

Beyond Assyrtiko

Local food and wine writer **Ben Colvill** scours the town for signs of the Greek wine renaissance

The buzz around new-wave Greek wine has reached a crescendo: millennia of winemaking history has met with late 20th Century innovation.

You're probably familiar with crisp, white Assyrtiko, Greece's answer to Riesling. It's a name you'll hear often, alongside Albariño, Picpoul, and Vinho Verde, as an acidic summer favourite. Just like these, Assyrtiko's easy-drinking image is slowly being remodelled by quality producers aiming for age-worthy, serious wines.

Setting sail from its Santorini home, Assyrtiko has reached pretty much every corner of the world, now found in our own local wine lists: you can drink it at Olive Tree, of course, but also The Kings Arms, where you'll find a Macedonian example. The Alford Arms stocks a lovely Nemean, and you can order a Cretan at The Crystal Palace.

There's much more to the country's wine scene, though. Like Portugal, it's the abundance of indigenous varieties that are getting people talking. Four grapes in particular are gaining attention: Black Xinomavro (popular in North Greece, tannic), Agiorgitiko (softer and fleshier reds and rosés), Savatiano (Greece's most-planted grape variety) and finally Malagousia (rich and festive).



PAPAGIANNAKOS OLD VINES SAVATIANO 2023 MARKOPOULO, £16.30
PLATFORM WINES

This old-vine, low-yield Savatiano is definitely worth a punt if you're a fan of white Bordeaux. With a long, savoury finish, it demands food. Platform also have their Retsina – so much better than you remember.



VIN DOUX SAMOS 2022
£9.99 WAITROSE

The French go wild for it, but it's hardly known over here. A traditional Muscat vin de liqueur, it's rather sweet and floral, but joyous served chilled. Like with white port, a splash of tonic makes a lovely G&T alternative. Just don't tell the Greeks.



ZAFEIRAKIS MALAGOUSIA 2023
TYRNAVOS, £14.99
WAITROSE

An organic, biodynamic white from the foothills of Mt. Olympus. It's unoaked, with orangey citrus, herbal and peach tones undercut by clean flintiness. Great if you like white Rhône's lower acidity and fuller body.



THYMIPOULOS XINOMAVRO 2021
NAOUSA, £15.99
MAJESTIC WINE

Apostolos Thymiopoulos is at the top of his game and this grape is his speciality. One of his lighter reds, it's really well made, mixing black and red fruits. Think Barolo, but friendlier. Or Pinot Noir, only more accessible.



LYRARAKIS ARMI THRAPSATHIRI 2022 CRETE, £21.99
GRAPE EXPECTATIONS

This single-vineyard, high-altitude white is matured on the lees in French and American oak. Spicy, complex, vinous, extraordinary – we're not in Santorini anymore, Dorothy. Live dangerously, there's more to life than NZ Sauvignon Blanc!

Tip: Majestic Wine stock an Agiorgitiko & Syrah 'Greek Red', which is good value at under a tenner. For die-hard Assyrtiko fans, splash out at Grape Expectations on Estate Argyros' 2022. I visited this Santorini producer last year – fantastic.

Full tasting notes and more on Bencolwill.com and [@bencolwillwrites](https://twitter.com/bencolwillwrites)

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