

It's All Greek To Me



Greece is considered by many to be the birthplace of wine. In addition to having the oldest documentation of a deity dedicated to wine – Dionysus - there is archeological evidence to support the theory that wine was an important part of Greek life dating back over four thousand years. Wine was not only a staple of the daily Greek diet, but also played a viable role in their economy as well as their cultural celebrations.

The earliest evidence of wine production was found on the island of Crete. Pieces of ceramic vessels, called amphora, have been shown to date back to the third century, BC. These amphorae, used to transport wine for trade and storage, were made of different shapes and sizes to identify their city of origin, and incorporated an elaborate labeling system similar to the labels we use on wine bottles today.

As their empire expanded, the Greeks introduced winemaking techniques throughout their Mediterranean settlements in Italy, France and Spain. But they also quickly realized how important it was to protect the authenticity of wines produced in specific regions. They developed a basic “appellation d'origine controlee” system to protect the value of wines from particular regions and harsh penalties were imposed on counterfeiters.

Today, some of the more than three hundred indigenous Greek grape varieties can be found growing throughout the wine producing world. In addition, the bright sunny climate and fertile soils provide an ideal environment for popular non-native varietals that many young winemakers are beginning to use. Here are a few delicious examples of white wines to help beat the summer heat.

Let's start with a sweet deal. Patras, on the northern Peloponnese, is famed for its excellent Muscat dessert wines. The **Non-Vintage Hermes Muscat of Patras** is fragrant and sweet, but well-balanced with floral nuances honeysuckle and delicious flavors of candied orange rind, ripe apricot, and a delightful baked honey taste. **\$11**

The **2014 Argyros Atlantis White** is an Assyrtiko grape based wine produced on the beautiful island of Santorini. This dry white wine is made from mountain grown assyrtiko grapes that thrive in the volcanic soil that makes up most of the island. It features bracing notes of citrus fruit and volcanic minerals on the front of the palate. The medium-based acidity keeps the finish light and crisp, with notes of grapefruit and nectarine the shine on the back of the palate. It is a wonderful alternative to un-oaked chardonnays. **\$16**

From the 2,000 foot high Mantinia Plateau come the **2014 Nasiakos**, a crisp white wine made from the locally celebrated moschofilero grape. It has a lovely nose of honeysuckle, nectarine, acacia flowers and citrus fruits and rich, layered flavors of tropical fruit and citrus in the mouth. Just a touch of minerality on the balanced finish adds texture and depth. **\$20**

Fermented with wild yeast indigenous to the vineyard, the **2013 Sigalas Santorini Athiri-Assyrtiko** from Santorini is an interesting assyrtiko due to its creamy mouthfeel. This charming white wine is aged in a blend of wood barrels and stainless steel tanks. It possesses a fragrant nose of nectarine, acacia flowers and citrus fruits and rich, layered flavors of tropical fruit and citrus in the mouth. Just a touch of ginger on the balanced finish adds texture and depth. **\$20**