

Articles on greek wines

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Massachusetts Beverage Business

Greece: Ancient Vines/Modern Wines

By Edward Finstein

If you haven't tried Greek wines since sipping Retsina a way back when, you'll be in for a major shock. In the last number of years an incredible transformation is taking place in the country that spawned Homer and the Odyssey. Traditional, ancient grape varieties are being molded by talented winemakers into world-class, delicious, extremely food-friendly selections. Even if blended with more well known western European offerings, the finished wines always maintain their Greek character. Crisp whites with plenty of floral fruity, mineral notes; pretty, fruit-driven rosés and plummy, earthy reds, many with great aging potential, are popping up everywhere. Remember the names of these most common, Greek grape varieties. You're going to be seeing a lot more of them as time goes on.

Whites

Moschofilero is the camelian of the white grape family in Greece. Produced mostly in the central Peloponnese, focused in Mantinia, this aromatic variety is as versatile as Riesling. Its grey skin, like a Pinot Gris, can give its wine a pinkish-grey color when skin contact is allowed. From bone dry to sweet, rosé to sparkling, its floral aroma, with hints of spice, lychee and citrus make it easily likable. Its many incarnations match it to almost any food. Recommended producers: Domain Skouras, Semeli, Mercouri Estate and Domain Spouropolis (who is actually experimenting making ice-wine with it).

Assyrtiko

Although best seen on the island of Santorini, this versatile variety has now spread throughout the country. Its earthy, mineral, pumice-like, steely, citrus character comes from the volcanic soil of Santorini. Usually bone dry, it is sometimes blended with the local Aedani for sweeter versions. Whether stainless steel produced or barrel-aged, this wine was made for fish and seafood. Recommended producers: Domain Sigalis.

Malagousia

Another aromatic varietal produced throughout mainland Greece, resulting in many styles of wine, it possesses decent acidity, exotic fruit and elevated floral nuances. It adores seafood, pasta in cream sauce, poultry and white meats. Recommended producers: Boutari.

Roditis

This pinkish grape produces elegant, crisp white wines with plenty of citrus, peach and melon notes. Great with fish and seafood! Recommended producers: Mercouri Estate.

Reds

Agiorgitiko

This very popular red variety is produced throughout the Peloponnese, especially in Nemea. Able to be transformed into fresher, aromatic numbers or big, age-worthy blockbusters, its sappy, spicy, plummy character shines through. Lighter versions work well with burgers, sausages and grilled tuna while bigger ones mesh wonderfully with grilled red meat and hard, seasoned cheeses. Recommended producers: Gaia, Domain Skouras and Semeli.

Xinomavro

A Nebbiolo-like grape with great aging potential, it delivers spicy red fruit, olives, mushroom and tomato leaf complexity. Try it with stews, casseroles and aged cheeses. Recommended producers: Boutari.

Mavrotragano

Originally from Santorini, it produces big, dark-fruited, full-bodied wines with great aging potential. Recommended producers: Domain Sigalas.

For more information on Greek wines check out "All About Greek Wine" at www.allaboutgreekwine.com

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