

//to kalon//dreams of chile//farmers' markets

# tidings

*for*  
**RIPE PICKING**  
*the*







Greek wine is a mystery to most people. Made from tongue-twisting indigenous grape varieties like Assyrtico and Moschofilero (white) and Agiorgitiko and Xinomavro (red), they are quaffed in great quantities in Greek restaurants, but outside of that, are not widely available on wine lists. And that's a great pity. Greek wine pairs with food like sun goes with sand. And the match is as universal because wine from Greece complements most recipes.

For example, I thought my son, the chef, would serve Pinot Noir with seared duck breast and potato mash, but he surprised me on my birthday with an aged Xinomavro. Its body stood up to the rich sauce, while its elegance enhanced the subtle flavours of pistachio and chives. The wine was a heavenly match with the food. Who knew?

On the home front (my dishes are simpler than my son's), I serve a lot of Greek red because it is terrific meat-and-veg-from-the-grill wine. Served at 18°C with a burger, steak, lamb, chicken or sausages, the tannins – and price – are attractive. Try Agiorgitiko (aka Saint George) or Xinomavro, the two most widely grown reds, or blends of these grapes with others to find your favourite pairings.

In the winter, my braised dishes with rich sauces and tomato-based pastas find favour with savoury Greek reds. Herbed, garlicky tomato sauce with feta and fat shrimp is comforting with almost any bottle, and a fast one-dish wonder that I first tried in Nemea with that region's wines.

The real beauty of wine from Greece is that it is different. Unique. It affords the curious, the bored-with-Cab-and-Chard, and the adventurer a whole new realm to explore. When you invite it to your table, not only does it make friends with your food, but its mystery entertains your guests.

#### KIR YIANNI AKAKIES SPARKLING ROSÉ 2011 (\$14)

Made from Xinomavro, it smells like strawberries and tastes like flowers. A smile in the glass, it stands alone as a welcome to any party or gathering.

#### TSANTALI MT. OLYMPUS RAPSANI 2010 (\$12)

Grapes (Xinomavro, Krassato, Stavroto) for this wine are grown at a monastery where no women can visit. But the guys do a great job without us. Round and quaffable with ripe fruit and a solid finish, serve this approachable, happy-go-lucky red with appetizers and friends.

#### KIR YIANNI RAMNISTA 2009 (\$19)

My first taste of a Kir Yianni wine was at a taverna not far from the winery where a dozen of us shared a plethora of dishes and a magnum flight of older Ramnistas. The food, wine and company were so memorable that I still think of that night when I taste this floral, round, silky Xinomavro beauty. A classic with meat-based dishes.

#### KARYDAS NAOUSSA 2008 (\$25)

A lovely aroma of ripe cherries and plums is followed by softening tannins, a welcome brightness and a long finish. Perfect with rich comfort food, like macaroni and cheese.

#### ALPHA ESTATES OLD VINES RESERVE 2008 (\$27)

Rich and intense, this flavourful wine could still spend time in the bottle, but is delicious now. Savour with a rare grilled steak topped with blue cheese. And consider yourself fortunate.

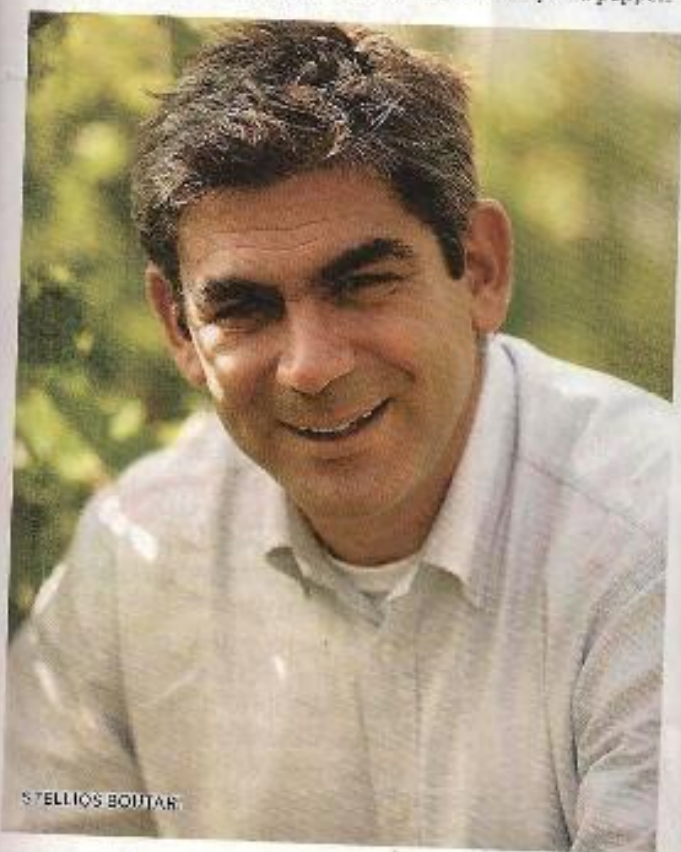


**BOUTARI GRAND RESERVE NAOUSSA 2007 (\$19)**

Complex with a medium body, this wine has an earthiness that would make it pair well with mushroom dishes, and blackcurrant flavours combined with solid tannins call for meat. A steak and mushroom pie made with some of this wine in the sauce would be divine.

**KATOGE-STROFILIA NAOUSSA 2007 (\$20)**

This round, soft, balanced, dry wine has cherry and herb flavours that call for spaghetti and meatballs with lots of basil in the sauce, or a slow-cooked winter stew with thyme, rosemary and pepper.



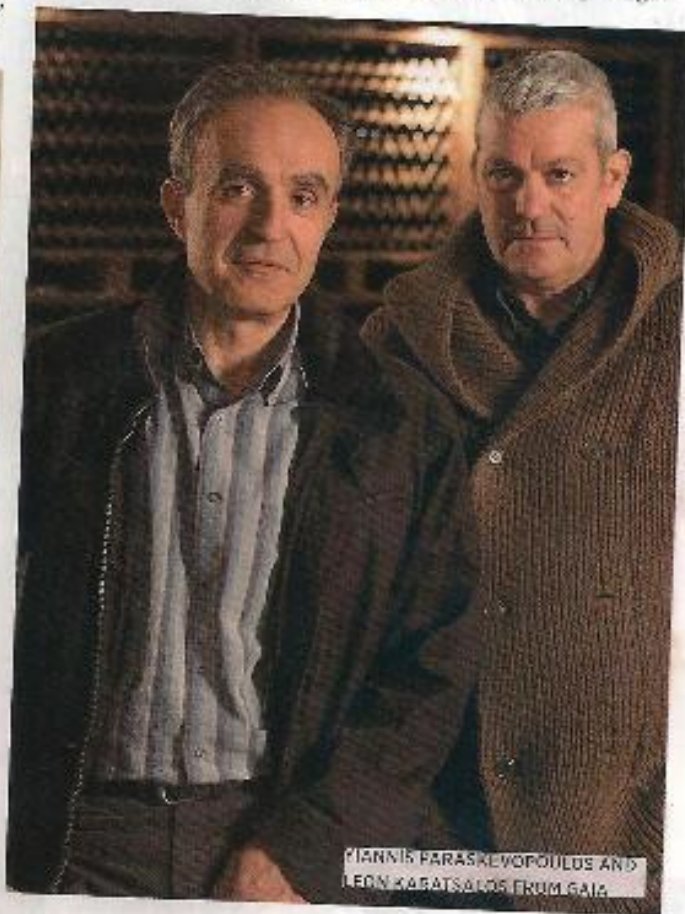
STELIOS BOUTARI

**TSELEPOS DRIOPI RESERVE 2008 (\$33)**

Big, deep and as full bodied as a line-backer, this balanced wine sports ripe cherry flavours and a long finish. Throw a beast on the barbecue and pull the cork for a bit of heaven on Earth.

**PAPAIOANNOU ESTATE 2007 (\$20)**

Spicy, dusty, dry and ready to drink, this lovely single vineyard St. George from Nemea would match a simple pasta dish that included mushrooms sautéed in olive oil with garlic and tomatoes. Crumble goat cheese on top and let the magic begin.



YIANNIS PARASKEVOPOULOS AND LEON KARATSALOS FROM GAIA

**ALPHA ESTATES HEDGEHOG VINEYARD 2007 (\$20)**

There is a lot going on in a glass of this flavourful Xinomavro/Syrah blend! Not surprisingly, lavender aromas greet you just like they do at the winery. Full bodied but not heavy, grilled meats and sausages with a tomato, feta, olive and fresh herb salad would be delicious with this big boy.

**SKOURAS ST GEORGE NEMEA 2010 (\$17)**

St. George is the English name for Agiorgitiko grapes. This offering is bright, balanced and flavourful with herbs and crushed stones. Bring on the appetizers!

**GAIA WINES AGIORGITIKO 2011 (\$20)**

This wine from Nemea has a welcome acidity with peppery, cherry and wood flavours. It would age well but could also be quaffed now with savoury dishes and cheeses.

**MONEMVASSIA 300 RED 2005 (\$35)**

This garnet coloured Agiorgitiko/Mavraki blend from Laconia is really beguiling! Very dry and medium bodied, it sports savoury cherry flavours that make it ideal with meat, cheese and tomato-based sauces. Bring on a rare flat iron steak with garlicy mashed potatoes and heaps of roasted veg. Expect sighs of contentment. And cheers! ☑