

## **U3A Wine Appreciation Group: Tenth “sort of kept in depending which way you look at it” Newsletter**

(you can control/click on any text highlighted in blue to go through to the website concerned)

### **Welcome**

Hello Wine Appreciation members, this is the tenth of our regular emails during the Coronavirus restriction period. I have taken the liberty of suggesting a two step process to the ideal protective mask, which is in the second attachment to this email. Remember to place a receptacle under the location where you put the mask on in order to re-use any overspill. Waste not, want not!

### **Members Feedback**

If you have wine-related news or information to share, please let us have that and we will try to include that in the next newsletter. Also, if you are able to offer help to or if you need help from any members, please let us know and we'll share that as necessary.

I thought I'd share some recent experiences of wines from Hungary, and Romania, areas covered in Newsletters 2 and 5.

Firstly an indigenous white from Roumania, Prince Stirbey Tamâioasa Româneasca Sec 2018, 12.5%, cork closed and priced at £11.50 ([The Wine Society](#)). Lovely fruity freshness on the nose and palate with a great aftertaste. Runs our beloved N. Zealand Sav. Blanc a very close second for summer drinking pleasure. Also available from [Solaris Wines](#).

Interestingly [Prince Stirbey](#) wines are not just royal by name: a very good range of Romanian wines is produced by Princess Ileana – granddaughter of Princess Maria Stirbey – and her husband, Baron Jakob Kripp. They began winemaking in 1999 after reclaiming and reviving the historical family property, the winery of which had been designed in a Tuscan style by Princess Ileana's grandfather, Prince Barbu Alexandru Stirbey. The completely family-run winery is set in the foothills of the Transylvanian Alps near Dragasani, where the family has owned vineyards for around 300 years. The family's most successful white grape is the native tamâioasa româneasca – a relative of muscat – which makes both dry and sweet wines. Ileana and Jakob have found it grows best on the dark red cool loam and limestone soils on their south-facing vineyards, which enhances the grape's natural floral, aromatic spiciness and refreshing acidity.

Secondly a drinkable budget Hungarian Pinot Noir. Yes I know the words “budget” and “drinkable” do not normally go together, in which respect I agree with Geoff. But in this case decent nose, pleasant taste with adequate dark fruit, and no insipid nasties so common in the cheap stuff. So this Egri Pinot Noir from [Ostorosbor](#) made the grade at £7.50 ([The Wine Society](#))

### **Study**

We are a learning organisation so each newsletter will cover one wine learning subject each

time. Your suggestions for future subjects and the way that the subject is covered will be gratefully received. This time the topic is wines from Greece.

[Greece](#) is one of the oldest wine producing regions in the world and among the first wine-producing territories in Europe. The earliest evidence of Greek wine has been dated to 6,500 years ago where wine was produced on a household or communal basis. In ancient times, as trade in wine became extensive, it was transported from end to end of the Mediterranean; Greek wine had especially high prestige in Italy under the Roman Empire. In the medieval period, wines exported from [Crete](#), [Monemvasia](#) and other Greek ports fetched high prices in northern Europe.

Nowadays Greece is a moderately small country, especially in terms of vine growing, with acreage of about 61.500 hectares of vineyards. The surface under vine has been remarkably stable over the last decade although a slight increase is projected for the future. The number of growers is close to 180,000, which is about a fifth of all landowners involved in agriculture. Therefore, the average land- holding size in terms of vineyards is slightly above half a hectare, indicating that viticulture in Greece is a hugely fragmented sector. There are more than 1290 wineries producing wine, but the number is rising by the week.

The average annual wine production in 2017 was 2.5 million hl, which makes it only the 17th largest wine-producing country in the world. Styles are dominated by white wines, since reds are about a third of the overall production. Greek grape varieties are, as expected, the majority of the wine produced, or about 90% of the total. The three most important grape varieties in terms of quantity are Savatiano, Roditis and Agiorgitiko.

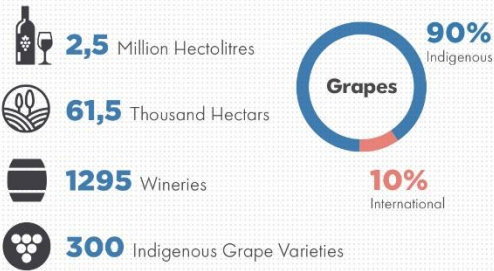
The major viticultural centres are found in Crete, the Peloponnese, Macedonia and the area of Central Greece that is close to Athens, namely the prefectures of Attica and Viotia (Boetia). In terms of appellations, the largest red wine appellation is Nemea; for dry whites it is Patras; Samos leads the way for sweet whites; and Patras, this time with the Mavrodaphne variety, also dominates sweet reds. Nevertheless, very few areas in Greece are completely vine-free and these usually are the extremely rugged parts of the country.

There are 33 regions that have attained the Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) status, which were previously known as OPAP (the Greek equivalent of VqPrD) or OPE (the Greek equivalent of AOc). The most important appellations are considered to be Santorini PDO (produced from Assyrtiko grapes), Nemea PDO (from Agiorgitiko), Mantinia PDO (from Moschofilero), Naoussa and Amynteo PDO (both from Xinomavro). There are also almost a hundred Protected Geographical Indications (PGIs), the new class encompassing all regional wines, as well as two styles under the Traditional speciality Guaranteed (TsG) category.

In terms of wine production, Greece is divided into five zones: Northern Greece (including Thrace, Macedonia and Epirus), Central Greece & Attica, the Peloponnese & the Ionian

## Islands, Crete and finally, the Aegean Islands.

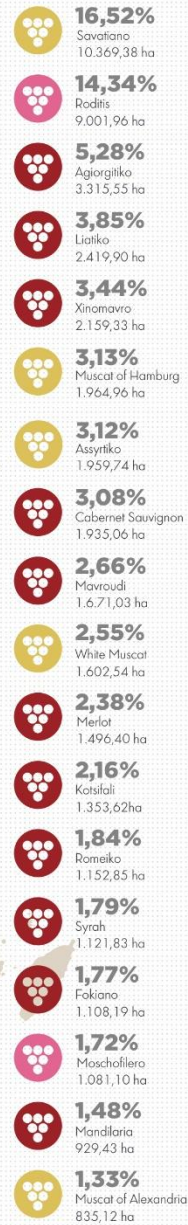
### GREEK WINE PRODUCTION



### GRAPE VARIETIES



### MOST POPULAR

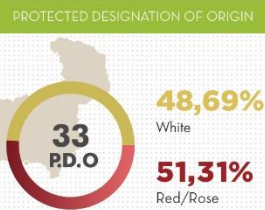


# Greek wine at a glance

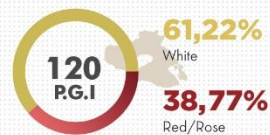
Everything you need to know about Greek wine in numbers

### HECTARAGE UNDER WINE PER REGION

Wine producing Vineyards Surface



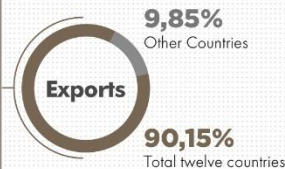
### PROTECTED GEOGRAPHICAL INDICATION



### GREEK WINE EXPORTS



### MAIN EXPORT MARKETS



### WINES OF GREECE



One of the first to introduce Greek wines into the UK some 20 years ago was Steve Danial then head buyer at Oddbins. This started with a handful of whites from the island of Santorini and some interesting reds from around the Peloponnese, Naoussa and Cephalonia. These examples were dominated by the white assyrtiko grape which produces intensely dry wine defined by purity, freshness and elegance. [Assyrtiko](#) is one of these rare white grape varieties that can grow on hot and dry climatic conditions, while at the same time keeping the high alcohol in perfect balance by its crisp acidity. It is more of a textural variety, emphasizing extract, body and structure, rather than an aromatic grape. Assyrtiko originates from PDO Santorini, where it makes lean, mineral and very concentrated whites. However, it has been planted to most Greek wine regions, from other Aegean Islands to Macedonia (PDO Slopes of Meliton), Central Greece and down to the Peloponnese. In these areas, Assyrtiko keeps the crispness and minerality but it also shows a higher level of primary fruit aromas and a less dense structure. Finally, sweet Assyrtiko (like, Vinsanto or PDO Monemvassia-Malvasia) is a rich, sumptuous, piercing wine.

Much of the export of Greek wine has been led by [Agiorgitiko](#) as a captivating grape variety that caresses the senses with elegance, freshness and intensity of aromas and flavours. It is a red grape variety and is frequently referred to as “multidynamic”, since it is capable of producing a large range of styles, from refreshing rosés to concentrated sweet wines. However, the most common expressions are two: either as a young, unoaked red wine, or as a red matured in oak for at least a year.

A young Agiorgitiko is a wine with a moderately deep purple red colour, intense aromas of fresh red fruits, medium acidity and soft tannins. The oak aged examples are deep in colour, while the nose showing concentrated and complex aromas of red fruits. The palate is rich and, with high quality, ripe tannins. Moreover, it is a variety that can produce, other styles, like excellent rosés or stunning dessert wines from sun dried grapes. Many commentators use references to Sangiovese. Agiorgitiko is the grape of the PDO Nemea, the largest red wine appellation in Greece –and a quality leader as well. Traditionally, Nemea-Agiorgitiko are inextricably connected, as Agiorgitiko was only cultivated in Nemea and in its greater area. Nevertheless, the top quality potential convinced many producers to plant it in other areas, like Macedonia or other parts of Peloponnese.

## Lottery win wines!

Usually this is one of an occasional series about the world's greatest (and most expensive) wines. Ones which probably are only something we could only consider buying after a very big lottery win and even then we might balk at the price!

This one might be entitled “birth of a recent legend”, and in pricing terms is roughly equivalent to the performance mode switch labelled “ludicrous” in some Tesla vehicles.

**Screaming Eagle Winery and Vineyards** is a California wine estate producing limited amounts of varietal wine; due to the small quantities produced and high prices commanded, their wines are considered cult wines. The winery is located in Oakville California, north of the town of Napa in the Napa Valley.

Jean Phillips, a former real estate agent, bought the 57 acre Oakville vineyard in 1986 which was planted to a mix of varieties, most of which Phillips sold to various Napa wineries except the 1-acre (4,000 m<sup>2</sup>), approximately 80 vines of Cab Sav. For this one acre of Cabernet,

Philips sought the opinions of Robert Mondavi Winery employees on the commercial potential of her wine before hiring Richard Peterson as a consultant, and subsequently met Peterson's daughter, [Heidi Peterson Barrett](#), who became Screaming Eagle's first winemaker. Screaming Eagle rocketed to almost instantaneous fame after Napa-Cab-loving wine critic Robert Parker gave its first 1992 vintage a near-perfect 99 out of 100 rating. And so the legend, and the pricing was borne.

The winery would eventually receive the magic 100 Parker points for its 1997 vintage, as well as its 2007, 2010, and 2012 bottlings. It takes about 12 years to get on the mailing list and there are no public tours. Starting with its 2010 vintage, the winery protects all bottles with a “bubble-coded” verification system — a label placed between the foil and the bottle that creates a security seal that cannot be detached without it and the foil being visibly damaged. Beneath the seal, bottles contain unique identification codes that can be verified on Screaming Eagle’s website.

If any of you wine appreciation members are so minded go to [“Hedonism Wines”](#) (great name) London, UK, where a 500ml bottle of the 92 is £17,500 whereas the 92 1.5L magnum is a relative bargain at £42,800!!

PS If you hurry this could be your big bold red at our Zoom tasting on the 14<sup>th</sup>!

## **Members cellar**

In this section we'll share information about your current favourite bottle or something you're saving for a special occasion, please let us have that and we'll include in future newsletters.

## **The best wine or wine experience**

Do you have a real wine highlight either the wine itself or the overall experience? Please email in to share with other members?

## **A quick reminder of the 14<sup>th</sup> July Zoom tasting event**

The other news for us in Wine Appreciation is that we are going to have a virtual meeting. This will be on:

**Tuesday July 14<sup>th</sup> at 2pm.**

**Please will you RSVP.**

The meeting will be held using the Zoom video meeting tool. The meeting invitation, with the meeting link, will be sent out near to the date.

For the meeting we will be having a group tasting and discussion. For the tasting please bring a single bottle of any wine you would like to sample:

If you can, please bring a bottle of wine which fits into one of the following types:

A light, fruity or summery white wine

A full-bodied white wine

A light and fruity red wine

A big and bold red wine

If you can't bring a wine that fits any of these categories, please bring any other wine of your choice.

Please prepare a sheet of paper with the wine type, as above, and the wine name written in big bold letters. You will hold this up in the video meeting so we can all see what each other has brought.

Finally, if you are new to Zoom and you would like to have a one-to-one trial Zoom meeting any time before the event please email either Nick or Steve to ask for this.

Happy Drinking. Keep happy!

Cheers

**Steve**

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