and still very leathery. Despite all these mature characters, I think it needs more time for the tannins to slim down, and perhaps a more restrained approach to extraction. Still a bit of a beast with a slight bitterness on the finish. (JH) 15.5%

Drink 2020 – 2026

Dougos, Meth'imon Opsimo 2008 Wine of Greece

16.5 +

Full bottle 1,368 g. Cabernet Franc, Syrah, Merlot, Grenache, Limniona planted in Rapsani, Mount Olympus, in 1991 at 520–580 m and farmed organically; certified organic wine. Unirrigated. Iron-rich schist and sandy clay. Harvested by hand. Two years in French and American oak.

Browning garnet with dark core – doesn't really look much older than the 2013.

Leathery aroma dominates, though like the 2013 it is also slightly minty.

Undergrowth and mushrooms rather than fruit even though there's the sweetness of red fruit lurking somewhere in the heart of the wine. Powerful, thick, dense but still surprisingly fresh. The alcohol does weigh it down a bit but not as much as you might expect. Heat comes in mainly on the finish. Seems as if this still needs more time for the tannins to gain finesse but perhaps they will outlast the fruit?

The 2015 vintage shows that the trajectory of the style of this wine is towards finesse, rather than this more rustic powerhouse that was also evident in the 2013.

But it still has a great personality. (JH) 15.5%

Drink 2018 – 2024

Douloufakis, Dafnios Liatiko 2018 PGI Crete

16 +

Full bottle 1,316 g. Liatiko from the area of Dafnes, near Heraklion (Crete), at 350 m. Aged up to 10 months in big French oak.

Light to mid ruby. Looks more mature than 2018 but this is typical for Liatiko colour. Like the colour, the aroma is typically more mature than you might expect

for a 2018: leathery red fruits, some dried cherry but also a gentle herbaceous freshness. On the palate, this is fresh but also more meaty/savoury, with umami flavours that you would normally get from an older wine but which are, I think, typical at a younger age in Liatiko. Tannins are dry, slightly grainy and firm. Absolutely needs food now but should have a long life ahead. If you are tired of Cabernet, Merlot or Syrah, try this slightly rustic but characterful wine. Even though Liatiko often seems to age quite quickly initially in terms of colour and flavour (if not tannin), it often ages very well in bottle. This and the Dafnios Vidiano would make a great starting pair if you have not yet ventured into Cretan wines. (JH) 14.3%

Drink 2021 – 2028

£16 Maltby & Greek

Kanakaris, Agrio 2020 PGI Slopes of Egialia

14.5

Full bottle 1,233 g. Mountainous slopes in the north-west of the Peloponnese. The producer notes: 'Novelty to Basics is our new concept. Its core spirit is oenology that embraces, interprets and promotes tradition. The result is innovation that showcases the basic principles of winemaking.' The grapes are transported to the winery and refrigerated for 24 hours. The grape juice is then put in stainless-steel tanks under carbon dioxide for a short-term cold extraction period of three days at 10 °C. The fermentation follows with the use of indigenous yeast strains. After the end of the alcoholic fermentation and the spontaneous malolactic conversion, the wine is immediately bottled under inert gas.

Agrio means 'wild'. Vibrant purplish crimson, translucent but not pale. This is not exactly carbonic maceration but it does have the vibrant red and dark-red fruit aromas of that style of wine – smells a bit like cough linctus. Lots of red fruit on the palate too and some fizz, which I think must be the CO₂. It's dry, juicy, slightly sour on the finish. More novelty than anything else. A bit like alcoholic fruit juice but not really to my taste and that spritz is disconcerting but not, as far as I can tell, a fault. (JH) 12.5%

Drink 2021 – 2022

Lyrarakis Liatiko 2020 PGI Crete

16 +

Full bottle, 1,292 g. Dry-farmed vines in central (Rethymno) and eastern (Sitia) Crete at 580–800 m. Hand-harvested, three-day maceration for colour extraction, fermented in tank with organic yeasts. Vegan friendly. TA 5 g/l, pH 3.59.

Light cherry red. Intense and fresh red-cherry fruit on the nose, nicely dusty. Juicy, full of red fruits and given a firm structure by the tannins. Straightforward and refreshing now but has the structure to pair well with food. The producer suggests moussaka, pizza, oven-baked tuna with tomatoes. Acidity is just right and the tannins increase the freshness. This really does need food. Chewy, honest, perhaps slightly rustic in a good way, more scented on the day after opening. I think this will be more interesting in a year or two and will probably age longer than I have suggested, even if that is not the intention. (JH) 12.5%

Drink 2022 – 2025

Methymnaeos Chidiriotiko 2019 PGI Lesvos

16.5

Full bottle 1,257 g. Certified organic. Fermentation at 22 °C (previous vintages 24 °C or higher). More frequent racking between the end of malolactic conversion and bottling to 'smooth' the wine, explains owner/winemaker Yannis Lambrou.

Pale bricky red, typical for this variety even in youth. Almost tawny. From the colour, you would be forgiven for thinking this was a much older wine (a bit like Liatiko in that respect). Open and aromatic with sweet cherry and a light smoky note, like lapsang souchong tea (a little rubbery at first but this blows off).

Peppery spice, too. A hint of leather. Smells complex even in youth and without any oak. On the palate, dry, taut and lively. Fresh but balanced. The tannins are dry and fine, slightly chalky, giving a dry, stony texture, not at all astringent.

Subtle and distinctive with flavours of red cherry and orange plum. Probably better with food than on its own. Even though this appears mature from the colour, I know from previous vintages that it will age well in bottle. That lapsang influence comes back on the finish. (JH) 12%

Drink 2021 – 2027

Moschopolis, Aióra 2019 Wine of Greece

16

Blend of 40% Syrah, 30% Mavrotragano, 30% Xinomavro grown at 300 m in a 70-acre vineyard in Monopigado, Thessaloniki.

Firm, aromatic, fresh, zesty, well-integrated nose. Really lively and fun! Pure fruit rather than complex ageing. Then just a spicy charcoal note on the end. Should go beautifully with oilier Greek foods. Pure, offering lots of simple pleasure with a nice tangy finish. 13%

Drink 2020 – 2023

£17.49 M J Wine Cellars

Vourvoukelis Mavroudi 2017 PGI Thrace

16.5

Full bottle 1,375 g. 12 months in oak.

Mid crimson. Lovely sweet/savoury dark-red fruits on the nose, with something a little bit wild about it. There's some oak spice and sweetness but it's not dominant. And with air it becomes gently floral and herbal. Complex aroma. On the palate, this is pretty tannic but it is really wholesome and full of life and ready to take on a steak or a nice chunk of lamb (with apologies to vegans and vegetarians). Big, chewy and long. Bags of character and, I suspect, a long life ahead. Chewy and full of fruit. (JH) 13.5%

Drink 2022 – 2030

£22 Maltby & Greek

Top: photo taken on Santorini by [Jennvmy_](#) via Unsplash.

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