

## Articles on greek wines

[www.allaboutgreekwine.com](http://www.allaboutgreekwine.com)

### All Greek Wine

By *David Lawrason*

Katogi-Strofilia 2004 Xinomavro, Naoussa, Greece  
(\$19.00, Rubaiyat Wines 416-462-1577, score 89)

One of the star reds of the Greek Wine Road Show that touched down in Toronto last week. A pale but amazingly floral, flavourful, vibrant red from the native xinomavro grape that is finding new legs with modern winemaking in the Naoussa district of northwestern Greece. Not unlike pinot noir or nebbiolo, this has complexity and structure beyond its light appearance. Lifted aromas of violets, strawberry, sour cherry and fine spice. Mid-weight, firm and harmonious with some bitter, gritty tannin. Excellent length. Best 2008 to 2011.

It was truly a day of discoveries, one after another. More discoveries than I ever expected in one afternoon after over 20 years in this business. New grape varieties like the beguiling, fragrant red xinomavro mentioned above and the sturdier, complex agioritiko, plus the amazingly fragrant, snappy dry whites of the moschofilero and malagousia varieties. These are just four of over 300 indigenous grapes, now interspersed with international varieties like merlot and chardonnay. Then there all the new regions to learn. Modeled on the French system, Greece has 18 AOC wine regions of traditional importance, plus 80 "country wine" zones with less-strict regulations that are the breeding ground for a whole new wave of experimental, small producers. And there are so many producers large and small, 24 of which made the trip to Toronto.

Greek wine is also a new language that until now had really largely been—pardon the cliché—Greek to me. It's true: as much as I was fascinated by what was in the dozens of bottles opened at the trade event at Park Hyatt event, I was also frustrated trying to identify and mentally organize the wines. Without an excellent pre-tasting seminar by Toronto sommelier and educator John Szabo I would have been at a complete loss in the tasting room. This remains one of the great obstacles facing the new push into North America markets by the Greek wine industry.

Smaller, industry-backed road shows have probed major centres in the USA, but the Toronto and Montreal dates marked the beginning of a new, multi-year program that, for the first time, has backing from the Greek government. Indeed, it could take them several years to establish a ground swell beyond the Greek community on the Danforth, which organizers of this event feel is something of a colonial backwater for Greek cuisine. Guest chef Christine Cushing, herself of Greek descent, told the group about being "blown away" by the energy and sophistication of modern cuisine in the Aegean. And Sofia Perpara, founder of an Atlanta-based organization called All Wines of Greece, said that this new Greek cuisine and modern Greek wine has begun to catch on big in New York.

Don't be overly optimistic, however. Even with the energy and enthusiasm that came from Greece, the restrictive system overseen by the LCBO makes it difficult to build the necessary retail outlet. I'm reminded of Austria's experience. Austria is another rejuvenated European wine nation with a great portfolio of indigenous and international wines that has been trying to crack the Toronto market for at least a decade. Another of the annual Austrian trade-only fairs runs this Wednesday ([toronto@austriantrade.org](mailto:toronto@austriantrade.org)), kicking off a three-month

Toronto restaurant promotion with Austrian glassmaker Riedel. Yet, after all this time, there is true paucity of Austrian wines available at through the LCBO and Vintages. It's hard to build a fan base without a playing field.

The same is true for Greek wine. Very few of the wine presented last week are on shelf, or ever coming to Vintages. It's up to a handful of Greek-oriented importers to do the work through the Consignment program. They include: [Rubaiyat Wines](#), [The Kolonaki Group](#), Celebrated Cellars (416-239-9463), and [Dionysus Wines](#). To point you in the right direction here are few wines that I would recommend, listed with score out of 100, producer, vintage, region, importer and grape variety in brackets. The vast majority are under \$25:

**Whites:**

- 91 Gerovassilou 2006 White, Macedonia (assyrtiko& malagousia), Celebrated Cellars
- 89 Ktima Pavlidis 2006 Thema, Macedonia, (assyrtiko &sauvignon blanc) Kolonaki Group
- 88 Orenos 2006 Helios, Peloponnese, (moschofilero & roditis) Rubaiyat Wines
- 88 Oenoforos 2006 Asproliithi, Patras, (roditis), Dionysus Wines
- 87 Sigalas 2006, Santorini, (assyrtiko) Kolonaki Group

**Reds:**

- 89 Boutari 2001 Grande Reserve, Naoussa, (xinomavro), Kolonaki Group
- 89 Kir-Yianni 2003 Ramnista, Naoussa, (xinomavro), Kolonaki Group
- 88 Gaia Estate 2004 (Agiorgitiko), Peloponnese, Kolonaki Group
- 87 Dom. Mercuri 2004 Dry Red, Peloponnese, (refosco & mavrodaphne) Vintages, June, \$19.95
- 85 Fresco Averoff 2005 Red, Peloponnese, (agioritiko), LCBO, \$15.10

For complete info on Greek wine go to: [www.thewinesofgreece.com](http://www.thewinesofgreece.com)

**David Lawrason**

*David Lawrason has worked full time as one of Canada's leading, independent wine writers and educators for over 20 years. He was the founder of Wine Access magazine and Globe and Mail wine columnist for 13 years before becoming resident wine guy at Toronto Life, where he pens a monthly column and writes an exhaustive review of LCBO general listings for the annual Food and Wine Guide. As a wine educator he has taught sommelier programs at George Brown, Humber and Niagara Colleges, and has run popular public courses in Toronto since 1988. He has visited every major wine major producing country in the world, while focusing recently on the booming Canadian wine scene, as founder of the Canadian Wine Awards program, and Canadian wine columnist for Wine Access.*

[\[print\]](#)