

# Ep 44 Wines of Greece with Anonymus Greek Sommelier

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## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

grape variety, wine, wines, greece, greek, volcanic soils, santorini, called, tannins, winery, varieties, winemaker, fruit, bit, vines, softer, people, minerality, region, indigenous



## SPEAKERS

Janina Doyle, Anonymus Sommelier

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Janina Doyle 00:07

Welcome to Eat Sleep Wine Repeat, a podcast for all you wine lovers, who, if you're like me just cannot get enough of the good stuff. I'm Janina Doyle, your host, Brand Ambassador, Wine Educator, and Sommelier. So stick with me as we dive deeper into this ever evolving wonderful world of wine. And wherever you are listening to this, cheers to you.



J

Janina Doyle 00:30

Hello, everybody. How are you all? I can't believe we are in March already. I hope you're staying strong and positive and drinking delicious wines to make your days that little bit brighter. So to add extra magic and brightness to your day, today's episode is all about Greek wines. Now, I cannot introduce my guest officially because he's decided to be anonymous. But what I can tell you is he is a top Greek Sommelier in London having worked in Fine dining restaurants and Michelin star restaurants. Now, the reason for him wanting to be anonymous, he has just launched a wine website called [www.thevinonaut.com](http://www.thevinonaut.com). And the idea is he wants it to be about the wine, about the wineries and not about who he is. So you will just have to keep on guessing. You can also watch videos on YouTube, the channel is called VinoRepublic where you will see a bottle of wine and just his hand. So go and explore. Now may I remind you there is always a transcript to these episodes. And you can find that in the show notes or just go to my website, [www.eatsleepwinerepeat.co.uk/podcast](http://www.eatsleepwinerepeat.co.uk/podcast), and you'll be able to find it because with this episode more than any with the Greek grape varieties, the Greek wine names the Greek wineries, how they're said and how they're spelt are completely different.

J

Janina Doyle 01:56

Now we owe it to the Greeks to get into Greek wine if we haven't already remembered. This is the birthplace of democracy, the beginnings of philosophy. They brought us literature, the Olympic Games, Greek mythology, which is so much fun, drama, art, the lot. The truth is they were intelligent people, you had Hippocrates, the Greek physician, advising patients to a tablespoon of wine as a remedy every day. Now, in fact, even during the debates at the Greek Symposia, they would dilute the wines down so that they wouldn't get too drunk. Instead, this would allow them to drink all night long and let the wine be the inspiration. The Greeks also considered wine to be the nectar of gods. I mean,

as I said, intelligent people. You've probably heard of Dionysus, who was the God of wine, also known as Bacchus. And in fact, even Liber Pater, which side note is actually the most expensive wine to come out of Bordeaux. So just FYI, but let's get back to Dionysus. He was also the God of ritual madness, fertility and religious ecstasy. I mean, this truthfully does sound like my kind of God I can get with this programme. But yes, they would worship him to ensure a good harvest. Now, the history is impressive and extensive. The downfall sadly for the Greek empire of wine was when the Ottoman ruling happened, which lasted for about 400 years. And during that time, it was incredibly discouraged to make wines to consume wines. And so they went from being a winemaking force of the world to virtually nothing. So it's only really in the 1970s and this is when the Appellation system was created, something that mirrors the appellation systems they have in France and and in Italy, it since then that they've made a comeback and a quality comeback they have made. About 80% of the wineries in Greece are less than 20 years old. So it really shows how new a winemaking region they are when ironically they have well over 4000 years of winemaking history. So it's definitely a wine region to delve deep into.

**J** Janina Doyle 04:12

Now, I feel like I can't do a Greek podcast without mentioning Retsina. Retsina I personally do not like. It is a dry white wine infused with pine resin. It certainly has an interesting spicy note, I can tell you that. It was a wine that was made actually by accident in history. So they used to seal the amphoraes or their containers with pine resin, and then it would actually drip into the wine and over time, it's an acquired taste and something that is still actually very much loved now. However, the quality is way better now than it ever used to be in the past. winemakers are deliberately making this wine so it's definitely something to try but not something that reflects the wines coming out of Greece right now. There are so many vibrant, mineral-lead whites, and big and bold, juicy reds. And we are going to come on to that. So now before we go to the chat with my anonymous Greek Sommelier, I thought I'd go and give you a little bit of a lowdown on the Greek wine regions. So when our anonymous Sommelier is talking about the grape varieties, you should hopefully be able to pinpoint exactly where they're from.

**J** Janina Doyle 05:24

Okay, so with the wine regions, you can break down Greece into four, the northern part of Greece, the central part of Greece, the southern part of Greece, and then the islands in the Aegean Sea. Some of them obviously are closer to mainland Greece, others actually closer to mainland Turkey, but for the purposes of trying to separate the country into four, I shall call these the Mediterranean islands. So the Mediterranean islands are exactly what everyone thinks of when they think of Greece, you know, the blue topped roofs and all the

beautiful sunsets. Well, the blue roofs are typically Santorini, which we're going to go into more detail over. So you will learn about the Assyrtiko grape variety then. There's the Lemnos Island, and the main grape variety that grows there is Limnio, which is a red, full bodied wine producing very herbaceous styles, lots of raspberry notes. And another island to think about would be Samos, which is known for the Muscat of Samos so they can make dry wines all the way through to sweet with the Muscat grape variety. So these are really warm Mediterranean style islands. Now heading right up to the north of mainland Greece, you have Macedonia, not the most famous area in Macedonia producing really premium wine is Naoussa. And we're going to be talking about the two main grape varieties of this area that would be Xinomavro, which is the king of red grape varieties in Greece, and then Malagousia, which is a white variety. Now here up in the north. Remember, it's surrounded by lots of mountains. So it's a lot more of a continental climate. So colder winters, more rain, in fact, very, very different than what you might expect. Now going to central Greece, it's obviously gets warmer and hotter, the further down south you go. So more of the Mediterranean climate you would expect. There are regions within central Greece like Thessaly and Attica. Now, Attica is actually specifically where the Retsina has come from. So the main grape variety that grows there is Savatiano. This is a less aromatic grape variety, always typically used in Retsina, but now made on its own as a dry white wine and you can expect kind of green apples and melon and just a lovely good acidity. Now they're making it so much better. Sometimes if you get Retsina now, they may use Assyrtiko in fact, that's the grape variety from Santorini Island, or even another indigenous variety called Roditis, which is actually typically found in the Peloponnese region, which is in the southern part of Greece. So we'll go to the southern part now in the Peloponnese. And the main region in the Peloponnese is Nemea. Now Nemea is where you're going to find your Agiorgitiko, we're going to taste one of them in a little bit and the white grape variety Moschofilero which is really floral, peachy almost even a Turkish Delight nature to it. It is delicious, and that you can find just south of Nemea in a region called Mantinea. Then right on the coast you have Patras which is the third largest city in Greece. There you can find a really lovely grape variety called Mavrodafni which it typically makes some really great dessert wine think raisins and date, but more and more they're starting to make it into a dry red wine style. And if so expect more of that black fruits but with a peppery nature, a bit of coffee, some bayleaf. You can also find that grape variety on Kefalonia if you ever go to visit. In fact, also talking of Kefalonia, there's a beautiful white grape variety, beautifully scented called Robola. And that's a very citrusy, pineapple, high acidity style of wine that's delicious. Hopefully you're understanding now there are a lot of amazing indigenous varieties to explore. Now just sticking with the southern region, the island of Crete, south of the mainland, and if you're going to Crete, one of the main grape varieties, there is a white grape variety called Vidiano which is a really lovely floral and stone fruit style of white wine and depending on where it's planted, and the altitude apparently it really can give Assyrtiko a bit of a run for

its money. Now here in the whole southern part of Greece, you get your hot Mediterranean climate, in the Peloponnese area, but remember, there are still lots of hills and quite a lot of altitude and a lot of people planting on north facing slopes. So you get a lot of microclimates around here, right? Well now I think is the time to go over to the chat with my lovely sommelier friend. I have to apologise for the sound quality. Unfortunately, good old technology, had a little bit of a boo boo, all the wines got drunk, everything got recorded. And if you do try and do things a second time, it's never as good, right? So please stick with me, I promise you because I've listened to this whilst editing over and over again. And that within two minutes, you will forget all about the sound quality. And you'll just be focused on absorbing as much Greek wine knowledge as you possibly can. Also, a big shout out to our sponsor, Hallgarten and Novum wines who were kind enough to make sure that we had some delicious Greek wines to try on this podcast. So without further ado, I know you're all super excited for this terrible audio. Let's get cracking.



Janina Doyle 10:54

Thank you so much for joining me.



Anonymus Sommelier 10:56

I'm so happy to be here. I'm excited and honoured to join you for this podcast.



Janina Doyle 11:01

Thank you. So let's pour our first one. This podcast is all about Greek white. Where are you from in Greece?



Anonymus Sommelier 11:09

I was born and raised in Athens.



Janina Doyle 11:11

That's perfect. Athens, right in the middle. Cheers.



Anonymus Sommelier 11:14

Cheers. Well, I grew up with wines more or less like this one. There was always a bottle of wine on the table, paired with food and I got into the wine culture from a very early age, that showed me or revealed to me, the beauty of everyday life of having amazing

flavours, pairing the food with wine.

**J** Janina Doyle 11:43  
And what was the moment?

**A** Anonymus Sommelier 11:44  
So it has not to do with Greek wine. Even even even if I might have had very good wines from Greece, until the moment I tried my first Amarone. It was a present for my birthday. And wow, the rest is history. I decided to explore more.

**J** Janina Doyle 12:05  
Do you know that one of my epiphany moments I was already in the wine industry. So I'm slightly jumping ahead. But a specific epiphany moment was a Quintarelli Amarone. And it made my legs, I actually feel like, I might be exaggerating here. It felt like they were a little shaky. There was a moment. Do you know, you know what I mean? You have the epiphany moment.

**A** Anonymus Sommelier 12:24  
Yes. Well Quintarelli Amarone. Definitely.

**J** Janina Doyle 12:27  
Anybody who doesn't know who he is, he is the legend, a legendary legendary producer of Amarone and you definitely need to get your hands on some. Unfortunately, he has passed away but his son is still doing fantastic things. We should not be talking about Italian wine. Now, let's get to business. We are drinking Malagousia.

**A** Anonymus Sommelier 12:45  
Yes so Malagousia by Gerovassiliou. The winemaker saved from extinction.

**J** Janina Doyle 12:51  
Yeah, this is fantastic, isn't it? This winery and the guy behind it. So how did he save Malagousia from extinction?

- A** Anonymus Sommelier 12:59  
Ok let's go through a bit of history here because in Greece there is uninterrupted wine production for more than 4000 years of evidence, 4000 but, and there were long periods that viticulture got neglected. During this period, some grape varieties got near extinction. And thankfully, some people like Gerovassiliou with their efforts and with experimenting a lot. They realised that there are unknown or obscure grape varieties that they deserve a second chance, let's say, and ummm.
- J** Janina Doyle 13:36  
Bring it back.
- A** Anonymus Sommelier 13:37  
Yes, yes, yes, exactly. So Gerovassiliou was working at Porto Carras, Chateau Porto Carras.
- J** Janina Doyle 13:43  
Which really, they've been around since the 1960s? Oh 70s! And they're kind of the start of the modern day era of Greek wine aren't they?
- A** Anonymus Sommelier 13:52  
That's correct. That's correct. We are talking about the mid 70s. And then Gerovassiliou started working at Chateau Porto Carras. Here I have to mention that at the time, there was also Émile Peynaud.
- J** Janina Doyle 14:07  
He studied underneath him didn't he. He was a student.
- A** Anonymus Sommelier 14:10  
So he was advising for Chateau Porto Carras and Gerovassiliou started working there. And he discovered Malagousia. He realised that there is a great potential with this aromatic grape variety. And the rest is history. Now is the...
- J** Janina Doyle 14:26

Everyone loves this grape variety in Greece now, right?



Anonymus Sommelier 14:29

Yeah, yeah. That is correct. I think it's easygoing, very aromatic and cheerful.



Janina Doyle 14:36

Perfumed, and pretty. Quite fun as well. I don't, actually fun doesn't give it enough credit. Because it's not just simple. It does smell like I'm sticking my nose into like a, ironically, a pot of Potpourri. It smells so much of so many different flowers and apricot and peaches and stone fruit and it's a really highly concentrated aroma on the nose. Isn't it?



Anonymus Sommelier 15:00

Yeah it's also a food wine. And I have to say that I have had some beautiful dishes and beautiful food pairings with with the Malagousia wine such as, for me, except the, what you mentioned the floral part, there is also a bit of some tropical fruits like mango or even those of passionfruit. So the thing is that there is kind of a sweet side without being sweet. And there is a freshness and acidity that is calling for some exotic fruits and then it's based on prawns, lobster or any kind of white seafood. I wouldn't say oysters, but seafood, it can be brilliant.



Janina Doyle 15:47

Definitely doing like a mango puree, and then a squeeze of lemon. And maybe this could even handle a little bit of spice, a little bit of cajun on the white fish just for the fact because there is this it's more voluptuousness and concentration of fruit. But there is that slight Gewürztraminer style almost to it.



Anonymus Sommelier 16:06

Yes it is. The florality is definitely giving some some people some Gewürztraminer notes. But also the acidity is making a big difference with Gewürztraminer notes. It's refreshing the palate and it helps a lot, I think.



Janina Doyle 16:19

I think it's super, super yummy. And definitely it's a noticeable wine. When you smell it with all the flavours, there's stuff going on. I think this can really get a lot of talk around the

table going and obviously so happy that you have brought this wine, the guy that has rescued, resuscitated this grape variety. This specific wine is £18.49 ish, it's what we've been told and you can get it from Selfridges. So that makes things quite easy for people in the UK. Right. And I think this is so interesting, and so concentrated. I'm very, very happy with this. Can you tell us a little bit more about the history then, whilst we are just sipping away. Tell us a story.

A

Anonymus Sommelier 17:15

So storytelling, okay. As I have mentioned, it's more probably more than 4000 years. And also, I think we need to mention that the first wine writers were Greece, in ancient Greece. And also that very important fact that the system marketed the culture of the trading system and a lot of experimentation with different soils. They were taking place in Greece. That's where it all started. So unfortunately, there were long periods that the viticulture got neglected. But thankfully, thanks to the efforts of the people like Gerovassiliou, everything is back to, well, I wouldn't say is back, but definitely the last 40 to 45 years, there is a Renaissance, there is a lot of good efforts and good things going on. Ah if you'd like I could say a little bit about the microclimate, the geography.

J

Janina Doyle 17:47

You know what, I think that's really interesting, because a lot of people go: Greece, oh, it's hot. And actually, in terms of the viticultural areas, there is a lot of different topography, different terroirs. And it's a hell of a lot colder in many of these areas that people have any idea about. So yeah tell everybody the main wine growing regions.

A

Anonymus Sommelier 18:31

So in Greece there are mountains, mountains and more mountains.

J

Janina Doyle 18:36

So when you say quite a lot, really alot.

A

Anonymus Sommelier 18:38

Yes. Of course, there are 1000s of islands, the climate is very, very hot. But there are big differences between different places. Now, we are trying this Malagousia that is from the north part from Macedonia, and Papamola. And it is slightly cooler than for example, Crete or Santorini. And also what is important is that whatever is on the mountain, and

500-600 metres above the sea level, it has a quite different edge on it than the vines that are closer to the sea and on flatter land. Well, of course that applies everywhere but you can also sense it in the Greek wines. Now, if we want to be more specific for Epanomi that Gerovassiliou is located there is no, its not a prestigious appellation.



Janina Doyle 19:37

It's not very well known. And I couldn't say with my English accent, Epanomi. Yeah. So I mean, a lot of people who do know about Greek wine will of course have heard of Nemea but they won't have heard of this region, perhaps as an example.



Anonymus Sommelier 19:53

So the big difference for Epanomi is Gerovassiliou. He made Epanomi what it is today. Of course, I think that we already have a good location, a good place to grow vines and to grow grapes, but manly it's calcarious and sandy soils with a lot of sea deposits. Then it's Gerovassiliou expertise and his experience, his knowledge and his passion and his efforts. He really transformed this humble appellation into a great one.



Janina Doyle 20:25

Yes.



Anonymus Sommelier 20:25

But in general, if we think about the North, there are other places that the harvest is taking place last, so late September and they really pray that they will not be affected by rain. That is always, it has, it is always very dangerous for the winemakers of the North. Uh the south, things are a bit easier. They have the sun, they are fighting with heatwaves and excess temperatures.



Janina Doyle 20:54

So then let's have a second chat about the winery a little bit more. So obviously, we know that he rescued Malagousia, but also in general, he's started up lots of different wineries. There's lots of different projects. This fantastic winemaker who we said he was a student of Émile Peynaud, which is an incredible enologist from Bordeaux. He has got lots of different fingers in pies as well. It's not just this family winery that he's running. But there's other ummm....

A Anonymus Sommelier 21:22  
He started at Biblia Chora in 1998. And he also had some, for a couple of years, with partners, the Escapades in Stellenbosch.

J Janina Doyle 21:35  
Yes, in South Africa. He is doing that now as well.

A Anonymus Sommelier 21:38  
But what is interesting, Gerovassiliou, is that he's experimenting a lot with many grape varieties: indigenous and international. I believe he's making an exceptional job with international grape varieties, such as Syrah, Chardonnay, Viognier. So at Biblia Chora there is something amazing that is happening. There is overall 10? 10 or 12 wines and each one of them is offering something that you can talk about, you can enjoy and the premiums, they can last for.... I don't know if you have ever heard about Ovilos?

J Janina Doyle 22:15  
No, but I am going to pretend that I have.

A Anonymus Sommelier 22:16  
So there is Ovilos Red and Ovilos White, and with these wines, they are aged. You can cellar them. And I was lucky enough to try and eight years old and they develop, they develop alot, and I think even the basic level, you can find it everywhere. And you know that with a very inexpensive wine, you'll have a lot of pleasure. So...

J Janina Doyle 22:39  
Win Win. Right it's Gerovassiliou, right, the winery. Gerovassiliou. I say that just because I'm saying it's slower than you, so for people Gerovassiliou. All of his projects, whether it be his family project, or the other wineries we mentioned, they're all in the North West, aren't they of Greece. Whereas Naoussa is the main region that people may have heard of in the north in Macedonia, right? Considering we do not have that grape variety, do we want to touch on the famous grape variety of Macedonia?

A Anonymus Sommelier 23:10

Absolutely, I was tempted to include this grape variety. And also one or two wineries. one of them is Kir-Yianni. Kir-Yianni that prove themselves over decades, or more than a century now. And the Boutari family, they are making an exceptional job. And they also know how to, vinify Xinomavro. So this is the grape variety. Well, I will tell you that. If I was rich, I would I would go and buy some land and make Xinomavro which is so charismatic, having, it's a difficult grape variety. It's very difficult to grow and it's difficult to tame. With extremely high tannins and very, very high acidity and the perfume, the aroma is unique. You can correlate a little bit with Nebbiolo.

J

Janina Doyle 24:01

You see, I always say it's like Barolo and Pinot Noir had a love child, how do you feel about that?

A

Anonymus Sommelier 24:12

Yes and no!

J

Janina Doyle 24:13

I think it's a fantastic description. But of course, as a Greek you're probably like no Xinomavro is Xinomavro, there's nothing quite like it, which is fair enough. But for people listening who've never had it, it does have those really high tannins, almost even the paler colour of a Barolo and even that slightly mushroom and earthy nature but beautiful fruits and florals and perfume, and also a slight softness of Pinot Noir. It's a very perfectly powerful, restrained, elegant grape variety.

A

Anonymus Sommelier 24:43

First of all, Xinomavro is a combination of two words. Xino which is sour in Greek. And mavro which is black. So the Xino is definitely Xino because the acidity is very high. But mavro we, we are not sure why they call it mavro because of the colour is, not that black. But we don't know why. Anyway it is a favourite grape variety for me, but also a grape variety that can produce sparkling wines, and very robust red wines. I was lucky enough to try 25 years old wines, not all of them of course, but most of them, I will say that, they can last long. And when you open them after all these years, the bouquet, the spectrum of aromatics is, I remember I opened a bottle and I was keeping notes and my notes were going on and on and on.



Janina Doyle 25:35

Now, how would you compare Xinomavro in terms of age ability to Agiorgitko, the other red main grape variety of Greece.



Anonymus Sommelier 25:44

So the Agiorgitko that we will try, they are very different. They are very different because Agiorgitko it almost immediately or in a couple of years can offer a lot. Xinomavro needs cellaring. Also, the great positive with Agiorgitko is that it is a very balanced grape variety. There are tannins but they are quite round, and they are moderate, let's say. When we're talking about acidity, it's always in the middle. And the bouquet is a very easy going blend of black and red fruit. And also it can integrate oak very, very well. In contrast with Xinomavro that you have to be very, very careful with oak. You have to be very careful. It can be destroyed with excessive oak, or it can be elevated. In the case of Agiorgitko there is a softer and quite velvety...if you want a more feminine character...



Janina Doyle 26:39

Yea, well we will get to that won't we, when we taste it, but I always think if Merlot had a love child with Barbera maybe. That, I'm liking my love child. But you know, it's the softer tannins with juicy fruit it can be made into aswell a Rosé. Right, let's pour the second wine. We are pouring now probably the most famous grape variety in terms of internationally from Greece. I think if anybody would talk about one grape variety, it would be Assyrtiko. And I have to say Assyrtiko for me is the point of difference because of the island, because of where it comes from. Do you want to tell us a little bit about why you think Santorini the island is so special?



Anonymus Sommelier 27:22

I think we also need to mention here that we are trying Gaia.



Janina Doyle 27:27

Oh my god. I love how you pronounce this. I always say Gaia.



Anonymus Sommelier 27:30

Yeah, it's, in latin characters is Gaia, but for me its...



Janina Doyle 27:34

This is why it's amazing to have you here. Can you please pronounce it one more time?



Anonymus Sommelier 27:38

So it's Gaia. And Gaia is the ancient name for planet earth. That's it. Pangea... So this is the brainchild of Mr Paraskevopoulos. And it is probably the first Assyrtiko that made something astonishing, I have to say that. This is pure. So it's stainless steel. It's coming from quite low yields. And also, it's volcanic soil. Volcanic soil completely on Santorini. And what they aimed with this wine when it was first released in 1995?



Janina Doyle 28:16

I know that they started in 1994.



Anonymus Sommelier 28:19

Yeah it was 1994 or 1995. But they they said okay, we going up produce this wine as pure as possible. And is worth to mention Thalassitis is from the Greek word thálassa, which is the sea.



Janina Doyle 28:34

Hmm, because of the effect of the sea, it that why. So that's why they called this specific wine Thalassitis.



Anonymus Sommelier 28:40

Yes, and also the island of Santorini, where the plants, the vines are getting the water? Where are they getting from? From the sea. So it's raining once per year or twice per year. It's terrible. They have great water problems there. And all the water is coming from the mist from the sea. It is going up the island and is watering all the plants including the vines. So there is a certain salinity in to this wine, actually that we are trying and in Santorini the Assyrtiko's that they are produced.



Janina Doyle 28:41

Yes fab. If we compare this to the other one. I mean, no, let's compare this to wine in general. The minerality, the steeliness, the slatiness, is not about fruity, at all is it?

A Anonymus Sommelier 29:36  
No, no. This wine, I have to mention something we have decanted the wine and is beneficial. I really recommend to decant white wine. Yes, yes. It exists. It has changed since we decanted it.

J Janina Doyle 29:52  
So when we first encountered it, all the mineral notes came through, definitely and I got like a little touch of lemon but it was quite, well it was shy, wasn't it? It was definitely the fruit was very restrained, the fruit has come out much more now. Obviously still playing second place to the minerality. But now I get still got the lemon, but I'm getting hints of mango as well in there but it's very soft. It's an absolutely pure linear fresh, super high acidity wine.

A Anonymus Sommelier 30:23  
It is. The acidity is quite high. And this is really calling for oysters. It is calling for raw seafood.

J Janina Doyle 30:32  
Seafood. Ceviche maybe, with a slice of mango, why not. Let's just put that in there.

A Anonymus Sommelier 30:37  
And there is a tropical side that is a bit more expected on them, because Assyrtiko now is like Malagousia. It has conquered other regions and also it's it's growing in foreign lands.

J Janina Doyle 30:49  
Australia, is probably the number one for Assyrtiko now, right?

A Anonymus Sommelier 30:54  
Yes with Jim Barry and then Lebanon, and lately the Languedoc in France. So why is that? Because after centuries and centuries of natural selection and evolution the indigenous grapes at Greece, because they have to adapt to a very arid and hot climate they adapt in the climate change. So they have problems now, more and more winemakers with adapting to hotter seasons, higher temperatures and Assyrtiko it seems, that is adapting

very, very well to an extreme hot climate like in Lebanon or Australia or in the south of France. Yes but the detail that is making the big difference here is the minerality. You can only find in Santorini. Santorini is offering that. We're talking about pre-phylloxera vines.



Janina Doyle 31:49

They are really old aren't they. They are maybe even 300 year old vines in Santorini.



Anonymus Sommelier 31:55

Now in our glasses we have a wine produced by 80 to 100 year old vines.



Janina Doyle 32:00

Such a baby in comparison to some of the others. Such a baby.



Anonymus Sommelier 32:03

Yes that's true. But still it's offering this minimality which is there. I mean, if you really want to try a mineral wine and you like this kind of slatey finish, flinty - that is your wine. As it's moving in the glass with tropical fruit as Janina mentioned, which is quite interesting.



Janina Doyle 32:25

It's stunning. The length is really long. It's super refreshing. And this is really really unique. Anyone who's interested, this is a little bit more expensive and hence why also it's fantastic in a decanter. Complex white wines need to open up. Remember, white wines or red wines, if they are stuck in a bottle, there are particles that are squished and we need to open them out and let them dance around. And this is definitely working for us. This is our around £28.99 apparently. There are a few places we know you can get it from the UK. Noble grape, Selfridges again and Hedonism. It's absolutely fantastic. So yeah, if anyone says as well like what is terroir? So terroir, of course, is your soils, your climate, the weather. Is there hills nearby, is there a forest nearby? Also terroir includes the winemaker as well, although I don't actually agree with that so much, but it is. So it's just everything that influences the wine, and specifically those volcanic soils. And I believe, you know, you can get volcanic soils, of course in other areas like Mount Etna and Sicily as an example, but they have different soils as well. Whereas on Santorini, it's literally volcanic soils since the eruption in 1500 BC... 1600! It's just, I mean that was a devastating effort. Apparently for years afterwards, the world was affected. There were Tsunamis. I mean, there was apparently...

- A** Anonymus Sommelier 33:45  
This is probably the reason why the Minoan civilization ended. Also interesting to know that there are a couple of different Lava and Volcanic soils. So it is volcanic soils but it has others. So we have the pumice. We have the basalt, and we have the volcanic marl. So it's everywhere, the vines are going different volcanic soils, and they are giving slightly different results, always imparting the minerality, always. So if we have an Assyrtiko at a different place, it's very different. It can be delicious and there are the delicious Assyrtiko from mainland, Macedonia, other islands, but I would say I don't think they have the same potential, ageing potential.
- J** Janina Doyle 34:10  
And what about the baskets? We've talked about the volcanic soils, but the way the vines are grown, that is so unusual and so unique to Santorini.
- A** Anonymus Sommelier 34:44  
So in order to survive, you have to, how you call that, you do...
- J** Janina Doyle 34:48  
You wrap the vines...
- A** Anonymus Sommelier 34:49  
You wrap the vines. It's called koulara in Greek and they have to survive the wind. Very windy there. And also they are getting protected into the basket by the extreme temperatures sometimes. So yes, if you ever visit you will see a vine landscape like no other.
- J** Janina Doyle 35:09  
Certainly unique and super crazy. Now talking of unique, I don't know if I'm correct in saying this. Let's move on to the next wine which is super random indigenous grape varieties for me, I've never heard of them at all. So we'll going back to the original producer again now aren't we.
- A** Anonymus Sommelier 35:28

We are going back to Gerovassiliou in Epanomi. And the wine is called Avaton. It is the blend of Limnio, Mavroudi and Mayrotragano. I know, I know, it's a little bit difficult.



Janina Doyle 35:41

Lets do it one more time for everyone.



Anonymus Sommelier 35:43

So Limnio, I think is the most ancient grape variety in Greece. It is recorded by a couple of ancient writers, Aristotle included. Then is the Mavroudi which is the local grape variety, and Mayrotragano which is coming from Santorini.



Janina Doyle 36:04

Ah Mayrotragano.



Anonymus Sommelier 36:06

And is another very interesting grape variety. So Gerovassiliou believed in these grape varieties and he found the right proportion for them. So it is 60% Limnio and the rest 20/20. So what do you think?



Janina Doyle 36:22

I think it's all about fruit. There's a real intensity of dark, crushed, fresh, pure blackberries and black cherries. And then what I was surprised about when we first opened this up, you told me it was 15 months, in oak barrels right? And on the nose you didn't get that, it was just such a freshness. But now I'm getting a real chocolate wafer. It's like a bit of like mocha. It's mocha powder. But it's very soft. It's still quite subtle, but it's pleasant and it's pretty, which I just think is so, it's so different from a normal wine that has oak in it. It's not that typical just spice or cedar, it's just a softer, more perfumed version.



Anonymus Sommelier 37:05

The magic word would be elegance. It is so elegant. And elegance is something that I think we tend to miss or we tend to not to pay a lot of attention. It is very important when something it's so balanced and so delicious, that at the same time, yes, it's all about black, ripe red fruit, and it definitely has evolved to a more chocolatey character but also there is a certain juiciness that...

**J** Janina Doyle 37:34  
Uh! Medium bodied still, super soft tannins, really approachable. The tannins are really ripe but they're, they're just super, super soft now. Avaton, for anybody interested, I'm just looking on the bottle now, means a place inaccessible and unapproachable, inviolable, what does inviolable mean? Oh gosh, inviolable, and sacred. Someone tell me what inviolable means...and sacred. Isn't that, that sounds amazing. And I can tell you it tastes amazing. It's £21.99 roughly which is amazing value and amazing to get your hands on something that is indigenous and pretty unique. Again Selfridges. They seem to be a lover of Greek wines. You can get it in Selfridges and also a place called Shelved Wine, should you be interested and you're in the UK. But Gerovassiliou, this winery is just doing amazing things. They are working really well with indigenous varieties and I think anything that this guy gets his hands on is gold. It's a top top winery.

**A** Anonymus Sommelier 38:41  
I really think that is Midas touch. The ancient King.

**J** Janina Doyle 38:44  
Oh yea, the Midas touch.

**A** Anonymus Sommelier 38:46  
Yes, I really believe that there is a lot to expect even if he was and is famous for his white blends and white grape varieties, now he's doing a terrific job of the red grape varieties as well. And I think it's time for the star.

**J** Janina Doyle 39:05  
Is it time? Yay, we are going back to....

**A** Anonymus Sommelier 39:09  
Back to Gaia.

**J** Janina Doyle 39:10

Where is Nemea. What major region is Nemea in?

A

Anonymus Sommelier 39:14

Nemea is the largest first of all, the largest viticultural region in Greece. I think there are, more than 50,000 acres, more than that. And since the ancient time they grow vines. So Mr Paraskevopoulos, the founder of Gaia.

J

Janina Doyle 39:33

Or Gaia if you're really bad like me.

A

Anonymus Sommelier 39:35

Yes! And he chose two regions. Santorini and Nemea. And he is working almost exclusively with indigenous grape varieties. We're talking about Greek grape varieties. This is a 100% Agiorgitiko and it is a Agiorgitiko that is very very serious. He decided to produce a wine, to produce an Agiorgitiko that we go on for a couple of years, and I think, we haven't tried it yet, but the structure is there. The news is, is powerful and oak is showing.

J

Janina Doyle 40:15

It's got some sweeter oak in there, there's something, again, really concentrated, lots of dark fruits. But there's something a little bit more vibrant and red in there as well. Something a bit sweeter from the oak. This as far as I believe, am I right, this was the first Agiorgitiko that was kind of seen as serious?

A

Anonymus Sommelier 40:34

Yea. Exactly as you said. So he aimed for a Agiorgitiko that you can cellar and you can open after a decade or more. I was lucky enough to try 15 years old Gaia. And it's unbelievable. The complexity in the tertiary aroma that it develops. So for me always, there were two fruits that are definitely here. Morello cherries, and how you call them? Damson?

J

Janina Doyle 41:06

Damson! There is a real perfume to it. And it's very, on the palate, the red fruit comes out more, so it's darker and a little bit more oakier on the nose. And then it's actually softer and fresher and lighter, I don't wanna say it's a light wine, it's not. But it dances more on

the palate. It's quite alive. It's still closed. It is a little bit, isn't it? We haven't tried this. We tried the others just before, because we could. And this, and this one we thought nah, it needs to be decanted. And we'll just get round to it. And we never actually did try it before. But ummm...

A

Anonymus Sommelier 41:39

Either way I think you understand that this is a serious wine that needs food. Definitely. And is, I wouldn't call it full bodied, but it's fleshy. Ah we forgot completely to mention the vintages. So we are trying, for the red wines, it's both 2017. The Assyrtiko, the Thalassitis is 2019. And the Malagousia is 2020. Would you cellar this?

J

Janina Doyle 42:07

100%. I mean, it's lovely now, and you can enjoy it. But I think in terms of ideal timing, I would want to wait maybe three more years. And then there would be at least five to seven years on top of that, you know, I guess without being presumptuous, you've got at least 15 years for this wine.

A

Anonymus Sommelier 42:27

Yes, yes, I am at the same page. I also think that you need food. Okay for me, you can have a glass on it's own, yes, but you realise very quickly you need something to pair, you need something to eat.

J

Janina Doyle 42:41

I would, the tannins are pretty present, they're pretty grippy, but they're not powerful and over the top. So for that reason. And the fact that there's quite a nice, I think all that red fruits and berries and cherries coming through on the palate, something like duck with a kind of cherry compote, a fruity sauce to go on the side. I think could go very, very nicely with it. And again, it would be roasted duck. So to go with that, the slight oak notes, I think could be pretty nice. I don't know what, if you've ever had a perfect pairing?

A

Anonymus Sommelier 43:13

Pork with prunes.

**J** Janina Doyle 43:14  
Ohhhh he's good isn't he, ladies and gentlemen. That's good. Yeah, because you don't, I mean, this would be fine with beef. This would be fine with a steak. No worries, you're going to have fun. But because of the softness to this wine and the openness to it, having it with something like pork or as I mentioned, duck, something that doesn't need crazy tannins or anything like that, and especially pork with the prunes. Put it with some meat that can have a fruity sauce with it. I think it really, is screaming for that, isn't it? That's fantastic.

**A** Anonymus Sommelier 43:53  
So next time I'm cooking probably as well?

**J** Janina Doyle 43:55  
Yes please. Now, any conclusions to finish off with in terms of greek wine?

**A** Anonymus Sommelier 44:00  
Yes well, what needs to be mentioned is that there are around 300 grape varieties, indigenous grape varieties. But around 100 of them, we use them for commercial purposes. So we make wines that are recognisable, let's say. So there are 100, forget about the rest 200. 100 indigenous grape varieties to discover. And I really believe that some of them, they deserve an international career but slowly they get, so we were talking about Assyrtiko, Assyrtiko has got into the list of great restaurants. Michelin star restaurants. Restaurants with great wine lists. And more and more people appreciate the potential of some of the great varieties like Agiorgitiko, like Assyrtiko or like, even Malagousia.

**J** Janina Doyle 44:48  
I tell you what we haven't mentioned, Moschofilero, I love that.

**A** Anonymus Sommelier 44:51  
Ah of course, from the Peloponnese.

**J** Janina Doyle 44:52  
Moschofilero, that, a pink grape variety. I think that's so aromatic. I think we have a lot of

aromatic whites and I love that. Moschofilero is a top one for me. And another top grape variety for me is Daphne from Crete Island. Lyrarakis? I'm pronouncing their name wrong. What's the name of that winery. It's spelt with an A. Like it looks like it's A upside down.

A Anonymus Sommelier 45:18  
Lyrarakis!

J Janina Doyle 45:21  
Lyrarakis is an amazing winery aren't they on the Crete Island, taking these indigenous varieties and really promoting them as well. They're a fantastic producer to go and try.

A Anonymus Sommelier 45:30  
They also saved let's say from obscurity, or extinction. I'm not sure if it was near extinction like Malagousia. But definitely, they tend to bring this not known grape varieties to a new quality level, which is very interesting. So wherever you go, you will find a vine, you will find a grape. And some are very prestigious for our standards, or they are quite well known, say for Sommelier. But everywhere there is wine and there is the culture of gastronomy and the pairing. And so you have a lot to discover and enjoy. That's the main thing.

J Janina Doyle 46:12  
You have a lot of work to do is basically what you've been told. You have a lot of work to do to get through those at least 100 grape varieties. Thank you so much, my lovely anonymous London Sommelier. Thank you for sharing just a tiny bit of your knowledge on greek wine.

A Anonymus Sommelier 46:27  
It's been a pleasure, it has been a great experience to chat with you and try to show some pleasures and some grape varieties that can deliver.

J Janina Doyle 46:38  
These wines were fab. Just to finish off this wine is £35.99, roughly. You can get it from Vinvm, or you can get it from Strictly Wines. So we need to get that in there because I forgot to say. Cheers, thank you so much.



Janina Doyle 46:49

So as you now know, there are over 300 indigenous grape varieties from Greece and about 100 of them, we can actually likely get our hands on. How many of them have you tried so far? Do you have any favourites? You have to let me know? Or are there some new varieties that you've heard of on this podcast that you're now going to set out and go and discover? So for my wine quote of the week, I could have chosen Aristotle, the Greek philosopher, Homer, the Greek author, but I decided to go with Euripides, the Tragedian of classic Athens because I just love this quote, super short, super simple. And he said:



Janina Doyle 46:58

"Where there is no wine? There is no love."



Janina Doyle 47:37

Punto. Full stop. Actually a wonder what full stop is in Greek? Someone like me know. So thank you so much for joining me again and with of course my anonymous Sommelier. Please may I ask if you haven't already liked and share this podcast, please do so. Any comments are so greatly appreciated. And of course don't forget to go across to [www.patreon.com/EatSleepWineRepeat](http://www.patreon.com/EatSleepWineRepeat) where you can have some extra special episodes for just a couple of quid a month. So until the next episode, guys, cheers to you!