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The Peloponnese – or Peloponnisos, as we Greeks call it – has always been a very special destination for us. Its stunning landscapes, rich history and, of course, the excellent wines produced on this blessed land inspired us to dedicate this year’s English issue to the wonders of this very special region.

Over the years, many travelers have discovered its beauty, some even choosing to build summer homes or settle here permanently. Among them was Patrick Leigh Fermor, the renowned British writer, scholar and war hero – and one of the greatest travel writers of the 20th century. He made the Peloponnese his second home, building a beautiful stone house in Kardamyli, a coastal village in the Mani Peninsula. “When God had finished making the world, he had a sack of stones left over and he emptied it here,” he wrote in *Mani: Travels in the Southern Peloponnese*, capturing the rugged essence of the land he so loved.

One would truly need weeks, if not months, to uncover all the hidden treasures of this region, where the history of the modern Greek state was born. But even a single sip of its wine may be enough to grasp something of the richness of its land, the depth of its centuries-old winemaking tradition, and the uniqueness of its terroirs, which range from fertile plains to rugged mountain slopes.

Nemea is Greece’s largest red wine producing PDO area. Here the noble red grape Agiorgitiko reigns supreme. The resulting wines, deep ruby in color and brimming with red-fruit perfume and notes of spice, have long been nicknamed “Hercules’ blood,” a nod to the hero who, legend has it, once slew the Nemean lion nearby. Today more than 40 estates craft styles that run from bright, cherry-driven rosés to age-worthy, oak-matured reds.

Further to the south and just outside the town of Tripoli lies the Mantinia plateau, where Moschofilero is the great star. This pink-skinned grape yields elegant aromatic whites. Seeking to showcase the many possibilities of their zone’s PDO variety, the region’s producers are experimenting with various winemaking techniques, all while emphasizing top-quality grapes with the high acidity that stems from the region’s continental climate and the significant temperature differences between day and night.

To the north of Nemea lies the small but significant wine region of Corinth.

High elevations, steep slopes, harsh winters and cool summers characterize the region’s vineyards, which yield distinctive wines, most of them crisp and elegant, with delicate aromas, as well as some fuller-bodied expressions from both Greek and international grape varieties.

Travel to the west and you come across Achaia and the region of Aigialeia, with its high-elevation steep-slope vineyards where crisp, altitudinal Roditis thrives, while sun-drenched pockets near Patras ripen Mavrodafni, a thick-skinned variety transformed into luscious, fortified dessert wines reminiscent of tawny Port. All the way down to the southwest, Messinia is home to a dynamic group of winemakers who have revived viticulture, a part of the region’s centuries-long history and tradition.

On the opposite side of the map in Laconia lies the fortified medieval town of Monemvasia, the port from where Malvasia, the famous sweet wine of the medieval times used to travel both east and west. Thanks to the efforts of the area’s winemakers, the production of this sweet wine has been revived; the local white grape Kydonitsa, considered one of Greece’s rising stars, is making waves, too.

But wine is only half of the story. The Peloponnese feeds both body and soul with a pantry as varied as its scenery. Liquid gold Kalamata olive oil – pressed from fruit harvested from centuries-old Koroneiki trees – is the region’s culinary heartbeat, drizzled over everything, from ripe tomatoes to sweet orange cakes. In Mani, you will find synglino, smoked pork steeped in orange-peel brine and stored in under olive oil, alongside crisp spiral fritters called lalagia, both perfect matches for the local wines. Mountain villages dine on goat slow-braised with oregano, trahanas soup thick with yogurt, and forest honey perfumed by wild thyme. Along the coasts, fishermen haul in red mullet, sardines and squid; their catch is swiftly cooked over glowing embers from vine cuttings and served with a squeeze of lemon grown on terraced inland hillsides.

From vineyard to table, the Peloponnese offers an ever-unfolding banquet. Each bite, each sip, tells a fragment of the same enduring tale – a land where history and hospitality are poured as generously as wine, and where visitors, just like Patrick Leigh Fermor, often find themselves dreaming of staying forever.



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UNDERSTANDING
THE PELOPONNESE IS EASY.
JUST GRAB A FEW GLASSES...

TEXT BY
KONSTANTINOS LAZARAKIS, MW

IF YOU HAPPEN TO BE VISITING GREECE, WHICH IS A GOOD BET IF
YOU ARE READING THIS, YOU HAVE TO TREAT YOURSELF TO AT LEAST
A FEW DAYS IN THE PELOPONNESE.

TABOO

A short visit there, however, is a whole different thing to truly understand its beauty. For the latter, you will need months. Or, if you're a wine lover, you can just see all the glory of the place through some of its wines.

One camp in the wine universe claims that a wine is shaped by the place it is produced. We call it "terroir". If the slope is steep, or the climate is cold, the grapes will be different and so will the wine. This is an easy concept to grasp. A warm region will push fruit ripeness levels up, so the grapes will be sweeter and, in the end, the wine will have a higher alcohol content. A cold spot will result in more acidic grapes, so the wines will be crisper rather than fuller.

Other wine people consider this view as just another expression of the "naturalistic fallacy" that says "if it comes from nature, then it must be good." They see the human hand and mind as the ultimate shapers. Human genius will find a path towards greatness from wherever it starts. I confess that I sit, for the most part, in this camp.

If you have a glass of wine in front of you, try to see the place or the mind behind the wine. But then, here's my twist: get a few wines from one place, either all at the same time or a new one each day. This will lead to an exploration of a whole universe, like being in a dark room and trying to identify what's in there just by touch. It's something like this, but with your nose and your mouth.

A case in point: the Peloponnese. Go to a wine bar and ask for tiny pours of several wines from the area. Or go on a mission and taste a new wine every day. Magically, you'll find many layers unfolding. Brace yourself.

You'll grasp the journey of the Peloponnese through time. A place that boasts so many local wine grape varieties instantly qualifies as a kind of Methuselah. Many indigenous grapes mean that DNA had plenty of time to play around, to unfold, to change and to mutate. *Vitis Vinifera*, the "vine that brings us the wine" has been around in the Peloponnese for millennia, and we can now enjoy all its magnificent variations, from the pink-skinned Roditis and Moschofilero grapes to the dark Mavroudi and Agiorgitiko varieties to the white Asproudes. A genetic big bang in your wine glasses, right before your eyes.

You'll soak up the heritage, which is rather different than time. Heritage is what time allowed to flourish.

As you sip a Nemea wine, you taste the "lions' blood" as consumed by Hercules himself (although vegan options are now readily available as well). Treat yourself to a sweet Malvasia of Monemvasia and smell all the qualities that made medieval aficionados go crazy over this wine style.

You'll visualize the topography of Peloponnese, which is dazzling. Most tourists only linger around the beautiful beaches and assume that's all there is. But the complexity of the landscape, with steep slopes, high elevations, sheltered plateaus and deep valleys, is readily displayed in your wine glasses. One of the most striking examples of this occurs when comparing the whites of Mantinia, from Moschofilero, and the reds of Nemea, from Agiorgitiko. The former are almost Germanic in their coolness and freshness. The latter can be broad, rich and full-throttle enough to seduce a devoted Napa Valley fan. The fact that you can drive from one place to the other in twenty minutes might leave the most articulate viticulturist grasping for words.

You'll taste the food of Peloponnese through its wines. For Greeks, wine was always considered food in liquid form, but wine here is a mirror of what locals enjoy eating. The glorious sweets, based on nuts or on fruit, co-evolved with the stunning sweet wines of Muscat and Mavrodaphne in Patras. The Peloponnese is surrounded by sea, and a crisp Roditis or a dense Assyrtiko will match those shellfish or that grilled sea bream. If a specific wine style had no suitable food partner, believe me, it would have become extinct a long time ago.

What's more, you'll encounter the people. The moment you taste a top-quality wine, you'll meet the Peloponnesians, with all the dedication, the infatuation really, needed to achieve such a feat. The moment you realize the very sensible, by international standards, price tags of these wines, you'll understand that this is a labor of love, not a plan to turn wine producers into billionaires. Smell these vibrant whites and you'll know that these were made as a way of making life more enjoyable, more upbeat. Drink a second glass of these deep reds and then take a selfie. Yes, your teeth might be showing a few temporary wine stains, but then it will hit you that you're only noticing that because you're smiling so broadly ...

So, go on then. Taste these wines. And then, why not just go to the Peloponnese after all? ¶

Taste...
the difference



ONE OF THE WINE CATEGORIES THAT HAS DRAMATICALLY IMPROVED IN RECENT YEARS IS UNDOUBTEDLY ROSÉ.

CELLAR RAT

I remember one of my first jobs, many years ago, where I had to manage 2,500 different wines from every corner of the globe – among them, the insultingly low number of just one rosé. (V.D.P du Var, Domaine des Triennes.) The Wine Director I worked with at the time, Claude Douard, was one of many who, quite rightly, didn’t think much of rosé wines.

That was during the period when Marc Davies, the sommelier at Spondi (sadly no longer with us), described rosé wine as “like kissing your sister on the mouth,” and critics around the world dismissed it as a “pizza wine.” It wasn’t the bridesmaid in the story; in fact, it wasn’t even invited to the wedding.

On the production side, the Tavel region on the outskirts of Châteauneuf-du-Pape, which had been exclusively producing rosé since 1936, was making the only serious effort toward quality. Provence was producing its characteristic pale rosé, but that wasn’t particularly popular beyond the Côte d’Azur. At the same time, the moment had clearly passed for the dark-hued Clairet wines of Bordeaux, as well as our own “kokkinelia,” which had already faded as a viable option, while the rest of the wine world made rosé out of whatever leftovers they had – mostly red grapes.

And then suddenly, producers decided to take it seriously. The climate, with its increasingly prolonged periods of sunshine, favored its production. Sidewalk cafés and town squares began filling up with glasses of rosé in every shade. A big part of this success rested on the fact that rosé satisfies a deep-seated consumer desire for guilt-free drinking. In the Greek market, rosé may also offer a much-needed escape from semi-sweet wines.

- At present, rosé production runs on two tracks:
- The pale rosés of Provence and the many “wannabe” versions from every corner of the globe, and;
- The darker, more food-friendly versions – the ones our French friends describe as more “gastronomic.”

I have a feeling a third category will soon emerge: sparkling rosé. Even if just for cinematic reasons, since the bubbles don’t really change the flavor profile, whether rosé or white.

In the first category, we’re talking about light, refreshing wines that are perfect as an aperitif but also flexible enough for the dining table. The fact that this trend began on the French Riviera naturally lends some glamour to these pale-colored, delicate wines. The second category includes more structured wines (relatively speaking, for rosé), with greater intensity in both aroma and flavor.

In the Greek vineyard, there are grape varieties rich in pigment, and we already have some notable examples from Agiorgitiko, Mandilaria, Mavrodaphne and even Syrah, which have earned the appreciation of consumers thanks to their well-structured, full-bodied, food-worthy rosés. In a way, they scoff at the light red wines of the past (called kokkinelia in Greece). Alternatively, Xinomavro offers, across all its zones, wines of true pedigree, with a more delicate flavor profile – ideal as an aperitif.

In closing, I believe rosé is here to stay. It’s neither a trend nor the “next big thing.” Sometimes, history simply steps in to correct past mistakes. Cheers! 🍷

Emphasis. Assyrtiko

KTIMA PAVLIDIS
KOKKINOIA DRAMA

follow us on  



“PEOPLE DO NOT REMEMBER DAYS; THEY REMEMBER MOMENTS”. WINES, RESTAURANTS, AROMAS, MOMENTS AND IDEAS, CAPTURED IN A JOURNAL.

TEXT BY
GREGORY KONTOS, DIP WSET

MAVROS GATOS IN PANGRATI, ATHENS IS THE PLACE TO BE FOR ANY FOODIE AND WINE LOVER.

WINE JOURNAL

This is a spot where most Greek wine geeks and enthusiasts gather to pair the restaurant's first-class meat dishes with their collections' best wines, since the venue allows, and indeed is very comfortable with, BYOB (Bring Your Own Bottle). In our case, however, we preferred to buy from their wine list which included some serious wines at ridiculously low prices. We had the outstanding, creamy and zesty Zafeirakis Foothills Chardonnay and the silky Tselepos Kokkinomylos Merlot, both fascinating, and ideal to pair food with. The restaurant's starters and salads are fresh and delicious, their lamb chops are a must, the beef steak was tender, while the liver, covered in caul fat, is the star of the menu ... really unforgettable!

Strong-willed and energetic Markos Markovitis from Naoussa inherited a vineyard and a winery, plus some serious wine culture from his father; they both studied Oenology in Germany and had a viticulture background. Markos decided to steadily replant the whole vineyard, starting in 2012, and recently offered us a vertical Xinomavro tasting at his winery in Naoussa. We could easily understand what he envisioned doing while we were tasting selected vintages from 2001 to 2021, a 20-year range. We compared the mature, earthy and herbal 2001 to the challenging mid-2010s (in 2014, he sold his grapes and did not make wine at all). The vines were still very young in 2015 and 2016, but from 2017 through 2021 the progress was substantial. Lively forest fruits, umami character, potpourri and wonderfully balanced acidity and tannins. This was special!

Japanese comfort food at a restaurant that shares space with a Japanese grocery store called “Ikigai”: this is Ekiben Athens! This venue started as a “Birdman” spin-off during the pandemic, offering Asian food for home delivery; it got some love, expanded, and is now super cool, with an authentic Japanese vibe. We had some hearty bowls, sando sandwiches, ramen and, of course, the renowned Ekiben smash burger. Just yummy! Even more so, when paired with Garalis Terra Roza from the volcanic Limnos Island, from 95% Muscat of Alexandria and 5% Limnio; with the ramen in particular, this was a pairing made in heaven.

In summer, when it gets very hot, I like to enjoy a fresh chilled beer. Sometimes to satisfy my thirst before carrying on with ... wine! Although a beer, when crafted with attention and care, can be equally intriguing. I recently tried Valia Calda, a hand-crafted beer from Ioannina. Lovely citrus aromas, rich head, dense palate, long finish. Inspired by the Pindus National Park (nicknamed 'Valia Calda'), one of the most beautiful and isolated national parks in the country.

It had been a long time since I first tasted the wines of Domaine Zacharioudakis back in 2011. I had been impressed with the wines, even more than I was impressed with the spectacular vineyard and the breathtaking surroundings. Fast forward 14 years, and I got the chance to revisit the wines. I found their most charming quality was the rich and concentrated palate, the length and extract of all wines. Really enjoyable food wines! The powerful Assyrtiko screams for lamb pairings, and the oak-matured Vidiano has an impressive oily, textured palate and is perfect for any white risotto. The Codex white and Orthi Petra white are both zesty and charming, and follow the Zacharioudakis approach with a concentrated style on the palate. The Kotsifali red was extremely enjoyable as well.

Have you ever been to a Beefbar, anywhere in the world? This renowned restaurant concept by Riccardo Giraudi is present in Monte-Carlo, Sao Paulo, Paris, Milano, London, Dubai, Doha, Hong Kong, New York and other major cities. In Greece, there is Beefbar Athens (Four Seasons, Vouliagmeni), Beefbar Santorini and Beefbar Mykonos. We dined at Beefbar Athens and it was a special experience: the venue, the views, the ambience, the food! We loved the salads – kale with avocado, parmesan, cherry tomatoes and lemon zest – and the roasted greens with seared vegetables and mimolette cheese. Both the “rock corn” in tempura with spicy mayonnaise and the “ultimate smash cheese-burger” with Wagyu beef were comforting and yummy, while we particularly loved the marinated sea bass in yuzu dressing and the Black Asngus striploin. A very special place at maybe the best spot in Greece. ¶

BOUTARI  WINERIES

- EST. 1879 -



The heart of summer in a glass

A wine born from the land of Mantinia and matured under the light of the Greek sun. 100% Moschofilero, from 50-year-old organic vineyards, it offers a tasting journey unlike any other. Crisp, elegant and full of character, it's the perfect companion for summer days and nights.



Illustration → Philippos Avramidis

The Peloponnese, located in southern Greece, is a land rich in history, breathtaking landscapes and exceptional wines. The largest share of Greek wine comes from its vineyards. Its diverse terrains, ranging from coastal plains to rugged mountains, create ideal conditions for viticulture, which has been one of the main activities of its people for centuries. Renowned wine regions such as Nemea, which is the largest red wine producing area of Greece; Mantinia; Korinthos; Aigialeia; Messinia and Laconia all produce distinctive wines reflecting the character of their terroirs from grapes varieties that include Agiorgitiko, Moschofilero, Roditis and Kydonitsa.

Gastronomically, the Peloponnese offers an authentic taste of Greece: olive oil from Kalamata, artisanal cheeses, cured meats, and hearty dishes such as lamb with oregano or a savory wild greens pie. Local high-quality tavernas and restaurants pair traditional cuisine with regional wines, enhancing the depth of flavors. The landscape is equally compelling, with ancient ruins, verdant vineyards, and crystal-clear coastlines that invite exploration. Whether you're sipping wine in one of its numerous wineries or enjoying a sunset somewhere along its amazing coastline, the Peloponnese offers visitors a multisensory journey through the wild natural beauty of a region that's been at the heart of Greek culture through the ages.



An aerial view of the rugged terrain of the Peloponnese.



The archaeological site of Nemea in springtime.



The restaurant 17 Choria are a must-visit destination for anyone exploring the Nemea region.

TRAVEL

TEXT BY
GREGORY KONTOS, DIP WSET

PHOTOS BY
MARCO ARGÜELLO, iSTOCK
AND WINERIES ARCHIVE

NEMEA, THE LARGEST PDO-DESIGNATED WINE REGION IN GREECE, IS DEDICATED TO THE PRODUCTION OF RED WINE FROM THE LOCAL AGIORGITIKO GRAPE. JUICY, SUPPLE AND CHARMING, AGIORGITIKO IS NOW THRIVING IN VARIOUS AREAS OF GREECE.

Nemea

The Nemea region is a beautiful mosaic of vineyards, olive groves and cypress stands surrounded by hills and mountains, with the Nemea Valley in the middle. A wonderful, warm Mediterranean climate with elevated areas and different soil types make Nemea a diverse region that affords winemakers a variety of growing conditions and styles. From the semi-mountainous limestone soils and the stony and gravelly soils on the mountain slopes to the alluvial deposits of the Asopos River in the lowlands, grape growers have a wide range of options at hand.

The soul of the ancient city of Nemea is still alive, its spirit firmly rooted in the hearts, minds and feelings of the locals. There are plenty of those who, even today, consider the Nemean lion to be their guardian angel. Nemea can be proud of the excavations of the Ancient Stadium of Nemea, conducted under the auspices of the renowned archaeologist, Dr. Stephen Miller, who passed away a few years ago, and of the revival of the Nemean Games, which attract athletes and visitors from all over the world. And, last but certainly not least, there's the Temple and Sanctuary of Nemean Zeus, perhaps the only ancient temple on the planet surrounded by modern vineyards producing wines for today's wine lovers. In recent years, the area has seen significant developments, both in wine and beyond, clearly showing that all key players – including both the wineries and the local community – are moving forward together.

THE WINERIES

Nemea is home to 2,700 hectares of vineyards, 80% of which are planted with Agiorgitiko. The region hosts fifty wineries producing PDO Nemea wines; thirty-six of them are members of the PDO NEMEA Winemakers' Association (SON). This is where some of the crown jewels of the Greek vineyard are crafted, wines such as Papaioannou Mikroklima, Gaia Estate, Driopi Reserve, Mi-travelas Old Vines, Palivos Ammos Terra Leone Reserve, Strofilia Mavros Konos, Skouras Grande Cuvée, and many more. Nemea is a truly unique wine region in Greece, one that can be appreciated as a whole, with its wealth of exceptional wines and producers clearly proving the unique nature of the area.

THE INNOVATORS

PALIVOU ESTATE

Giorgos Palivos is a key figure in Nemea, a true-born Nemean deeply connected to his land and heritage. Together with his wife Angeliki and their daughters Vassiliki and Evangelia, he runs the family winery in Ancient Nemea. From the very beginning, they were pioneers in wine tourism; their winery has welcomed visitors every weekend for decades, building a strong bond with wine lovers from Greece and abroad.

More recently, they've introduced an exclusive wine-tasting experience in a refurbished vintage railroad car overlooking the Ammos vineyard and offering stunning views of the valley. The winery's portfolio is diverse, covering a broad range of styles. Their red wines include three varietal Agiorgitikos (Anemos Red, Palivou Estate Nemea, and Ammos Terra Leone Nemea), as well as three reds from international varieties (Ihnos Merlot, Ploutos Red and Noema Red, the last of which also includes Agiorgitiko).

The rosés include a semi-sweet and semi-sparkling label called Bee, the deeply colored dry rosé Vissinokipos, and the pale-hued La Vie en Rose. On the white side, the estate produces varietal Assyrtiko, Kydonitsa and Viognier, as well as two blends, Anemos and Stone Hills, completing an impressive and well-rounded wine range.

KTIMA DRIOPI

Whenever Yiannis Tselepos, of Cypriot origin and trained in Dijon, believes in the potential of a wine region, he follows a consistent business model; he finds an exceptional old vineyard, buys the land, and builds a winery. This is exactly what he did in 2003 when he founded Ktima Driopi in the semi-mountainous village of Koutsi in Nemea, within a stunning 8.5-hectare vineyard.

This venture, which focused on Agiorgitiko, was his second major undertaking following the success of Ktima Tselepos in Arcadia, where Moschofilero still leads the portfolio. The flagship wine of the Nemea winery, Ktima Driopi Reserve, is made from 50-year-old vines and is known for its velvety texture and structure. Grapes from younger vines are used for Driopi Classic. The range also includes a high-elevation rosé from Asprokambos, as well as a wine called Cava, a robust blend of Agiorgitiko (Nemea) and Cabernet Sauvignon (Arcadia). A recent addition is Driopi Kydonitsa, a white wine made from the charming and increasingly popular Peloponnesian variety of the same name. Yiannis Tselepos' children, Aris and Andriani, who studied at prestigious wine and business schools, are now contributing their expertise to the estate, helping to drive it toward a dynamic new era.

LANTIDES WINERY

There's another Cyprus-born, France-trained oenologist making a significant mark on Nemea; Panikos Lantides has played a crucial role in elevating both the image and the quality of Nemea's wines. His portfolio includes the Ergo line (white: Sauvignon Blanc; rosé: Cabernet Sauvignon; red: Agiorgitiko Nemea), the Goldvine - Chrysambelo wines (white: Chardonnay; red: Cabernet Sauvignon), and the Little Ark range (an Assyrtiko and Malagousia blend for white; a Moschofilero from Argolis for rosé; and a distinctive blend of Agiorgitiko from Asprokambos and Xinomavro from Amyntaio for red).

In addition to these core series, the winery produces four stand-alone labels: Abyss, a Peloponnesian Assyrtiko; AnOsis, a Moschofilero from Skoteini in Argolis; Aenaon, a varietal Merlot; and Cuvee Lantides, sourced from Asprokambos.

Panikos Lantides' decision to focus on high-elevation vineyards (Asprokambos, Koutsi and Skoteini) reflects his commitment to producing elegant, well-balanced wines. The future of the winery looks bright, with the next generation, Simos Lantides, bringing both knowledge and passion to the business.

ESTATE PAPAIOANNOU
Producing profound and contemplative wines, Estate Papaioannou is one of the few wineries in Nemea, and in Greece, that truly excels at both viticulture and winemaking, producing not just good but truly memorable wines. In many ways, it resembles a classic French domaine; it operates with a thorough scientific understanding of the region and the Agiorgitiko variety, and with precise winemaking protocols.

What sets Papaioannou apart is confidence, something often lacking in the Greek wine scene. No salesperson can sway them; they know exactly what they're doing and they've been doing it for decades, with no need to compromise. The results of this steadfast commitment are perhaps the finest Nemea wines: Nemea Old Vines, Nemea Microclima and Nemea Terroir, each showcasing a peak of Agiorgitiko expression.

Behind this winemaking dynasty is George Papaioannou, a chemist-oenologist and son of the legendary Thanasis Papaioannou, often referred to as the Patriarch of the region. Their white wines are also not to be missed: Assyrtiko Ai Lia, Malagousia, Lyric Roussanne, Aristocracy (Sauvignon Blanc-Gewürztraminer), Roditis-Sauvignon, Chardonnay and Chardonnay Fumé. The winery is located in Ancient Nemea.

DOMAINE SKOURAS
In the 1980s, Greek winemakers trained in Burgundy often adopted the term "Domaine" rather than "Ktima", and Skouras is one of the few who still use it. George Skouras is a pioneering winemaker and entrepreneur, gifted in crafting wines that are both accessible and refined, wines that achieve a rare balance between popularity and sophistication.

Born in Argos, Skouras understands his region intimately. Step by step, he grew his business from a small garage winery to a major player, with a landmark moment being the establishment of his modern winery in Malandreni in 2004. Some of his wines have been true game-changers: Saint George Nemea, Megas Oenos (among the first Agiorgitiko-Cabernet Sauvignon blends), Grande Cuvée Nemea (from high-elevation vineyards), Fleva Syrah, and Synoro (Cabernet Franc, Merlot, Agiorgitiko).

Rosé is another specialty, with Cuvée Prestige combining Agiorgitiko and Moschofilero from Nemea and Mantinia respectively, while Peplo is an elegant, pale rosé crafted from three grape varieties that is fermented in barrels, steel tanks and amphorae. The winery also offers classic bottlings of Chardonnay and Viognier and has made significant investments in Moschofilero. Today, the next generation is involved: oenologist Dimitris Skouras and marketer Stella Skoura continue the legacy with vision and dedication.

GAIA WINES
Gaia Wines was founded in 1997 by oenologist and professor Yiannis Paraskevopoulos and agronomist Leon Karatsalos, making them some of the first outside investors in Nemea. Their iconic black-labeled Gaia Estate Nemea inspired the entire region by proving that Agiorgitiko could be made with depth, structure, and finesse. The grapes are sourced exclusively from their privately owned vineyard in the village of Koutsi.

Their premium reds include Gaia S (Agiorgitiko and Syrah) and Optimum (a blend of a selected Agiorgitiko clone with a hint of Vertzami). Agiorgitiko by Gaia is their approachable, juicy red expression. Rosé wines 4-6H and 14-18H, both from Agiorgitiko, are fresh and lively, while Ritinitis Nobilis is a modern and elegant take on traditional retsina. The winery's portfolio is rounded out by the Synergy series, a sweet Nemea (Anatolikos), and accessible labels such as Monograph and Notios.

SEMELI ESTATE
Founded in 1979, the Semeli Estate is located in Koutsi, one of the most prestigious sub-regions of Nemea, at an elevation of

600 meters. The gravity-flow winery, built in 2003, offers ideal conditions for winemaking; the entire facility, luxurious and upscale, is arguably the finest in the region.

Head winemaker Yiannis Flerianos crafts wines from Nemea grapes aimed at both domestic and international markets. Key labels include Nemea Reserve, Nemea Grande Reserve, Ktima Semeli Estate Blend, as well as more accessible wines like Feast, Oreinos Helios, Semeli Spondee, and the white blend Sofia (Assyrtiko and Moschofilero), the last of which is partially sourced from Nemean grapes.

Rosé wines Delear and Oreinos Helios complete their Nemea portfolio, while the winery also sources grapes from other high-quality regions of the Peloponnese, mainly from Mantinia (Arcadia) and Achaia, to produce outstanding whites from Moschofilero, Malagousia, Sauvignon Blanc, Chardonnay and Gewürztraminer. With 250 acres of privately-owned hillside vineyards and the support of its new owner, Premia Properties, Semeli Estate stands out as a major player poised to make an even greater impact on the wine scene.

LAFAZANIS WINERY
A major force in Greek wine, the Lafazanis Winery in Nemea was established after a split from the original family winery, which dates back to the early 1950s. This branch of the family recognized Nemea's potential and, in 1993, invested in vineyards and built a modern winery in Archaies (Ancient) Kleones.

Founder Spiros Lafazanis leveraged his family's deep wine expertise and Nemea's potential to create a range of modern, distinctive wines. Highlights include the New World-style Break the Glass, the single-varietal Geometria series (featuring Assyrtiko, Moschofilero, Malagousia, and Agiorgitiko), and the acclaimed PDO Nemea wine Nemea Kleones.

While Nemea remains a core focus, Lafazanis is also recognized as a key player across the Peloponnese. The company expanded with the establishment of Nestor Winery in Messinia (est. 2015, through the acquisition of the Messinia Cooperative) and Patraiki Winery in Patras (acquired in 2019 by purchasing the Patras Cooperative).

The next generation – Athina Lafazani (Trade Manager) and Vassilis Lafazanis (Production Manager), daughter and son of Spiros Lafazanis – are now leading the charge, promising an even brighter future for this Peloponnesian wine giant.

NEW DEVELOPMENTS
"With reason and with a dream," wrote Dionysios Solomos in his unfinished epic work The Free Besieged, talking of what is needed to endure hardship. In the Greek wine industry, however, reason is often absent, leaving wine dreams to be dashed. We tend to forget that wineries are production facilities with high operating costs, and therefore to be sustainable, they must also be profitable. This means finding the right balance between identity, quality and volume.

Against this backdrop, the Greek wine sector is undergoing major changes, and Nemea is no exception. Non-viable units are being sold off, new investors are entering the scene, and the landscape is shifting. One of the most notable developments in the region is the acquisition of the Nemeion Estate by Cavino, the largest wine company in Greece. Cavino, which recently acquired the historic "Greek Wine Cellars" (Kourtakis), had been producing wine in partnership with local wineries in Nemea for years. Now it has the opportunity to establish a prestigious standalone winery within the appellation, following the model of the Mega Spilaio Estate. The company acquired the Nemeion Estate winery along with a small, 10-acre vineyard, but the goal is to expand to 20 hectares through land purchases, ultimately producing 200,000 bottles of premium wine annually. The name of the new winery is still under discussion; the first 250 tons of grapes will be vinified this year.

Meanwhile, Semeli has also recently changed hands. The Sallas family sold it to Premia Properties, owned by the Georgiadis brothers. The brothers are a strong presence in the Greek wine world: they've acquired Boutari (with holdings in Mantinia, Naoussa and Goumenissa), are collaborating with TEMES on the development of Navarino Vineyards, and have now added Semeli, with its jewel-like winery in Koutsi and its upscale hospitality infrastructure, to their portfolio. The estate's 10 suites are available for companies and organizations looking to host events that bring executives closer to nature and the vineyard. Groups of individuals may also rent the entire facility.



PEPLO
Always beating
for summer.

ΣΚΟΥΡΑΣ
DOMAINE SKOURAS
EST 1986

WHERE TO STAY

KERA NEME
Opened in August 2023, Kera Neme was the first official hotel to operate in the heart of Nemea. Maria Athanasiou, a Nemea native, undertook the transformation of two derelict buildings on Dervenakion Street, formerly home to a gas station, a betting shop, and a hunting club, into a boutique gem. Today, it features nine charming rooms, a serene backyard and a refined stone wine cellar for tastings. More than just a hotel, Kera Neme marked the beginning of a new era for Nemea’s urban revival.

NAIAS
Just six months after Kera Neme opened, another exciting addition emerged. In early 2024, local resident Ioanna Pezou-Anagnostara and her husband converted a family-owned building on Dervenakion Street, previously home to a pastry shop, a pizzeria, and a Greek music bar, into a cozy, stylish hotel. Naias offers five thoughtfully designed rooms, a quiet backyard retreat, and a tastefully decorated terrace, all within steps of the town’s main attractions.

TERRA VINUM
Set to open in the summer of 2025, the hotel Terra Vinum is a highly anticipated arrival that will operate at the town’s edge. Developed by investors Orphee Beinoglou and Vasilis Kapouralos, it will feature a dozen elegant rooms, a rooftop bar offering sweeping views of Mt Ziria and the dramatic Virgin of the Rock Monastery, and a semi-basement space, dedicated to tastings and other events, that comes complete with its own wine cellar. Its prime location on the main road leading into town makes it both a landmark and a visitor’s perfect introduction to Nemea.

LEON SUITES
Wine enthusiast Giorgos Alexopoulos, born in Athens but with family roots in Nemea, spent his childhood vacations here and has now returned to act as host to others. Slated to open in July 2025, his Leon Suites will breathe new life into a historic mansion tucked away at the end of Panagioti Anesti Street, just behind the Heroon at Nemea, a Classical-era shrine site. The intimate retreat will offer five warm, rustic rooms and an attic suite, all decorated in the earthy tones and textures of the Italian countryside.



The dining and wine-tasting area at 17 Choria.

WHERE TO EAT

17 CHORIA
Menios Tourlotos spent his early childhood in the Kypseli neighborhood of Athens before coming to Nemea at the age of 12. In 2019, he opened the restaurant Antika on Dervenakion Street; he eventually changed its name to 17 Choria, although it kept the antique wooden furniture and the beautiful, warm atmosphere it had always had. Together with his partners, Tourlotos offers a unique taste experience based on local ingredients from local cheesemakers and farmers in the wider area; the wine cellar is a treasure trove of Peloponnesian gems with old vintages, rare bottlings and iconic labels of the region. A full 99% of the list is from Nemea or Mantinia, with Nemea boasting the lion’s share.

SOFOS
A beloved fixture in Nemea’s dining scene, Sofos traces its roots back to the 1950s when it began as a traditional taverna run by the grandmother of the current owner. Today, under the stewardship of third-generation chef-owner Giorgos Sofos, the restaurant has evolved into a true temple of refined gastronomy. Presenting authentic Greek flavors with culinary finesse, Sofos places great emphasis on local, high-quality ingredients. Every dish is thoughtfully crafted with wine in mind, and the dining experience is elevated by linen tablecloths, fine glassware, and attentive hospitality. The wine list is a celebration of Nemea’s viticultural excellence.

NEMEA WINERIES AT A GLANCE

- CLASSIC NAMES
- Estate Papaioannou → [papaioannouwines.gr](#)
 - Gaia Winery → [gaiawines.gr](#)
 - Aivalis Winery
 - Constantin Gofas → [ktimagofa.gr](#)
 - Ktima Driopi → [tselepos.gr/ktima-driopi](#)
 - Lantidis Winery → [lantides.gr](#)
 - Mitravelas Estate → [mitravelas.gr](#)
 - Bairaktaris Winery → [bairaktariswines.gr](#)
 - Palivou Estate → [palivos.gr](#)
 - Repani Estate → [repanis.gr](#)
 - Harlaftis Estate → [harlaftis.gr](#)
 - Semeli Estate → [semeliestate.gr](#)
 - Strofilia Wines → [strofiliawines.gr](#)
 - Zacharias Winery → [zacharias.gr](#)
 - Barafakas Vineyards → [barafakaswinery.gr](#)
 - Domaine Skouras → [skouras.gr](#)
 - Ieropoulos Family Winery → [f-iero.gr](#)

- UNSUNG HEROES
- Bizios Estate → [biziosestate.gr](#)
 - Pyrgakis Estate → [oinopoiio-pirgaki.gr](#)
 - Raptis Winery → [ktimarapti.gr](#)
 - Lafkiotis Winery → [lafkiotis.gr](#)
 - Ktima Spyropoulos → [ktimaspiropoulos.com](#)
 - Koroniotis Winery → [koroniotiswinery.gr](#)
 - Papantonis Winery → [papantonis.gr](#)

- NEW WAVE
- Karamitsos Winery → [karamitsoswinery.com](#)
 - Opsimos Winery
 - Anastasiou Family Estate → [athanasiouwines.gr](#)
 - Gatsinos Winery → [gatsinos.gr](#)
 - Mitrakos Wines → [mitrakoswines.gr](#)
 - Athanassiou Winery → [athanasiouwines.gr](#)
 - Nikolaou Estate → [domainenikolaou.gr](#)
 - Sellas Winery → [sellaswinery.gr](#)
 - Papagiannakopoulos Wines → [papagiannakopoulos.com](#)



ZACHARIAS WINERY

SKLAVA ZACHARIAS
THE REVIVAL OF A FORGOTTEN VARIETY

Since 1988, Zacharias Winery has been crafting its own legacy in the world of wine, bringing back to life an almost extinct ancient grape variety of the Peloponnese. For its founder, Ilias Zacharias, Sklava is not merely a rare grape - it is a symbol of perseverance, devotion, and true vinous identity.

In the late 1980s, as Greece’s wine landscape began to shift with the first waves of native varietal revival, one family in the heart of Nemea made a daring choice: rather than follow the commercial trends of the time, they turned their attention to a forgotten and rare white grape - Sklava.

A VARIETY BECOMES A SYMBOL

Within just a few years, Sklava was no longer an experiment - it became the hallmark of Zacharias Winery. Bottled with precision and deep respect, it emerged as a symbol of authenticity, typicity, and local heritage. The wine world began to recognize Sklava not just as rare, but as truly unique - offering wine lovers a fresh, distinctive and expressive profile unlike the usual whites of the region.

Sklava is heritage. It is identity. It is a bold choice. And it is a story worth tasting.

UNIQUE · RARE · REVIVED
SKLAVA TODAY

The authenticity of Ilias Zacharias, the vision of his son Othon, and the winemaking signature of Petros Tsioros bridge the past and present, delivering Sklava to our glasses in the form we enjoy today. The first varietal bottling of Sklava was released in 2014. In 2020, the wine underwent a rebranding and assumed its current identity. Today, it remains in tank and matures on fine lees for five months.

In the glass, it presents a bright, medium lemon-green color with silver-gray reflections. On the nose, aromas of citrus, fresh stone fruits, and a subtle herbal character. On the palate, it is complex and textured, with crisp acidity, medium body, and flavors of pear and green apple. Hints of lemon blossom and citrus, herbal nuances, tea leaf, and chamomile round out the profile. The finish is long and mineral, inviting another sip.

THE EXPERIENCE BEYOND THE GLASS

The privately owned, visitable vineyard Douramani is a destination in itself. Nestled in the breathtaking landscape of the Nemea plain, the winery hosts tastings, vineyard picnics, and meals featuring local products - an experience that ties the wine to the land, the people, and the moment. For wine lovers in search of something authentic and immersive, Sklava awaits - not just to be tasted, but to be lived.

And this year is the perfect time to discover it up close. At the Great Days of Nemea 2025, Zacharias Winery is launching a new era, following a significant three-year investment in facilities, hospitality and equipment. It returns with renewed energy, offering a rich winemaking and cultural program, ready to welcome visitors with fresh experiences and a modern spirit.

Wine is just the beginning.

We look forward to unlocking the future together.



INTERVIEW

TEXT BY
THALIA KARTALI

PHOTO BY
MARCO ARGÜELLO

THE VISIONARY BEHIND THE REVOLUTION IN GREEK WINE. GEORGE SKOURAS IS ONE OF GREECE'S MOST RENOWNED WINEMAKERS.

George Skouras

A commanding presence, he belongs to the golden generation of Greek vintners who spearheaded the so-called “Greek wine revolution” of the 1990s. He is also, without question, a masterful storyteller.

“Since the day I decided I wanted to be a winemaker, my life has been a wonderful journey,” Skouras tells me as we sit down for an interview in his beloved Nemea, the wine region he fell in love with more than 40 years ago. “My passion for wine has never made my work feel like a burden, despite the difficulties. That’s a blessing. Even at the hardest moments, I never felt weighed down.”

At the age of 19, Skouras left for France to study Oenology at the University of Dijon in Burgundy. “It was the late ’70s, the golden era for wine in France,” he recalls. “Back then, wine was for everyone. It wasn’t as snobbish as it has become today.”

During his time there, he worked in every possible role: in the vineyard, in the cellar and even in marketing. “I did everything, from sweeping the sidewalks of the winery to driving a van to Paris airport in the middle of the night to deliver a shipment bound for Hong Kong.”

After returning to Greece, he found himself in Kefalonia, initially working for the Kalligas winery. It was there that he met Spiros Kosmetatos, a pivotal figure in his life. Together, they created Gentilini, one of Greece’s first boutique wineries. Their partnership lasted until 1989.

During those formative years, Skouras also met his wife, Ourania, and began dreaming of making his own wine. His first vinification took place in his father’s garage. “Yes, I’m a garagiste winemaker,” he jokes. From there, he rented space in a Nemea winery, leased vineyards, and borrowed money. “That’s all you need to get started, right?”

He built a small winery in 1997 and, by 2004, had completed his state-of-the-art facility in Malandreni: the Skouras Estate. It was there that he cemented his reputation as one of Greece’s great winemakers. More importantly, it was the base from which he launched his dream of taking Greek wine beyond national borders. His vision of introducing Greek wine to international markets became a reality.

“The dream grew. The vines grew. Wines were made and, along with the wines, an incredible team came together. I have the joy of sharing all this success with my family and the people who work at the winery.”

THALEIA KARTALI

When did you first get the idea that Greek wine could make its way onto the international market?

GEORGE SKOURAS

From the very beginning! I studied wine abroad, so my expectations were high right from the start. Perhaps it was premature to think that way, but from day one, my goal was to introduce Greek wine to the world. That’s why my entire career has revolved around exports. I started exporting just three or four years after producing my first wine.

THALIA KARTALI

Where was your wine first exported?

GEORGE SKOURAS

To the United States. It all began through a friendship. I met Ted Diamantis, who’s still a dear friend, in a bar in Kefalonia. My wife and his sister knew each other, and that’s how we met. We’ve been through thick and thin together. Ted devoted his life to helping the American market discover and appreciate quality Greek wine; he became its ambassador. His dedication is remarkable. I gave him the idea, and he ran with it, often at great personal cost. At one point, he had to work three jobs to support it all, trading wines from around the world to learn the business. Our first export was a container of our flagship label, Megas Oenos, to Chicago. When it arrived, Ted realized the labels were wrong. He had to replace them all by hand, cursing me the whole time, of course!

“GREEK WINE IS IN A VERY GOOD PLACE. I REMEMBER MY FIRST INTERNATIONAL EXHIBITION IN BORDEAUX, BEFORE GOING TO THE U.S. PEOPLE WOULD STOP BY AND SAY, “SERIOUSLY? YOU MAKE WINE IN GREECE?”

THALIA KARTALI
Then what happened?

GEORGE SKOURAS
In 1992 or 1993, I don't remember the exact year, Megas Oenos unexpectedly won an award at a competition during Wine America, an exhibition that no longer exists. We never imagined that would happen. I remember returning to Greece and being met at the airport by my wife and some friends waving flags. She had even organized a surprise party; when I walked into the house, I thought someone had broken in. I couldn't believe the joy this brought us. Thank God we have such moments to share. Otherwise, people like me would just be boring winemakers and nothing more.

THALIA KARTALI
How would you describe your experience in the U.S.?

GEORGE SKOURAS
It was tremendous, a real learning experience. That's where I came to understand the true scale of things. It's easy to think you're doing great within the small confines of your village. But then you go to America and realize the competition is fierce. There are hundreds of wines that cost the same but are better. That's when you wake up. It's a challenge. You're constantly being judged: every day, every hour. Every time I visited, Ted – who was also learning – would take me around to see what was selling, what trends were emerging, which categories were in demand, how labels were changing. Even now, every time I return from the U.S., I come back wiser. Things are always evolving, and we must keep up.

THALIA KARTALI
Where does Greek wine stand today in terms of recognition?

GEORGE SKOURAS
Greek wine is in a very good place. I remember my first international exhibition in Bordeaux, before going to the U.S. People would stop by and say, “Seriously? You make wine in Greece?” They thought that all we produced was retsina. That's why I created a blend of Agiorgitiko and Cabernet Sauvignon. Cabernet was our passport into the international market, since nobody had heard of Agiorgitiko back then. Those days are behind us now. My generation had some great winemakers, educated abroad, who worked together to put Greek wine on the map. We introduced the world to four key words: Agiorgitiko, Assyrtiko, Moschofilero and Xinomavro. These are now our ambassadors. Many other varieties have followed, because Greece's true wealth lies in its 300+ indigenous grape varieties.

THALIA KARTALI
Are you worried that anti-alcohol campaigns might harm wine consumption?

GEORGE SKOURAS
Look, every product has its good and bad versions. Wine labeling is now very transparent; QR codes show all the ingredients, so consumers know what's in the bottle. Health warnings have been around for years in the U.S., and yet wine sales have increased. That's just how it works.

THALIA KARTALI
But younger generations drink less than older ones. Doesn't that concern you?

GEORGE SKOURAS
Everything moves in cycles. History often teaches us what to expect. Wine has been part of our culture for thousands of years. We've been through crises, especially here in Greece. The financial collapse in 2010, capital controls, COVID, we came through it all. We'll adapt again.

THALIA KARTALI
What do you think of low-alcohol or no-alcohol wines?

GEORGE SKOURAS
Maybe they're necessary. Take a young pregnant woman whose doctor tells her not to drink; she still wants to enjoy a good time with her friends. Why not have a non-alcoholic wine? Who says these wines will take over the world? Trends come and go. Ten years ago it was red wine, then rosé, now white, and tomorrow low-alcohol. You shouldn't ignore these trends; instead, you should adapt.

THALIA KARTALI
How do you feel about tariffs?

GEORGE SKOURAS
Tariffs make me angry. And not just because they exist. Everyone's angry. But that doesn't matter. What matters is the outcome. Right now they're at 10%, and some importers are absorbing that cost. But what happens if they go up to 20%, 30% or 40%? For me, exports are 15% of my business. But for some importers, it's 100%. How will they survive? It's their loss. American consumers will still want these wines, just at a higher price. It doesn't make sense. Sure, there may be a trade imbalance between the U.S. and Europe, but these aren't problems that get solved overnight. Meanwhile, we must continue doing business. We'll keep supporting our customers there, and they'll support us. I can't imagine seeing 30-40 years of work in the U.S. just go down the drain. I've devoted my life to building our presence in America, traveling all over. If you take three months off, you're finished. So, no! We'll persevere and keep doing our job.

A win-wine situation.



TÖRNVIKEN
wine shelf
79,00€



“NEMEA IS A BLESSED LAND, GREECE’S LARGEST VINEYARD. IT’S MAGICAL, WITH ITS VALLEYS, MOUNTAINS, PLATEAUS RANGING IN ELEVATION FROM 250 TO 1000 METERS, AND INCREDIBLE MICROCLIMATES. IT PRODUCES A WIDE VARIETY OF WINES AND ADDS TO THE COMPLEXITY OF THE GREEK VINEYARD. IN NEMEA, YOU’LL FIND NOT ONLY AGIORGITIKO, THE STAR VARIETY, BUT THERE’S ASSYRTIKO, KYDONITSA, CABERNET SAUVIGNON AND PINOT NOIR, TOO, ENABLING WINEMAKERS TO EXPERIMENT AND CREATE DIVERSE LABELS.”

Do you have any new projects? You recently acquired a winery in Mantinia.

Yes. Last year, driven by our love for the Peloponnese, we bought an old winery in Mantinia. We’ve already released our first label from the region and are now renovating the facility. Why? Because we want to support the exceptional Moschofilero variety. I’ve been vinifying Moschofilero since 1989, and I’ve sold more of it in the U.S. than in Greece, just like with Agiorgitiko. We took over the winery at a time when things are finally looking up for Mantinia, after a long decline. Many young people have gotten involved and are already making an impact. Yiannis Tselepos and Boutari have been key figures there. For us, this project is both a business move and a continuation of our commitment to the Peloponnesian vineyard.

Let’s talk about Nemea...

Where do I begin? Nemea is a blessed land, Greece’s largest vineyard. It’s magical, with its valleys, mountains, plateaus ranging from 250 to 1000 meters, and incredible microclimates. It produces a wide variety of wines and adds to the complexity of the Greek vineyard. In Nemea, you’ll find not only Agiorgitiko, the star variety, but there’s Assyrtiko, Kydonitsa, Cabernet Sauvignon and Pinot Noir, too, enabling winemakers to experiment and create diverse labels. But we want Nemea to stand out, not just as a region but also for Agiorgitiko. The diversity of terroirs is a strength, but also makes it difficult to define a single identity. We’d love to see Nemea express itself through its 17 villages – each with its own appellation, reflecting the terroir. We started a project last year called “Lions” to explore this, but climate conditions made things difficult. Climate change has really affected us. Still, there’s a new generation of winemakers, both experienced and young, working together through the local association. We need to showcase what we’ve accomplished and the market’s positive reception.

Nemea inspires me. Its vineyards have always inspired everything I’ve done. I used to ride my Enduro motorcycle through those hills and think, “This vineyard can produce amazing wines.” I would argue with growers about vineyard management, and we experimented with Agiorgitiko in every way imaginable. Today, we’re at a great point, and we’re all proud of our land. I’d also like to add that more people from Greece and abroad are visiting our wineries and learning about our rich history and ancient sites. We’re so close to Athens, just an hour and a half away. Nemea has become a wine tourism destination. It’s our duty to show the world what Nemea and its wine are all about.

A new generation of winemakers is emerging, not just in the Peloponnese but across Greece. What does this mean for the future?

What I see are brilliant, well-educated young people, full of respect, with sharp minds – and I see this all over Greece. Many of us have our children involved, and this gives me hope. I’m proud, both as a professional and as a father, since both my children are working with me. Of course, we’ve had our differences. But we don’t expect this generation to go through what we did. They can build on our experience. They see things more clearly, and they’re calmer than we ever were.

What advice would you give the next generation?

Be humble. Enjoy life. Keep your business clean. The rest will follow. And never stop drawing inspiration from this beautiful land of ours. ¶



THE PELOPONNESE: A LIVING VINEYARD

In a land where myth and memory coexist with mountain peaks and coastal breezes, the Peloponnese tells a story of wine that stretches back through millennia. This storied peninsula in southern Greece is not only the country’s largest vineyard region, it’s a living, evolving landscape where tradition and innovation meet in the glass. With more than 19,000 hectares under vine, over 90% of which are planted with indigenous varieties, the Peloponnese is a cornerstone of Greek viticulture. Its topography is among the most dramatic in Europe, boasting more than 50 peaks over 1,000 meters. From cool, high-elevation regions such as the slopes of Aigialeia to coastal vineyards shaped by sea breezes, this is a land of contrasts, and of incredible winemaking potential. While native grapes remain at the heart of its identity, select international varieties are also being cultivated with notable success, and rare or forgotten Greek varieties are quietly being revived, adding new layers to the region’s already diverse vinous landscape. The Peloponnese’s many terroirs are not only a canvas for expression, but also a natural ally to sustainability. With abundant sun, fresh mountain air and sea breezes, the region naturally favors organic farming. Many producers are embracing eco-friendly methods – not as a trend, but as a return to tradition – blending heritage with innovation to craft wines that are both authentic and forward-looking.

Here, Agiorgitiko reigns in Nemea, yielding charming red wines with velvety texture and complex aromas. In Mantinia, Moschofilero reaches its aromatic peak, bursting with floral and citrus notes and bright acidity. In Achaia, Roditis reveals a fresh, mineral-driven character with hints of lemon and melon. The rare Kydonitsa, native to Laconia, offers juicy stone fruit aromas and soft, rounded textures. Mavrodaphne, long associated with sweet winemaking, is now also vinified dry with increasing success, revealing impressive structure and depth. The Peloponnese is home to seven distinct PDOs (Protected Designations of Origin): PDO Nemea in Corinthia and Argolis, where 100% Agiorgitiko wines are produced in Greece’s largest red wine PDO; PDO Mantinia, where noble Moschofilero reaches its finest expression; in Achaia, PDO Patras – a stronghold of Roditis – and the PDO Mavrodaphne of Patras, the country’s most iconic sweet red; the twin PDOs Muscat of Patras and Muscat of Rio Patras, focused on dessert wines from 100% White Muscat; and finally, PDO Monemvasia-Malvasia in Laconia, historically tied to the legendary medieval Malvasia wine. The Peloponnese’s gastronomic identity is equally compelling. From world-class olive oil and PDO cheeses that include feta to local delicacies such as rustic savory pies and cured meats, this is a place where food and wine speak the same language. Whether in a traditional taverna or a fine dining restaurant, the pairing possibilities are endless – and always delicious. With numerous wineries offering wine tourism experiences, high-quality accommodations, and a hospitality tradition as deep-rooted as its vines, the Peloponnese isn’t just a wine destination, it’s an invitation to connect with Greece at its most authentic. Whether you’re sipping Moschofilero in a stone-built village or discovering an age-old Malvasia reborn by the sea, every bottle uncorks a true sense of place.

THE PELOPONNESE IS 8,320.30 SQUARE MILES (21,549.60 SQUARE KILOMETERS). ITS COASTAL LINE MEASURES 856 MILES (1377 KILOMETERS). IT IS 85% MOUNTAINOUS (GREECE IS 80%), AND IT HAS MORE THAN 50 MOUNTAINS WITH ELEVATIONS OVER 3300 FT (1,000 M). WERE IT NOT FOR A SLIVER OF LAND AT CORINTH, WHICH IN FACT HAS BEEN BISECTED BY A CANAL SINCE 1890s, IT WOULD BE THE LARGEST GREEK ISLAND.

THE MAGIC OF NEMEA

The Peloponnese has seven PDOs (Protected Designation Of Origin): Mantinia, Nemea, Mavrodaphne of Patras, Patras, Muscat of Patras, Muscat of Rio Patras, and Monemvassia-Malvasia. It also has seven regional PGI (Protected Geographical Indication) designations: Argolida, Arcadia, Achaia, Ilia (Elis), Korinthia, Lakonia and Messinia, and eight PGI Area Wines designations: Klimenti, Letrina, Pisatis, Slopes of Aigialia, Slopes of Petroto, Pylia, Tegeia and Trifilia. The Peloponnese produces roughly 26% of all of the wines of Greece and is home to over 30 indigenous grape varieties (Greece has more than 300) and a dozen international grape varieties as well.

These are the facts of the region that we as Greeks refer to as southern Greece, but to me it's about much more than the aforementioned data points. It's about the history it has seen, ancient and recent; the people who have either lived or passed through here, its future, and how we in the outside world choose to define it and how it will choose to define itself.

For the sake of transparency let me divulge that I have strong personal ties to the Peloponnese; my fathers' family can trace its roots in the region back to at least to the 15th century in Gortynia in the highlands of Arcadia. Ever since I was a young child, I have been visiting this region, absorbing its energy, and over the years I have fallen in love with the entirety of the Peloponnese, not just because of its abundant natural beauty but also because of its rich heritage as one of the birthplaces of the ancient Greek way of life.

This region was home to the Bronze Age Mycenaean civilization, the austere culture of Classical Sparta, and, at Mystras, the last seat of Byzantine power. There are still clear traces of the interest paid to this area by other European powers such as the Venetians and the Franks (numerous medieval castles and fortifications built by these invaders dot the landscape of the Peloponnese), and it was from here that the Greek uprising against the Ottoman occupation began.

AS REGARDS WINE, THE PELOPONNESE IS BOTH DISTINCTIVE AND IMPRESSIVE, PRESENTING A SELECTION THAT IS AS RICH AS ITS HISTORY AND AS DIVERSE IN ITS EXPRESSIONS OF WINE STYLES AS ITS CULTURE IS FROM VILLAGE TO VILLAGE.

With so many important grapes and unique regions, it can be hard to know where to start, but for me, it's always Nemea first! Why is this? Well, to start with, there is its importance to wine history, being by all definitions the first “appellation” to be referred to in ancient texts (dating back as far as 740 BC) that describe it as a wine-producing area. There's also the region's connection to mythology and, in particular, the story of Hercules and the Nemean Lion. On top of this, there's the fact that it is the largest red wine PDO of Greece in size and volume produced, and only a two-hour drive from Athens. Of course, it's even closer to Nafplion, a seaside town that served as the first capital of the modern state of Greece.

All of these are good reasons to begin here, but there's one more; this is where I started my wine journey 35 years ago, when I met a young man that wanted to change the face of Greek wine, beginning at Nemea and starting with the grape variety Agiorgitiko. This person was George Skouras, who convinced me that wine is, in fact, the drink of life. This chance encounter changed the course of my professional and personal life; I was just 25 years old, busy exploring all possibilities in the world. I was open to being impressed and inspired, and he accomplished just that. A humble thank you to George for leading me to embark on a crusade to share the wines of Greece and their stories with the United States and with anyone who would listen to me!

As I've often stated in wine presentations over the last 35 years, a bottle of wine from the Old World is history captured in a bottle. It reflects the region and its people. This is especially true when we talk about Nemea and its noble variety Agiorgitiko. This grape has endured for nearly 2500 years in its mountainous home and has gone through nearly as many transformations as the Peloponnese has.

WHEN I FIRST VISITED NEMEA IN 1990, IT WAS A MUCH DIFFERENT LANDSCAPE THAN IT IS TODAY, MOST OF THE PLANTINGS WERE TAKING PLACE IN THE “BIG VALLEY,” WHERE ELEVATIONS RANGE FROM 800 TO 1000 FEET, AND THEY WERE GENERALLY HIGH-TONNAGE HARVESTED SO AS TO YIELD FROM 6 TO 10 TONS PER ACRE.

The ultimate buyer of these grapes was either the Co-op or bulk negotiant producers. Between the vines you'd find intermittent plantings of tobacco, tomatoes or other cash crops, as grape cultivation wasn't garnering much return. Prices were low, and they haven't gotten much better for the farmers over the last 25 years. The high elevation mountain plateaus (where the real story of Nemea lies) were nearly abandoned because of the low natural yields and the increased labor needed. Some smaller vine-

yard plantings were tended by locals so they could produce wine for themselves, but they did this in their spare time while working in the Big Valley producing tonnage. In the end, these bulk wine farming practices led to the wines having a poor reputation; wine writers of this period, including Hugh Johnson and Oz Clarke, characterized them as being thin, and lacking fruit and acidity.

And then came pioneers such as George Skouras, Yian-nis Paraskevopoulos and the late Thanasis Papaioannou who attempted to transform this region by shining a light on what the real Nemea is about, which is terroir! Yes, by all means, wine-making techniques and vineyard practices such as harvesting at lower yields, canopy management, trellising, vineyard orientation and clonal selection have proven to be ground-breaking in terms of the improvement of the wines, but understanding the ecosystem of Nemea with its natural physical diversity allows for Agiorgitikos with different characters, and this is the true magic of Nemea: its ability to express itself with the same variety in so many different styles and classes of wines.

What is terroir? It's the soils, the elevation, the winds, the temperature and the rains. In Nemea there are at least five different soil profiles: calcerous white soils, Alluvial, sandy, clay, red rocky volcanic and combinations thereof. Another key element, often underappreciated is elevation! Nemea starts at 800 ft and raise to over 3400 ft, making it one of the most extreme examples of high-elevation red grape cultivation in Europe. Rains and winds are site-specific but the best planting area are on hillsides with good drainage and located in wind gaps that help with aeration and keep the need for fungicides to a minimum. Objectively, these are the real factors that make Nemea so special, but this diversity has also created some obstacles with the consumer.

Since all Nemea's wines are not created equal (because of natural conditions), the task of educating the wine consumer falls to the producers. They need to help define the differences produced by particular ecosystems. The question is how to best accomplish this. In my opinion, after studying and marketing wines from different regions of the world, as well as working with US wine consumers, it is best to first focus on elevation and then on soils and sub-regions.

Classification by village (there are 17 in total) has been discussed as a solution, but I don't believe this alone would address the differentiation issue or capture the consumers' imagination. I believe that can be best achieved by creating zones of elevation similar to those of the three Rioja growing zones: Rioja Alta, Rioja Alavesa and Rioja Oriental (Baja).

ZONES OF ELEVATION WOULD PROVIDE A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF THE DIFFERENT FACES OF NEAMEAN AGIORGITIKO. THIS WOULD HELP THE REGION MARKET ITSELF TO A BROADER CONSUMER BASE AND IT WOULD SHOW THE DIVERSITY OF THE PDO AS WELL.

Even though I've waxed poetic about the Peloponnese and Nemea, the everyday oenophile has not yet discovered as much about the area and its wines as it has about the regions of northern Greece and the versions of the variety Xinomavro, or about Assyrtiko (in all its points of origin) as a white variety. Nemea, in my opinion, has been held back because of a lack of consumer understanding, a lack of branding and a lack of cooperation between producers, and this has shown in sales, public awareness and, most importantly, consumer appreciation.

What's more, in helping consumers better understand the wines of Nemea, we're also giving them glimpses into the history and the traditions of the Peloponnese, and bringing them a step closer to grasping the unique place that Greece and the Greeks hold in the world of wine. ¶



Mark Andrew MW

Nemea Wines: Through the experts' eyes

INTERVIEW

TEXT AND PHOTOS BY
NIKOS IOANNIDIS

WE ASKED TWO RENOWNED PERSONALITIES OF THE WINE WORLD TO SHARE WITH US THEIR VIEWS ON NEMEA AND ITS WINES. HERE'S WHAT THEY HAD TO SAY.

THE NEXT CHAPTER FOR NEMEA AND AGIORGITIKO

MARK ANDREW MW

A Master of Wine, Mark Andrew is the co-author of the book *Wine From Another Galaxy*, and the co-founder of the enterprise Noble Rot, which includes a magazine and three celebrated restaurants in London: one in Bloomsbury (est. 2015), one in Soho (est. 2020) and one in Mayfair (est. 2023). With his Noble Rot co-founder Dan Keeling, Andrew also started a wine import and distribution company based in Bloomsbury, London, in 2017. They supply the UK's leading restaurants and shops with some of the world's greatest wines from renowned artisanal domaines. Mark is also one of the finest ambassadors for Greek wine globally, a true connoisseur with vast knowledge and a genuine affection for Greece. We met him in Athens, where he was judging wines for Yiannis Karakasis MW's Great Greek Wines project, and we had the chance to talk about Nemea, among other things.

What's your relationship with Nemea?

I suppose I have a somewhat funny relationship with Nemea and Agiorgitiko, in the sense that it's never really been an area or a grape I've been particularly in love with. Within the Peloponnese, however, we have lots of different elevations: north-facing, south-facing, loads of interesting, exciting things happening there.

When we talk about modern Greek wine, and by that I mean post-1970s into the '80s and beyond, I think we're currently in what I'd call the third era.

The first era was shaped by people who studied in France, Italy and elsewhere, bringing back new techniques and a sensitivity that helped lift Greek wine out of the dark ages. That was a crucial moment. Then came a second wave, with figures such as the Boutari family – I'm thinking more of Kir-Yianni – and George Skouras in Nemea.

These were people who took that technical foundation and built on it, refining winemaking in their regions and venturing into export markets to present a new, modern face of Greek wine.

It wasn't the easiest time to be heard. The global wine conversation was still dominated by France and Italy, while Spain was fighting to carve out space. Meanwhile, the New World was on the rise. But despite the noise, figures like George Skouras were out there, pushing the Greek message, and Agiorgitiko, with its international approachability, became a natural ambassador.

All of that was necessary and positive, and George deserves immense credit. But as we've moved into this new era – and I mean a broader shift that began in places like France and Italy – there's been a return to provenance, authenticity, terroir, artisanal methods and sensitive handling. Natural wine is part of that story, but it goes deeper.

How would you describe the current situation?

In today's wine world, there's a resurgence of old-school producers such as Château Rayas. Greek wine has arrived a bit late to this conversation, understandably so, but it's exciting to see the transition beginning.

The thing with Nemea is that, because it played such a prominent role in the previous era, many producers didn't initially see this shift as an opportunity. In fact, it may have felt like a threat. Nemea had become home to well-established brands and familiar styles. The new narrative was about niche, small-scale producers; it was a different energy. For me, Nemea took longer than other regions to embrace this new narrative. But it's happening now. And that, I think, is a major opportunity.

So you're optimistic?

Absolutely. I may not have been Nemea's biggest champion over the last decade, but things are changing. Take George Skouras again, a key figure in shaping Nemea's identity. He's now in the process of passing the torch to his son, Dimitris.

Dimitris clearly has deep respect for his father and wants to continue his work, but he also wants to evolve the conversation. He's very interested in regional identity: the different terroirs, zones, elevations, vineyards. And he's not alone. Others in the area are thinking the same way.

That's essential if Nemea wants to stay relevant in today's wine world. And it's not just about narrative. There's serious work being done on the plant material itself – cleaning up virus issues in Agiorgitiko and improving vine health. But they must also preserve diversity. There isn't just one Agiorgitiko. There are many faces to it.

Is there, then, work to be done?

Definitely. But there's also a real opportunity. I can feel the shift, not just in what producers are doing, but in the story the region is beginning to tell.

This is now a big opportunity for Nemea, and I'm starting to see the change in the narrative – in the place and around the wines. Just as Naoussa has had an amazing last ten years, with people engaging with its different villages, styles, and vigneron, which has been hugely positive for Xinomavro, I hope and I think that Nemea now has the chance to go through the same process.



Olga Sofia Schiaffino

AGIORGITIKO MEETS SANGIOVESE

OLGA SOFIA SCHIAFFINO

Olga Sofia Schiaffino, Italian sommelier and founder of @wineloversitaly, has long been an admirer of Greek wine. She has studied it, written about it and shared its stories with audiences across Europe. Her recent trip to Nemea brought her to Gofas Winery, for an event organized by Kostas Touloumtzis and the Venikos team: a meeting point for two terroirs with more in common than one might expect: Nemea and Tuscany.

Is there really a connection between Nemea and Tuscany?

I think the two regions actually have a lot in common. First of all, the passion with which the winemaker produces wine, and also the way the grapes are so closely linked to the identity of each place. For example, in Tuscany, you immediately think of Sangiovese, and here in Nemea, when you think of grapes, you think of Agiorgitiko. They're both varieties with great ageing potential, and both pair beautifully with meat and the traditional cuisine, in Tuscany and here as well.

I also believe that many of the oenologists working in Greece today studied in Italy or France. Their winemaking style follows some shared principles. I find Agiorgitiko a very impressive variety, capable of producing truly beautiful wines. Personally, I love it when it's vinified purely; it expresses the uniqueness of this place. I think that, if the influence of oak is kept lighter than it used to be, Agiorgitiko can breathe more freely and offer even more emotion to the people who drink it.

In the past, heavy oak and extraction were very fashionable. But today, is it true that we're turning to fresher, more fruit-driven wines?

Yes, it is, and I think this change also comes from the life we've lived. For example, after COVID-19, people started to feel they don't have endless time. And if you have wines that need 20 or 30 years to soften ... that's just too long. In Italy we say Carpe Diem, live the moment. And I think this fresher style – more fruit, more flowers, easier to drink – is what people now expect from life. Something to share, to enjoy, without overthinking the future.

Do you think the family-style winery model that's growing in Nemea is sustainable?

Yes, I do. A small, family-run winery can care for its wines with great attention and integrity. They're not trying to sell across the entire world, and that's beautiful. It also creates jobs locally and, over time, it builds a culture of wine in the region, as well as wine tourism. And this is important, because it's a new frontier for wine. Not just tasting, not just winery shops, but people meeting each other, visiting the winery, enjoying the food, the landscape. That's culture.

But, on the other hand?

On the other hand, small wineries also mean small slices of income. If everyone wants to make their own wine, it can get complicated: too many wineries trying to share the same pie. That's something we have to think about. ¶



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Gaia Next Generation

Successful duos are rare. But when the recipe works, the results are unbeatable. Lito Paraskevopoulou and Sofia Karatsalou are a guarantee for a successful formula. The first, explosive like Santorini’s volcano, and the second, a quiet force, complement each other in the best way. They entered Giorgos Kaplanidis’ studio with energy, bringing a note of optimism – not only through their beauty and youth, but also with their plans for the future. Recently, their famous fathers, Yiannis Paraskevopoulos and Leon Karatsalos, founders of Gaia Wines, who have left their own significant mark on the wine industry, officially presented the new generation in a formal event, publicly passing the torch.

PENELOPE KATSATOU
Was choosing this profession an inevitability?

LITO PARASKEVOPOULOU
No, not at all. I was very lucky and studied something that I chose, which later “clicked” with the profession. I studied Biochemistry and Molecular Biology and continued with a postgraduate degree in Synthetic Biology and Biotechnology. After the master’s, while looking for a job – and because I needed money – I went to work at Sigalas Winery, without the intention of staying in the field. I simply wanted a job and didn’t want to work with my father. I stayed there for almost a year and that’s where I “saw the light.” I realized I really liked production because it combined the scientific with the creative side. I had always had an issue reconciling those two.

SOFIA KARATSALOU
Yes, definitely not an inevitability for me, either, even though my studies, both undergraduate and postgraduate, were in Agriculture, related to the field. It also took me some time; I tried various things, worked, and did some harvests, until I realized that this is what suits me, what I enjoy. What won me over the most was the vineyard. In this profession, you’re in contact with nature. As Lito said, it’s also something creative.

PENELOPE KATSATOU
You’re not really convincing me ...

LITO PARASKEVOPOULOU
My father tried to convince me otherwise. He’d say: “Are you sure?” I’d say yes. “It’s a hell of a job!” And I’d say: “That’s what I want!”

The two young women get along very well. There is chemistry, evident in how they speak and how they posed for the camera. However, wisely, they have chosen not to get in each other’s way. Lito has taken over all production in Santorini, while Sofia started with the viticultural side, which is her area of expertise, in Nemea. Of course, this doesn’t prevent them from being involved in other aspects of the job as well.

PENELOPE KATSATOU
I found it impressive that there was an event where your fathers publicly said they are handing over the reins. It was a nice gesture, and a clear one. How did you see it?

SOFIA KARATSALOU
I think it’s an intention they have, something they want. But in reality, it’s hard for them to let go of control.

PENELOPE KATSATOU
They’re also still quite young.

LITO PARASKEVOPOULOU
It’s not just that. At least on my side, my father has completely handed over the reins in terms of Santorini’s production, the winemaking part. Obviously, he’s there for questions – the man is a professor. I’ve learned, and still learn, a lot from him. But now he doesn’t even want to know what’s going on – he’s tired, too. Understandably so. He had things happening on too many fronts. He remains very active in Nemea’s production and wants to keep it that way. That said, in the business aspect, our fathers are still the ones who manage things daily.

SOFIA KARATSALOU
And that’s where we’re starting to get more involved ...

PENELOPE KATSATOU
So it was more a way to introduce you further to the public?

SOFIA KARATSALOU
Yes, and I think that’s where the process began for us to gradually become more involved. Each of us has her main area, but increasingly we’re taking on more responsibilities and participating in more decisions. It’s clearly a transition.

LITO PARASKEVOPOULOU
Personally, I have no ambition or desire to become a CEO. That will never happen! The moment that has to happen, I’ll leave and go do a PhD.

SOFIA KARATSALOU
I believe it’s a very interesting and creative part of the work. I definitely don’t have the requisite scientific knowledge yet. But the business part also has its charm. I think we should slowly start getting into that area as well.

LITO PARASKEVOPOULOU
Yes, we should. But for me personally, only in the sense of negotiation and being heard. As long as I feel heard, I’m not interested in being the person who has to handle all the communication. I want to be with my little tanks, doing my chemistry, the hands-on part.

PENELOPE KATSATOU
What do you find most difficult about working with your parents?

SOFIA KARATSALOU
The hard part is communication. Because two relationships are involved – the professional and the familial – so often the boundaries aren’t clear, and you can definitely say more than you would under other circumstances. I think the most difficult part is finding the right communication between us, but I believe we’ve found it.

LITO PARASKEVOPOULOU
I think it’s also about expectations, in the sense that they don’t believe there should be a limit to what we take on. When our fathers started, they began with something small that grew gradually. We were “thrown” into something very big. And it keeps growing. It’s clear that the same things they did on their own can no longer be managed by just one or two people. And that’s a bit hard for them to accept. “At your age, I was doing this and that too!” Yes, but not at this scale.

PENELOPE KATSATOU
So, what is the biggest challenge you face right now?

LITO PARASKEVOPOULOU
Boundaries!

PENELOPE KATSATOU
In general, regarding the evolution of this work?

LITO PARASKEVOPOULOU
Climate change and the building boom in Santorini, the rising prices.

SOFIA KARATSALOU
Every generation faces different challenges and I don’t think you can compare them. They started this work with the difficulties of their times. We enter with climate change and everything that’s happening already in place. For us, it’s easier because they are givens, whereas for them, they’re new problems they must handle. There’s more pessimism on their side regarding these issues. While we, you know, deal with viticulture, with wines – we’ll face these problems, just as they faced others that might seem foreign to us.

The subject of wine tourism is, of course, something of interest to them. They agree that, in Nemea, wine tourism has a lot of room for improvement – not only as regards their winery but for the entire region, which they believe has not realized its full potential at all. On Santorini, things are clearly better. The Gaia winery in the old tomato factory, located right on the seashore, has a wonderful bohemian vibe, and, as visitors are quick to declare, offers a unique experience. It’s also one of the most active wineries in the Santorini Winemakers Association. What’s more, despite the many difficulties involved, both in regards to land acquisition and to the extra irrigation needs that more vines represent, Gaia has decided to invest in new vineyards on the island. Eight new hectares will be added to the 11 they already have On Santorini and Thirasia.

LITO PARASKEVOPOULOU
Right now, though, the production sector is much healthier as an industry in Nemea. In fact, it is much healthier everywhere except on Santorini. Nemea has its issues, too, but things are certainly more organized and we work more collectively, especially in terms of the relationship between winemakers and growers. On Santorini, things are a bit more complicated.

PINELOPI KATSATOU
I think you might look with envy at someone on Santorini, if you

weren't there yourself.

LITO PARASKEVOPOULOU
My priorities are a bit different. I really value quality of life in my daily routine, and I don’t have huge ambitions. Santorini is often very difficult. The last two harvests we’ve done were in particular very tough in every aspect, psychologically as well – anyone responsible for production or winemaking on Santorini can confirm that. I started to wonder if it was worth it. Each time it took two months to recover, trying to get back on our feet. In the end, you forget. It’s a bit like childbirth. If you enjoy this job, you forget the pain and want it again. But it’s not a given that you will continue to do so. It depends on one’s priorities.

SOFIA KARATSALOU
On the other hand, it’s also an opportunity, with everything happening in Santorini, for the new generation to strive for something much better: in the viticulture, in the vineyard management, and in communication and cooperation between producers and winemakers. To have a common goal.

PENELOPE KATSATOU
Ideally, where would you like to be in ten years?

SOFIA KARATSALOU
I think the most important thing is, obviously, for the company to evolve, to grow a bit more. But I would like, as we grow older, for us to be more committed to more sustainable practices, whether in viticulture or winemaking. In all processes: in the bottles we use, in all our winery operations. I would like us to be able to say in ten years that this winery is a model, a benchmark.

LITO PARASKEVOPOULOU
I’m not interested in expansion because I believe we’ve already expanded a lot. For me, the dream is to base our production on our own vineyards. Very practically. More expansion in viticulture, and less in production.

SOFIA KARATSALOU
To be able to convert our vineyards to organic. When you’re based one hundred percent on your own vineyards, you have better control over all practices.

PENELOPE KATSATOU
Where are you at now in terms of organic cultivation?

SOFIA KARATSALOU
We haven’t started yet, but it’s in the plans for the next few years.

LITO PARASKEVOPOULOU
Exactly. That’s very easy. It’s not a matter of starting the process.

SOFIA KARATSALOU
But it’s also time-consuming.

LITO PARASKEVOPOULOU
Last year, Sofia took over vineyard management, and organic cultivation is one of the things we’ve decided she will pursue.

PENELOPE KATSATOU
Do you want this for the winery or is it just a trend that you can’t avoid?

SOFIA KARATSALOU
I think we could avoid it if we wanted to, but we don’t. We’ve already received a certification for integrated management. For me, it’s not a trend. We have a duty to do it. My generation has a duty. There



Lito Paraskevopoulou

are some difficulties, but it’s manageable. Our generation owes nature something in return.

LITO PARASKEVOPOULOU
We’re dealing with difficulties that are mostly related to labor.

PENELOPE KATSATOU
What about natural or biodynamic wines – where do you stand?

LITO PARASKEVOPOULOU
No, no. Our philosophy might be somewhat close to biodynamic wines, but not to natural ones.

I think that is a trend that will pass. I’ve seen it many times. I believe the term “natural” means nothing – it’s just aggressive marketing. I agree with the view that it started in France, from producers outside PDO zones, where the only way to enter the market was with such aggressive marketing. As a winemaker, I find their production uninteresting, as everything tastes the same. As a biochemist, I want to play with all the tools available to. I’m more interested in the circular economy aspect than in “natural.” We put a word on the label. But what do we actually do? For me, it’s a trend that will fade. Sometimes it’s mistaken for with orange wines, but they have nothing to do with each other. We, too, are trying something with the label “Asyrtiko Klaiei.” But that has to do with its vinification method, which includes native yeasts.

SOFIA KARATSALOU
I agree as well.

PENELOPE KATSATOU
Wine in cans? What do you say? Would you be open to it?

SOFIA KARATSALOU
It’s certainly interesting. But it also depends on marketing – whether someone would choose it. I’m not sure how ready the Greek public is. Maybe later. It does have several practical advantages; however, one doesn’t cancel out the other.



Sofia Karatsalou

PENELOPE KATSATOU
Favorite grape varieties?

SOFIA KARATSALOU
Assyrtiko, but I also really like Moschofilero. And for reds, I prefer full-bodied and aged wines.

LITO PARASKEVOPOULOU
Assyrtiko, Aidani and Robola. I also really like Cretan wines. As for reds, right now I love Etna Rosso wines. I’m crazy about them, they’re intense. It must have something to do with volcanoes. It’s a style that could inspire us in Greece – we’re very close geographically, too. I’m envious and want to sneak into a winemaker’s brain and learn what they do. We can learn a lot from Sicily. But I also see great potential in Xinomavro.

PENELOPE KATSATOU
As young women in a male-dominated field, do you face difficulties?

SOFIA KARATSALOU
The truth is that things are sometimes quite complicated. I don’t think they treat me the same as they would if I were a man. I feel in some cases that I’m not taken very seriously. I don’t know if it’s an age thing. I make twice the effort as I would if I were a man. I just persist.

LITO PARASKEVOPOULOU
Such problems come mainly from older people. In recent years, though, quite a few women have moved into production and leadership roles. I could even say, with just a degree of exaggeration, that Santorini is run by women. Come to Santorini and see for yourself.

PENELOPE KATSATOU
What would I see, beyond young and old at a big, beautiful table. What happens?

LITO PARASKEVOPOULOU
Our fathers run back and forth, constantly bringing more Gaia wines! ¶



The art of the harvest at Boutari Estate.



After the harvest, grape pressing at the winery.



TRAVEL

TEXT BY
THALIA KARTALI
AND NIKOS IOANNIDIS

PHOTOS BY
NIKOS IOANNIDIS

LEAVING BEHIND A RAINY ATHENS AS WE HEADED FOR ARCADIA IN THE HEART OF THE PELOPONNESE, WE ALREADY FELT THAT SOMETHING DIFFERENT AWAITED US THERE. THE ROUTE TO THE MANTINIA PLATEAU WAS MAGNIFICENT, THE LANDSCAPE RADIANT AFTER THE EARLIER DOWNPOUR AND THE VINEYARDS HEAVY WITH GRAPES AND READY FOR THE HARVEST. IT WAS AS IF MANTINIA HAD DRESSED IN ITS FINEST AND, ALONG WITH ITS WONDERFUL MANTINIANS, WAS FULLY PREPARED TO WELCOME US AND SHOW US ITS NEW FACE.

MANTINIA

Or rather, its many faces, as expressed through the efforts of those local winemakers, the Mantinia group, who decided to join forces and create a team with the goal of breathing new life into one of Greece's most important wine-producing regions – a region which, after a period of decline, is now making a powerful comeback.

Having had the chance to meet all the members of the Mantinia group together, as well as to speak with each one individually during an exceptionally well-organized two-day event, we saw firsthand that these are people full of incredible energy and passion. They are eager to work and collaborate meaningfully, and to plan joint initiatives that will lead to the revival of the Mantinia brand, one more often associated with earlier eras of Greek wine production.

We didn't manage to visit all of them; after all, not all wineries are open to visitors. However, we did sample the work of all of them, both during a wonderful lunch at the exceptional Villa Incognito and at a Masterclass held at the Tselepos Estate, an event which brought our two-day visit to a close.

The main asset of the region is the Moschofilero variety which, in recent years, has been on the rise again, thanks to the efforts of these winemakers who are striving – successfully – to prove that this important grape, one of Greece's four ambassador varieties, has much to offer: different styles, many distinct approaches, and very high quality. The many happy things we experienced during our visit to Mantinia included a healthy sense of competition, the free exchange of ideas, friendly conversation, a willingness to collaborate for a common goal, and wines of great quality.

New additions to the region, such as the brand-new Novus winery founded by renowned oenologist Leonidas Nasiakos – who confided to us that with this he had fulfilled a lifelong dream – along with the expansion of major wineries from nearby Nemea, such as Skouras Estate, clearly demonstrate a strong commitment to reviving the zone. At the same time, support from established figures such as Yiannis Tselepos (who, as we came to understand, played a catalytic role in forming the group by encouraging collaboration even as he discreetly made room so that Andriani and Aris Tselepos, the next generation, could take on greater roles at the Tselepos winery) shows that the idea of strength through unity has truly become part of the DNA of all those winemakers aiming to advance Greek wine.

Seeking to showcase the many possibilities of their zone's PDO variety, the region's producers are experimenting with var-

ious winemaking techniques, all while emphasizing top-quality grapes with the high acidity that stems from the region's continental climate and the significant temperature differences between day and night. Their goal is to present a different image of Moschofilero – beyond its familiar aromatic profile – by giving it color and body even as they take full advantage of the typical characteristics of the appellation.

May this unique group, the Mantinians, with their inspired name, serve as an inspiration to others! The potential is certainly there, as we discovered.

BOUTARI WINERY

Oenologist Alexandros Tzachristos welcomed us with a smile and palpable relief that the morning downpour hadn't ruined our visit. He led us straight to one of Greece's most historic vineyards, where the harvest had already begun. Small tractors with colorful crates full of grapes passed us on the way to the winery.

Covering a total of 700 stremmata (70 hectares), this particular vineyard was originally established by the Kampa winery before becoming a holding of Boutari, which today owns 310 stremmata (31 hectares), planted not only with Moschofilero but with Chardonnay, Gewürztraminer and Riesling as well. At an elevation of 650 meters, the Mantinia plateau is surrounded by the Artemisio and Mainalo mountains. It was the Boutari Winery that preserved the Moschofilero variety from extinction and introduced the bottled version to consumers. There's no doubt that the Boutari Winery is synonymous with Moschofilero – at least in the minds of older generations. That's undoubtedly part of why they continue to emphasize producing this particular label, which remains a classic for those who appreciate traditional Moschofilero. The winery has now entered a new era, with its most recent plantings from 2006–2007 being entirely organic.

Driving through the vineyards, we arrived at the oldest vineyard in the zone, one which produces a distinct label: Mantinia Cuvée. This is an evolution of a classic Boutari label, aimed at showcasing the complexity of the Moschofilero variety. We had the pleasure of tasting it under the trees, outside the estate's beautiful old stone warehouse. Accompanying the wine with delicious local pies, we first tasted the all-time classic Boutari Moschofilero 2023, followed by the Mantinia Cuvée 2023 from 50-year-old vines, and finished with a dessert wine made from sun-dried grapes. Our introduction to the many faces of Moschofilero was underway ...



Trucks loaded with grapes heading to the winery.

TSELEPOS ESTATE

Getting back on the Tripoli-Sparta highway, we headed south and took the exit toward Sparta, heading to the Tegea area where the Tselepos Estate is located. Another historic presence in the region, the Tselepos Estate hardly needs any special introduction. Our tour was led by Aris Tselepos, just back from Santorini where they maintain yet another winery, in addition to those in Mantinia and Nemea. The story of the estate's founder Yiannis Tselepos begins during what's become known as the Greek wine revolution, as he belongs to that golden generation of winemakers who put Greece on the global wine map. Now, gradually passing the baton to the next generation, he proudly watches his children Aris and Andriani – the latter is also the chairwoman of the board of Mantinians – moving steadily forward, always under his guidance, leading the Estate into its next phase.

Production here has now reached 500,000 bottles, with labels that have become trademarks in both Mantinia and Nemea. Aris said that the winery is expanding its support for wine tourism. The development of this kind of tourism in the Mantinia region is one of the goals of the Mantinians, and the Tselepos Estate is well positioned to lead this effort, thanks in large part to its modern and fully equipped facilities.

We continued our tour in the production areas, where we found the Kokkinomilios Merlot fermenting in open barrels, and concrete tanks awaiting the Blanc de Gris – one of the Moschofilero labels produced by the Estate – the grapes for which had not yet been harvested. A little further on was the Amalia Brut, another iconic sparkling wine produced using the traditional champagne method, and one of the Estate's flagship labels. Aris said that they are continuing to experiment with sparkling wines, and he hinted that we might see something new soon.

The walk through the vineyards was truly unique. The old watermill in the Kokkinomilios vineyard – named after the striking red color of its soil – has been restored, while at the highest point of the Estate stands the chapel of Saint Tryphon, patron saint of vine growers. A new tasting room, nestled literally among the vines, is under construction there, on a site with breathtaking views. During a brief tasting session, we had the pleasure of trying the 2023 Blanc de Gris and –unexpectedly, since the visit focused on Moschofilero – the 2017 Kokkinomilios, an exceptional Merlot from a great vintage year.

TROUPIS WINERY

After a short drive back towards the heart of the Mantinia plateau and its vineyards, we arrived at Troupis Winery. We were welcomed by Pitsa Troupi and Kostas and Thodoris Koutsoumbos, all family members involved in running the winery, with the youngest, Thodoris, leading the production as oenologist, and his father Kostas and uncle Yiannis Troupis taking care of the viticulture.

With a 100-stremma (10-hectare) privately-owned vineyard planted almost exclusively with Moschofilero – except for 10 stremmata of experimental Assyrtiko – the winery focuses on alternative vinifications of this PDO variety. As Thodoris, freshly returned from a harvest in Chile, explained, Troupis Winery uses the grape's pink-tinged skin to explore different extraction times, resulting in various styles of rosé e wines.

Low-intervention wines, with minimal sulfites, unfiltered and fermented with native yeasts, make up their premium range. In terms of yeasts, they've gone a step further, producing their own Moschofilero yeasts in a specialized lab in Bordeaux. Their production includes inspired labels, with "Tomi" (meaning "Incision") standing out – both conceptually, as it represents a symbolic turning point in Mantinia's Moschofilero story, and for the quality of the wine itself, both in its white and rosé versions alike.

A serendipitous discovery, as Thodoris recounted while we tasted the wines around a large table in the production area surrounded by stainless steel tanks and concrete eggs, led to their "100" label; a wine, forgotten for 100 days in a container originally destined for tsipouro, became an entirely new expression of rosé Moschofilero and, eventually, a gastronomic wine that was named Wine of the Year by the wine magazine Decanter. That distinction was not particularly surprising; the Troupis wines are highly appreciated, winning awards in Greece and abroad, and demonstrating the versatile potential of Moschofilero.

MANTINIA

SPIROPOULOS ESTATE

Leaving the Milia area and heading north toward Ancient Mantinia, passing the unique Church of Saint Fotini – a regional landmark – we found ourselves entering the gates of Spiropoulos Estate. A flurry of activity greeted us, as freshly harvested early-harvest Moschofilero grapes had just arrived, destined for sparkling wine production.

We were welcomed by Konstantina Spiropoulou and the wonderful dog Marley, who accompanied us throughout the tour of the winery. From our very first conversation, Spiropoulou's unwavering belief in the potential of Moschofilero was clear, particularly when she praised its high acidity and intriguing skin color. "Moschofilero went through some tough years due to its aromatic nature and almost nonexistent body," the winemaker explained. "It needs careful winemaking – lees contact, barrels, different vinification techniques – but its potential is vast."

Sparkling and rosé wines were the estate's first experimental ventures back in 1996, led by oenologist Yiannis Paraskevopoulos (of Gaia Wines); these became the backbone of today's production. Their 600-stremmata (60-hectare) vineyard, certified organic since 1996, has recently gone even greener by adopting strict permaculture protocols – a practice system focused entirely on sustainability.

The landmark year for the estate was 2020, when it reintroduced itself to the wine-loving public through internal winemaking upgrades and a renewed approach to its vineyards. A careful study of vineyard landscapes and their individual vinifications – a philosophy echoing that of Burgundy – is Spiropoulou's vision for the coming years. Guided by the winery's oenologist, Giorgos Korinis, we tasted four of the estate's eleven labels: Mantinia PDO 2023, Ode Panos 2023, Ode Panos Rosé 2023 – both sparkling wines made by the tank method – and the Mantinia Rosé 2021, a late-release Moschofilero rosé from one particular vineyard plot.

PANAGOPOULOS WINERY

Just a few minutes further, at the foothills of Ancient Nemea, lies Panagopoulos Winery – another admirable venture by two young individuals who impressed us not only with their knowledge and warmth but also with their determination to build upon the legacy begun by their parents. Backed by their dynamic mother, daughter Marilena, a chemical engineering graduate from NTUA, and son Dimitris, a food technology graduate, cultivate and vinify 30 stremmata (3 hectares) of vineyards surrounding their welcoming winery.

The venture began in the 1990s when the vineyard was first planted with Moschofilero and the grapes were sold to the Spiropoulos Estate. The first vinifications followed and, in 2015, their first bottled wines. Marilena and Dimitris took over in 2017, and since then they've been producing 11,000 bottles annually across four labels – three Moschofilero-based and one red Merlot. Their white and rosé Moschofilero wines, Antinoe and Astero-pi, are inspired by mythology and the region's ancient history. The natural label Moscofleur is produced in very limited quantities.

VERVENIOTI WINERY

Winemaker Betty Vervenioti's journey has been unique. After studies in oenology and viticulture in Montpellier and work experience in California's Napa Valley as well as in New Zealand, Australia and Portugal, she returned to Greece a few years ago to take over the family winery-all while organizing tastings for the program "Greece by the Glass," working on an agritourism farm, and teaching at vocational schools. When we asked how she manages it all, she answered disarmingly: "It's all about time management."

The winery's vineyard was planted by her parents in 1990; today, the estate has 50 privately owned stremmata (5 hectares). Its wines are low-intervention, with very low sulfite levels. As we prepared to taste her wines, we were served her mother's fig jam, her grandfather's honey, and a wonderful local cheese – all perfect accompaniments to the three bottles in front of us: Mantinia PDO 2023, Rodonitis 2023 (a rosé Moschofilero), and a sparkling Pet-Nat 2023. Vervenioti's first independent vinification was a 2021 Mantinia PDO, a tribute to the zone that hosts her. A rosé followed in 2022, and the Pet-Nat in 2023. Over its short existence, the winery has grown by small, careful steps, with production not exceeding 6,000 bottles across the three labels.

“Makes you want to dive into the sparkling sea”



Le Figaro, Béatrice Delamotte
“Les 10 meilleurs vins du monde”

Tetramythos - Roditis natur 2023

Le Figaro Rating: 93/100





Bottling time has arrived.

MOSCHOFILERO: A GRAPE WITH MANY IDENTITIES

Moschofilero is a variety with many different faces and great potential, and that is exactly what the Mantinians wanted to demonstrate at the masterclass they organized in the welcoming tasting room of the Tselepos Estate at Rizes Tegeas. There, we had the opportunity to taste a wine from each winery participating in the Mantinia group, wines of every style: sparkling and still; white, rosé and light red; products of conventional or organic farming; and wines made using gentle methods, long macerations and early and late harvest grapes – wines full of freshness, but also with the ability to age. While each had its own character, we found an overall high level of quality across the wines we tasted, thanks primarily to the excellent work being done with the Moschofilero grape, which dominates the Mantinia region. A noteworthy topic during the discussion that followed the tasting was the concern of the winemakers regarding climate change, particularly extreme weather events and their increasing frequency.

FIRST FLIGHT: THE SPARKLING ONES

The sparkling expression of Moschofilero has a long history, as documented by filmmaker Kostas Spyropoulos in his documentary "Arcadia, Champagne d'Orient." Sparkling wine appeared in Mantinia in the late 19th century; by the early 20th century, the region's sparkling wines were known in major wine markets. Today, the style is making a comeback, and we had the chance to taste three different sparkling wines from the Mantinians.

ODE PANOS, SPIROPOULOS ESTATE 2023 PDO MANTINIA, 100% MOSCHOFILERO

A white sparkling wine from organically farmed vineyards located at an elevation of 650–700 meters in Chani, Ancient Mantinia. It's produced using the autoclave method, with six months of lees aging before bottling.

AMALIA VINTAGE 2019 EXTRA BRUT, TSELEPOS ESTATE PDO MANTINIA, 100% MOSCHOFILERO

A white sparkling wine made using the traditional champagne method. Early harvest for the base wine, first fermentation in stainless steel tanks, followed by second fermentation in bottle. Aged for two years on the lees. Total production: 7,000 bottles.

PET-NAT 2023, VERVENIOTI WINERY 100% MOSCHOFILERO

This is a white Pet Nat, initially fermented in stainless steel and then bottled before fermentation completes. Brut Nature with 1.2 g residual sugar. The winery's first attempt at a low-intervention sparkling wine. Total production: 6,000 bottles.

SECOND FLIGHT: WHITE VINIFICATIONS

The classic and most well-known version of Moschofilero is white vinification, which produces most of the PDO wines from the 800-hectare zone. The oldest vineyards were planted in 1972, with most replantings occurring after 2011. The average age of the vines ranges from 15 to 25 years.

In all five wines of this flight, we recognized the key characteristics of Moschofilero: pale, bright color; elegant wines with nice acidity; and dominant herbal and floral aromas, along with green apple and citrus. Each wine, however, had its own unique character and reflected the winemaker's style.

MANTINIA 2022, VINEYARD 211 100% MOSCHOFILERO

Dry white wine. Organic vineyard in Levidi, at an elevation of 700 meters. Classic white vinification.

MANTINIA 2023, KALOGEROPOULOS WINERY 100% MOSCHOFILERO

Dry white wine. Organically farmed vineyards with low yields in Zevgoliati, Arcadia. Pre-fermentation maceration, followed by two months on the lees before bottling. Mantinia Cuvée Boutari 2023 – 100% Moschofilero Dry white wine. Grapes from the area's oldest vineyard (planted in 1972), now owned by Boutari. Pre-fermentation maceration, a blend of different vinification styles to highlight the vineyard's quality, and six months on the lees before bottling.

JULIET & ROMEO MOSCHOFILERO 2022 PGI ARCADIA, 100% MOSCHOFILERO

Dry white from a 50-year-old vineyard located at an elevation of 650 meters. Partly replanted, now with vines about 25 years old. Cold soak and fermentation in stainless steel with temperature control. Four months on the lees with batonnage. Released at least a year after harvest to highlight ageing potential.

OPTIMUM 2022, NOVUS WINERY PDO MANTINIA, 100% MOSCHOFILERO

Leonidas Nasiakos presents a different take on Moschofilero. A 50-year-old dry-farmed vineyard in Zevgoliati, 11.4 hectares with yields of 600–800 kg/ha, organically cultivated. Native yeast fermentation starts in stainless steel; midway, some juice is moved to small concrete eggs and acacia barrels to complete fermentation. Bottled and aged six months before release.

TRAVEL

THIRD FLIGHT: THE ROSÉS AND LIGHT REDS

Moschofilero is not a white grape – the berries have pinkish and gray hues. Rosé versions, produced through long maceration (typically 1–2 days), are increasing in the region. In fact, there are now so many rosé labels that the Mantinians aim to revise the PDO Mantinia dossier to include such wines.

MOSCHOFILERO 2023, PAPAGEORGIOU ESTATE PGI ARCADIA, 100% MOSCHOFILERO

Pale rosé, dry. Grapes from the "Mavrofilero" clone, from an estate-owned vineyard in Ancient Mantinia at an elevation of 650 meters. One-day cold soak and lees aging before bottling. Papageorgiou Winery is located in Artemisio.

TOMI 2023, TROUPIS WINERY PGI ARCADIA, 100% MOSCHOFILERO

Grapes from a vineyard in Fteri, Arcadia. 24-hour maceration and fermentation in stainless steel. Two months of lees stirring before bottling.

ASPELA 2022, BOSINAKIS WINERY 100% MOSCHOFILERO

Light red wine. Selected vineyards in Alea. Green harvesting leads to low yields (~500 kg/ha). 20-day maceration, followed by fermentation in two tanks: one with whole bunches, the other with destemmed grapes. Blended, then aged two months in old French oak barrels. Total production: 1,176 bottles for the 2022 vintage.

MANTINIA

MOSCHOFLEUR 2023, PANAGOPOULOS ESTATE 100% MOSCHOFILERO

Minimal intervention wine with intense light red color. 25-day maceration, meaning fermentation occurs essentially with the skins. Fermented with native yeasts. Aged two months with lees in wooden barrels, with batonnage. Only 300 bottles produced, unfiltered.

FOURTH FLIGHT: THE LATE HARVEST

Just one late-harvest version has emerged so far, adding another dimension to Moschofilero – a semi-dry wine.

NOEMVRIS 2022, MOROPOULOS WINERY PGI ARCADIA, 100% MOSCHOFILERO

Based on the year's climate, Moropoulos Winery selects one vineyard in Neochori to withstand conditions and be harvested in November. Pre-fermentation maceration, then aged for a year on the lees in tank, followed by another year in bottle before release. Semi-dry, with around 6 g/L residual sugar. ¶

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Yakinthi Tyrovola and Sotiris Kouros, owners of Villa Incognito, are flanking chef George Sougioultzis.



Some of the signature dishes at Villa Incognito.



TRAVEL

TEXT AND PHOTOS BY
NIKOS IOANNIDIS

VILLA INCOGNITO, AT THE HEART OF TRIPOLI'S GASTRONOMIC SCENE, STANDS APART FROM THE COMPETITION.

Villa Incognito: A culinary destination in the heart of Tripoli

More than just a restaurant, it is a destination, a reason to travel for those who see food and wine as true pleasures in splendid surroundings. Sotiris Kouros and Yakinthi Tyrovola curate an experience where food and wine play starring roles, and where every detail, from the décor and tableware to the kindness and warmth of the people, matters. The love they pour into their work is evident in every dish. "We want people to leave smiling," says Kouros.

The story of this establishment officially begins in 2012, but Villa Incognito is the continuation of something much older. In 1920, Sotiris' grandparents opened a hani, or roadside inn, on the very same site. For decades, weary travelers stopped here for rest, food and wine. Later generations took over, navigating both joyful and challenging times. Eventually, the hani became a restaurant, which later closed, and the building's use changed. Now, Sotiris and Yakinthi have brought the space back full circle, reinventing the eatery in its modern form: what such a place might be today.

Villa Incognito serves food with character: dishes rooted in traditional recipes, made with local ingredients and expressing what we might call creative cuisine, but in its most genuine and unpretentious sense. The kitchen honors seasonality, reinterpreting ancestral flavors with care. Behind the culinary team with Kouros is the head chef George Sougioultzis.

In the dining room, Yakinthi greets guests and tends to every detail. As the restaurant's sommelier, she also curates a wine list that many establishments would envy. It has a distinctly Greek orientation, categorized by grape variety and wine region, and includes rare bottles from older vintages. Naturally, the wines of Mantinia take pride of place, showcasing the region's producers.

We had the chance to enjoy a special menu based on the restaurant's signature dishes.

We began with sourdough bread and charcoal-grilled vlita, or greens, in a broth of fresh tomatoes, topped with roasted man-ouromyzythra, a local cheese; this was an absolute masterpiece.

The pie of the day followed: an oil-free, handmade filo stuffed with eggplant, trachanas (a fermented grain-yoghurt mix), Tripoli feta, and mint – each flavor clear and vivid.

Next came an exceptional reinterpretation of a classic Sunday meal from Tripoli: rooster croquettes served with a trachanas crêpe and a rich pastitsada (tomato-based) sauce.

The two main courses were served with ritual care. First there was lemon-braised kid goat giouvetsi, presented in traditional copper cookware. Then, Argitiko, a slow-cooked spiced beef in tomato sauce, arrived in a clay casserole, filling the table with aromas of allspice, cinnamon and tomato.

A handmade galaktoboureko, a custard-in-filo-pastry treat, brought the evening to a perfect close.

"Our goal is to create a destination and showcase the cuisine and ingredients of our region," says Kouros. We want our food to convey the effort of all those who bring us their produce. When someone strives to grow a truly good tomato, I just want to place it on a plate, untouched."

Inspired by tradition and guided by culinary exploration, Sotiris and Yakinthi often travel to further expand their vision. For their fellow gastronomic travelers, they've created two charming rooms above the restaurant, recreating the hani that once was, and honoring its story in the best possible way. ¶



WINE PAIRING

TEXT BY
NIKOS LOUKAKIS
SENIOR LECTURER WSPC

ILLUSTRATION BY
PHILIPPOS AVRAMIDIS

IF ONE RED GRAPE CAN EFFORTLESSLY SHIFT FROM A PLAYFUL ROSÉ TO A DEEPLY STRUCTURED RED, AND ACCOMPANY DISHES AS VARIED AS VEGETABLE STEWS, PIZZA, RIB-EYE STEAK OR EVEN CHOCOLATE, IT'S AGIORGITIKO. VERSATILE, WELCOMING AND INDELIBLY LINKED TO NEMEA, THIS VARIETY PROVES THAT EXCEPTIONAL FLAVOR CAN COME WITH A GREEK NAME.

AGIORGITIKO

Naturally, the conversation about Agiorgitiko starts in Nemea. While the last decade has seen excellent plantings in northern Greece, Nemea remains the benchmark for this grape; its soils and winemaking styles let the variety show off in everything from pale rosés and bright, juicy reds to dense, age-worthy cuvées.

Unlike Xinomavro's edgy structure, Agiorgitiko relies on generous alcohol and velvety tannins rather than high acidity and grip, making it perfect for newcomers to red wine. Light extractions are bursting with red fruit, while ageing in oak brings on sweet spice notes. Denser versions add notes of black fruit and chocolate along with hints of dried herbs. Below is a guide for pairing each distinct style.

- **ROSÉ AGIORGITIKO**
Brief maceration yields crisp acidity, vibrant red berries, and virtually no tannin.

IDEAL PAIRINGS

Summer vegetable dishes prepared in olive oil (okra, green beans and briam, or Greek ratatouille); tomato-based pastas (with Napolitana or Marinara sauces); Neapolitan-style pizza; grilled jumbo shrimp; and seafood tartare.

- **FRESH, UNOAKED RED AGIORGITIKO**
Some estates use Beaujolais-style carbonic maceration for a vivid fruit presence. Slightly chilled, these light reds are lively and soft-tannined.

IDEAL PAIRINGS

Fattier charcuterie; savory tarts and cheese pies; Florina peppers stuffed with cheese; and imam (baked eggplant with tomato). Step up from rosé to this style when vegetable stews include chicken.

- **CLASSIC "NEMEA" STYLE**
Medium-bodied wines show ripe red fruit, supple tannins, and vanilla-sweet spice from barrel ageing. Warm alcohol rounds out the mid-palate.

IDEAL PAIRINGS

Spaghetti Bolognese; juicy beef burgers; pizza with pepperoni or cured meats; braised octopus with macaroni; spit-roasted meats; and grilled pork – dishes whose richness will balance the wine's tannin and showcase its fruit.

- **TOP-TIER AGIORGITIKO**

Low yields and long maturation (often in new oak) produce two main expressions: cool-site wines (higher elevations): brighter acidity, vivid red fruit.

Warm-site wines (lower elevations): darker fruit, higher alcohol, firm ripe tannins, marked chocolate notes.

IDEAL PAIRINGS

Flame-grilled rib-eye or T-bone; slow-cooked beef cheeks or oxtail; duck breast with berry sauces; meats with wild mushrooms and stewed or baked pork or lamb shanks. Aged yellow cheeses, including Kefalograviera, Comté, Parmigiano Reggiano and mature Gouda and Emmental, also shine.

- **SWEET AGIORGITIKO**

Sun-dried grapes and lengthy barrel ageing intensify fruit and add nutty, coffee, and chocolate overtones. Expect high alcohol and sweetness.

IDEAL PAIRINGS

Dark chocolate, especially chocolate with hazelnuts, or desserts featuring dried dark fruits.

IN CONCLUSION

Across every expression, Agiorgitiko is a culinary chameleon, equally at ease beside weeknight comfort food, casual bites or haute cuisine. Its naturally soft, rounded character makes it appealing to both beginners and seasoned wine lovers – proving once again that versatility can, indeed, have a Greek accent.

MOSCHOFILERO

Moschofilero is the white wine that embraces the Greek summer as much as we do. With the Mantinia plateau as its birthplace and a naturally high acidity as its hallmark, it pairs effortlessly with a wide range of dishes, asking for nothing more than the chance to refresh and win you over.

You'll encounter Moschofilero primarily on the Mantinia plateau, which already sets that area apart from other PDO regions in Greece. Unlike many wine regions, Mantinia has no maritime influence. Lying at an elevation of 500 to 600 meters and surrounded by mountains, its climate leans toward semi-continental, with cold winters and milder summers.

This environment has two key effects on the wine's style: first, it allows Moschofilero to ripen slowly, often into October; second, it preserves the grape's naturally high acidity while keeping alcohol levels moderate.

Moschofilero from Mantinia was granted PDO status in 1970, in recognition of its unique character. Until the early 2000s, its style followed a consistent pattern, still largely dominant today, and it remains a favorite among Greek wine lovers. The classic Moschofilero is dry, with high acidity, low to medium alcohol, light to medium body, and a pronounced aromatic profile featuring citrus, green fruits, floral and herbal notes.

This makes it ideal for the Greek summer diet. It pairs beautifully with seafood such as fried calamari, anchovies or white-bait, as well as with vegetable dishes such as green beans or briam (Greek ratatouille). Its refreshing nature and low alcohol levels make it perfect for hot weather: an easily enjoyable wine that doesn't overwhelm the palate.

Since 2010, a variety of stylistic interpretations have emerged, reflecting winemakers' creativity and commitment to quality.

→ SPARKLING MOSCHOFILERO

TRADITIONAL METHOD

Here, the grapes are harvested early to retain acidity and low alcohol, which rises during bottle fermentation. The result maintains Moschofilero's crisp aromas while adding complexity from autolytic (yeast-derived) notes. It's available in both white and rosé styles.

FOOD PAIRINGS

Bolder, saltier foods, including sea urchin with lemon, raw shellfish, bottarga and intense cheeses.

CHARMAT METHOD

This tank fermentation method preserves the grape's primary aromas, offering a style reminiscent of Prosecco.

FOOD PAIRINGS

Ideal as an apéritif; complements summer fruits, crisp salads and marinated fish.

→ SKIN CONTACT WINES

Moschofilero is not a typical white grape; its skins have a subtle color, giving wines a pinkish hue. When vinified with skin contact, it gains both color and aromatic complexity, introducing notes of rosewater and Turkish delight. With ageing, it may develop a copper hue, richer body and more nuanced aromas.

FOOD PAIRINGS

Clean, well-defined flavors such as white-fish sushi nigiri, ceviche and seafood tartare.

→ ROSÉ WINES

Thanks to its high acidity and floral aromas, Moschofilero is also ideal for rosé wines. These are pale in color, low in tannins, and light on the palate. Increasingly popular and competitively priced, they're highly versatile.

FOOD PAIRINGS

Tomato-based pasta dishes, mild seafood curries, and salmon or tuna sashimi.

→ LIGHT RED EXPRESSIONS

In more advanced winemaking, extended skin contact and gentle cap management can yield light red wines. These retain bright acidity, gain some structure with light tannins, and show riper fruit and herbal notes.

FOOD PAIRINGS

Charcuterie boards, or grilled reddish fish such as swordfish, salmon or tuna.

→ PREMIUM STILL WINES

With better vineyard selections and modern techniques that include lees aging or the use of large neutral oak barrels (always with restraint to preserve the grape's character), producers are crafting richer, more complex expressions. These wines are fuller in body, retain acidity, and hover around 13% ABV, offering more intensity and length.

FOOD PAIRINGS

Complex dishes such as seafood or vegetable stir-fries, pesto pasta, elaborate sushi rolls, or baked fish in tomato sauce.

→ SWEET WINES

Sweet Moschofilero, more commonly found in rosé versions, balances residual sugar with bright acidity to avoid cloying sweetness.

FOOD PAIRINGS

Perfect with desserts such as cheesecake with red fruit, or crème brûlée.

IN SUMMARY

Moschofilero is a highly appealing wine, offering excellent value for money and often outperforming questionable imported alternatives. Its broad range of styles makes it attractive to many consumers, as does its consistently refreshing acidity and easy-drinking nature. It's a quintessential summer wine and a reliable all-rounder for pairing with an entire meal.

In tasting menus, Moschofilero shines with light, simple starters, although it doesn't aim for the structure or weight of a Santorini Assyrtiko. But not all wines are meant to compete on power, and Moschofilero's rightful place is among the lighter, more refreshing styles, where it excels in grace and honesty. ¶

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TRAVEL

TEXT BY
NIKOS IOANNIDIS

PHOTOS FROM
ROUVALIS ESTATE ARCHIVE

Achaia

From the days when black Corinthian raisins sustained local viticulture and drove Greece's agricultural exports to today's dynamic revival of high-elevation vineyards and characterful wines, Achaia has always been a land of resilience and reinvention.

Recent archaeological excavations near ancient Helike, in the region of Achaia, uncovered grape seeds dating back to around 750 BC. This discovery places viticulture in the area as early as the Geometric period, offering tangible proof that the cultivation of vines was already established here in antiquity. It reinforces the long-standing relationship between Achaia and wine, suggesting that the region played a meaningful role in the early development of Greek viticulture.

Patras, the capital and epicenter of the region, has embraced wine not just as a product, but as part of its urban rhythm. From tavernas to wine bars, its vibrant energy reflects a city that lives outdoors and drinks locally. Wine culture here is visible, and growing. Today, the dominant grape varieties cultivated in Achaia are Roditis, Muscat and Mavrodaphne.

Roditis, a pink-skinned grape classified as white, is most commonly vinified into dry, off-dry or semi-sweet wines, appreciated for their freshness, moderate alcohol levels and bright acidity. In Achaia, Roditis forms the basis of the Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) Patras, which showcases the variety's potential in high-elevation, cool-climate vineyards.

Mavrodaphne, a red grape deeply rooted in the region's history, is best known for producing the sweet fortified wines of PDO Mavrodaphne of Patras, typically made in combination with black Corinthian currants. These rich, age-worthy reds have long been among the iconic wines of not just Achaia but of Greece as a whole. Achaia is also home to the PDO Muscat of Patras and PDO Muscat of Rio Patras, both highlighting the expressive nature of the Muscat Blanc à Petits Grains grape in sweet styles, offering floral intensity, citrus purity, and elegant structure.

South of the city of Patras lies Achaia Clauss, the historic winery, founded in 1861 by Gustav Clauss, that helped shape the

early modern history of Greek wine and pioneered oenotourism long before that term existed. Nearby producers such as Sant'Or in Santomeri have revived rare local varieties, including Santameriana, imbuing their wines with a deeper sense of place.

To the north lies Parparoussis Winery, founded in 1974 by oenologist Thanasis Parparoussis and his wife Vasso with the aim of producing quality bottled wines. After the founder's passing, the second generation took over the family winery. Thanasis' daughters Erifyli and Dimitra have continued his legacy. With more than 50 years of winemaking history, the winery's contribution is significant not only to the region but also to Greek wine more broadly. Wines such as Taos Mavrodaphne and especially the iconic, sweet PDO Muscat of Rio Patras have carried the name of Greece to wine lovers around the world.

AIGIALEIA

Further east, the mountainous vineyards of Aigialeia, climbing above 1,000 meters, have quietly become a driving force in the region's reputation. Terraced slopes, rocky soils and cooling northern winds define a unique microclimate, one of the very few north-facing PDO zones in Greece. Here, Roditis takes on surprising depth and tension, shaped by terroir and interpreted differently by each winery.

Aigialeia's winemaking story is deeply intertwined with the cultivation of black Corinthian raisins, once a pillar of the local economy. In an effort to strengthen collective presence and visibility, seven wineries came together to form the OINOXENEIA Quality Network, a platform that began as a regional gastronomy festival based in Aigio and evolved into a dynamic hub for wine tourism, cultural events, and the promotion of Aigialeia wines.

Wine tastings, masterclasses, vineyard visits and culinary pairings now take place in theaters, town squares and even remote village corners each summer. Check out oinoxeneia.gr for a full calendar of events.

ROUVALIS WINERY

Founded by Angelos Rouvalis in 1991, the winery is now guided by that family's next generation. Theodora Rouvali and her husband Antonio Ruiz Pañego – two winemakers with valuable international experience – are passionate about Aigialeia. With dedication, skill and knowledge, they craft wines of character, genuine expressions of this fascinating terroir.

Rouvalis wines have received major awards in both national and international competitions and are widely recognized for their quality. Using techniques that honor the unique nature of the land and the wisdom of local tradition while still embracing modern pioneering methods, the duo has succeeded in capturing the clarity and finesse of native grape varieties such as Roditis, Tsigello (a clone of Mavrodaphne) and Lagorthi, as well as renowned international grapes such as Riesling and Chardonnay, always under the distinctive signature of Aigialeia.

As one of the founding forces behind the OINOXENEIA initiative, the Rouvalis family remains active in collective efforts that go beyond wine, promoting the region of Aigialeia as a whole. The Rouvalis Winery was also the first in Greece to be recognized by the international organization CERVIM (Centre for Research, Study and Valorization of Mountain Viticulture), and continues to stand out for the innovation and leadership it exhibits.

→ rouvaliswinery.gr

TETRAMYTHOS WINERY

Tetramythos belongs to that rare category of wineries that is shaping the future of Greek wine. The Spanos brothers, Aristos and Stathis, together with co-founder and head oenologist Panayiotis Papagiannopoulos, have embraced organic and, in some cases, biodynamic viticulture from the outset, producing low-intervention wines with a clear sense of place.

They cultivate both native and international grape varieties, with the local Roditis as their flagship. It is vinified in multiple expressions: fresh; barrel-aged; matured in clay amphorae; and matured in concrete eggs. Each version offers a different perspective on the same variety, albeit are always crafted with precision and clarity.

Their emphasis is on quality and authenticity, on producing wines that are true reflections of the grape and the mountainous terroir of Aigialeia. The team has also invested in the winery's facilities, creating a welcoming space for visitors that highlights wine tourism as an integral part of their philosophy.

→ tetramythoswines.com

CAVINO

MEGA SPILEO ESTATE

Cavino is Greece's largest winery in terms of production volume. Housed in a neoclassical building, its facilities are among the country's finest examples of industrial architecture dedicated to the production of wine and spirits. With a vast export network, Cavino wines reach markets in dozens of countries.

There is historical significance to many of the company's holdings. Mega Spileo Estate stands as a distinct boutique winery, producing limited quantities of high-quality wines. Located in Kalavryta at an altitude of 880 meters, the estate enjoys breathtaking views over the Vouraikos Gorge and boasts buildings featuring traditional architectural style that reflects the area's past. The Estate's story begins in 1550 and is closely tied to the historic monastery of Mega Spileo, an important religious and cultural site, and a destination in its own right. The estate's ancient heritage does not, however, get in the way of a modern approach to viticulture and wine production; this mix of old and new makes for a unique experience for visitors and wine lovers alike.

→ cavino.gr, megaspileo.gr

ACHEON WINERY

The winery, which been producing wine since 1949, is now in the hands of the third generation of the same winemaking family. The three Katsikostas siblings – Sosanna, an oenologist trained in France, Katerina and Loukas – have divided up responsibilities as they focus on crafting quality wines exclusively from local grape varieties. At the same time, they're also highly active in wine tourism and in collaborative efforts aimed at promoting the broader Aigialeia region.

Their philosophy emphasizes minimal intervention, both in the vineyard and the winery, with the goal of creating wines that express the true character of each grape variety and their place of origin. Through the production of varietal wines and their winemaking approach, they highlight the identity of each variety as well as the unique terroir of Aigialeia.

The varieties Sideritis, Roditis, Muscat and Mavrodaphne are cultivated on the slopes of Aigialeia, at elevations ranging from 500 to over 1,000 meters. Exports to premium markets are their strong suit and a major focus of their efforts.

→ acheonwinery.gr



Sea views from the hilltop vineyards.



A vineyard in the Achaia region.



The Rouvalis winery.



A vineyard in the Achaia region.

RIRA VINEYARDS
With a 25-hectare vineyard open to visitors on the slopes of Aigialeia in the Rira area of Arravonitsa, this winery uses only its estate-grown grapes for the production of the wines. The varieties they plant aren't only the traditional grapes typical to the region. The vineyard is home to Mavrodaphne, Agiorgitiko, Malagousia, Assyrtiko and Sauvignon Blanc, but it's also planted with international varieties such as Chardonnay, Viognier, Gewürztraminer, Merlot, Pinot Noir, Syrah, Cabernet Sauvignon and Grenache Rouge.

→ rira.gr

KROKIDAS WINERY
Now run by the third generation of the family that founded it, Krokidas Winery began operations in 1959. In collaboration with grape growers across the mountainous zones of Aigialeia, the winery produces wines from a wide array of varieties. These include Roditis, Sideritis, Muscat, and Mavro Kalavrytino, local grapes that reflect the regional identity, along with better-known Greek such as Agiorgitiko and Moschofilero, as well as international grape varieties. The winery, which continues to honor tradition even as it adapts to new winemaking approaches, sources its fruit from diverse microclimates and elevations, and maintains a consistent focus on quality.

→ krokidas.gr

M20 WINERY
Dimitris Staikos returned from New York in 2018 and founded M20, a small family-run winery that produces wines from the local grape varieties Roditis and Lagorathi, as well as the international variety Cabernet Sauvignon. The philosophy of M20 centers on showcasing the terroir of Aigialeia through both their vineyard practices and winemaking techniques.

→ m20winery.gr

Achaia is home to many more wineries; some are small and artisanal, while others are larger in scale. A number stand out for their quality, philosophy, or distinct contribution to the region's evolving wine landscape. Other notable examples include:

KINTONIS WINERY
Kintonis is a winery focused on crafting high-quality wines that simultaneously capture the character of Aigialeia's terroir and preserve the typicality of each grape variety. Their work emphasizes a balance between regional identity and varietal expression, an approach that speaks to both tradition and modern winemaking precision.

→ kintonis.gr

KANAKARIS WINERY
Now run by the third generation of the family that first launched it, Kanakaris Winery brings more than four decades of experience to the vineyard and the cellar. In addition to native varieties, the winery works with a wide range of Greek and international grapes, including Roditis, Malagousia, Moschofilero, Mavro Kalavrytino, Merlot, Syrah and Agiorgitiko. The grapes are sourced from five distinct vineyard zones, reflecting a diverse range of microclimates and soils, and resulting in wines of expressive character and regional clarity.

→ kanakariswines.gr

From long-established names to bold newcomers, the wineries of Aigialeia and of greater Achaia form a mosaic of tradition, experimentation and mountain viticulture. What unites them is not only the dramatic terrain they cultivate, but a shared sense of responsibility: to the land, to their craft and to the identity of their region. In this corner of the Peloponnese, wine is more than a product. It's a cultural ambassador, a collective language, and an open invitation to discover a place where altitude meets attitude.

EDANOS WINERY
Founded in 1975, Edanos Winery is now being run by the third generation of the family that began it. Combining tradition with modern technology, the estate cultivates six hectares planted with Roditis, Malagousia, Agiorgitiko, Merlot and Syrah. These vineyards provide the primary raw material for the production of their wines. For years, the winery has also collaborated with grape growers from the village of Kalamias, supplementing the estate's own production. The combination of family continuity, local partnerships and diverse grape varieties reflects a balanced approach that values both heritage and evolution.

→ edanoswines.gr

www.rouvaliswinery.gr

Mountain Heroic Viticulture

Mountain ranges, rocky shores, terraces with sweeping views over the Gulf of Corinth. Small and hard-to-reach plots on slopes exceeding 30%, at altitudes reaching 1,100 meters. Vines cascading down mountainsides and climbing over stony ridges, sheltered from heatwaves, exposed to the cooling meltemia winds. Indigenous varieties deeply tied to both time and place. This is one of the world's most compelling viticultural zones: a gifted terroir that demands heroic labor—but rewards it with wines of character and distinction.

Nothing here happens in haste. Time asks for our patience and generosity. We let it guide our cultivation, honoring the rhythms and cycles of nature. The terrain is demanding, calling for our effort and soulful care. The work is largely manual, carried out by skilled and experienced hands that give individual attention to each vine.

And when the time comes, we grant winemaking the same natural, unforced pace.

Built to follow the mountain's natural slope, our gravity-flow winery—among the few of its kind globally—lets the winemaking process unfold gently, guided by the land itself.

Winemakers Theodora Rouvalis and Antonio Ruiz Pañego combine valuable international experience with a shared passion for the highlands of Aigialeia. With dedication, skill, and deep knowledge, they craft wines that capture the purity, finesse, and depth of character of this remarkable terroir.

ROUVALIS

The term "heroic viticulture" refers to winegrowing under difficult conditions, producing what are known as "extreme wines". Rouvalis Winery is the first in Greece to be recognized as a member of the international "Center for Research, Environmental Sustainability and Advancement of Mountain Viticulture" (CERVIM).



INTERVIEW

TEXT AND PHOTO BY
NIKOS IOANNIDIS

THE ROOTED WINEMAKER AND THE LANGUAGE OF RODITIS.

Panagiotis Papagiannopoulos

“Wine is a path to self-awareness,” says Panagiotis Papagiannopoulos. “It shows you how small you are.” At Tetramythos in Aigialeia, Papagiannopoulos crafts low-intervention wines that reflect the land, the vintage, and that conviction – with the grape variety Roditis at their core. In this intimate conversation, he shares his philosophy, his hopes, and his quiet fight to keep Greek viticulture alive.

Panagiotis Papagiannopoulos was born in Sydney in 1973, but his roots lay deep in eastern Aigialeia. When his family returned to Greece, they revived their old farmland, including a traditional, electricity-free winery that produced rustic skin-contact wines. As a teenager, he was already immersed in harvest life. “By the time I was 18, I was pressing more than three tons of grapes a day with my feet,” he recalls. “It wasn’t just work, it was a way of growing up.”

Though it puzzled his teachers, oenology was his first and only choice. In 1992, he enrolled in the Technological Educational Institute of Athens as a top candidate and completed his studies in under four years. After gaining early experience at wineries in the Peloponnese, including at Antonopoulos Vineyards, he returned home where, in 1998, he partnered with local growers Aristos and Stathis Spanos, whose family also cultivated vineyards in the area, to start bottling wine. They began with a small cellar in the village, and in 2004 founded Tetramythos Winery at its current location, planting new vineyards and expanding production.

In 2007, disaster struck. A devastating wildfire swept through the region, destroying the winery, all the equipment and more than 30,000 bottles. But the vines survived. “When the fire came, the vineyards were the only green thing left,” Papagiannopoulos says. “They held enough humidity to stop the flames. That’s when you understand what resilience really means.” Thanks to long-standing collaborations, Tetramythos managed to vinify the year’s crop elsewhere and, within a year, the winery was rebuilt.

The winery was rebuilt but, more importantly, its purpose had come into sharper focus. What kind of wine did Papagiannopoulos really want to make? And for whom? For years, he had worked in larger wineries, where the wines were made to a formula: over-extracted, oak-heavy and stylistically stable. “It wasn’t my style,” he says. “At home, my father was still making wine the old way. It was closer to what I love: less polished maybe, but freer.” The contrast became a turning point.

At Tetramythos, he found the space to reconnect with that freedom, but this time tempered by experience and intention. “We make wines almost the same way they were always made here,” the winemaker explains, “but with the help of temperature control and phenological awareness. Not to change the wine, but to protect it.” Spontaneous fermentation, organic farming, unfiltered bottlings – these weren’t marketing decisions. “We were using clay before clay was fashionable. These are the wines we love. They’re not an imitation. It’s just the way we believe the terroir speaks best.”

WINE, FOR PAPAGIANNPOULOS, IS NEVER JUST ABOUT THE BOTTLE. IT’S ABOUT WHERE THE WINE IS MADE, WHO MAKES IT, AND HOW IT SHAPES THE PLACE IT COMES FROM.

If one grape distills the ethos of Tetramythos – its humility, clarity and resolve – it is Roditis. Often dismissed as ordinary or neutral, Roditis becomes something entirely different in the cool, high-elevation vineyards of Aigialeia. “It’s not easy to work with,” Papagiannopoulos says. “But it’s honest. It gives you exactly what the year gave to the vineyard.” Old bush vines, non-irrigated, rooted in limestone soils: the conditions transform Roditis into a precise reflection of place. Even the Aleppo clone he works with, purple-skinned and low in color pigments, resists easy categorization. “Even after weeks on the skins, it won’t give you rosé. You get amber at best. It’s just not wired for color.”

Roditis accounts for nearly 80% of the Tetramythos production today, with at least seven different expressions ranging from free-run, unfiltered whites to pét-nats, retsina and skin-contact bottlings. Yet for all its versatility, the grape remains underappreciated. “Usually, you don’t value what you have in large quantities,” Papagiannopoulos says. “But in a large cultivation area like this, you also find magical small plots. You just have to know where to look.”

The story of this grape, like that of the region, is ancient. Carried westward during waves of Greek colonization, Roditis evolved into Inzolia in Sicily, Ansonica in Tuscany, Claret in southern France, and even shares DNA with Airén in Spain, once the most widely planted grape in the world. Yet nowhere else does it hold PDO status as it does in Patras, as 100% Roditis. “Even international grapes are shaped by this terroir,” Papagiannopoulos says, “but with Roditis, the connection is ancestral.” And yet, the future remains uncertain — both for Roditis and for the broader landscape of Greek viticulture. “Viticulture in Greece is shrinking year by year,” he says. “We’re stable now, but if you look at the numbers since before Greece joined the European Union, we’ve lost two-thirds of our vineyards. And yet we have more wineries than ever before.” That paradox defines much of what concerns him today: enthusiasm without infrastructure, passion without continuity.

Roditis, at least, seems resilient, especially in Aigialeia, where altitude, poor soils, and low yields allow it to thrive without irrigation, a crucial trait in the age of climate change. “It will probably be one of the last Greek grapes to suffer seriously,” Papagiannopoulos says. But that alone is not enough. What the land needs, he believes, is not just investment, but devotion. Not merely professionals, but vigneron – people who fall in love with the land and choose a different kind of life, perhaps even sommeliers who want to grow vines, live simply, and make wine as an act of craftsmanship.

Asked how he envisions Roditis in the future, Papagiannopoulos doesn’t reach for marketing terms. He describes textures, feelings. “With age, the citrus and blossom fade, and what remains is something elemental, like sucking on wet stones, or crushed rock by the sea.” In warmer, drier vintages, he says, Roditis can even evoke petrol-like notes, not unlike aged Riesling.

And what of Roditis beyond Greece? “A few producers from southern France have shown interest,” the winemaker says. “They’ve tasted our wines, they’ve asked about planting it. It could be a solution for them too.”

Today, Tetramythos exports to over 40 countries. For his part, Papagiannopoulos tries to taste widely, not just from classic regions, but from offbeat corners of the world. “Some of the most surprising wines I’ve had were from Hunter Valley – Semillon, over 20 years old, under 11% alcohol. I didn’t want to admit it, but they were amazing.”

He mostly drinks whites – “Probably 80% of the wines I taste” – and he loves the reds which exist in the twilight zone between white and red, such as those from Jura or from Sicily and Etna’s volcanic soils. He is also a fan of those whites from Loire that were aged four or five years, before climate change pushed things out of balance. And of course, he enjoys the wines of his friends and those of his wife (also an oenologist), whose wines from Crete he tastes daily, whether he wants to or not.

When asked whether this is truly a “new era” for Greek wine, Papagiannopoulos hesitates. “There is movement, yes. There are more interesting wines than there used to be. But if it were a real new era, we’d be replanting the slopes, not abandoning them. If you don’t have a second job, and you try to live from this alone, it’s extremely hard, especially for first-generation winemakers.”

The challenge ahead, Papagiannopoulos suggests, is no longer just environmental, it’s deeply ethical. Reducing bottle weight, switching to lighter glass, using recycled materials, rethinking transport are all paramount. “We were the first winery to stop using PVC capsules. Many of our wines don’t use capsules at all. We fought to bring recycling bins to the village, and now even taverna owners bring their glass bottles back to us. We’ve had solar panels for years, we drive hybrid and electric cars for deliveries. But still, it’s not enough.”

Organic farming adds another layer of cost and bureaucracy. “In this region, organic is just the traditional way of farming but with extra paperwork,” Papagiannopoulos says. “And if the market doesn’t reward the effort, some will just give up.”

In the end, his concerns are less about wine, and more about people. “Vineyards used to be planted where nothing else could grow. The land was poor, and the wine was better for it. But now? Our villages are home to a few old people, fewer of middle age and almost no young.”

It’s not a sentimentalism. It’s a warning. “I’m afraid the next generations won’t stay,” the winemaker says. “And if the vineyards are no longer there – not even as subjects for everyday conversations – what will we be talking about?”

Wine, for Papagiannopoulos, is never just about the bottle. It’s about where the wine is made, who makes it, and how it shapes the place it comes from. He doesn’t reject scale – “Every country needs everything,” he says – but he believes that scale must rest on strong foundations. “It’s a mosaic and it’s a pyramid. The bigger your base, the higher your peak can go. But without enough people doing something with conviction, there’s no chance of doing anything truly great.”

His ideal model? Not monolithic estates, but small, rooted producers. “A person who owns a piece of land and believes in it, that’s where it begins.” For Papagiannopoulos, wineries should take on a social role: supporting local sports teams, sponsoring events, drawing people to stay in the village. But only if they are built to last. “If you build something with no real connection, no staying power, it becomes a burden, for you and for the whole area.”

Papagiannopoulos knows the work is hard. Whether you’re alone on a broken tractor or managing a company with global distribution, “it’s never easy.” But in Greece, he insists, the conditions are here. The size is right. The potential is enormous, if things are done with care and with purpose.

“I wouldn’t mind if we had 500 wineries and 20 foreign workers cultivating the vines,” he says half-seriously. “What matters is that someone wants to be part of something living. Not just a factory. A place.”

In the end, Tetramythos is not just a winery, it is a quiet insistence that wine can still root us, connect us, and keep both vineyards and villages alive. ¶

TODAY, TETRAMYTHOS EXPORTS TO OVER 40 COUNTRIES. FOR HIS PART, PAPAGIANNPOULOS TRIES TO TASTE WIDELY, NOT JUST FROM CLASSIC REGIONS, BUT FROM OFFBEAT CORNERS OF THE WORLD. “SOME OF THE MOST SURPRISING WINES I’VE HAD WERE FROM HUNTER VALLEY – SEMILLON, OVER 20 YEARS OLD, UNDER 11% ALCOHOL. I DIDN’T WANT TO ADMIT IT, BUT THEY WERE AMAZING.”





The view from Mega Spileo Estate over the surrounding area and vineyards.



WINERY

TEXT BY
THALIA KARTALI

PHOTOS BY
NIKOS IOANNIDIS

UNDOUBTEDLY ONE OF THE MOST IMPRESSIVE MOUNTAIN VINEYARDS IN ALL OF GREECE, MEGA SPILEO ESTATE HAS OPENED ITS DOORS TO THE PUBLIC, AFTER YEARS OF EFFORTS TO REVIVE THE VINEYARD THAT HAD ONCE BELONGED TO THE MONASTERY OF MEGA SPILEO.

MEGA SPILEO ESTATE

Today, the winery is managed by a team of dynamic individuals under the broader umbrella of the Cavino company. After decades of work building upon the legacy left by the monks, the Mega Spileo Estate has now joined the list of Greece's wine tourism destinations, offering a unique setting characterized by wild beauty.

To get there, we first climb the road leading to Kalavryta and the Monastery of Mega Spileo, until a sign directs us toward the estate. Descending toward it, we are awestruck by the vineyard plateau; it's a natural terrace overlooking the Vouraikos Gorge, in the heart of the Helmos-Vouraikos Geopark. Steep slopes, ravines, and, in the distance, the Corinthian Gulf are part of breathtaking views that leave visitors speechless.

The staff of the estate, led by oenologist Stelios Tsirir, welcome us warmly, ready to guide us through this extraordinary site with its centuries of history. We're at an elevation of around 800 meters, and in front of us stretches a vineyard planted in 1999 on this flat stretch formed within the gorge. Or rather, it was replanted then, since the monks of the Monastery of Mega Spileo had discovered this same spot many centuries ago. They built a dependency (metochi) here, and cultivated a vineyard. After so many years of neglect, however, the vineyard had to be created again from scratch. The buildings that once formed the monastery's dependency still stand. They have been restored and now house a visitor-friendly winery featuring a very special winemaking area, an attractive tasting room, and a welcoming shop.

Tsirir has a somewhat monastic air himself. He first came here in 1999 and has stayed ever since, overseeing both the replanting and the vinification of the estate's wines. He explains how the mountain creates many different terroirs that may not be immediately visible. Different slopes, orientations, and elevations – ranging from 780 to 880 meters – create a great diversity in the soil, with each section of the vineyard having its own characteristics. “This little platform in the gorge, with its many varying slopes, is a very cool terroir,” he explains, “as it is affected by winds coming from the Corinthian Gulf.”

Our conversation is suddenly interrupted by a deafening noise. We look up to see two fighter jets from the Hellenic Air Force making a dramatic flight through the gorge before vanishing. “It happens often,” says Tsirir with a smile, noticing our astonished expressions.

The vines are still lush and heavy with grapes – the harvest here typically begins in late September to early October. “The soil composition – sandy with gravel – and the steep slopes help with good drainage,” adds fellow oenologist Chara Spyropoulou, who is responsible for tours at the new winery. International varieties – Cabernet Sauvignon, Syrah, Merlot, and Sauvignon Blanc – were the first ones planted in 1999, later joined by Greek varieties: Assyrtiko, Lagorthi, Vidiano and Moschato for the whites, and Mavrodaphne, Mavro Kalavritino and Vertzami for the reds. About 15 labels are produced here, totaling between 250,000 and 300,000 bottles annually, with a large portion exported to Germany and Canada. The four Mega Spileo estate abels, however, stand out as the flagship of the winery's production.

Chara Spyropoulou leads us through the winemaking area, which has been redesigned based on the spaces once used by the monks. Here we find three large tanks carved into the ground, ready to receive the grapes; this year's first vinifications will be from Assyrtiko and Mavrodaphne.

Fermentation will take place in these open tanks, following the methods used by the monks, and the wine will then be transferred to two Foudre barrels with a capacity of 1,500 liters and six clay amphorae of 300 liters each – just small enough to fit through the narrow door of the building – which make up the ageing equipment in the adjacent cellar.

Around a beautifully set table in the tasting room, also housed in a restored building, and with excellent local dishes to accompany the wine, we taste each of the estate's labels one by one. We talk as we taste, and our conversation centers on the estate's winemaking philosophy, which emphasizes the expression of the fruit, keeping the influence of barrel aromas to a minimum if at all present, and highlighting the uniqueness of the terroir.

The Mega Spileo Estate, which first opened to the public in August of 2023, welcomes visitors wishing to explore the historic vineyard, see the winemaking facilities and the cellar up close, and enjoy a wine tasting, either in the dedicated tasting room or in the specially designed outdoor space overlooking the vines. For those interested, accommodation is also available at the hotel Amario Suites in nearby Aigio, which offers wine experiences for guests and friends of the estate. ¶



WINERY

TEXT BY
PENELOPE KATSATOU

PHOTOS FROM
ACHAIA CLAUSS ARCHIVE

ACHAIA CLAUSS

WHERE GREEK WINE FIRST WROTE ITS HISTORY

There are places where time seems to pause. The Achaia Clauss winery, perched on a hillside overlooking Patras and the Gulf of Patras, with its stone buildings, barrels, and a pervasive scent of wine, gives you the feeling that you are looking at one of the most significant landmarks in the history of Greek wine.

The story begins in 1861, when Gustav Clauss, a young Bavarian working for a trading company in the ports of Patras, was enchanted by the landscape, the grapes and the character of the region. He bought a small vineyard planted with Mavrodaphne and began to experiment. From this almost poetic beginning emerged the first Mavrodaphne wine, a fortified wine that would forever change the wine identity of the country.

A few years later, the Mavrodaphne of Patras he created became synonymous with quality and tradition. It is a sweet, fortified wine, deep, concentrated, and full of character, aged in massive oak barrels, some of which are now over 150 years old. The names engraved on them – from kings and princesses to politicians and celebrities from around the world – testify to the prestige and fame this wine acquired.

The winery quickly evolved into one of the most important centers of wine production and export in Greece. As early as the late 19th century, Achaia Clauss was equipped with cutting-edge facilities for its time: oak cellars, bottling lines and even its own oenology laboratory. It was among the first to combine knowledge with vision, and commerce with wine culture. Its reputation extended beyond Greece, reaching markets in Europe, America and the Far East. The name “Patras” became internationally recognized for the first time through the labels of Achaia Clauss.

One of the most defining figures in the winery’s historic journey was the legendary oenologist Matthaios Paraschos, who joined Achaia Clauss in 1908 and remained in its service for over half a century. Paraschos was not merely a technician; he was a guardian of memory, a custodian of quality and a man who treated Mavrodaphne as his personal legacy.

But perhaps the most captivating aspect of the estate is that it never remained just a winery. It evolved into a cultural monument, a keystone to Greek wine identity. Today, visitors wander among Gothic buildings, stone cellars with heavy wooden doors, and storerooms with thousands of bottles and barrels, standing there as living witnesses of another era. The “Cellar of Kings” is one of the estate’s most impressive spots. There, bottles of 19th-century Mavrodaphne are preserved, each with its own story, vessels containing not just wine, but memory and emotion.

Achaia Clauss is not simply a remembrance of a glorious past. It is a living, active winery, continuing to produce signature wines, innovating and attracting wine lovers from around the globe. Mavrodaphne remains its flagship product, with top-tier bottlings that stand out for their complexity and bottle longevity. At the same time, however, its product range has expanded significantly: from fresh-profile white and rosé wines to aged reds and experimental blends of Greek and international varieties. The winery closely follows modern trends without abandoning its own hallmarks: respect for time, the land and tradition.

In terms of wine tourism, the visitor experience has been significantly enhanced. Guided tours are offered in multiple languages, as are organized tastings, thematic events and cultural activities that connect wine with local history and the spirit of Achaia. Guests can sample rare vintages, explore the spaces where Greece’s first internationally renowned wines were born, and purchase collectible wines not widely available commercially. The estate also hosts conferences, seminars and partnerships with educational institutions, linking oenological knowledge with tourism and culture.

Achaia Clauss is much more than a winery. It’s a living museum, an ark of flavor and history, a place that proves that when tradition meets dedication and timelessness, the result transcends its era. There, on the hills of Patras, Greek wine continues to write its story, with the same reverence and inspiration that once made it known around the world. ¶



Looking down on Patras from the iconic Achaia Clauss winery, the site where Greek wine history began in 1861.



Traditional grape baskets in the courtyard, symbols of a time-honored winemaking heritage.



The impressive stone-built entrance to the historic winery.



Inside the legendary cellars, where century-old barrels still hold the spirit of Mavrodaphne.

MILESTONES 1861

Founding of Achaia Clauss
by Gustav Clauss

1873

Creation of the ollectible Mavrodaphne
bottle in the Royal Cellar

1898

Matthaios Paraschos becomes
director of the winery

1908

Start of exports to Europe,
America and the Far East

1983

Renovation and expansion
of the wine tourism facilities

2020

Revival of Moschato Patron



The atmospheric barrel room.



Historical oak casks engraved with the names of royalty and dignitaries from around the world.



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Images from the historic Mercouri Estate.



WINERY

TEXT BY
GREGORY KONTOS DIP WSET

PHOTOS FROM
MERCOURI ARCHIVE

MERCOURI ESTATE

ONE OF THE MOST INTRIGUING GREEK WINE STORIES STARTS IN 1840, WHEN THEODOROS MERCOURIS WAS LIVING IN A MOUNTAIN VILLAGE OF ILIA. POLITICALLY OPPOSED TO KING OTTO, MERCOURIS DECIDED TO LEAVE GREECE. AS LUCK WOULD HAVE IT, WHILE DEPARTING FOR ITALY, HE PASSED BY A BEAUTIFUL SEASIDE ESTATE IN KORAKOCHORI. ALTHOUGH SEEING IT DID NOT CHANGE HIS PLANS, HE MADE NOTE OF THE ESTATE AND REGISTERED IT IN HIS MEMORY AS SOMETHING SPECIAL.

Initially, Mercouris lived and worked in Friuli, Italy, where he became acquainted with wine in general and the Refosco grape variety in particular. Later, he became involved in the cotton trade and went to Alexandria, where his business grew and he made a good deal of money. In 1864, he invested that money in the piece of land that fascinated him shortly before he left his homeland, buying the coastal property from the Greek State. This land would, years later, become the Mercouri Estate.

In 1870, Mercouris planted his first Refosco vineyard with plants from Italy; his initial plan was to sell the grapes to others for the production of wine. This was, of course, a complementary business activity, next to the extremely profitable activity of raisin production. The export trade in raisins and barreled wine was made easier in this area by direct access to the nearby commercial port of Katakolo.

In 1874, Mercouris built himself a temporary home – today, this ivy-covered structure is where the tastings are held – and began the construction of a mansion, which was completed in 1880. Cost wasn't of paramount concern; from the moment phylloxera appeared in Europe, decimating vineyards in the traditional wine-growing countries, the export of raisins and raisin wine from the Mercouris Estate had increased exponentially.

Once phylloxera had been overcome by the introduction of American rootstock, traditional European wine production rebounded and wine exports from the port of Katakolo declined. The export of raisins also decreased dramatically, and the society that relied on their production fell into poverty. By 1920, half of the working population of the Peloponnese had emigrated, mainly to the United States and Canada.

The visionary Leonidas Mercouris, successor to Theodore, worked as an agent for the Cunard Line that carried out these transatlantic voyages. At the same time, he also created a large new winery which focused on producing wine from the Refosco grape variety and exporting it, in barrels, to Trieste. When Leonidas died before World War II, the business was taken over by his daughters Kaiti Mercouris and Maria Mercouris, together with the latter's husband Lambis Kanellakopoulos.

The estate operated throughout the war, despite problems,

and until 1960, when it completely stopped wine production and focused on growing grapes for sale to the large wine industries of the time. In the 1980s, the brothers Vasilis and Christos Kanellakopoulos, sons of Lambis and Maria, decided to modernize the Estate and invested in a transformation of the vineyards. With their first commercial harvest in 1986, the two brothers created the modern wines of the Mercouri Estate that we know today. Sadly, Christos Kanellakopoulos passed away recently, so the Estate is now run by Vasilis and his twin sons Lambis and Dimitris Kanellakopoulos.

The raw material for the estate's wines comes almost exclusively from two vineyards, the privately owned seaside vineyard of eight hectares and another vineyard of seven hectares that the family rents and cultivates, about a kilometer east of the main estate. Together with the olive grove, other crops, buildings and forest, the total area adds up to 30 hectares. The forest that stands today between the estate and the sea is not a natural feature; it was planted by previous generations to block the often-violent winds of the Ionian Sea. Of course, although the forest impedes destructive gusts, it still allows beneficial sea breezes to cool the plants.

White grape varieties, including Assyrtiko, Robola, Malvasia Aromatica, Albariño and Viognier, are cultivated at the Estate; Roditis is the only grape sourced from the mountain slopes of Aigialeia. The red grape varieties Refosco (Mercouri clone), Refosco dal Peduncolo Rosso, Mavrodaphne (Tsiggelo), Avgoustiatis, Mourvèdre, Syrah and Negroamaro are also cultivated, although the last two are only used in the production of rosé. A full 55% of the annual production of approximately 140,000 bottles per year goes to the Greek market; the remaining 45% is exported to the United States, Canada and a number of European countries.

The Mercouri Estate is a true jewel of the Peloponnese and, by extension, of Greece, producing wines with identity and a sense of authenticity. Its long history serves as a beacon of inspiration for the future, while the energy, talent and respect for legacy evidenced by the new generation of winemakers ensures continued success and yet further recognition. ¶



TRAVEL

TEXT BY
THALIA KARTALI

PHOTOS FROM
ESTATE GIOULI ARCHIVE

THE PELOPONNESE AND ITS WINES NEVER CEASE TO SURPRISE YOU. I HAD NEVER BEEN TO THE AREA ABOVE KIATO, ALONG THE ROUTE TOWARD STYMPHALIA AND FARTHER SOUTH NEAR DIMINIO, BEFORE, EVEN THOUGH IT WAS JUST AN HOUR AND A HALF FROM ATHENS.

Corinth

The drive from Kiato to Lake Stymphalia, which also passes by the stunning Lake Doxa, is considered one of the most beautiful routes in the Peloponnese. The Peloponnese and its wines never cease to surprise you. I had never been to the area above Kiato, along the route toward Stymphalia and farther south near Diminio, before, even though it was just an hour and a half from Athens. The drive from Kiato to Lake Stymphalia, which also passes by the stunning Lake Doxa, is considered one of the most beautiful routes in the Peloponnese.

Undisputed protagonists of the region are the Corinthian curren(stafida) and the production of bulk wine from the Roditis and Savatiano varieties. However, for some years now, several winemakers have taken root here, driven by passion and hard work; they are cultivating vineyards and producing wines of notable quality. High elevations, steep slopes, harsh winters and cool summers characterize the region's vineyards, which yield distinctive wines, most of them crisp and elegant, with delicate aromas, but also some fuller-bodied expressions from both Greek and international grape varieties.

PAPARGYRIOU ESTATE

Arriving at Papargyriou estate, I find Yiannis Papargyriou having just finished with the bottling of his Assyrtiko, which had spent several months ageing on its lees in barrels. During a brief tour of the new winery, which was completed in 2019, I come across the old vertical hydraulic press that his father purchased from Italy in the 1980s and which is still in operation today. The production area houses not only tanks, both large and small, but also 500-liter French oak barrels, as well as two-ton and three-ton barrels (of which he plans to purchase more).

The old bottling machine I spot next was also acquired by his father, who began his own winemaking efforts in the 1980s in the basement and courtyard of their home.

As a young agronomist, he planted the first hectare and a half with Assyrtiko, Muscat and Cabernet Sauvignon, deliberately avoiding the traditional local varieties of Roditis and Savatiano. "In the early years, winemaking was primitive – we didn't even have electricity," recalls Papargyriou. The first bottlings began in 1993 with 7,000 bottles that were mostly shared with friends, although some made their way to Germany. Today, the old bottling machine bottles 90,000 bottles annually across 12 different labels. Bottles sealed with wax are all hand-dipped – "with a small pot and torch, about 35,000 bottles a year," he says.

A major wildfire in 2000 destroyed the vineyards near the winery, prompting the Papargyriou family to establish a new vineyard in the Sofiana area, at an elevation of 850 meters. The first four hectares were planted in 2002 with Syrah, Muscat, Cabernet Sauvignon and Assyrtiko.

Until 2019, all winemaking still took place in the basement and courtyard of the family home. Gradually, the vineyard expanded, with additional plantings of varieties such as Mavrostyfo, Zakynthino and Goustolidi, as well as Mavrodaphne and Riesling. "I really believe in Zakynthino and Goustolidi – they're beautiful Greek white varieties with a lingering finish and great ageing potential," says the winemaker. Today, the vineyard spans 17 hectares, with plans for further expansion.

As a family of agronomists, the Papargyriou clan placed strong emphasis on developing the vineyard in their quest to produce quality wines. In a short time, and through collaboration with the company Trinity, their wines found their way into both domestic and international markets. The "Le Roi de Montagne" series, launched in 2014, was the first result of this collaboration in 2014. In September 2020, the first vintage was produced in the new winery; around the same time, the idea of creating a restaurant on the premises was born.



The vineyards with sea views at Gioulis Estate.

Despite the challenges brought by the COVID-19 pandemic, the project was completed, and Osteria Greca opened its doors in November of 2022. It's a well-designed space with an intriguing menu and a wine list of over 120 labels. "We have wines we like and love, both from Greek and international vineyards," Papargyriou explains as he shows me around, "not just our own. We wanted to create a place with proper food, proper wine served in the proper glass." The restaurant currently operates on weekends, and the tireless Papargyriou family is planning to create an additional dining space on the rooftop for summer evenings, as well as a small guesthouse.

As for the basement cellars where winemaking once took place, these will soon be transformed into wine cellars to store older vintages. Decisions such as this are made as a family: "We always talk together about how to move forward, and I want my children to gradually take on more responsibility," Papargyriou says. One thing that won't change is the attention to detail. "Our wines share a common style that's then adapted to each variety. What matters to us is that they are phenologically ripe. We're not fans of high alcohol. What we're after is harmony."

STANDOUTS

- **THE VIGNERON GREQ**
Distinct orange character resulting from the co-fermentation of Assyrtiko with Muscat pomace. The aromas of Muscat blend beautifully with Assyrtiko, creating a unique taste profile.
- **LE ROI DE MONTAGNE ASSYRTIKO**
Produced from late harvest grapes, it is aged for 6-9 months in 500-lt barrels, and shows great ageing potential.
- **LA REINE DE MONTAGNE, MAVRODAFNI**
This exceptional Greek variety produces a wine with a very rich aroma and vibrant acidity. It is bottled unfiltered.

OSTERIA GRECA

The restaurant located on the Papargyriou Estate is definitely worth a visit. It is managed by the Papargyriou family and is a true destination for lovers of fine gastronomy and exquisite wines. Each dish is thoughtfully crafted to highlight the flavors and aromas of the 120 carefully selected wine labels available at the restaurant.

TRAVEL



Vineyard inspection, just before the harvest begins.

STANDOUTS

- **DOMAINE GIOULIS AGIORGITIKO, CABERNET SAUVIGNON**
Traditional red wine vinification; done separately for each variety. After the alcoholic fermentation, the blends are made. The wine is being aged for 16 months in French oak casks.
- **DOMAINE GIOULIS SAUVIGNON GRIS**
Light lemon yellow with green tinges. A rich flavor profile of white flowers and unripe orange citrus. On the palate, lime and exotic fresh fruit, a refreshing acidity and a pleasant long aftertaste. (Domaine Giouli is the first winery in Greece to cultivate Sauvignon Gris.)
- **DOMAINE GIOULIS CHARDONNAY**
The grapes are pressed at low temperature for a few hours and clarified by static sedimentation. The fermentation takes place during a gradual warming from 17°C to 22°C in temperature-controlled stainless steel vats. The color is yellow-green. The nose gives fresh fruits, lemon, and white flowers. On the palate, there is citrus, including grapefruit, and summer fruits, as well as a round aftertaste.

KTIMA KISSA

Leaving Domaine Gioulis, I head back down toward the sea, aiming for Kiato. Somewhere along the way, the GPS, guiding me via the shortest route, gets me tangled up in some incredibly narrow roads in Ano Diminio, and we start to worry we may have taken a wrong turn. However, upon arriving at the winery's doorstep – located right in the village – I am welcomed by Dimitris Kissas, who explains that there's a much easier road that the GPS stubbornly ignores.

Ktima Kissa, the Kissa family winery, has been in the village of Ano Diminio since 1949, when it was founded by Dimitris' grandfather. The mark of history is clearly visible: the old tanks – these huge vessels, the size of entire rooms, were still in use until 2000 – are still there, standing alongside new stainless steel ones, and the old presses are still on display. The production volume used to be enormous, with Roditis and Savvatiano – the region's two main grape varieties – taking center stage.

Young Dimitris Kissas returned in 2019 from the United States with a degree from UC Davis and harvest experience

CORINTH

he'd acquired in Adelaide, Australia, where he had lived for three years. That's when Ktima Kissa began bottling its first wines from the estate's 20-hectare vineyard, located several kilometers away in the mountains bordering the Aigialeia region. "A ravine separates us from Aigialeia," explains Dimitris' father, Giorgos Kissas, who took over the winery from his father in 1979 and continues to organize collaborations with many major wineries across the country.

"Our mountain vineyards have inclines up to 40% – you won't find any with less than a 20–30% slope," Giorgos tells me as he prepares to visit them after the recent snowfall, hoping the road will be passable. Here, too, the elevation reaches 1,000 meters, which facilitates organic cultivation, for which Ktima Kissa's vineyard is now awaiting official certification from DIO (a Greek organic certifying body). Mt Ziria to the south and Mavro Oros to the north block most of the rainfall, and yet the vineyard remains entirely dry-farmed.

The first vines were gradually planted starting in 2009, as Dimitris explains, and now the entire production from the estate-owned vineyard is being directed toward bottling. The early results of his work are excellent, with Malagousia, Assyrtiko and Pinot Noir wines being particularly noteworthy. (Interestingly, there's a Buddhist center in the area; the mountainous landscape gives its visitors the impression of being in Tibet.)

STANDOUTS

- **KTIMA KISSA PINOT NOIR**
The color is ruby and the nose is expressive, with aromas of strawberry liqueur, cardamom seeds and hints of cacao. The mouth is fruity, with good acidity, medium silky tannins and a long raspberry finish.
- **STOURNAROPETRA, ASSYRTIKO**
Stournaropetra has a distinctively mellow lemon-yellow color. Its powerful aromatic mark lies at the very heart of what this wine is about. Its aromas are governed by tones of lemon, lime, apricot, jasmine and honey.
- **MAVRIOROS MALAGOUSIA**
Lemony-yellow and green hues. It's characterized by an intense nose dominated by the presence of fleshy fruits, peach in particular, complemented by botanical notes and discreet tones of violet and jasmine. ¶



TRAVEL

TEXT BY
THALIA KARTALI

PHOTOS FROM
ESTATE TSIBIDI ARCHIVE

ARRIVING AT THE SOUTHEASTERN TIP OF THE PELOPONNESE, ONE IS CAPTIVATED BY THE WILD BEAUTY OF THE ROCKY LANDSCAPE THAT DOMINATES THIS RUGGED REGION. THE ROCK OF MONEMVASIA, HOME TO THE MEDIEVAL TOWN ONCE CALLED MALVASIA BY THE FRANKS, STANDS PROUDLY, WELCOMING THE THOUSANDS OF VISITORS WHO MAKE THE JOURNEY TO THIS REMOTE CORNER OF GREECE.

Laconia

It was from the fortified port of Monemvasia that the famous sweet wine known as Malvasia – named by the Franks after the town – was exported to both East and West. This trade began in the 12th century and continued until the 16th century, when the region fell under Ottoman rule. At that point, production and trade of the renowned wine ceased. The vineyards were destroyed and largely replaced by olive groves. Yet the remnants of stone wine presses scattered across the land, along with numerous historical references, bear witness to the area's rich winemaking heritage.

Thanks to the meticulous research of the late Dr. Stavroula Kourakou, we now have a clear understanding of the origins of this sweet wine, which once graced the tables of Europe's royal courts during the Middle Ages. (In Shakespeare's play "The Tragedy of Richard III" the Duke of Clarence is famously depicted as being murdered by drowning in a barrel of Malvasia.)

In 2009, drawing on both this research and the efforts of local winemaker Yorgos Tsimbidis, the legendary wine was officially revived, receiving its own Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) status: Monemvasia-Malvasia PDO.

Although Laconia produces less wine by volume than other regions of the Peloponnese, the emergence of notable grape varieties such as Kydonitsa has established it as a significant point on the map of Peloponnesian wines.

MONEMVASIA WINERY, TSIMBIDIS

Arriving at the Tsimbidis winery, I'm greeted by Anastasia, the second of Yorgos Tsimbidis' three daughters. All three have studied oenology – the youngest is, in fact, still at university – and have joined him in the family business.

A physics professor by training, Yorgos Tsimbidis became intrigued by the region's long tradition in winemaking, particularly

with Malvasia, a wine that in medieval times was synonymous with high-quality production. He decided to dedicate himself to reviving Malvasia's legacy. Initially, he began by buying grapes from local vintners, but in 2003, he planted his own vineyard. In 2010, he bottled his first Malvasia, a sweet wine made from sun-dried grapes of various local white varieties.

Today, the Tsimbidis estate owns 300 acres of organic vineyards. The family produces a number of different wine labels in a variety of styles. Their flagship wine is made from a local variety called Kydonitsa, which has recently gained popularity in Greece and abroad. Other white varieties include Monemvasia and Assyrtiko, while the reds are mainly Agiorgitiko and Limniona, the latter a grape originating from central Greece that's attracting attention for producing fresh, chillable red wines ideal for hot summer days.

As Anastasia gives me a tour of the facility, she explains their winemaking philosophy; they produce a mix of fresh, tank-fermented wines and more mature expressions that undergo extended ageing, some for as long as four years before release. "There are three certified oenologists here, soon to be four, working alongside my father, who has very strong views on wine styles, as you can imagine," she says, laughing. "My father always preferred oak-aged reds, whereas we like to preserve the freshness of the fruit." Somehow, they've managed to balance these differing views, and the result is impressive.

Older vintages, both white and red, are stored in a state-of-the-art cellar for further study and experimentation. Art also plays a role at the winery; the space serves as an exhibition venue for various artists. On the day of my visit, the walls were adorned with vibrant paintings by Juergen Steinhauser, a German-born artist who now lives permanently in the nearby town of Neapoli, Laconia.

WHEN WE ENTER THE TASTING ROOM, WE'RE JOINED BY ANASTASIA'S OLDER SISTER, MARIALENA. LISTENING TO THEM TALK ABOUT THEIR FAMILY AND THEIR EQUALLY DYNAMIC MOTHER, I CAN'T HELP BUT THINK THAT YORGOS TSIMBIDIS IS INDEED A VERY LUCKY MAN, SURROUNDED BY SO MANY STRONG AND PASSIONATE WOMEN.

- STANDOUTS
- **KYDONITSA 2024**
The flagship wine of the Tsimbidis estate. A crisp white with great freshness and an expressive aromatic profile.
 - **KYDONITSA MATURE 2019**
Fermented in tanks and aged on the lees for nine months, then matured in the bottle for four years. A complex expression of the Kydonitsa grape, a variety named after the quince ("kydoni" in Greek).
 - **MONEMVASIOS 2015**
A red blend of Agiorgitiko and Mavroudi. Aged for 12 months in French oak. Deep ruby color, aromas, and flavors of sour cherry and cherry marmalade.
 - **TSAKALI (JACKAL) 2024**
A standout Limniona. Spontaneous fermentation in small stainless steel tanks with two weeks of extraction, then aged on fine lees for 12 months with periodic stirring. Fresh, fruity and ideal when served chilled.
 - **MONEMVASIA MALVASIA PDO**
The winery's historical sweet wine. Made by sun-drying overripe grapes for nearly twelve days, followed by fermentation in stainless steel and maturation in oak barrels for two years. A modern revival of a medieval classic.

VATISTAS WINERY
In 1986, Ioannis Vatisas began exploring local grape varieties, among them Kydonitsa and Petrouliano. Recognizing their great potential, he decided to produce high-quality wines based on these varieties. The winery was established in 1990, and Vatisas—who passed away in 2018—is considered one of the winemakers whose vision and belief in the potential of Kydonitsa played a key role in its revival.

Over the past decades, the winery has been producing wines of exceptional quality. Today, it is run by his daughter Maria, who is determined to follow in her father's footsteps. The wines are made from 350 hectares of vineyards scattered throughout the area. Production remains small, with around 65,000 to 70,000 bottles per year, and includes a total of 10 labels: six whites, three rosés, and two reds.

All wines are fermented in stainless steel tanks, while the reds undergo barrel aging. The winery's signature label is Vatisas Kydonitsa a wine that highlights all the aromatic characteristics of this rising variety. ¶

- OTHER WINERIES IN THE AREA**
- Theodorakakos Estate
estatetheodorakakos.gr
 - Lacovino Winery
lacovino.gr



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OF KYDONITSA
IN ITS NATIVE
LAND.

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THERE’S AN ASTONISHING PATTERN IN THE TALES YOU HEAR FROM VIGNERONS OR WINEMAKERS EVERYWHERE IN GREECE, JUST AS WHEN YOU COME ACROSS THE SECOND WINEMAKING GENERATION OF THE TSİMBIDI FAMILY AND ALL THREE OF THEM PASSIONATELY TALK ABOUT THE ROOTS OF MALVASIAS OENOS, THE MOST IMPORTANT WINE OF THE MIDDLE AGES, OR KYDONİTSA, A RARE LOCAL GRAPE VARIETY THAT THE TSİMBIDI FAMILY HAS BEEN CULTIVATING FOR AT LEAST THE LAST 15 YEARS.

KYDONİTSA MONEMVASIA WINERY TSİMBIDI

There’s an astonishing pattern in the tales you hear from vignerons or winemakers everywhere in Greece, just as when you come across the second winemaking generation of the Tsimbidi family and all three of them passionately talk about the roots of Malvasias Oenos, the most important wine of the Middle Ages, or Kydonitsa, a rare local grape variety that the Tsimbidi family has been cultivating for at least the last 15 years. Laconia is a place of great historical importance and “there were vines on all sides” of its gentler slopes in the broader viticultural area in the past. Today, the area covered by vineyards is much smaller, but it’s still significant, as is the viticultural diversity it displays.

From all the obscure grape varieties that survived through the ages in the region, Kydonitsa is probably the great white grape of Laconia. Its name is a direct reference to its aromas, which resemble those of quince (“Kydoni means quince in Greek”). Kydonitsa has a distinct history in this place but, as is the case with a number of grape varieties in Greece, it was nearly extinct until a few years ago. It tends to make the most complete wines of the region: distinct in the quince and tropical fruit aspects that the variety provides, with a lovely balanced acidity and a broad texture, sometimes highlighted by extra ageing on the lees. Apart from making lovely, dry varietal wines, Kydonitsa is also a vital ingredient in the newest appellation of the Peloponnese, the PDO Monemvasia-Malvasia. The PDO revives the famous Malvasia Oenos of the past and the senior stalwarts of the Tsimbidi family, Giorgos and Elli, can take all the credits for their hard work in bringing this historic wine back to prominence.

Summing up, what does Kydonitsa, at its best have in its favor? It can certainly be a beautiful, easy-drinking, aromatic wine with a lovely texture that balances between silkiness and a crunchy end, but are those qualities enough to make it a great wine? Most people out there would expect a bit more complexity and depth rather than just a charming and charismatic character. I myself am a fan of simplicity and upfront enjoyment in my wines, but in any case the vertical tasting did provide the level of complexity that someone would expect in a great bottle. The idea of complexity in a Kydonitsa was certainly made clear a few years ago when the family released a 2019 Kydonitsa (a late release). This wine changed the perception of a grape variety that by no means is only fit to be enjoyed young. Yes, it can be adorable, fruity and absolutely charming when young, but forget it in your cellar and it will blossom into something unexpected, complex and great. I fell deeply in love with the wines I tried in this vertical tasting.

MONEMVASIA WINERY TSİMBİDİS KYDONİTSA 2024

I loved this one. It has a very pleasant apple-fruity character, some candied tropical fruit and some leafy notes as well, and a palate that combines freshness with substance in the mid-palate. Lovely, minimalistic, not very loud as, say, a Malagousia can be, but with great depth and intensity on the palate. A wine of definition and character.

MONEMVASIA WINERY TSİMBİDİS KYDONİTSA 2023

An extra year in the bottle and the fruit shines through. Very expressive and aromatic, the quince takes center stage, complemented by notes of apricots, (some dried ones as well) and a lovely creaminess on the nose. Perfectly ripe fruit but still a kind of slightly underripe leafiness (although not in a bad way) and a crunchy acidity on the palate. It has already gained more complexity and depth.

MONEMVASIA WINERY TSİMBİDİS KYDONİTSA 2020

Here’s the evolution in the bottle that you would have wished for. A complex nose with layers of ripe fruit and some hints of petrol-like minerality. It’s ripe without being boring at all, and it’s salty and mineral at the same time. A round palate, with lovely creaminess yet still vibrant and fresh, with some spicy notes towards the finish. It’s a long-lasting, developing and multi-layered wine. An absolute sensation.

MONEMVASIA WINERY TSİMBİDİS KYDONİTSA 2016

A beautiful light-golden color with some still-green highlights the signs of its slow evolution. It’s even more intense than the 2020 on the nose. Very mineral, with petrol aromas, not heavy at all, with a lovely sweetness of fruit. Developing but not yet there. Very impressive. The palate is leaner than you’d expect from 2016, a touch underripe, with some appetizing bitterness towards the finish. It’s amazing how young this one still tastes.

MONEMVASIA WINERY TSİMBİDİS KYDONİTSA MATURE 2019

With a different winemaking approach, this one is sourced from a single vineyard and vinified in stainless steel tanks with nine months on the lees and aged for a minimum of three years in the bottle prior to release. It’s a wine of tremendous complexity. Exotic spices on the nose with a honeyed character and a herbal touch. Very intense and multi-layered, juicy and creamy palate, with lemon curd and lemon zest with excellent weight, slightly oily, but with enough acidity to balance and provide freshness. A stretch of quality for the grape. ¶

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The impressive facilities of the Kinsterne Hotel, with views of Monemvasia in the distance.



TRAVEL

TEXT BY
THALIA KARTALI

PHOTOS FROM
KINSTERNA HOTEL ARCHIVE

NESTLED IN THE LUSH FOLDS OF A HILLSIDE WITH STUNNING VIEWS OF THE SPECTACULAR MEDIEVAL FORTIFIED SETTLEMENT OF MONEMVASIA, THE HISTORIC KINSTERNA HOTEL IS SITUATED IN THE AGIOS STEFANOS AREA, JUST 7 KILOMETERS FROM MONEMVASIA.

Kinsterne Hotel

A narrow dirt road begins at sea level and winds its way up the hills to this magnificent estate, which surrounds an 18th-century mansion that was converted into a boutique hotel in 2010. The hotel owes its name, Kinsterne (meaning cistern), to the large cistern located near the entrance, surrounded by 120-year-old eucalyptus trees and cypresses.

More than 100 hectares of land surround the mansion, which features architectural elements reflecting the rich Byzantine, Venetian and Ottoman heritage of the area. The earliest known owner of the building complex was Ibrahim Bey, one of the local feudal landlords. Until the 1970s, the sprawling manor was inhabited by Lina Kapitsini, known as the Lady of Monemvasia. After her death, it was abandoned until it was purchased and restored by its current owner. The main goal of the restoration was to preserve the original architecture using traditional techniques and natural materials.

In addition to the beautifully restored buildings and the new additions that house 51 rooms, suites, residences and two pool villas, the owners' vision of transforming the surrounding land into a self-sufficient estate is equally impressive. During our tour of the estate, guided by the hotel's head chef, Giorgos Hapsas, we came across a 7-hectare vineyard, both olive and orange groves, herb gardens, vegetable plots and even a greenhouse where mushrooms are cultivated. Everything grown here is used in the kitchen, reflecting a farm-to-table dining philosophy. The estate also has its own beehives for honey production, and eggs are sourced from a state-of-the-art hen house. "Our goal is zero waste, and my philosophy is based on the 5 Rs: Refuse, Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, Rot," Hapsas explained.

The vineyard is planted with local grape varieties such as Monemvasia, Kydonitsa and Agiorgitiko, which are used to produce the estate's own wines. There are several dining options, but the highlight is the experience at the traditional Taverna Linos. Here, food is primarily prepared in an open-air wood oven, accompanied by vegetables harvested from the estate. Remarkably, the estate is also 100% energy-autonomous.

The rich breakfast options will satisfy even the most discerning guests: eggs from the hen house, homemade marmalades, cheese from local producers, olives from the estate's groves, and traditional local recipes – all prepared with estate-grown ingredients – guarantee the perfect start to a day that can be filled with activities or simply peaceful relaxation in the serene surroundings of the hotel. ¶



TRAVEL

TEXT BY
THALIA KARTALI
AND PENELOPE KATSATOU

PHOTOS BY
YIORGOS KAPLANIDIS

RENOWNED FOR ITS BEAUTIFUL LANDSCAPES DOTTED WITH OLIVE TREES AND BORDERED BY SANDY BEACHES, THE REGION OF MESSINIA IN THE SOUTHWEST OF THE PELOPONNESE HAS, IN THE LAST FEW YEARS, BECOME A FAVORITE TRAVEL DESTINATION FOR MANY.

MESSINIA

Thanks largely to the vision of the late Captain Vassilis Constantakopoulos, founder of the Costa Navarino resort complex, the entire area is now attracting visitors searching for an alternative to the Greek islands, and offering those interested in exploring the region's rich history a variety of attractions from which to choose. Some of the most important archaeological sites in the Peloponnese are to be found here, including the sites of Ancient Messene and the Palace of Nestor. Luxury accommodations with world-class golf courses and other sports facilities provide excellent leisure activity options.

What's more, the region boasts a rich culinary tradition that celebrates outstanding local products. Until recently, good-quality wine was absent from the scene but, in the past few years, there have been significant efforts to revive vineyards in the area, a region which had long supplied grapes for bulk-wine production taking place in other areas of Greece. A number of small producers emerged in the late '90s and early 2000s. Since the area lacks a signature local variety, most producers turned to Cabernet Sauvignon. However, more recently some have begun experimenting with Greek varieties such as Malagousia and Assyrtiko, which seem to thrive in the Messinia terroir. As a result, the Messinia Terroir initiative was launched, under the management of the Captain Vassilis and Carmen Constantakopoulos Foundation.

Established in 2011, the foundation is dedicated to making Messinia a model for sustainable rural development by supporting and promoting forward-looking strategies. The history of vineyard-rich Messinia is inextricably entwined with the legends, traditions and values of centuries-old viticulture and winemaking. For the past three years, the Costa Navarino resort complex has hosted the Messinia Terroir Wine Festival, a three-day event where producers showcase their new products, alongside masterclasses and roundtable discussions on the region's rich viticultural history.

NAVARINO VINEYARDS

The views from Navarino Vineyards, the Costa Navarino winery, are breathtaking. At an elevation of 400-500 meters, the estate's western-facing slopes offer magnificent views of the sea. In the shade of a centuries-old tree which stands proudly in the midst of the well-tended vines, visitors can enjoy picnics and wine tastings. Summer temperatures can be quite cool up here, especially in the evening, contributing to the production of high-quality grapes with very good levels of acidity. Since 2022, Dr. Stefanos Koundouras, professor of viticulture at the University of Thessaloniki, has been overseeing the vineyard, and he's opted for the planting of more indigenous Greek varieties.

"The area of Trifilia is mostly known for the cultivation of French varieties," says the professor, "mainly Cabernet Sauvignon, Syrah, Merlot and Chardonnay. There has been a great effort made to revive the old vineyards; at the same time, new vineyards have been planted, with an emphasis on indigenous varieties of the southwestern Peloponnese, which include Assyrtiko, Mavrodafni, Kydonitsa and Agiorgitiko."

Harvested by hand and gently pressed, the grapes produce red and white vintages that are bottled and stored in the Costa Navarino cellars. The series, aptly named "1827" in honor of the historical naval battle of Navarino, comprises a white wine combining Chardonnay with Roditis; a red Cabernet Sauvignon; and a Syrah rosé. The Kotyle series – its name inspired by an ancient clay drinking vessel known as King Nestor's Cup – includes a white Chardonnay matured in a barrel for four to five months, and a red Cabernet Sauvignon matured in a barrel for 18 months.



An aerial view of the Navarino Vineyards.

PANAGIOTOPOULOS WINES AND SPIRITS
The Panagiotopoulos Estate claims to have the largest vineyard in the Pirkos Trifilias area. The winery, surrounded by 100 acres of vineyards, is open to visitors eager to enjoy tours of the vineyards and wine tastings. The vineyards, which are cultivated organically, feature varieties such as Malagousia, Sauvignon Blanc, Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and Syrah. The estate produces 15 different labels and around 200,000 bottles per year, but has the capacity to reach up to 700,000 bottles. Most of the labels are varietal wines, including organically grown Malagousia and Sauvignon Blanc, both of which are fermented in stainless steel tanks. The estate's flagship label is the 36 Cabernet Sauvignon, which ages in barrels for 36 months. Other labels include wine made from a local variety called Fileri.

DERESKOS ESTATE
Dereskos Estate is hidden away in a beautiful area near the village of Floka. Its owner, Theodoros Dereskos, a civil engineer by training, was not involved with winemaking until he decided to take over the family-owned vineyard. His first harvest was in 1994; since then, he has dedicated himself to winemaking. Production is relatively small, i.e., 50,000 bottles per year, and includes a total of eight labels. Dereskos knows a great deal about the area and its rich history of winemaking, which, as he says, was interrupted when local producers decided to abandon viticulture and turn to the cultivation of olive trees, which they considered more profitable.

NESTOR LAFAZANI WINERY
This winery holds the distinction of being the largest winery in the Balkans in terms of both facilities and production numbers. Originally part of the Nestor Cooperative, an agricultural and wine cooperative of Messinia founded in 1954 by local viticulturists, the winery was acquired by the Lafazanis family in 2015. It boasts a total capacity of 10,000 tons, with facilities covering 7,000 square meters and cellars spanning 3,000 square meters. The winery was designed to bring to mind the architecture and color schemes of King Nestor's ancient palace; that archaeological site is just 6 km away. The first grape variety vinified here after the Lafazanis family took over was Fileri, which remains their flagship variety. Athina Lafazani, who serves as the marketing director of Spiros Lafazanis SA, the company founded by her father, Spiros, believes in the tremendous potential of this local variety, which can yield various styles of wine. In addition to Fileri, the winery produces three other varietals using Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and Chardonnay, all under the series Pylos. They also produce Avarino tsipouro, a strong spirit made in the distillery at the Nestor facility. The winery is open to visitors, who can tour its impressive facilities and enjoy unique wine-tasting sessions.

BIOVIN, TSAVOLAKIS WINERY
Oenologist Giannis Tsavolakis founded his winery in Kalamata in 1995. Today, it is run by his daughter Maria and her husband Giannis Marios. They produce organic wines from grapes sourced from local producers with whom they have been collaborating for a long time. Biovin-Tsavolakis Winery has 11 labels and produces around 90,000 bottles using both international and local varieties: Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Chardonnay, Moschofilero, Sauvignon Blanc, Roditis and Malagousia.

PATSOUROS WINERY AND VINEYARDS
Stefanos Patsouros is a third-generation winemaker. His grandfather used to make wine at home, which he sold to local tavernas, a common practice at the time. After a career in the Navy, Stefanos' father decided to return and establish his own winery. Stefanos, who studied chemistry, discovered his passion for the vineyard when he planted his first vine. He enjoys experimentation and strongly supports the local variety Fileri, believing it can yield very honest wines. The winery currently produces four labels but plans to add four more in the near future. Their main grape varieties include Grenache Blanc, Fileri, Malagousia, Syrah, Muscat and Tempranillo. They have an annual production of 70,000 to 80,000 bottles.

PSAROULIS WINERY
The Psaroulis family has been involved in viticulture since 1948. Konstantinos Psaroulis started production in 2013 at the new winery, near privately owned vineyards planted on the grounds of a prehistoric lake. Here lies the largest Assyrtiko vineyard in Messinia, spanning 60 acres. Other varieties vinified here include Malagousia, Chardonnay, Fileri, Syrah, Cabernet Sauvignon, Agiorgitiko and Merlot. Total production amounts to around 90,000 bottles, a portion of which is exported. The winery produces a total of nine labels, primarily varietal wines, with the Assyrtiko Retsina and the semi-sweet Malagousia particularly notable choices. Over the past four years, the winery has been open to visitors and has had the pleasure of welcoming many who've enjoyed the tasting sessions in the vineyard.

GOTSIS WINERY
Nikos Gotsis runs a winery which originally belonged to his grandfather, who produced both wine and olive oil. After a long absence, Nikos returned to the area with the aim of reviving the family vineyards, initially without plans to establish a winery. However, he expanded his vineyard holdings, and, in 2002, began his own production in collaboration with oenologist Ioanna Davleris. The vineyards, situated in Diodia, Messinia, sit at elevations of 350 meters or more. The winery produces four series of labels – Psathi, Diodia, Nassos and a varietal – as well as two premium-label series: Treis Kores, a Merlot rosé; and the pride of the winery, Two Worlds, an Assyrtiko. The vineyard for Two Worlds, located at an elevation of 350 meters, is a dry vineyard with red soil, yielding approximately 6,000 bottles. Total production amounts to around 70,000 bottles.

ASTIR X WINERY, XYGOROS
Astir X is the brainchild of two brothers from Kalamata, Vangelis and Stathis Xygoros, along with two northerners, Vangelis Papaioannou and Stelios Mavromatis, who share a passion for wine. A chance encounter brought the four together, leading them to collaborate on the goal of producing, in Kalamata, high-quality wines destined for numerous countries abroad. The raw materials for Astir X wines are sourced from 800 acres of vineyards across the Peloponnese region. The viticultural team closely collaborates with 88 winegrowers whose grapes are vinified at the winery. Varieties include Malagousia, Fileri, Moschato, Roditis and Chardonnay for whites, and Agiorgitiko, Cabernet Sauvignon, Grenache Rouge, Merlot and Tempranillo for reds. The winery spans 14 acres on the outskirts of Kalamata, with covered areas totaling 2,500 square meters. Its stainless steel refrigerated tanks have a capacity of 3,000 tons. ¶



The archaeological finds at the Palace of Nestor in Messinia are awe-inspiring.



TRAVEL

TEXT BY
THALIA KARTALI

PHOTOS BY
YIORGOS KAPLANIDIS

THE REMAINS OF THE PALACE OF NESTOR, ON AN OLIVE-COVERED HILL IN MESSINIA, ARE SO IMPRESSIVE THEY LEAVE THE UNSUSPECTING VISITOR SPEECHLESS.

THE PALACE OF NESTOR

This is the most perfectly preserved palace of the Mycenaean era, brought to light in 1939 by an archaeological excavation led by Konstantinos Kourouniotis, then director of the National Archaeological Museum, and Carl Blegen, professor of archaeology at the University of Cincinnati, a long time resident of Athen, where he died in 1971. The excavation, which continues to this day, was interrupted by the start of WWII but resumed in the 1950s – without Kourouniotis, who died in 1945. Jack Davis, who holds the Blegen Chair of Archaeology at the University of Cincinnati, has led the team since 1974, along with his wife Sharon Stocker. Their efforts have brought to light Mycenaean beehive tombs full of archaeological treasures. Davis graciously showed us around the archaeological site, which the duo hope to transform into a National Archaeological Park, with the cooperation of the Ministry of Culture and support from private entities such as Costa Navarino.

The area around the impressive palace has yielded up many finds, from beehive tombs to perimeter walls. Unique objects have been discovered inside the tombs, and are now being gathered to form part of a collection that will go on exhibit at the Archaeological Museum of Messinia in Kalamata as of 2025. Subsequently, the collection will travel to the Getty Museum in the US and then to Athens before finally taking up home at the Chora Museum, currently under renovation.

Finds at the Palace of Nestor, a two-story building adorned with colorful frescoes, include, as Jack Davis explains, some of the most significant evidence of wine culture in the prehistoric world. The palace housed a unique wine warehouse, in which 1,300 wine casks were discovered. Linear B inscriptions found on these casks contain the word “wine” and make reference to food, feasts, sacrifices, and the preparation of olive oil.

“They must have consumed a lot of wine here; the whole place was filled with wine glasses when Carl Blegen discovered it in 1939,” remarks Mr. Davis. Blegen himself dubbed this area of the palace “Nestor’s Cellar,” marking it as a unique find in wine-related history. The palace comprised several distinct buildings and served not only as a seat of power but also as a tax-

tion center for local production. Farmers of the time transported amphorae filled with wine and oil to the palace archive, where production was documented and taxed. Storage areas housed pithoi (large amphorae-like vessels) sunk into the ground, and filled with local wine and oil. In fact, a fire, likely ignited around the 12th century BC, erupted when stored oil exploded, resulting in the destruction of the palace.

Today, the remains of the palace are safeguarded from the elements by an impressive canopy of structural steel; visitors can admire the layout from specially designed metal walkways and gain a comprehensive understanding of the building’s different spaces and functions. The palace’s association with wine and olive oil production, reinforced by the discovery of ancient grape seeds in the surrounding area, further underscores the significance of wine during the prehistoric era in Greece.

BEEHIVE TOMBS

The beehive tombs uncovered by Davis, Stocker and their team represent yet another remarkable archaeological discovery in this area overlooking Navarino Bay. While awaiting access to a section believed to be of archaeological interest, the archaeologists unexpectedly unearthed a beehive tomb in another location. Within it were rare and astonishing finds, including gold rings – some of which are the largest-ever examples found in a prehistoric tomb in Greece – along with a bronze mirror with an ivory handle, semi-precious stone signets, and other objects of value, all of which are currently undergoing expert analysis.

A total of five beehive tombs have been discovered in the vicinity of the palace, with the most recent one unearthed in 2018 and still undergoing excavation. These discoveries have brought to light various artifacts, including pottery, jewelry, amber beads, amethyst and ivory. The finds at this significant archaeological site not only attest to the flourishing of the Mycenaean civilization in this region of Messinia but also underscore the profound relationship that the local population has had with wine over millennia. This connection, while not always clearly evident from the historical record, was, it seems, never entirely severed. ¶



INTERVIEW

TEXT BY
THALIA KARTALI

PHOTOS BY
YIORGOS KAPLANIDIS

BARBARA GRUBER AND HER HUSBAND JÖRG SALCHENEGGER ARE THE AUSTRIAN COUPLE BEHIND LACULES ESTATE AND ITS IMPRESSIVE WINES.

Barbara Gruber

For some time, we had heard about an estate in the southern Peloponnese owned by an Austrian. We had even tried the wines from there, and although we liked what we tried, their limited production made them difficult to find. During a visit to Messinia, we decided it was time we dropped in at the Lacules Estate and discover the story behind it.

A young woman greeted us with a warm “Kalosorisate” (Greek for “Welcome”) – although her accent hinted she wasn’t a native speaker – as we arrived at a magical seaside location near the town of Koroni. Barbara Gruber’s Greek may not be flawless, but her deep love for Greece, her adopted homeland, is more than evident.

A chance professional collaboration had brought Barbara’s father, Friedrich, the owner of a construction company specializing in wine cellars, to Greece in 1995, and from that moment the Gruber family’s fate became forever linked with our country. Today, there is a seaside estate planted with vines and olive trees, a house reminiscent of the Italian Riviera, and a career quite different from what Barbara had envisioned when completing her MBA, planning to one day take over her father’s construction business.

As we sat surrounded by terraced vineyards and olive groves with the blue sea in the background, and dozens of other plants forming the Mediterranean garden of their beautiful home, Barbara began telling us the story of her family.

In 1995, her father was commissioned to build a wine cellar for an Austrian who had a house in the Lacules area, near Koroni. “The project was completed, but he wasn’t getting paid. At some point, the client said to my father: ‘You’re a great guy. I like you, and I’d love to have you as a neighbor. What would you say to taking the plot of land next to mine instead of the money?’ We came here with my mother without knowing anything. Then my father asked us what we thought of the landscape. ‘We love it,’ my mother and I replied, and he said, ‘Perfect, because it’s ours.’”

That’s how the construction of the house, originally intended as a vacation home, began. Barbara’s father had no previous involvement in wine production, but he decided to plant some vines on the estate to give the landscape a more Mediterranean feel. The first vines planted were of the Syrah variety. Through his work, he had many winemaker friends, and one of them raised the idea of making wine from these grapes.

“We had no idea how to do that,” Barbara said. “A friend from Austria, and later other winemakers vacationing here from Italy and California, all helped us make our first wine. Just for fun. A few liters, which we didn’t even think would be drinkable.” But not only was the wine drinkable, it was very good. And so, Friedrich Gruber continued making wine in the garage of the house for six years. Anyone who passed by lent a hand in the winemaking.

“Then our generation came along. I used to spend my summers here, and on a nearby beach, I met my future husband. My friends and I played around with the grapes for fun. We thought the whole process was very cool; we liked it. At the time, it never crossed my mind to get into wine professionally. I was studying to eventually take over my father’s company when he retired, and he would continue making wine as a hobby.”

But things took a different turn. Barbara and her husband Jörg, a chemist, began getting a bit more serious, and her father’s suggestion came soon after: “I think I should keep running the company, and you should take on the wine, but more professionally.” But what did that mean in practice? There was no possibility for large production – the Syrah grapes from the estate were only enough for one barrel of wine. “Guys, you need more grapes,” said Christos Kokkalis, the creator of the famed Trilogy, who quickly supplied them with additional Syrah and Cabernet Sauvignon grapes. He helped them with their second harvest, and suddenly, one barrel became six.

“When we decided to take it more seriously,” Barbara explained, “I traveled to California, where we had many contacts through my father, people who showed me many things. I did a harvest there and really learned a lot, and gradually, with the help of my husband’s chemistry background, we began moving forward.

“We now have our own vineyard. But nothing would have been possible without the invaluable help of Christos Papadimitriou, who manages the vineyard. It wasn’t easy for me – not speaking Greek at all – to communicate with the growers we worked with. I often felt desperate, at one point even thinking, ‘OK, that’s it, we can’t move forward.’ And then Christos appeared: a wonderful person who has helped us tremendously. We learn from him, and he learns from us. He’s open to trying new things and incorporating all the knowledge we’ve accumulated over the years. I truly consider him a second father.”

Production remains small – about 20,000 bottles a year, with three labels total, all from red grapes. What is unusual about their approach, however, is while that the wine ferments here in stainless steel tanks, it is then transported to Austria and put into barrels, where it remains for 18 months. “Just like our wine, our family splits its time between Greece and Austria. I wish I could spend more time in Greece, but at this stage, it’s not possible. I love this country – the sun, the people – we’ve become friends with families from Koroni and Vasilitsi. This is our home, too.”

Gradually, however, steps are being taken that may allow them to complete their production here. A small winery has already been built, and maybe someday in the future, the estate’s wines will age here too. As for the grape varieties they use, in addition to the international ones – Cabernet Sauvignon, Syrah and Merlot – they are now turning towards Greek grapes, such as Mavroudi, Avgoustiatis, Limniona, Mavrotragano and Kydonitsa. “In Austria, I want to act as an ambassador of Greek wine,” Barbara said. “In blind tastings, Greek wines are very well received, but people there still can’t believe that Greece can produce good wine. Austria, however, is a very small market. My father and his wine-enthusiast friends speak passionately about Greek wines. Our production is small; it’s not enough to create critical mass. We promote our wines ourselves, in specific places. We are, and want to remain, a boutique winery.

“The truth is, when people talk about Greek wines, they’re looking for Greek varieties. That’s why we’re starting to experiment with them – but it takes time to work with them. What matters is that the first step has been taken. And we’re very happy about that.” ¶



Summer Best Buys

Summer calls for easy days, salty skin and a glass of chilled in hand. It also calls for pleasure and, when it comes to wines, the Peloponnese delivers. This amazing southern part of Greece has been making wine since ancient times, but don't let the history fool you, its bottles are as fresh, fun, and full of character as your best summer plans. Summer Best Buys is dedicated to breezy whites, bright rosés and reds that can handle a chill from the region. Affordable, versatile and undeniably Greek, these are the top picks for sipping your way through the season.

- 1

1

PETROULIANOS, VATISTAS WINERY [PETROULIANOS]
• €13.00

→ From the sunny vineyards of Laconia comes a refreshing revelation. Petroulianos, once a hidden grape, now shines as a standout varietal wine crafted by Maria Vatista. Crisp, white and fruit-forward, it's the perfect summer pour. Fragrant notes of jasmine, citrus blossom and ripe apricot lead to a soft, elegant finish. Ideal as an aperitif or paired with seafood, fresh salads and white cheeses.
- 2

2

KA, ESTATE THEODORAKAKOS
[KYDONITSA, AGIORGITIKO] • €11.80

→ This vibrant rosé unites the indigenous Kydonitsa and Agiorgitiko varieties in a refreshing harmony of flavor and aroma. Bright pomegranate-pink in color, it bursts with notes of peach, quince, strawberry and cherry, gently layered with floral hints. Juicy, fruity and delightfully crisp, it's perfect for casual meals or refined pairings. To maximize the pleasure, pair it with fresh salads, stuffed vegetables, tomato-based pasta or shrimp linguine.
- 3

3

MONEMVASIA, MONEMVASIA WINERY TSIMBIDI
[MONEMVASIA] • €14.00

→ Grown organically for over 15 years in the vineyards of Monemvasia Winery, this varietal expression is crafted with care. The result is a bright golden wine with floral and fruity aromas such as citrus zest, stone fruit and wildflowers. Balanced acidity, a rich texture and a lingering finish make it both refined and approachable. Pair it with grilled fish, seafood pasta, sautéed mushrooms and aged yellow cheeses.
- 4

4

A PRIORI, NOVUS WINERY [MOSCHOFILERO] • €11.00

→ This expressive P.D.O. Mantinia white is crafted from the charismatic reddish-skinned Moschofilero grape, perfectly adapted to the region's unique terroir. Bright lemon color with silvery-gray highlights, it bursts with aromas of citrus, Turkish delight, and a touch of tangerine peel. Crisp acidity, refined structure and a lingering finish make it an ideal match for green salads, shellfish, grilled fish or a refreshing aperitif.
- 5

5

PET NAT, BOSINAKI WINERY [MOSCHOFILERO] • €17.20

→ Bosinaki Pét-Nat is a naturally sparkling wine made with the ancestral method, where fermentation finishes in the bottle – no additives, just pure expression. Bursting with aromas of white flowers, lime, green apple, and a touch of minerality, it's vibrant, refreshing and joyfully unfiltered. Perfect for summer sipping, spontaneous moments, or pairing with light dishes and good company.
- 6

6

MOSCHATO DI RIO, ACHEON WINERY [MUSCAT] • €10.20

→ In the hands of the Katsikostas family, native varieties come alive in elegant expressions of PGI Achaia. This white wine from the sun-kissed slopes of Aigialeia offers vibrant fruit aromas over a floral base, a rich body and crisp acidity. A refined aperitif and a perfect match for delicately aromatic dishes from both Greek and international cuisines.
- 7

7

CUVEE III, MEGA SPILEO ESTATE
[MALAGOUSIA, ASSYRTIKO, CHARDONNAY] • €11.80

→ Malagousia and Assyrtiko from the high-elevation slopes of Aigialeia join forces with barrel-aged Chardonnay to create a rich yet vibrant white wine. Aromas of fresh stone fruits, basil, bergamot, butter and coconut, underscored by subtle spicy notes. On the palate, it reveals structure and volume, with fruity flavors embraced by oak, and a long, creamy vanilla finish. Pairs perfectly with dolmadakia, roast chicken with potatoes, pork roulade and grilled fish.

- 8

8

ANAX, ANTONOPOULOS VINEYARDS
[CHARDONNAY] • €55.80

→ One of Greece's best-selling barrel-aged whites, this wine enjoys a loyal following and high praise from both local and international experts. Aromatically complex, it reveals ripe stone fruits, herbal nuances and elegantly integrated oak notes of vanilla and toasted nuts. Rich and full-bodied, with balanced structure and a long finish, it's crafted for memorable meals and discerning palates. Try grilled squid and smoked cheese for the win!
- 9

9

THE GIFTS OF DIONYSUS, PARPAROUSSIS WINERY
[SIDERITIS] • €11.80

→ Crafted from 100% Sideritis grapes grown in gravel-sandy soils under a Mediterranean marine microclimate, this organically certified unique dry white offers a green-yellow color and intense aromas of fresh fruits and delicate wildflowers. The pleasant aftertaste makes it a perfect companion for fish, shellfish, summer salads and white meats.
- 10

10

NOEMVRIS, MOROPOULOS WINERY
[MOSCHOFILERO] • €16.70

→ This impressive semi-dry PGI Arcadia white is an exotic take on the variety; it's made from 100% Moschofilero, and has elegant citrus and lime blossom aromas with candied notes and hints of white flowers. Light-bodied and refreshingly acidic, it finishes with sweet fruit and a vibrant freshness. Pair it with bulgur salads, artichokes, fennel pies, fish ceviche or mussel dishes, or enjoy it as an aperitif or alongside sweet-and-sour Asian cuisine.
- 11

11

ODE PANOS, KTIMA SPIROPOULOS
[MOSCHOFILERO] • €13.90

→ A popular sparkling wine that brings together Moschofilero's elegant aromas with the crisp energy of fine bubbles. Produced via the Charmat method and aged on the lees for six months, it has a lively bouquet of apple, citrus, banana, and rose. On the palate, explosive bubbles enhance the refreshing flavors in perfect harmony. A stylish, affordable alternative to champagne, ideal with fruit salads, sushi and other raw seafood dishes.
- 12

12

ROUTE GRIS, TROUPIS WINERY [MOSCHOFILERO] • €16.20

→ Made from grapes grown at an elevation of 640 meters in Arcadia, this unfiltered bold, natural-style white is fermented in stainless steel, oak and acacia, then aged in concrete. Aromatic and exotic, with notes of rose, citrus, peach skin and sweet spices, it's textured and fresh, with subtle tannins and a long, zesty finish. Pairs well with fried seafood, lemony chicken, spanakopita (spinach pie), sushi and vegetable dishes.
- 13

13

LITTLE ARK ROSÉ, LANTIDES WINERY
[MOSCHOFILERO] • €12.20

→ This Moschofilero-based rosé from Argolis bursts with aromas of sweet quince, cherry, strawberry and rosewater. Silky in texture and floral in aromas, with a crisp, balanced finish and a soft, salmon-pink color, it's a top pick among Greek rosés, effortlessly elegant and perfect for summer sipping. Ideal with seafood risotto, fried fish and Mediterranean starters.
- 14

14

NEMEA OLD CLIMATES, PAPAIOANNOU WINERY
[AGIORGITIKO] • €22.00

→ A powerful, age-worthy Agiorgitiko from old vines in Ancient Nemea, this is crafted at the family winery to yield dense aromas of ripe red fruit layered with spices such as nutmeg and pepper and a hint of earth. On the palate, it opens smoothly with sweetness, then reveals firm, grippy tannins and structure. Aged one year in oak and another in bottle, with potential to evolve for over a decade. Pairs perfectly with richly spiced meat dishes and slow-cooked classics.

- 15

VISSINOKIPOS, PALIVOU ESTATE [AGIORGITIKO] • €11.70
→ A rosé that thinks like a red, with impressive color and a rich nose of ripe red fruit and subtle spice. Full-bodied and structured, with gentle tannins and a long, savory finish, this is not a light aperitif rosé. Instead, it's made for food and for ... fire. Perfect with grilled pork, fried meatballs, or anything off the barbecue, it's a summer rosé that holds its own at the heart of the meal.
- 16

SIXTY NINE STEPS, BARAFAKAS ESTATE [MALAGOUSIA] • €12.80
→ Named after the steps across the vineyard that lead up to stunning views of Nemea, this varietal white bursts with peach, apricot, citrus blossom and herbal notes. Bright and fruit-forward with refreshing acidity and a clean finish, it's a polished expression of Malagousia from Barafakas Estate. Pair it with grilled calamari, veggie pies, pasta salads, and fried cheese. It's summer in a glass, with a true sense of place.
- 17

PEPLO, DOMAINE SKOURAS [SYRAH, AGIORGITIKO, MOSCHOFILERO] • €17.40
→ A rare blend of Agiorgitiko, Syrah, and Moschofilero, each vinified uniquely in acacia barrels, amphorae and stainless steel. Bright coral color, with aromas of strawberry, rose, citrus, and a mineral hint. Structured and fresh, with complexity and a long, evolving finish. From vineyards at elevations over 600 meters, this is a rosé that balances finesse and depth. Perfect with grilled shrimp, ceviche or Mediterranean meze.
- 18

TSIGELLO, ROVALIS WINERY [MAVRODAPHNE] • €18.00
→ This dry and elegant red is crafted with minimal intervention and matured in handmade clay vessels. Aromatic with bay leaf, eucalyptus, dark cherries and hints of vanilla and bitter chocolate. Smooth, earthy and full-bodied, with soft tannins and a long finish. Pair it with grilled meats, eggplant dishes, tomato sauces or rich charcuterie. This wine is proof that indigenous Greek varieties can stand proudly on the world stage.
- 19

GAIA S ROSÉ, GAIA WINES [AGIORGITIKO, SYRAH] • €14.90
→ A lively blend of Agiorgitiko and Syrah, with vibrant rose petal color and aromas of mango, cherry and strawberry. Crispy, aromatic and quite extroverted, it's bursting with herbal freshness. Elegant yet playful, ideal for aperitif moments or Mediterranean fare. A delicious expression of balance and summer charm. Pair it with grilled vegetables, seafood and light pasta dishes.
- 20

SKLAVA, ZACHARIAS WINERY [SKLAVA] • €13.60
→ This refreshing white comes from an ancient, almost forgotten variety, revived with elegance. Bright lemon color, with citrus, green apple and herbal notes such as chamomile and mountain tea. Light to medium-bodied, with a balanced acidity and a clean, pleasant finish. Perfect withsteamed shellfish, light salads, spinach pie or lemony soups. A conversation-starting wine for everyday tables and festive moments alike.
- 21

KALLISTO, MERCOURI ESTATE [ASSYRTIKO] • €11.50
→ From the vineyards of Karakohori, this sur lies expression offers elegance and depth, richness and remarkable value. Golden color with aromas of citron, lemon zest and subtle white fruits. Creamy yet bright on the palate, with piercing acidity and a long, pear-tinged finish, this wine is refined, structured, and unmistakably Greek. Perfect with grilled fish, citrusy salads or white cheeses.
- 22

BLACK CONE RARE EARTHS, STROFILIA ESTATE WINERY [AGIORGIIKO] • €18.00
→ Produced using natural fermentation techniques that were a result of pioneering academic research, this expressive Nemea is a rare balance of science and soul. Vibrant red with blue color, it bursts with plum, blackberry and red fruit, layered with notes of clove, vanilla and dark chocolate. Medium-bodied, fresh and super elegant, with smooth tannins and a lingering, aromatic finish. Perfect with veal dishes, charcuterie and aged cheeses.

- 23

AMALIA ROSÉ, TSELEPOS WINES [AGIORGITIKO] • €20.10
→ A great example of a Greek sparkling wine, pale salmon in color with bronze glints and an elegant, fine mousse. Cherry and dark berry aromas meet the savory complexity that comes with traditional nine months on the lees ageing. Refined yet vibrant, ideal for summer indulgence. It pairs wonderfully with shrimp salad, seafood pasta, or kagianas, a local egg-and-tomato recipe.
- 24

AVGOUSTIATIS, KTIMA BRINTZIKI [AVGOUSTIATIS] • €18.50
→ A graceful expression of Greece's hidden varietal treasures, ruby in color and elegant in nature, this native variety charms with red cherry, wild berry and soft herbal notes. Subtle oak ageing adds vanilla and spice, balanced by fresh acidity and silky tannins. Naturally refined and inviting, it's a perfect choice for those seeking character without weight. Enjoy it with grilled poultry, herbed vegetable dishes or aged cheeses.
- 25

DIALOGOS, DIO IPSI ESTATE [KYDONITSA, ASSYRTIKO] • €15.30
→ This bright blend of Assyrtiko and Kydonitsa brings citrus, quince and mineral notes together in a vibrant union. Lively acidity meets a rounded, fruity palate, structured yet charming. A refreshing take on two standout Greek varieties, it is ideal for Mediterranean meals or light al fresco dining. An effortless pour for everyday and beyond. Perfect with seafood, grilled vegetables or fresh cheeses.
- 26

LE ROI DES MONTAGNES CUVÉE , PAPARGYRIOU WINERY [CABERNET SAUVIGNON, TOURIGA, MAVRODAPHNE] • €27.20
→ Crafted by Yiannis Papargyriou from high-elevation Corinthian vineyards, this red bursts with ripe black fruit, plum jam, spice and roasted coffee. Full-bodied with gripping tannins, a high alcohol level and lively acidity, it's a wine made for lovers of power and depth. Bold, structured, and unapologetically rich, this one is best paired with grilled red meats or a juicy gourmet burger. Drink it now for power, or cellar it for finesse.
- 27

MAVRO KALAVRYTINO, TETRAMYTHOS WINERY [MAVRO KALAVRYTINO] • €16.00
→ This rare 100% Mavro Kalavrytino from the mountain vineyards of Aigialeia offers a ruby glow and aromas of red and black berries, herbs and violet. Silky tannins and vibrant acidity make it an all-season red that's both easy-drinking and distinctive. Perfect with red-sauced pasta, roast white meats, stuffed tomatoes or grilled tuna.
- 28

MONOPATI, AIVALIS WINERY [AGIORGITIKO] • €24.80
→ A cult-classic Agiorgitiko from Nemea's elite vineyard “Monopati”. Rich, powerful and structured, with firm tannins and deep ageing potential, this wine bursts with ripe dark fruits, spice and intensity. A true showcase of Nemea's potential and a must-try for lovers of bold, complex reds. Pair it with hearty meat dishes or aged cheeses, or simply age it for future magic.
- 29

KOTYLE, NAVARINO VINEYARDS [CHARDONNAY] • €19.30
→ A refined, oak-aged Chardonnay from organic vineyards in Messinia. Rich and expressive, it blends ripe peach and melon with buttery, nutty and herbal notes from six months in new French oak. Creamy yet fresh, it's a white wine made for elegant dishes and lovers of bold, barrel-influenced styles. It pairs beautifully with grilled fatty fish, creamy pasta, roast pork or chicken, lamb and more.
- 30

LOW WHITE, SEMELI ESTATE [MALAGOUSIA, MOSCHOFILERO] • €11.10
→ A delightful low-alcohol choice (6.5%) blending aromatic Moschofilero and Malagousia. Bright and floral on the nose, with notes of citrus blossom and white-fleshed fruit, it offers a refreshing, light-bodied sip with zesty acidity. With 40% fewer calories, it's the perfect companion for relaxed summer moments, sunny lunches or guilt-free sipping – easy to enjoy anytime. ¶



TRAVEL BY THE GLASS. SEMELI ESTATE



Nestled in the hills of Koutsí, Nemea, where vineyards trace the sun across ancient slopes, Semeli Estate invites visitors to encounter Greek wine in its truest form. Established in 1979 and perched at 600 meters, the estate is part of one of Greece's most storied wine-growing regions. Here, indigenous varieties like Agiorgitiko and Malagousia, as well as international varieties such as Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and Syrah, find expression through elevation, climate, and thoughtful cultivation. Semeli Estate is not merely a winery; it is a place where wine, landscape, and culture quietly converge. The contemporary winery blends seamlessly with its surroundings, while Semeli Estate sits at the center of a living vineyard, where the land itself tells the story. Guests are invited to take part in curated tastings, explore the cellar where time and oak shape the wines, and walk among the vines where it all begins. The Semeli Wine Experience ranges from introductory tastings to vertical samplings. Tastings that trace the evolution of a wine across years and harvests reveal how age, weather, and craftsmanship interact in subtle, expressive ways. For those seeking moments of depth beyond the glass, the Estate offers wine-paired meals that follow the rhythm of the seasons, open-air painting sessions, and private picnics nestled within the vineyard. Sustainability is not an afterthought but a founding principle. Certified carbon neutral since 2021, Semeli Estate continues to adopt regenerative practices that honor the land, protect biodiversity, and secure the vitality of the soil for years to come. For corporate events and clients, guests can extend their stay in one of ten suites designed for comfort and reflection. Surrounded by vineyards and natural light, these spaces provide a tranquil atmosphere that encourages focus, relaxation, and meaningful connections. The Estate offers a rare perspective both literal and cultural, on Greek viticulture. Situated near landmarks such as Ancient Nemea, Mycenae and Nafplio, Semeli becomes a starting point not just for discovery, but for deeper connection. Whether you're a devoted oenophile or simply drawn to places of quiet authenticity, a visit to Semeli Estate is not just a pause, it's a return to the essence of life.

FING GRAPE MAGAZINE

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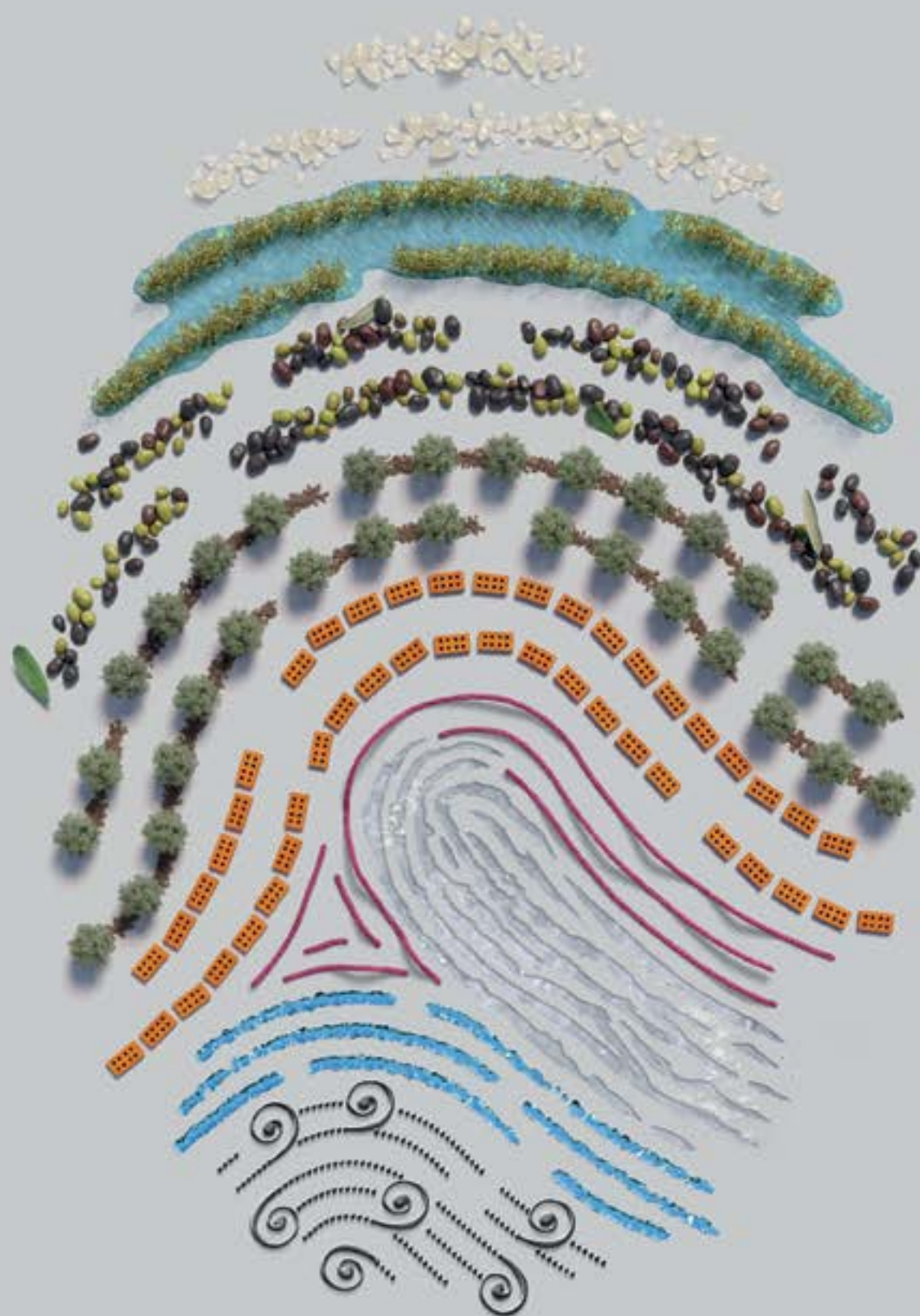


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