

# Greece

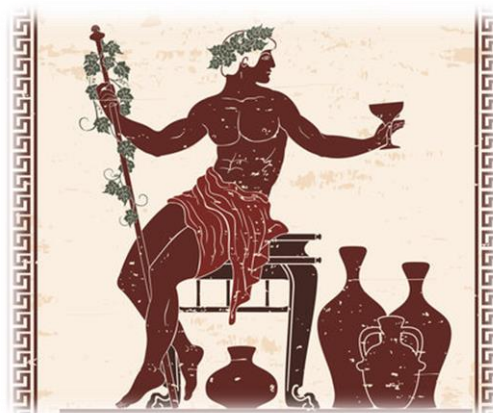


## January 2023 Wine Club Greek Odyssey: Six Wines, Six Regions

Greece is one of the world's oldest winemaking regions, amongst the first to be identified in Europe, with evidence of crushed grapes and fruit fermentation dating back as far as 6,500 years ago. The country was also amongst the first winemaking regions to introduce methods of quality assurance and apply geographic protections to their wines. For example, as early as the 4<sup>th</sup> Century BC, wines from the Thassos region could only be sold in special amphorae which not only protected the wine while it was in transit, but also acted as a guarantee of the wine's origin.

In the times of Ancient Greece, wine was a very important part of daily life (as it is today) – it was a much-revered substance, and its powerful qualities made it the ideal sacrifice to the society of the time's many gods. One such god, Dionysus, was particularly important – he was considered the god of not only wine, festivity, and pleasure, but also vegetation, specifically important to agriculture. Farmers of the time would offer up sacrifices of precious wine to Dionysus in order to ensure the quality and success of that year's harvest.

When not being used as a sacrificial offering, wine was also enjoyed at gatherings known as 'Symposiums'. This term literally translates to the act of 'drinking with others'. The enjoyment of wine is and was certainly something to be enjoyed with others, and its consumption was accompanied by discussions and debates (much like a literary salon) which were attended by important thinkers of the day such as Socrates, Plato, and Homer.



Perhaps unsurprisingly, Greece has the ideal conditions for viticulture – the terroir is rich and varied, from its spine of mountains and lush valleys to the mineral-rich islands of the Aegean and Ionian Seas. The soil is fertile, with plenty of natural irrigation, sunny summers, and warm autumns – perfect conditions for the ripening of high-quality grapes.

Despite this long and illustrious history, and near-perfect agricultural conditions, the Greek wine industry has suffered greatly in 'recent' history, with the country's wine production almost ceasing to exist during the 400-year rule of the Ottoman Empire (spanning from the mid-15<sup>th</sup> Century to the early-19<sup>th</sup> Century). The Turks discouraged wine consumption and winemaking, and many winemakers were forced to abandon their vineyards completely. Through the years, with a succession of different political regimes, Greece lost its status as a winemaking superpower. However, in the aftermath of WW2, towards the beginning of the 1970s, a handful of winemakers pushed hard to put Greece back on the map as a producer of world-class wines. Today, 80% of the wineries found in the country are less than 30 years old.

This month's case will take you on a journey through Greece, exploring 6 regions through 6 wines – we look forward to hearing what you think of these and are sure you will discover some new favourites along the way.

### ***2019 'Voltes Red', Monemvasia Winery, Tsimbidi – 12.5%, £17.99***

Tsimbidi is found in the Peloponnese region of Southern Greece and covers most of the peninsula. The Monemvasia Winery was founded in 1997 and covers some 121 hectares of vineyards, all planted with local varieties. The winery is committed to producing quality wines which showcase the characteristics of the indigenous varieties and the terroir of the peninsula of Maleus.

The 'Voltes Red' is a blend of two native grape varieties (Agiorgitiko 50% and Mavroudi 50%), both grown in Laconia where the climate is warm and dry. The vineyard is situated at an altitude of 200 metres above sea-level, which offers cooler nights, resulting in wines with naturally balanced freshness.

The two grape varieties in this blend are co-fermented on skins to impart depth of colour and tannic structure. The resulting wine is well-structured, yet on the lighter side in body – it exudes notes of ripe red berry fruits and touches of sweet spice such as vanilla and nutmeg. A true winter warmer for these January evenings, pair with homemade winter vegetable stews and a roaring fire.

**2019 Single Vineyard Hedgehog Xinomavro, Alpha Estate, Amyndeo – 14%, £27.99**



Alpha Estate is located in Amyndeo, a region of Northwest Greece, which hugs the country's border with North Macedonia. This pristine estate in the cool highlands of Western Macedonia comprises 120 hectares of single block vineyards and uses the most up-to-date vineyard techniques and wine-making technology – and produces world-class wines as a result. The Xinomavro grapes for this wine are grown in the sub-region known as 'Hedgehog' which is located 690 metres above sea-level and faces Lake Petron and Mount Voras. This vineyard is located on rather steep slopes, so all the grapes are harvested by hand. The wine is aged 'sur lie' for a period of eight months post-fermentation and then matured in oak barrels for twelve months, followed by maturation in bottle for a further year prior to release.

This is a wonderful example of Xinomavro with its complex bouquet of red berry fruit, leather, pepper, clove, and vanilla spice, which are typical characteristics of the variety. On the palate, dark chocolate and savoury, earthy notes combine with rounded tannins and well-integrated oak. There is also a touch of quince jelly ripeness to the finish, making this a great match for Charcuterie and Cheeseboards with a Mediterranean (in particular Spanish) theme.

**2021 'Clio, The Red Muse', Muses Estate, Sterea Ellada – 13%, £18.99**

Third generation winemakers (Nikos, Stelios, and Panayiotis Zaharias) founded Muses Estate in Central Greece in 2005. Their skills, scientific knowledge, and youthful ideas, combined with family tradition and experience has enriched the estate, providing it with expertise and quality that far exceeds its years. From their vines grown on the slopes of the Valley of the Muses, at the foot of Mount Helicon, the family aim to produce wines that are in perfect harmony with the local ecosystem, and they succeed, with their wines exuding the freshness of their mountain terroir.

The grapes in this blend (Merlot 60% and Agiorgitiko 40%) are fermented separately and matured without the influence of oak for just a month, after which they are blended and left to mature for a further two months. This is a fresh and youthful wine, with a rounded and velvety mouthfeel. Notes of wild blackberry, mulberry, raspberry, and ripe strawberry leap from the glass with a berry-laden palate to follow. An incredibly moreish wine, perfect for enjoying on its own or with simple Mediterranean tomato pasta dishes.

**2019 Limniona, Theopetra Estate, Meteora – 13%, £32.99**

Located at the foot of the Meteora Rocks and around the prehistoric Cave of Theopetra, where signs of human existence and evolution date back to the Palaeolithic Era. In 1996, the Tsililis family founded the Theopetra Estate, a now iconic winery, with the aim of reviving the vineyard to its former glory following the Phylloxera outbreak of the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century. The family combines historical tradition with cutting-edge technology in their desire to revive rare Greek grape varieties while respecting the natural environment around them.

Limniona is a native Greek variety originating in Thessalia, in Northern Central Greece. The grapes for this wine are harvested and sorted by hand, followed by the gentlest of pressings, so that the juice extracted from the grapes is of the highest quality without any bitterness that is associated with mechanically crushed grape seeds. The wine is aged in 90% French Oak and 10% American Oak for twelve months and then bottle-aged for a further twelve months prior to release.



This is a supple, elegant, and complex red with fruity aromas of cherry, raspberry, sweet quince, and dried figs complemented by hints of nutmeg, clove, and black pepper spice. Silky tannins with ripe, red berry flavours on the palate and a long finish. Try with slow roasted lamb with a garlic and rosemary crust.

### 2020 'Oros', Akrathos Winery, Halkidiki – 13%, £28.99

The Akrathos Winery was founded in 2007, with vines planted in 2009 and the building of the winery was completed in 2014, making this the youngest winery featured in this month's case. Halkidiki is a mountainous region of Central Macedonia, situated near Thessaloniki – due to its mountainous location, the area is surprisingly cold and often experiences snowfall! This naturally irrigates the vineyards, and the arrival of warm summers and autumns proves highly beneficial to the production of low yields of grapes with deliciously concentrated juice. Here, again because of the steep slopes, all the grapes are hand-harvested and hand-sorted to ensure that only grapes of the highest quality make it to the press.

Fermentation is kick-started with wild yeasts in stainless steel tanks to retain the freshness and purity of the fruit. This wine is a juicy blend of 70% Assyrtiko and 30% Sauvignon Blanc. It has complex aromas of bergamot, grapefruit, and pear, with notes of white flowers and green herbs. The palate is lively and fresh, with zippy acidity, making this a great aperitif wine or accompaniment to fresh Goats Cheese Salads.

### 2021 'Nautilus White Aged Under Water', Domaine Foivos, Kefalonia – 12.5%, £22.99

Located to the west of mainland Greece, in the Ionian Sea, the Foivos Winery is the gem of Kefalonia. The winery specialises in producing wines from rare Greek varieties and uses some of the most intriguing winemaking practices you may ever discover! The grapes are farmed organically and biodynamically, and Foivos also explores practices such as fermentation in clay Amphora and maturation under water. This exciting winery is at the cutting edge of the Greek wine world and is making some of Greece's finest wines. Many believe Kefalonia to be the next Santorini – so watch this space!

Now, this is an incredibly unique wine, that has been described as being 'salty, aromatic and volcanic...like Muscat from a rockpool!'. It is aged under water at the winery, so keep reading for a deep dive (pardon the pun) into how this wine is created and what to expect from it.



The grapes for this wine (Muscat 30%, Muscatel 30%, Tsaousi 20% and Vostilidi 20%) are 'vinified following a philosophy of minimal intervention. A cool pre-fermentation maceration lasted for eight to ten hours to extract aromas and flavours. The free run musts and pressed musts were fermented separately with wild yeasts at controlled temperatures before spending one month on the fine lees with periodical stirring to impart texture and complexity. The wine was gently filtered prior to being bottled. The bottle was then submerged under fresh water in special tanks in the winery. This new method of maturation promotes constant temperatures, darkness, and a lack of oxygen, resulting in an aromatic wine, with

*a pure fruit character. This is a bone-dry and intriguing wine with a heady mix of iodine, peaty aromas, exotic fresh fruit, melon, and dried pear. Mouth-wateringly fresh on the palate with plenty of tension on the long finish.'*

Intrigued? You certainly should be! Pair with platters of fresh seafood.

Shelf Price: £149.94

Case Price: £127.45

Wine Club Price: £115

*For your reference, see overleaf for a map of Greece's wine regions (all credit to Wine Folly), and be sure to check out their website for more detailed maps: [Click Here!](#)*

# WINE REGIONS OF GREECE

WINE FOLLY

## NORTHERN GREECE EPIRUS, MACEDONIA AND THRACE

Naoussa  
Amyndeo

Zitsa

KERRIRA

IOANINA

KATERINI

SERRES

KAVALA

ALEXANDROUPOLI

THESSALONIKI

POLIGIROS

Rapsani

Lemnos

## CENTRAL GREECE INCLUDING ATTICA AND THESSALY

LARISSA

VOLOS

LAMIA

CHALKIDA

MITILINI

HIOS

PATRA

Nemea

Mantineia

TRIPOLI

NAFPLION

KALAMATA

ATHENS

Samos

ERMROUPOLI

KOS

Santorini

RODOS

## AEGEAN ISLANDS SAMOS, SANTORINI, LIMNOS, ETC

## SOUTHERN GREECE CRETE, PELOPONNESE, KEFALONIA

HERAKLION  
Crete



0 60 120 180 km  
0 60 120 mi

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