

# WINE OVERVIEW



## GREECE

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Closely review the syllabus for this wine level to determine just what items require your attention in each of the region/country overview documents.

Greece is one of the oldest wine producing regions in the world. The earliest recorded evidence of Greek wine has been dated to over 6,500 years ago. Much of this wine was low quality communal wine. Since the 1960's, Greeks have made considerable investments in modern wine making technology, which became evident in the quality of the wines since the early 1980's. In addition to better technology, several Greek agronomists and oenologists returned home in 1985 from formal study and training in France. This influx of technology and enthusiasm, coupled with the desire of native Greeks to drink higher quality wine has fueled the revival of Greek wines over the past few decades.

## GREEK WINE REGIONS

### MACEDONIA

Today Macedonia represents one of the oldest and finest winemaking regions in Greece. Wars, emigration and the catastrophic phylloxera attack slowed down the development of Macedonian wine at the turn of the last century, but after replanting the vineyards and investing heavily in modern technology, Macedonian wines have regained their appreciation worldwide.

Naoussa, located on the slopes of Mount Vermion, was one of the first AOC regions to be registered in Greece and produces delicious, full-bodied red wines made from the native grape, Xinomavro. This grape is also cultivated in the remote AOC region of Amynteon where it produces light, fruity reds and pleasant sparkling and still rosés.

### EPIRUS

Some of the most mountainous and difficult vineyards to reach in Greece are in Epirus, hidden between the slopes of Mt. Pindos. Despite the difficult growing conditions many wine experts agree that some excellent wines are being produced in this region.

### THESSALIA

On the Southeastern slopes of Mt Olympus, is the AOC region of Rapsani. The peaks of Mt Olympus and the neighboring Aegean Sea form a unique microclimate that provide a positive effect on the production of the distinct Rapsani red wines made from a combination of indigenous Xinomavro, Krassato and Stavroto grapes.

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## STEREA ELLADA

The region of Attica in Sterea Ellada is one of the oldest winemaking areas of Greece. It is here that Dionysus, the God of Wine, introduced the culture of wine to the Greeks. A number of inspired winemakers have shown that the region exhibits all of the necessary qualities for the production of world-class wines.

## PELOPONNESE

Neither wars nor phylloxera were able to stop the production of wine here in one of the most historic wine regions of Greece. Spread throughout hillsides, plains and plateaus, the vineyards of the Peloponnese are known for their diversity and complexity.

Not far from the town of Nafplion is Nemea, the most important AOC region in Southern Greece for the production of red wines. The Agiorghitiko grape is used and produces wines famous for their deep red color, complex aroma and long, velvety palate.

In the high altitudes of Mantinia, the noble Moschofilero grape is cultivated producing the AOC wines, of Mantinia. The continental climate together with the poor, but well drained soil also leads to the production of some exciting aromatic white wines.

On the northwestern part of the Peloponnese is the viticultural region of Patras. Four AOC wines are produced in this area: a dry white named Patra, made from the Roditis grape, two aromatic white dessert wines, Moschato Patron and Moschato Rio of Patras, and Mavrodaphne, a fortified red wine made from the Mavrodaphne and Korinthiaki grapes.

## AEGEAN ISLANDS

The Aegean islands have an important winemaking tradition that dates back to the Neolithic age. The moderate Mediterranean climate of the Aegean combined with the rocky, volcanic soil, plentiful sunshine and constant sea breezes provide excellent conditions for the cultivation of grapes.



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## ISLAND OF RHODES

Rhodes was one of the first areas in ancient Greece known for the production of wine. Rhodes enjoys the longest periods of sunshine and the shortest periods of rainfall in all of Greece, favorable factors in the production of the high quality AOC Rhodos wines. The dominant grapes are the white Athiri and the red Mandelaria, (known locally as Amorgiano), which produce elegant white and red AOC Rhodos wines. A sweet AOC wine from Muscat grapes is also made in Rhodes.

## IONIAN ISLANDS

The mountainous island of Cephalonia is recognized as the most important of the Ionian islands for the production of new-style Greek wines. The native Tsaoussi and Robola grapes are grown together with small quantities of Mavrodaphne and white Muscat. Robola of Cephalonia is one of the three AOC wines produced here.

## COMMON GREEK WHITE WINE VARIETIES

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### ASSYRTIKO

Assyrtiko was first cultivated on the island of Santorini. It has the ability to maintain its acidity as it ripens. It produces a bone dry wine that has citrus aromas mixed with an earthy, mineral aftertaste due to the volcanic soil of Santorini. In the last 25, years Assyrtiko has been planted throughout Greece including Macedonia and Attica where it expresses a milder and more fruity character.

### MOSCHOFILERO

Moschofilero is a distinct aromatic grape from within the AOC region of Mantinia, in the Peloponnese. Its crisp character and beautiful floral aroma of roses and violets with hints of spices can be drunk as an aperitif or with food.

### ROBOLA

Robola is grown mainly in the mountains of Cephalonia. The wines take on a smoky, mineral and lemon character.

### RODITIS

Roditis is a rose-colored grape that is very popular in Attica, Macedonia, Thessaly and Peloponnese where it is cultivated for the production of AOC Patra wines. It produces the best results when cultivated with low yields on mountainous slopes. Roditis produces elegant, light white wines with citrus flavors.

## COMMON GREEK RED WINE VARIETIES

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### AGIORGITIKO

One of the most noble of the Greek red grapes, Agiorgitiko (aka St George) is grown mainly in the AOC region Nemea in the Peloponnese. It produces wines that stand out for their deep red color and remarkable aromatic complexity. Agiorgitiko's soft tannins, in combination with its balanced acidity lead to the production of many different styles of wine, ranging from fresh aromatic reds to extraordinary aged reds.

### XINOMAVRO

The predominant grape variety in Macedonia is a native red called Xinomavro (meaning "acid-black"). The wines made from Xinomavro are known for their superb aging potential and their rich tannic character. Xinomavro is often compared to Nebbiolo.

### MANDELARIA

Mandelaria (aka Amorgiano) is mainly cultivated on the islands of Rhodes and Crete. Mandelaria is found in various regions, but usually blended with other grapes such as Monemvassia in Paros, Kotsifali in Crete or as a single variety on the island of Rhodes.

### MAVRODAPHNE

Mavrodaphne, meaning black laurel, is mainly found in the Peloponnesean regions of Achaia and Ilia as well as the Ionian Islands. It is blended with the Korinthiaki grape to produce a fortified dessert wine known as Mavrodaphne. It also yields very good results when blended with Refosco, Agiorgitico and Cabernet Sauvignon grapes.