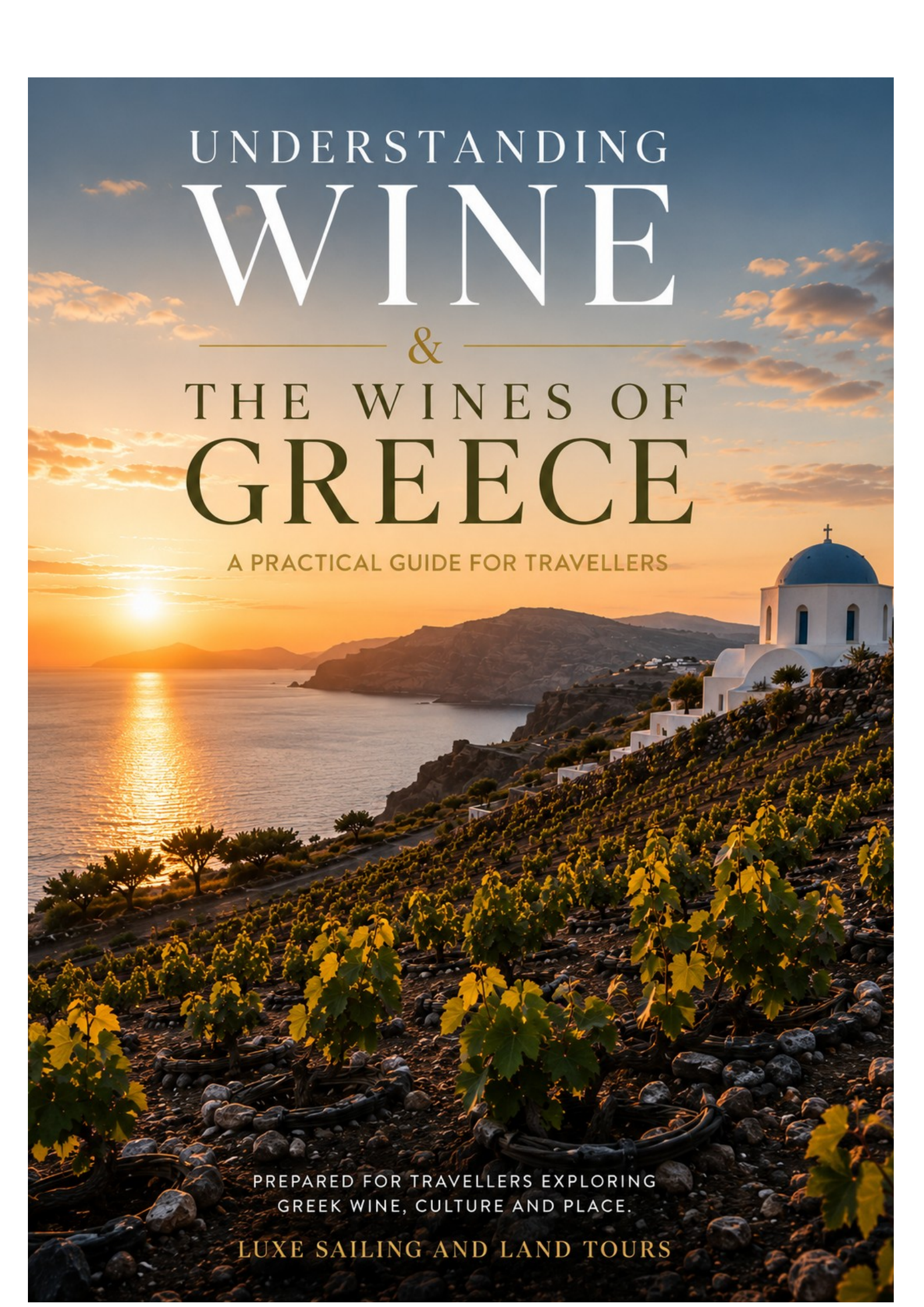


The background of the entire page is a photograph of a Greek coastal scene at sunset. In the foreground, there are rows of young grapevines planted in a field of dark, rounded stones. The vines have green and yellowing leaves. In the middle ground, a white building with a blue dome and a cross on top, likely a church, sits on a hillside. The sea is visible in the background, with the sun low on the horizon, creating a bright orange glow and a reflection on the water. The sky is a mix of blue and orange.

UNDERSTANDING WINE & THE WINES OF GREECE

A PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR TRAVELLERS

PREPARED FOR TRAVELLERS EXPLORING
GREEK WINE, CULTURE AND PLACE.

LUXE SAILING AND LAND TOURS

About This Guide

Wine is one of the world's oldest and most fascinating beverages, yet it can often feel intimidating to those approaching it for the first time. Labels, grape varieties, regions and technical terminology can sometimes make wine seem far more complicated than it needs to be.

The purpose of this guide is simple: to provide a practical and accessible introduction to wine through the unique lens of Greece, one of the world's oldest and most exciting wine-producing countries.

Whether you are completely new to wine or already enjoy a glass with dinner, this guide has been designed to help you better understand what is in your glass, how it was made, and why different wines taste the way they do.

The first part introduces the foundations of wine, including how wine is made, the role of acidity and tannins, the influence of climate and the basics of wine tasting. From there, we explore some of the world's most important grape varieties before turning our attention to Greece.

Along the way, you will discover the indigenous grape varieties, wine regions and producers that make Greek wine unique, and gain a deeper understanding of the people, places and traditions that have shaped Greek wine for thousands of years.

This guide is not intended to be an academic textbook or a professional wine qualification. It is designed to enhance your enjoyment of wine and provide useful context for the wines, wineries and regions you may encounter during your travels.

Above all, wine should be enjoyed. The more you understand it, the more rewarding that experience becomes.

WHO THIS GUIDE IS FOR

Travellers exploring Greece · Wine enthusiasts · Readers wanting a practical introduction to wine · Anyone curious about Greek wine.

How to Use This Guide

This guide has been structured to take you from the fundamentals of wine through to a deeper understanding of Greece's most important grape varieties, wine regions and producers.

You can read the guide from beginning to end, or simply explore the sections that interest you most.

Part 1 introduces the building blocks of wine. Part 2 provides reference points through the world's best-known grapes. Parts 3 and 4 focus on Greek wine and its indigenous varieties. Part 5 explores the regions featured in this guide, and Part 6 profiles selected producers.

Where possible, taste the wines discussed throughout this guide. Wine is ultimately best understood through experience.

Contents

Page numbers shown reflect the current layout. If you edit this document, select all (Ctrl+A) and press F9 to refresh them.

Part 1: Wine Fundamentals	6
Chapter 1: What is Wine?	8
Chapter 2: How Wine is Made	12
Chapter 3: The Major Styles of Wine	14
Chapter 4: Understanding Acidity	16
Chapter 5: Understanding Tannins	18
Chapter 6: Understanding Sweetness	20
Chapter 7: Understanding Body	22
Chapter 8: Understanding Alcohol	24
Chapter 9: Understanding Oak	26
Chapter 10: Climate and Wine	28
Chapter 11: How to Taste Wine	30
Chapter 12: Food and Wine Pairing	32
Part 2: The World's Great Grapes	34
Chapter 13: Chardonnay	36
Chapter 14: Sauvignon Blanc	38
Chapter 15: Riesling	40
Chapter 16: Pinot Grigio	42
Chapter 17: Cabernet Sauvignon	44
Chapter 18: Merlot	47
Chapter 19: Pinot Noir	49
Chapter 20: Shiraz / Syrah	50
Chapter 21: Sangiovese	52
Chapter 22: Nebbiolo	54
Part 3: Introduction to Greek Wine	56
Chapter 23: A Brief History of Greek Wine	57
Chapter 24: Why Greek Wine is Different	60
Chapter 25: Understanding Greek Wine Regions	62
Chapter 26: The Modern Greek Wine Revival	64
Chapter 26A: Understanding Retsina	66
Greek Wine at a Glance	68
Understanding PDO and PGI	70
How to Read a Greek Wine Label	72
Part 4: Greece's Indigenous Grape Varieties	74
Chapter 27: Assyrtiko	76
Chapter 28: Xinomavro	78
Chapter 29: Agiorgitiko	80
Chapter 30: Savatiano	82
Chapter 31: Malagousia	84
Chapter 32: Limniona	86
Chapter 33: Vidiano	88
Part 5: Regions of Greece	90
Chapter 34: Attica	91
Chapter 35: Nemea	93

Chapter 36: Macedonia.....	95
Chapter 37: Santorini.....	97
Chapter 38: Crete.....	99
Part 6: Featured Wineries.....	101
Chapter 39: Papagiannakos.....	102
Chapter 40: Gaia.....	104
Chapter 41: Gerovassiliou.....	106
Chapter 42: Biblia Chora.....	107
Chapter 43: Mikro Ktima Titos.....	108
Chapter 44: Zafeirakis.....	110
Chapter 45: Thymiopoulos.....	112
Chapter 46: Estate Argyros.....	113
Chapter 47: Mikra Thira.....	115
Chapter 48: Douloufakis.....	117
Glossary.....	119
Further Reading and Resources.....	120

PART ONE

Wine Fundamentals



This part introduces the essential building blocks of wine — the elements that shape every glass, from a simple weeknight red to the finest bottle in a cellar. By the end of Part 1, you will understand how wine is made, what creates its flavour and structure, and how to taste it with confidence.

THE SIX ELEMENTS OF WINE





What is Wine?

THE STORY BEHIND EVERY GLASS

Wine is more than a drink. It is a reflection of nature, craftsmanship, culture and time.

Wine is an alcoholic beverage made primarily from fermented grapes.

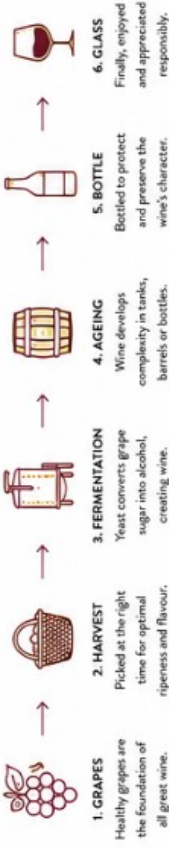
It is as old as civilisation itself—a product of agriculture, curiosity and culture.

But wine is far more than a simple drink. It is a reflection of place, people, history and tradition.

From a casual weeknight glass of Malagousia to a complex aged Xinomavro, every wine has a story to tell—of the climate, the soil, the vineyard, the winemaker and the choices made along the way.

This guide will help you understand that story—and enjoy every sip with greater confidence.

FROM GRAPE TO GLASS



DID YOU KNOW?
Archaeological evidence suggests that people began making wine more than 8,000 years ago in the South Caucasus region (modern-day Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan). Wine is one of humanity's oldest crafted beverages.

Ancient Greek wine amphora, 5th century BC

A BRIEF HISTORY OF WINE

	8000 BC+ THE BEGINNING Early evidence of winemaking in the South Caucasus.		1600–300 BC ANCIENT GREECE Wine becomes central to Greek culture, trade, religion and daily life.		ROMAN EMPIRE WINE GOES WEST Viticulture spreads across Europe, with Romans perfecting techniques.		20TH CENTURY + MODERN REVIVAL Greek winemakers blend tradition with innovation, creating world-class wines.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Wine is made primarily from fermented grapes.

Winemaking has a history that stretches back thousands of years.

Every wine reflects its place, its people and the winemaking choices made.

Understanding the basics helps you enjoy wine more, wherever your journey takes you.

	THINK ABOUT IT		Why do you think wine has survived for thousands of years?		What makes wine different from other drinks?		What does wine mean to you?
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CHAPTER 1

What is Wine?

The story behind every glass



Wine is one of humanity's oldest and most enduring beverages. Long before the rise of the great civilisations of Greece and Rome, people were cultivating grapevines and producing wine. Archaeological evidence suggests that winemaking began more than 8,000 years ago, making wine not only an agricultural product, but also an important part of human history and culture.

At its simplest, wine is made by fermenting grapes. During fermentation, yeast converts the natural sugars found in grapes into alcohol, producing the beverage we know as wine. While the process itself is relatively straightforward, the range of wines that can be produced is extraordinary.

A crisp Assyrtiko from Santorini, a powerful Xinomavro from Naoussa and a rich Shiraz from Australia are all produced using the same basic process, yet each displays completely different flavours, aromas and textures. Understanding why wines can be so different is one of the great pleasures of wine.

Why Grapes?

Many fruits can be fermented into alcohol, yet grapes have a unique combination of characteristics that make them ideally suited to winemaking. Unlike many other

fruits, grapes naturally contain the key ingredients required to produce balanced wines: sugar, acidity, tannins and aromatic compounds.

This natural balance allows winemakers to produce an enormous variety of wine styles, from delicate sparkling wines and crisp whites to powerful reds capable of ageing for decades.

More Than Fermented Grape Juice

While wine begins with grapes, the finished product is shaped by grape variety, climate, vineyard location and winemaking. Different grape varieties create different flavours. Climate influences acidity, alcohol and ripeness. Vineyard location brings in altitude, sunlight, rainfall, wind and soil. Winemaking decisions influence texture, flavour and ageing.

One of the reasons wine captivates so many people is its ability to reflect the place where it is produced. Climate, geography, local traditions and grape varieties combine to create wines that express the character of a particular region. This relationship between wine and place is particularly important in Greece, where many wine regions have been producing wine for thousands of years.

From Grape to Glass



A Brief History of Wine

A BRIEF HISTORY OF WINE



THE BEGINNING 8000 BC+

Early evidence of winemaking in the South Caucasus.



ANCIENT GREECE 1600–300 BC

Wine becomes central to Greek culture, trade and daily life.



WINE GOES WEST ROMAN ERA

Viticulture spreads across Europe as the Romans refine technique.



MODERN REVIVAL 20TH C.+

Greek winemakers blend tradition with innovation to create world-class wine.



KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ✓ Wine is produced by fermenting grapes.
- ✓ Grapes are well suited to wine because they contain sugar, acidity, tannins and flavour compounds.
- ✓ Grape variety, climate, vineyard location and winemaking all influence style.
- ✓ Wine is one of the clearest expressions of place, culture and history.

CHAPTER 2

How Wine is Made

From vineyard to bottle



One of the remarkable things about wine is that such an extraordinary range of styles can be produced from a relatively simple process. Whether it is a crisp Sauvignon Blanc, a rich Chardonnay, a delicate rose or a powerful red wine, they all begin in the vineyard with the harvesting of grapes.

Harvesting the Grapes

Throughout the growing season, grapes accumulate sugar while gradually losing acidity. Harvest timing is one of the most important decisions a winemaker makes. Harvest too early and the wine may be overly acidic and lacking flavour. Harvest too late and the wine may become overly alcoholic and lose freshness.

Fermentation

Once harvested, the grapes are crushed to release their juice. Yeast is then introduced, either naturally or by the winemaker. During fermentation, yeast consumes grape sugars and converts them into alcohol, carbon dioxide and heat. Fermentation is the moment when grape juice becomes wine.

White, Red and Rose

White wines are generally produced by separating grape juice from skins before fermentation. Red wines gain their colour, tannins and much of their flavour by

fermenting juice together with skins. Rose wines are produced from red grapes, but with only brief skin contact.

Ageing and Special Styles

After fermentation, some wines are matured in oak barrels. Oak can soften tannins and add flavours such as vanilla, spice, toast and smoke. Some wines continue to develop after bottling, although most are made to be enjoyed within a few years.

Sparkling wines contain dissolved carbon dioxide, which creates bubbles. Fortified wines have additional alcohol added during production and include styles such as Port, Sherry and Madeira.

Although the process appears straightforward, countless decisions influence the final wine. The grape variety, climate, vineyard location and choices made by the winemaker all contribute to the wine that ultimately reaches the glass.



KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ✓ Wine begins with harvested grapes.
- ✓ Fermentation converts sugar into alcohol.
- ✓ White wines are generally fermented without skins.
- ✓ Red wines are fermented with skins to extract colour and tannins.
- ✓ Oak ageing can add flavour, texture and complexity.

CHAPTER 3

The Major Styles of Wine

White, red, rosé, sparkling and fortified



Walk into any wine shop and you will be presented with hundreds, if not thousands, of different bottles. At first glance the choices can seem overwhelming. Yet almost all wines can be grouped into a handful of major styles.

White Wine

White wines range from light and refreshing to rich and complex. Common characteristics include citrus, apple, pear, stone fruit, floral aromas and fresh acidity. Popular examples include Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc, Riesling and Pinot Grigio. Greek examples include Assyrtiko, Savatiano, Malagousia and Vidiano.

Orange Wine

Orange wines are made from white grapes, but with extended contact between the juice and grape skins. This gives the wine a deeper amber or copper colour and can add texture, grip and savoury complexity. Common characteristics include dried citrus, apricot, tea, herbs, honey, nuts and gentle tannins. Orange wines can feel more structured than white wines while still retaining freshness.

Rose Wine

Rose wines sit between white and red wines. They are usually fresh and fruit-driven, with flavours of strawberry, raspberry, watermelon and floral notes. Their versatility makes them natural companions to Mediterranean cuisine.

Red Wine

Red wines are produced from dark-skinned grape varieties and obtain their colour from grape skins during fermentation. Common characteristics include cherry, plum, blackberry, spice and herbal notes. Red wines also contain tannins, which contribute structure and texture.

Sparkling, Sweet and Fortified Wine

Sparkling wines contain bubbles and range from bone dry to sweet. Sweet wines retain residual sugar and can display honey, apricot, marmalade and dried fruit flavours. Fortified wines have additional alcohol added and include Port, Sherry and Madeira.

Dry vs Sweet

One common misconception is confusing fruit flavour with sweetness. A wine can taste of peach, mango or blackberry and still be completely dry. Sweetness refers specifically to residual sugar remaining after fermentation.

THE MAJOR STYLES OF WINE

WHITE WINE	ORANGE WINE	ROSÉ WINE	RED WINE	SPARKLING WINE	SWEET WINE	FORTIFIED WINE
Made from white grapes with little or no skin contact. Light, fresh and often aromatic with high acidity.	Made from white grapes with extended skin contact. Amber in colour with texture, grip and savoury complexity.	Made from red grapes with limited skin contact. Pale to vibrant pink in colour with red fruit characteristics.	Made from red or black grapes with full skin contact. Deeper colour with tannin, structure and rich flavour.	Any wine style with bubbles, created by natural or added carbonation.	Contains higher residual sugar for sweetness and richness. Can be still or sparkling.	Strengthened with brandy or grape spirit, resulting in higher alcohol and concentrated flavour.
						

COLOUR SPECTRUM



WHITE
ORANGE
ROSÉ
RED
SPARKLING
SWEET
FORTIFIED

DRY

SWEET

HOW SKIN CONTACT AFFECTS COLOUR & STYLE

→
→
→

No skin contact (white)

Limited skin contact (rosé)

Extended skin contact (orange)

Full skin contact (red)

KEY POINT

Different winemaking choices lead to a wide variety of styles. Understanding the basics helps you choose and enjoy wine with confidence.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ✓ Most wines fall into a small number of major styles.
- ✓ White, red, rose, sparkling, sweet and fortified wines each have distinctive traits.
- ✓ Fruit flavours do not necessarily mean sweetness.
- ✓ Understanding styles helps you navigate wine lists and tastings.

CHAPTER 4

Understanding Acidity

The freshness that brings wine to life



Acidity is one of the most important components of wine and often determines whether a wine feels fresh and vibrant or flat and lifeless. The easiest way to understand acidity is to think about biting into a lemon. The mouth-watering sensation that follows is acidity in action.

Acidity provides freshness, balance and structure. It helps wines feel lively on the palate and allows many wines to pair successfully with food.

High-acid wines often appear crisp, refreshing and energetic. Examples include Riesling, Sauvignon Blanc and Assyrtiko. Lower-acid wines often feel softer, rounder and richer.

Climate has a significant influence on acidity. Cooler climates tend to preserve acidity, while warmer climates reduce acidity as grapes ripen. This is one reason climate plays such an important role in wine style.

Acidity is often the secret to successful food and wine pairing. Wines with good acidity can refresh the palate, cut through rich foods and complement seafood, salads and tomato-based dishes. Assyrtiko from Santorini is one of Greece's clearest examples of high acidity, retaining remarkable freshness despite the island's warm Mediterranean climate.



UNDERSTANDING ACIDITY



KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ✓ Acidity creates freshness in wine.
- ✓ High-acid wines feel crisp and refreshing.
- ✓ Acidity helps wines pair with food.
- ✓ Climate strongly influences acidity.
- ✓ Assyrtiko is one of Greece's best examples of high acidity.

CHAPTER 5

Understanding Tannins

The structure behind every red wine



If acidity creates freshness, tannins create structure. Tannins are naturally occurring compounds found in grape skins, seeds and stems. They are most noticeable in red wines because red wines are fermented with their skins.

Tannins are not a flavour. They are a sensation. A useful comparison is strong black tea. After taking a sip, your mouth may feel slightly dry. That drying sensation is caused by tannins.

Tannins give red wines shape, texture and ageing potential. Lower-tannin wines such as Pinot Noir often feel softer and more approachable. Higher-tannin wines such as Cabernet Sauvignon, Nebbiolo and Xinomavro feel firmer and more structured.

Tannins work particularly well with protein-rich foods. This is why steak, lamb and game often pair beautifully with structured red wines. The protein softens the tannins, creating a more harmonious experience.

Xinomavro, one of Greece's most important red grape varieties, is known for significant tannin structure and is often compared with Nebbiolo, the grape behind Italy's Barolo wines.

**KEY TAKEAWAYS**

- ✓ Tannins come primarily from grape skins.
- ✓ Tannins create texture and structure.
- ✓ High-tannin wines often age well.
- ✓ Tannins pair particularly well with rich foods.
- ✓ Xinomavro is one of Greece's most tannic grape varieties.

CHAPTER 6

Understanding Sweetness

Sugar, fruit and the difference between them



One of the most common misunderstandings in wine is the difference between sweetness and fruitiness. A wine can display flavours of peach, mango or ripe berries while remaining completely dry.

Sweetness refers to the amount of residual sugar remaining in a wine after fermentation. If most of the sugar is converted into alcohol, the wine becomes dry. If some sugar remains, the wine becomes sweeter.

Most wines consumed around the world are dry, including many Sauvignon Blanc, Chardonnay, Cabernet Sauvignon and Assyrtiko wines. Some wines contain a small amount of residual sugar and are described as off-dry. Sweet wines retain a significant amount of sugar and may show honey, apricot, marmalade and dried fruit flavours.

Sweetness can be powerful in food pairing. Sweet wines work with desserts and blue cheese, while off-dry wines can be excellent with spicy food. When tasting wine, learning to separate fruit flavour from sweetness is one of the most useful skills a wine drinker can develop.

**KEY TAKEAWAYS**

- ✓ Sweetness comes from residual sugar.
- ✓ Fruit flavours do not necessarily mean a wine is sweet.
- ✓ Most table wines are dry.
- ✓ Off-dry wines contain a small amount of residual sugar.
- ✓ Sweet wines pair well with desserts and some cheeses.

CHAPTER 7

Understanding Body

The weight and texture of wine



When people describe a wine as light, rich, elegant or powerful, they are often referring to its body. Body is the weight and texture of a wine in the mouth. It is similar to the difference between skim milk, full cream milk and cream.

Several factors contribute to a wine's body, including alcohol level, sugar level, grape variety and winemaking techniques. Wines with higher alcohol often feel fuller and richer, while wines with lower alcohol feel lighter and more delicate.

Light-bodied wines such as Pinot Grigio and some Rieslings feel refreshing and easy to drink. Medium-bodied wines such as Merlot, Sangiovese and many Assyrtiko examples sit in the middle. Full-bodied wines such as Shiraz, Cabernet Sauvignon and oaked Chardonnay feel richer and more powerful.

Matching body is one of the simplest ways to improve food and wine pairing. Light dishes often suit lighter wines, while rich dishes generally suit fuller wines. Greek wines cover the full spectrum: Assyrtiko is often medium-bodied despite its freshness, Xinomavro can be medium to full-bodied, and Agiorgitiko ranges from elegant to powerful.

**KEY TAKEAWAYS**

- ✓ Body refers to the weight and texture of wine.
- ✓ Alcohol is one of the main contributors to body.
- ✓ Wines can be light, medium or full-bodied.
- ✓ Matching wine body to food often improves pairings.
- ✓ Greek wines offer examples across the full body spectrum.

CHAPTER 8

Understanding Alcohol

Ripeness, warmth and intensity



Alcohol is one of the most important components of wine, influencing flavour, body and balance. While it is often viewed simply as the intoxicating element of wine, alcohol plays a larger role in shaping how a wine tastes and feels.

During fermentation, yeast converts grape sugar into alcohol. The more sugar present in the grapes at harvest, the more alcohol can potentially be produced. This is why warmer regions often produce wines with higher alcohol levels: grapes ripen more fully and accumulate more sugar.

Most table wines fall between 11% and 15% alcohol. Lower-alcohol wines tend to feel lighter and more refreshing. Higher-alcohol wines often feel fuller, richer and warmer on the palate.

A wine should not taste alcoholic. The best wines achieve balance between fruit, acidity, tannin and alcohol. When these elements are in harmony, the wine feels complete.

Santorini Assyrtiko often combines relatively high alcohol with remarkable acidity. Many Xinomavro wines achieve balance through naturally high acidity and tannin structure.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ✓ Alcohol is created during fermentation.
- ✓ Higher sugar levels generally lead to higher alcohol.
- ✓ Alcohol influences body and texture.
- ✓ Balance is more important than alcohol percentage alone.
- ✓ Climate plays a major role in determining alcohol levels.

CHAPTER 9

Understanding Oak

Barrels, spice and texture



Few topics generate more discussion among wine lovers than oak. Some people love the richness and complexity oak can bring to a wine. Others prefer fresher styles that showcase fruit without oak influence.

After fermentation, some wines are matured in oak barrels. This ageing process can last from a few months to several years depending on the wine style and the winemaker's objectives.

Oak influences wine in three important ways. It can contribute flavours such as vanilla, toast, baking spices, smoke, coffee and chocolate. It can also soften tannins by allowing small amounts of oxygen to interact with the wine. Finally, it can add complexity by introducing additional layers of aroma and flavour.

New barrels generally contribute stronger flavours. Older barrels contribute less flavour and are often used when winemakers want a more subtle effect. Not all wines benefit from oak. Many fresh white wines are intentionally produced without oak to preserve fruit character and acidity.

Many premium Greek producers use oak selectively. The objective is usually to support the grape variety rather than dominate it.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ✓ Oak ageing can influence flavour, texture and complexity.
- ✓ Oak often contributes vanilla, spice and toast notes.
- ✓ New barrels have a stronger impact than older barrels.
- ✓ Not all wines are aged in oak.
- ✓ The best oak use is balanced and integrated.

CHAPTER 10

Climate and Wine

Why place shapes every glass

If grape variety is the foundation of wine, climate is one of the most powerful influences on how that grape expresses itself. A Chardonnay grown in a cool climate can taste completely different from one grown in a warm climate.

Throughout the growing season, grapes gradually ripen on the vine. As they ripen, sugar levels increase, acidity decreases, flavours develop and tannins mature. The speed at which this occurs is largely determined by climate.

Cool climate regions generally produce wines with higher acidity, lower alcohol, fresher citrus flavours and greater delicacy. Warm climate regions tend to produce riper fruit flavours, fuller body, higher alcohol and softer acidity.

Climate is more than temperature alone. Sunlight helps grapes ripen. Rainfall provides water but can also dilute flavours if excessive. Wind can cool vineyards and reduce humidity. Altitude can preserve acidity and extend the growing season even in warm regions.

Greece benefits from a remarkable range of climates, combining mountainous terrain, coastal influences, island environments and Mediterranean sunshine. This diversity allows Greece to produce an extraordinary range of wine styles, from structured Xinomavro in Naoussa to vivid Assyrtiko on Santorini.



KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ✓ Climate is one of the most important influences on wine style.
- ✓ Cooler climates generally produce fresher wines with higher acidity.
- ✓ Warmer climates generally produce riper wines with fuller body.
- ✓ Sunlight, rainfall, wind and altitude all influence grape development.
- ✓ Greece's diverse geography allows for a wide range of wine styles.

CHAPTER 11

How to Taste Wine

Look, swirl, smell, taste



Wine tasting is often portrayed as mysterious or intimidating, but the reality is much simpler. Professional tasters and casual wine drinkers use the same basic process. The difference is practice and experience.

The goal of tasting is not to identify every aroma or impress others with technical language. It is to understand what is in the glass and develop your own appreciation of wine.

Look

Begin by observing the colour, intensity and clarity. A pale white wine may suggest a different style from a deep golden wine. A light red often differs significantly from a deep purple one.

Smell

The nose often reveals more than the palate. Gently swirl the wine to release aromas, then take a slow smell. Common aroma categories include fruit, floral notes, herbal notes and oak-derived aromas.

Taste

Take a small sip and allow the wine to move around your mouth. Consider sweetness, acidity, tannin, body, alcohol and finish. There is no perfect answer. Confidence develops through practice.

One of the best ways to learn is by tasting wines side by side. Comparing Chardonnay and Sauvignon Blanc, or Assyrtiko and Riesling, quickly highlights differences and improves understanding.

The Five Steps of Tasting



KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ✓ Wine tasting follows a simple process: Look, Smell, Taste.
- ✓ Focus on broad aroma and flavour categories first.
- ✓ There is no single correct tasting note.
- ✓ Confidence develops through practice.
- ✓ Comparing wines is one of the fastest ways to learn.

CHAPTER 12

Food and Wine Pairing

Making the most of every meal



One of the greatest pleasures of wine is enjoying it with food. While pairing can become highly technical, a few simple principles can dramatically improve the experience.

The first rule is to match intensity. Light dishes such as fresh seafood, salads and grilled vegetables generally pair well with lighter wines. Rich dishes such as lamb, beef and slow-cooked meats usually suit fuller, more structured wines.

High-acid wines are among the most versatile at the table. They pair beautifully with seafood, tomato-based dishes and olive oil-based cuisine. This is one reason Greek white wines often work so naturally with Mediterranean food.

Tannins are softened by protein, which explains why structured reds pair well with steak, lamb and game. A touch of sweetness can also help balance spicy dishes.

One of the oldest principles of food and wine pairing is: if it grows together, it goes together. Local wines often evolved alongside local cuisine. Assyrtiko with seafood,

Agiorgitiko with grilled meats, Xinomavro with lamb and Vidiano with Cretan cuisine all reflect this principle.

Guidelines are helpful, but personal taste should always prevail. The most important rule is to experiment and discover what works for you.



KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ✓ Match the intensity of wine and food.
- ✓ High-acid wines are food-friendly.
- ✓ Tannins pair well with protein-rich foods.
- ✓ Sweetness can balance spice.
- ✓ Local wines often pair naturally with local cuisine.
- ✓ Personal preference always matters.

PART TWO

The World's Great Grapes



Before exploring the wines of Greece, it helps to have reference points. This part introduces ten of the world's most important grape varieties — four white, six red — each a benchmark you can return to when tasting something new. Several will resurface later in this guide as useful comparisons for Greece's own indigenous varieties.

WHITE GRAPES



CHARDONNAY



SAUVIGNON
BLANC



RIESLING



PINOT
GRIGIO

RED GRAPES



CABERNET
SAUVIGNON



MERLOT



PINOT
NOIR



SHIRAZ /
SYRAH



SANGIOVESE



NEBBIOLO

CHAPTER 13

Chardonnay

The world's benchmark white grape



Few grape varieties are as important or widely planted as Chardonnay. Found across the globe, it produces an extraordinary range of styles, from crisp and mineral-driven whites to rich wines matured in oak.

Chardonnay originated in Burgundy, France, where it remains one of the world's most respected white grapes. It is now grown in France, Australia, New Zealand, the United States, Italy, South Africa, Chile and Argentina.

The flavour profile varies significantly. In cooler climates, Chardonnay often shows green apple, lemon, citrus and mineral notes. In warmer climates, it may show peach, nectarine, melon and tropical fruit. When aged in oak, additional flavours may include vanilla, toast, butter and baking spice.

Chardonnay matters because it clearly shows how climate and winemaking influence wine style. A Chablis from northern France may be lean and crisp, while an Australian Chardonnay may be richer and more generous.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ✓ Chardonnay originated in Burgundy.
- ✓ It ranges from crisp and mineral to rich and oaky.
- ✓ Climate and winemaking strongly influence style.
- ✓ It is one of the world's benchmark white grapes.

CHAPTER 14

Sauvignon Blanc

Freshness, acidity and instant recognition

SAUVIGNON BLANC

Sauvignon Blanc is prized for its bright acidity, citrus aromas, and vibrant flavors of lime, green apple, and gooseberry, often lifted by fresh herbs.



Sauvignon Blanc is one of the world's most recognisable white grape varieties. Known for freshness, vibrant acidity and distinctive aromas, it is often one of the easiest wines for new drinkers to identify.

It originated in France, particularly the Loire Valley and Bordeaux, and is now grown successfully around the world. New Zealand has become especially famous for a highly aromatic style.

Typical characteristics include lime, lemon, grapefruit, gooseberry, passionfruit and fresh herbs. Cooler regions often show citrus and herbal notes, while warmer regions may display more tropical fruit.

Sauvignon Blanc is one of the most food-friendly white wines, pairing well with seafood, goat's cheese, salads and dishes featuring citrus, herbs or olive oil.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ✓ Sauvignon Blanc is known for freshness and high acidity.
- ✓ Common flavours include citrus, gooseberry and herbs.
- ✓ Climate strongly influences flavour expression.
- ✓ It is a useful benchmark for crisp aromatic whites.

CHAPTER 15

Riesling

Acidity, precision and remarkable ageing potential



Riesling is often regarded by wine professionals as one of the world's greatest white grape varieties, yet it remains misunderstood because it can be produced from bone dry to intensely sweet.

It is most closely associated with Germany, although it is also important in Alsace, Austria, Australia and New Zealand.

Young Rieslings commonly display lime, lemon, green apple and floral aromas. With age, some develop honey, toast and complex mineral notes. High acidity is Riesling's defining feature, giving freshness, longevity and balance.

Riesling pairs well with seafood, pork, Asian cuisine and spicy dishes. It also provides a useful comparison for Assyrtiko, since both varieties can retain striking acidity.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ✓ Riesling is famous for acidity and longevity.
- ✓ It can be dry, off-dry or sweet.
- ✓ Typical flavours include lime, floral notes and green apple.
- ✓ It is one of the most versatile food wines.

CHAPTER 16

Pinot Grigio

Light, easy and endlessly drinkable



Pinot Grigio is popular because it is approachable, refreshing and versatile with food. It is valued for drinkability rather than power.

The grape originated in France, where it is known as Pinot Gris, but is now most closely associated with northern Italy. Italian Pinot Grigio is often light, crisp and refreshing. Pinot Gris from Alsace can be richer, fuller-bodied and more aromatic.

Typical flavours include lemon, pear, apple and white peach. Most examples are light-bodied with moderate to high acidity.

Pinot Grigio pairs well with seafood, salads, light pasta dishes and Mediterranean cuisine.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ✓ Pinot Grigio is light, crisp and approachable.
- ✓ It is known as Pinot Gris in France.
- ✓ Typical flavours include citrus, pear and apple.
- ✓ It is useful as an introduction to refreshing white wines.

CHAPTER 17

Cabernet Sauvignon

The backbone of the world's great reds



Cabernet Sauvignon is one of the world's most widely planted and recognised red grape varieties. It originated in Bordeaux and now forms the backbone of many famous wines.

Typical characteristics include blackcurrant, blackberry, dark cherry, cedar, mint and tobacco. Cabernet Sauvignon is usually medium to full-bodied, high in tannin and suitable for ageing.

Cooler climates often produce more herbal notes and firmer structure. Warmer climates produce riper fruit, fuller body and softer tannins.

It pairs naturally with steak, lamb, barbecued meats and hard cheeses. Cabernet Sauvignon is a benchmark for structured red wines.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ✓ Cabernet Sauvignon originated in Bordeaux.
- ✓ Typical flavours include blackcurrant, blackberry and cedar.
- ✓ It is often high in tannins and suitable for ageing.
- ✓ It pairs well with red meat.

CHAPTER 18

Merlot

Softer, rounder and instantly approachable



Merlot is one of the most approachable and widely enjoyed red grape varieties. Compared with Cabernet Sauvignon, it is often softer, rounder and more immediately accessible.

It originated in Bordeaux and is grown extensively around the world. It appears both as a single-variety wine and in blends.

Typical flavours include plum, black cherry, blackberry and chocolate. Merlot generally has softer tannins, medium body and generous fruit character.

Merlot pairs well with roast chicken, pork, lamb and pasta dishes. It demonstrates that not every red wine needs to be powerful and intensely structured.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ✓ Merlot is generally softer than Cabernet Sauvignon.
- ✓ Typical flavours include plum and black cherry.
- ✓ It often has moderate tannins and medium body.
- ✓ It is one of the world's most approachable reds.

CHAPTER 19

Pinot Noir

*Elegance over power***PHOTOGRAPH PLACEHOLDER****Pinot Noir***Pale ruby Pinot Noir in a glass with a forest floor or earthy backdrop suggestion — subtle, not literal.*

Orientation: Landscape, full width

Pinot Noir is one of the world's most admired grape varieties and among the most challenging to cultivate successfully. Its wines are often elegant, expressive and capable of conveying a strong sense of place.

It is most closely associated with Burgundy, France, and is also grown successfully in New Zealand, the United States, Australia and Germany.

Typical flavours include cherry, strawberry and raspberry, with additional earthy, forest floor or spice notes in some wines. Pinot Noir usually has light to medium body, lower tannins and bright acidity.

It pairs beautifully with duck, mushroom dishes, roast poultry and pork. Its appeal often lies in elegance and balance rather than power.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ✓ Pinot Noir is associated with Burgundy.
- ✓ Typical flavours include cherry and strawberry.
- ✓ It is usually lighter in body and tannin.
- ✓ Elegance is often valued more than power.

CHAPTER 20

Shiraz / Syrah

Bold, spiced and full of character



Known as Syrah in France and much of Europe, and Shiraz in Australia, this grape produces some of the world's most expressive red wines.

Syrah originated in France's Rhone Valley and is now grown in France, Australia, South Africa, the United States and Argentina.

Typical flavours include blackberry, plum, blueberry, black pepper, spice, smoke and chocolate. French Syrah often displays pepper, earthiness and structure, while Australian Shiraz is frequently riper, fuller-bodied and more fruit-driven.

Shiraz pairs particularly well with grilled meats, barbecue, slow-cooked dishes and game.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ✓ Shiraz and Syrah are the same grape.
- ✓ Typical flavours include blackberry, plum and spice.
- ✓ Styles vary significantly between regions.
- ✓ It is a benchmark full-bodied red.

CHAPTER 21

Sangiovese

Italy's food-loving red



Sangiovese is Italy's most important red grape variety and the foundation of many of the country's famous wines, including Chianti and Brunello di Montalcino.

It is most closely associated with Tuscany. Typical flavours include cherry, red plum, dried herbs, tomato leaf, earth and spice.

Sangiovese is known for bright acidity and food-friendliness. It often seems to come alive at the table, especially with tomato-based dishes.

It pairs well with pasta, pizza, roast meats and Mediterranean cuisine. Sangiovese demonstrates the importance of acidity, balance and regional food traditions.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ✓ Sangiovese is Italy's most important red grape.
- ✓ Typical flavours include cherry and herbs.
- ✓ It is known for acidity and balance.
- ✓ It is exceptionally food-friendly.

CHAPTER 22

Nebbiolo

Firm, fragrant and built to age



Nebbiolo is responsible for some of Italy's most celebrated wines, including Barolo and Barbaresco from Piedmont.

Typical flavours include cherry, rose petals and red fruits. With age, Nebbiolo may develop dried flowers, leather and earthy notes.

Nebbiolo is unusual because it combines high acidity with high tannins. Young wines can appear firm and demanding, while mature examples often display remarkable elegance.

It pairs well with rich meat dishes, game, truffle-based dishes and mature cheeses. Nebbiolo is a useful reference point for Xinomavro because both varieties share high acidity, firm tannins and ageing potential.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ✓ Nebbiolo is associated with Piedmont.
- ✓ It combines high acidity and high tannins.
- ✓ It can age for decades.
- ✓ It provides a useful comparison for Xinomavro.

PART THREE

Introduction to Greek Wine



With the fundamentals in place, we now turn to Greece itself — one of the world's oldest wine-producing countries, and one of its most exciting modern stories. This part traces Greek wine from antiquity to its recent quality revival, explains what makes it distinctive, and gives you the practical tools to navigate a Greek wine list or label with confidence.

CHAPTER 23

A Brief History of Greek Wine

Thousands of years in the making



Few countries can claim a winemaking history as long or influential as Greece. Wine has been produced in Greece for thousands of years, making it one of the oldest wine-producing nations in the world.

For the ancient Greeks, wine was more than a beverage. It was woven into daily life, trade, religion and culture. Greek merchants transported wine across the Aegean, Mediterranean and Black Sea, helping spread wine culture throughout the ancient world.

Wine occupied an important place in mythology through Dionysus, the god of wine, fertility and celebration. Festivals dedicated to Dionysus featured music, theatre and communal celebration, highlighting wine's central role in society.

Greek wine traditions continued through the Roman and Byzantine periods, although wars, economic hardship and changing agricultural priorities later affected production. During much of the twentieth century, Greece's wine industry focused more on quantity than quality.

In recent decades, a new generation of winemakers has transformed the industry. By focusing on quality, indigenous varieties and modern techniques, Greece has re-established itself as one of the world's most exciting wine-producing countries.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ✓ Greece is one of the world's oldest wine-producing countries.
- ✓ Wine has been part of Greek culture for thousands of years.
- ✓ Ancient Greece helped spread wine culture through the Mediterranean.
- ✓ Modern Greek wine has undergone a remarkable quality revival.

CHAPTER 24

Why Greek Wine is Different

Originality in a world of familiar grapes



In a world where many wine regions focus on familiar international grape varieties, Greece offers something increasingly rare: originality.

Greek wine is built upon hundreds of indigenous grape varieties, unique growing conditions and a winemaking tradition that stretches back thousands of years. While international grapes are also grown in Greece, the country's greatest strength lies in varieties found almost nowhere else.

Examples include Assyrtiko, Xinomavro, Agiorgitiko, Savatiano, Malagousia, Limniona and Vidiano. These grapes create wines with personalities that cannot easily be replicated elsewhere.

Despite its relatively small size, Greece includes islands, mountains, coastal regions and inland valleys. These varied environments create a broad range of wine styles. For many wine lovers, Greek wine represents discovery: new grapes, new regions and new reference points.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ✓ Greek wine is distinguished by indigenous grape varieties.
- ✓ Greece has remarkable geographic diversity.
- ✓ Many vineyards have centuries of history.
- ✓ Greek wine offers opportunities for discovery and exploration.

CHAPTER 25

Understanding Greek Wine Regions

From volcanic islands to mountain vineyards



Although Greece is not a large country, its wine regions are remarkably diverse. From Santorini's volcanic landscapes to the mountainous vineyards of northern Greece, each region offers distinct conditions that influence wine style.

Northern Greece is home to Naoussa, Amyndeon and Goumenissa and is particularly associated with Xinomavro. These regions often produce structured wines with freshness and ageing potential.

Central Greece includes Attica, one of the country's most historic wine-producing regions and the home of Savatiano. The Peloponnese is one of Greece's most important wine areas, with Nemea famous for Agiorgitiko.

The islands provide some of Greece's most distinctive wines. Santorini is famous for Assyrtiko, while Crete is increasingly recognised for indigenous varieties such as Vidiano, Liatiko and Kotsifali.

There is no single Greek wine style. The country's wines reflect the variety of landscapes, climates and grape varieties found across Greece.

NORTHERN GREECE	ATTICA	PELOPONNESE	SANTORINI	CRETE
<i>Naoussa, Amyndeon</i>	<i>Central Greece</i>	<i>Nemea</i>	<i>Cycladic Islands</i>	<i>Southern Greece</i>
Signature grape	Signature grape	Signature grape	Signature grape	Signature grape
Xinomavro	Savatiano	Agiorgitiko	Assyrtiko	Vidiano

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ✓ Greece contains numerous distinct wine regions.
- ✓ Northern Greece is known for Xinomavro.
- ✓ Nemea is associated with Agiorgitiko.
- ✓ Santorini is famous for Assyrtiko.
- ✓ Crete is emerging as a leading region for indigenous varieties.

CHAPTER 26

The Modern Greek Wine Revival

A new generation, a renewed identity



Today's Greek wine industry looks very different from that of just a few decades ago. While Greece has ancient winemaking roots, its modern reputation has largely been built in recent decades.

A shift toward quality included better vineyard management, modern winery equipment, improved winemaking and renewed emphasis on indigenous varieties. A new generation of winemakers emerged with international experience and a desire to showcase Greek identity rather than copy international styles.

Many indigenous grape varieties had been overlooked for decades. Forward-thinking producers recognised that these grapes represented Greece's greatest competitive advantage. Varieties such as Assyrtiko, Xinomavro, Agiorgitiko, Malagousia and Vidiano have since gained renewed attention.

Greek wines now appear on serious wine lists and in specialist retailers around the world. The combination of indigenous grapes, diverse terroirs, skilled producers and growing recognition positions Greece as one of the most distinctive wine destinations in the world.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ✓ Modern Greek wine has shifted strongly toward quality.
- ✓ Indigenous varieties are central to Greece's success.
- ✓ Greek wines are receiving growing international recognition.
- ✓ Greece is now considered one of the world's most exciting wine destinations.

CHAPTER 26A

Understanding Retsina

Greece's most distinctive tradition



Few wines are more closely associated with Greece than Retsina. For some wine drinkers it is a beloved traditional style. For others it is misunderstood. Either way, understanding Retsina is an important part of understanding Greek wine.

The origins of Retsina stretch back thousands of years. In the ancient world, wine was often transported and stored in clay vessels known as amphorae. To prevent air from entering and spoiling the wine, producers sealed these vessels with pine resin. Over time, some of the resin's aromas and flavours entered the wine.

Modern Retsina is characterised by the addition of Aleppo pine resin during fermentation. The resulting wines often show pine, herbs, resin and Mediterranean vegetation.

During much of the twentieth century, large quantities of inexpensive Retsina damaged the style's reputation. In recent decades, quality-focused producers have restored interest by using better grapes and more careful winemaking.

Today's best examples are fresh, refined and food-friendly. Rather than overwhelming the wine, the resin complements the fruit. Papagiannakos in Attica is often associated with the revival of premium Retsina.

Retsina pairs particularly well with meze, grilled seafood, fried fish, olives and traditional Greek dishes. It represents a direct link between modern Greece and one of the world's oldest winemaking traditions.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ✓ Retsina is one of Greece's most traditional wine styles.
- ✓ Its origins lie in the use of pine resin to seal ancient wine vessels.
- ✓ Modern examples are fresher and higher quality than many historical versions.
- ✓ Papagiannakos is associated with premium Retsina.

QUICK REFERENCE

Greek Wine at a Glance

The essential grapes to know before we go further

Before exploring Greece's wine regions and producers in greater detail, it is useful to become familiar with the country's most important grape varieties.

Assyrtiko is a white grape primarily associated with Santorini and known for high acidity, citrus and mineral character. Savatiano is a white grape associated with Attica and valued for fresh, balanced, food-friendly wines. Malagousia is a white grape with aromatic, floral and stone fruit qualities. Vidiano is a white grape from Crete that can be rich, textured and expressive.

Xinomavro is a red grape associated with Macedonia, especially Naoussa, and is known for structure, high acidity and ageing potential. Agiorgitiko is the red grape of Nemea and is fruit-driven, approachable and versatile. Limniona is an emerging red grape from Tyrnavos, valued for elegance and freshness.

Although international varieties are grown throughout Greece, these indigenous grapes help define the country's modern wine identity.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ✓ Greek wine is defined by indigenous varieties.
- ✓ The major white grapes in this guide are Assyrtiko, Savatiano, Malagousia and Vidiano.
- ✓ The major red grapes are Xinomavro, Agiorgitiko and Limniona.



WHITE GRAPES

ASSYRTIKO

SAVATIANO

MALAGOUSIA

VIDIANO



RED GRAPES

XINOMAVRO

AGIORGITIKO

LIMNIONA

QUICK REFERENCE

Understanding PDO and PGI

What those letters on the label actually mean

When exploring Greek wines, you will frequently encounter abbreviations such as PDO and PGI on labels. These designations identify where a wine was produced and provide useful information about origin.

PDO means Protected Designation of Origin. These wines originate from a clearly defined geographic region and must comply with specific production rules. These may govern vineyard boundaries, permitted grape varieties, production methods and maximum yields.

PGI means Protected Geographical Indication. PGI wines also come from a defined area, but producers have more flexibility regarding grape varieties and winemaking approaches.

PDO and PGI are not guarantees of quality. Outstanding wines can be produced under either classification. They are best understood as origin and style indicators.

Examples include PDO Santorini, PDO Nemea and PDO Naoussa.

 PDO <i>Protected Designation of Origin</i>  Defined geographic region  Strict production rules  Limited grape varieties  e.g. PDO Santorini, PDO Nemea	 PGI <i>Protected Geographical Indication</i>  Defined geographic area  Greater flexibility  Wider range of grape varieties  Broader style range
---	--

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ✓ PDO wines come from defined regions with stricter rules.
- ✓ PGI wines come from defined areas with greater flexibility.
- ✓ These terms help you understand origin and style.

QUICK REFERENCE

How to Read a Greek Wine Label

Four things to look for, every time

Wine labels can appear intimidating, but most Greek wine labels contain the same basic information.

The producer is the winery responsible for making the wine. Examples include Estate Argyros, Gaia, Gerovassiliou and Papagiannakos.

The region indicates where the wine was produced, such as Santorini, Nemea, Naoussa or Crete. The grape variety may also be listed, such as Assyrtiko, Xinomavro, Agiorgitiko or Vidiano.

Many labels display PDO or PGI classification. The vintage indicates the year the grapes were harvested.

For example: Estate Argyros, PDO Santorini, Assyrtiko, 2025. Even without tasting the wine, you now know the producer, region, variety and vintage.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ✓ Look for producer, region, grape variety, classification and vintage.
- ✓ Greek labels become easier once you know the basic structure.
- ✓ This framework helps with wine lists, shops and winery visits.



PART FOUR

Greece's Indigenous Grape Varieties



This part takes a closer look at the seven indigenous grape varieties that define modern Greek wine — the grapes introduced briefly in Part 3, now explored in depth. Each profile includes the grape's home region, typical character, and food pairings, so you can recognise it confidently on a wine list or at a winery table.



WHITE GRAPES

ASSYRTIKO

SAVATIANO

MALAGOUSIA

VIDIANO



RED GRAPES

XINOMAVRO

AGIORGITIKO

LIMNIONA

CHAPTER 27

Assyrtiko

Greece's flagship white grape



If Greece has a flagship white grape variety, it is Assyrtiko. Renowned for freshness, structure and the ability to retain acidity in hot climates, it has become one of Greece's most internationally recognised wines.

Assyrtiko is most closely associated with Santorini, although it is now grown in other regions. On Santorini it has adapted to volcanic soils, strong winds and limited rainfall.

Typical flavours include lemon, lime, citrus zest and mineral notes. The best wines often combine power and richness with vibrant acidity.

Santorini vines are often trained into basket-shaped formations known as kouloura, protecting grapes from wind and intense sunlight. Assyrtiko pairs beautifully with seafood, shellfish, grilled fish and Mediterranean cuisine.



Assyrtiko



	COLOUR	White
	HOME REGION	Santorini (also grown elsewhere in Greece)
	CHARACTER	High acidity, powerful yet fresh, citrus and mineral
	TYPICAL FLAVOURS	Lemon, lime, citrus zest, mineral notes
	PAIRS WITH	Seafood, shellfish, grilled fish, Mediterranean cuisine

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ✓ Assyrtiko is Greece's benchmark white grape.
- ✓ It is closely associated with Santorini.
- ✓ It retains remarkable acidity in warm climates.
- ✓ Typical flavours include citrus and mineral notes.

CHAPTER 28

Xinomavro

Greece's flagship red grape



If Assyrtiko is Greece's flagship white grape, Xinomavro is often considered its flagship red. Known for structure, complexity and ageing potential, it produces some of Greece's most respected red wines.

Xinomavro is most closely associated with northern Greece, particularly Naoussa. Typical flavours include cherry, red berries, tomato and olive, with older wines developing dried fruit, leather and earthy notes.

It combines high acidity and significant tannins, giving structure and longevity. It is often compared with Nebbiolo, although it has a distinct identity of its own.

Xinomavro pairs particularly well with lamb, game, slow-cooked meats and rich Mediterranean dishes.

Xinomavro

	COLOUR	Red
	HOME REGION	Naoussa, northern Greece
	CHARACTER	High acidity, significant tannin, ageing potential
	TYPICAL FLAVOURS	Cherry, red berries, tomato, olive; leather and dried fruit with age
	PAIRS WITH	Lamb, game, slow-cooked meats, rich Mediterranean dishes

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ✓ Xinomavro is Greece's flagship red grape.
- ✓ It is closely associated with Naoussa.
- ✓ It has high acidity and tannins.
- ✓ It is capable of exceptional ageing.

CHAPTER 29

Agiorgitiko

Nemea's approachable, versatile red



Agiorgitiko is one of Greece's most widely planted and versatile red grape varieties. Known for approachable fruit character and broad stylistic range, it is one of the country's most popular wines.

Agiorgitiko is most closely associated with Nemea in the Peloponnese. Typical flavours include plum, cherry, blackberry, spice and sometimes chocolate.

Compared with Xinomavro, Agiorgitiko is often softer, more approachable and less tannic. It can produce fresh everyday reds, rose wines and premium barrel-aged examples.

It pairs well with grilled meats, roast lamb, Mediterranean dishes and hard cheeses.

Xinomavro

	COLOUR	Red
	HOME REGION	Naoussa, northern Greece
	CHARACTER	High acidity, significant tannin, ageing potential
	TYPICAL FLAVOURS	Cherry, red berries, tomato, olive; leather and dried fruit with age
	PAIRS WITH	Lamb, game, slow-cooked meats, rich Mediterranean dishes

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ✓ Agiorgitiko is associated with Nemea.
- ✓ Typical flavours include plum and cherry.
- ✓ It is softer and more approachable than Xinomavro.
- ✓ It is highly versatile.

CHAPTER 30

Savatiano

Attica's quiet revival



Savatiano was long misunderstood, historically associated with large-scale production. It is now experiencing a renaissance as quality-focused producers demonstrate its potential.

Savatiano is most closely associated with Attica, the region surrounding Athens. It is one of Greece's most widely planted white grapes and is well suited to warm, dry conditions.

Typical flavours include pear, citrus and apple, with possible herbal and floral notes. Modern examples can show freshness, elegance and complexity.

It pairs naturally with seafood, meze, salads and traditional Greek cuisine.

Savatiano

	COLOUR	White
	HOME REGION	Attica
	CHARACTER	Fresh, food-friendly, increasingly elegant
	TYPICAL FLAVOURS	Pear, citrus, apple; herbal and floral notes
	PAIRS WITH	Seafood, meze, salads, traditional Greek cuisine

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ✓ Savatiano is strongly associated with Attica.
- ✓ It is one of Greece's most widely planted grapes.
- ✓ Modern producers have improved its reputation.
- ✓ It pairs naturally with Greek cuisine.

CHAPTER 31

Malagousia

Rescued from near extinction



Malagousia is one of the success stories of modern Greek wine. Once close to disappearing, it has been revived and is now regarded as one of Greece's most exciting white varieties.

Typical flavours include peach, apricot and citrus, with possible jasmine, orange blossom and herbal notes. It is known for expressive aromatics and often makes a strong impression during tastings.

Malagousia pairs well with seafood, poultry, Mediterranean dishes and mildly spiced foods. Its revival reflects the broader resurgence of Greek wine and renewed appreciation for indigenous grapes.

Malagousia



	COLOUR	White
	HOME REGION	Grown across mainland Greece
	CHARACTER	Highly aromatic, expressive, memorable on the nose
	TYPICAL FLAVOURS	Peach, apricot, citrus; jasmine, orange blossom, herbs
	PAIRS WITH	Seafood, poultry, Mediterranean dishes, mildly spiced food

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ✓ Malagousia was once close to extinction.
- ✓ It is now one of Greece's most exciting white grapes.
- ✓ It is aromatic, often showing peach and floral notes.
- ✓ It reflects the modern Greek wine revival.

CHAPTER 32

Limniona

One of Greece's rising stars



Limniona is one of Greece's rising stars. Although still relatively unknown outside specialist wine circles, it is attracting increasing attention.

It is primarily associated with central Greece, particularly the area around Tyrnavos. Typical flavours include red berries, cherry, raspberry, spice and floral notes.

Limniona is often valued for freshness, balance and elegance rather than power. It pairs well with roast poultry, pork and Mediterranean dishes.

The variety highlights the remarkable diversity of Greece's indigenous grapes and the country's continuing evolution as a wine producer.

Limniona



	COLOUR	Red
	HOME REGION	Tyrnavos, central Greece
	CHARACTER	Fresh, elegant, valued over raw power
	TYPICAL FLAVOURS	Red berries, cherry, raspberry, spice, floral notes
	PAIRS WITH	Roast poultry, pork, Mediterranean dishes

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ✓ Limniona is an emerging Greek red variety.
- ✓ It is associated with Tyrnavos.
- ✓ Typical flavours include red berries and cherry.
- ✓ It is known for elegance and freshness.

CHAPTER 33

Vidiano

Crete's flagship white



Vidiano has become one of the flagship white varieties of Crete. Its combination of richness, texture and freshness has earned growing recognition.

Vidiano is indigenous to Crete. Typical flavours include peach, apricot and pear, with possible citrus, floral and herbal notes.

The wines often combine generous fruit, moderate acidity and textural richness. This balance makes Vidiano appealing to a broad range of wine drinkers.

Vidiano pairs beautifully with seafood, poultry, Cretan cuisine and Mediterranean dishes. It reflects the growing confidence of modern Cretan producers.



Vidiano



	COLOUR	White
	HOME REGION	Crete
	CHARACTER	Rich, textured, generous fruit with freshness
	TYPICAL FLAVOURS	Peach, apricot, pear; citrus, floral, herbal notes
	PAIRS WITH	Seafood, poultry, Cretan cuisine, Mediterranean dishes

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ✓ Vidiano is one of Crete's most important white grapes.
- ✓ Typical flavours include peach and apricot.
- ✓ It combines richness with freshness.
- ✓ It represents the future of modern Cretan wine.

PART FIVE

Regions of Greece



Greece's wine regions are as varied as its landscape — from the volcanic slopes of Santorini to the cool mountain vineyards of Macedonia. This part explores five regions in depth: the grapes that define them, the conditions that shape their wines, and what makes each one worth visiting.

NORTHERN GREECE	ATTICA	PELOPONNESE	SANTORINI	CRETE
<i>Naoussa, Amyndeon</i>	<i>Central Greece</i>	<i>Nemea</i>	<i>Cycladic Islands</i>	<i>Southern Greece</i>
SIGNATURE GRAPE	SIGNATURE GRAPE	SIGNATURE GRAPE	SIGNATURE GRAPE	SIGNATURE GRAPE
Xinomavro	Savatiano	Agiorgitiko	Assyrtiko	Vidiano

CHAPTER 34

Attica

Where Greek wine and Greek history meet



For many visitors, Attica is their introduction to Greece. Home to Athens and the surrounding region, Attica has played an important role in Greek wine production for thousands of years.

Attica surrounds Athens and extends across rolling hills, coastal influences and warm Mediterranean conditions. Long sunny summers, mild winters and limited rainfall create a challenging but historic environment for viticulture.

The region is most closely associated with Savatiano, a resilient grape that thrives in warm, dry conditions. Attica is also strongly connected with Retsina, Greece's famous pine-resin wine style.

For many years Attica was associated more with quantity than quality. Today, leading producers are creating fresher, more precise wines and reshaping perceptions of both Savatiano and the region itself.

Few wine regions combine such proximity to major archaeological sites with a living wine culture. Attica provides an ideal starting point for understanding modern Greek wine.

ATTICA

SIGNATURE GRAPE

Savatiano

LOCATION

*Surrounds Athens,
central Greece*

CLIMATE

*Long sunny summers,
mild winters, limited rainfall*

KNOWN FOR

*Retsina; historic wine culture;
proximity to major
archaeological sites*

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ✓ Attica surrounds Athens.
- ✓ The region is closely associated with Savatiano and Retsina.
- ✓ Modern producers have improved quality.
- ✓ Attica combines wine, history and culture.

CHAPTER 35

Nemea

The home of Agiorgitiko



Located in the north-eastern Peloponnese, Nemea is one of Greece's most important wine regions and the home of Agiorgitiko.

The region consists of valleys and hills with vineyards planted at varying elevations. Vineyards can range from around 250 to over 900 metres above sea level, creating different growing conditions and allowing producers to craft a wide range of styles.

Agiorgitiko is the defining grape of Nemea. It can produce youthful, fruit-driven reds, fresh rose wines and structured barrel-aged examples capable of ageing.

PDO Nemea is one of Greece's most recognised wine designations. The region's history, mythology and proximity to major archaeological sites add cultural depth to the wine experience.

Nemea matters because it demonstrates the versatility and appeal of Greek red wine. For many visitors, it provides the clearest introduction to Agiorgitiko.

NEMEA

SIGNATURE GRAPE

Agiorgitiko

LOCATION

Nemea, Peloponnese

CLIMATE

*Hot, dry summers,
mild winters, low rainfall*

KNOWN FOR

*Deeply coloured reds;
rich fruit; ancient
winemaking heritage*

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ✓ Nemea is the home of Agiorgitiko.
- ✓ Altitude variation creates diverse styles.
- ✓ PDO Nemea is a key Greek wine designation.
- ✓ The region combines wine, history and mythology.

CHAPTER 36

Macedonia

Structure, elegance and age-worthy reds



Northern Greece's Macedonia region is home to some of the country's most respected producers and wine regions. Its cooler climate and varied topography create conditions for wines of structure, elegance and longevity.

Macedonia includes Naoussa, Amyndeon, Goumenissa and Epanomi among other important wine-producing areas. The region is best known for Xinomavro, which produces many of Greece's most celebrated red wines.

Compared with southern Greece, Macedonia experiences cooler growing conditions. These preserve acidity and contribute to distinctive styles. The region also produces white wines, sparkling wines and blends from both indigenous and international varieties.

For wine enthusiasts, Macedonia offers some of the most serious and age-worthy wines in Greece. It is also home to several of the country's most influential producers.

MACEDONIA

SIGNATURE GRAPE

Xinomavro

LOCATION

Naoussa, Northern Greece

CLIMATE

*Cool continental climate,
mountain influence,
moderate rainfall*

KNOWN FOR

*Structured age-worthy reds;
old vine vineyards;
bright acidity*

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ✓ Macedonia is one of Greece's premier wine regions.
- ✓ Xinomavro is its most important red grape.
- ✓ Cooler conditions contribute freshness and structure.
- ✓ Many leading Greek wineries are located here.

CHAPTER 37

Santorini

Where volcanic soil meets vine



Few wine regions in the world are as distinctive as Santorini. The island's volcanic landscape, ancient vineyards and unique viticultural practices create one of the most fascinating wine destinations on earth.

Santorini was shaped by a massive volcanic eruption thousands of years ago. Its soils are volcanic, mineral-rich and low in organic matter. Rainfall is limited, summer conditions can be harsh and strong winds sweep across the island.

These conditions have shaped both the vines and the wines. Growers traditionally train vines into basket-shaped kouloura formations to protect grapes from wind and intense sunlight. Irrigation is limited, and the vines must work hard to survive.

Santorini is the home of Assyrtiko, which achieves some of its most celebrated expressions here. The island also produces Vinsanto, a traditional sweet wine made from sun-dried grapes and historically prized beyond Greece.

Unlike most European regions, Santorini escaped phylloxera, leaving many vines on original rootstocks. Some vineyards are very old, adding to the island's viticultural importance.

Santorini matters because few regions demonstrate the relationship between environment and wine so clearly.

SANTORINI

SIGNATURE GRAPE

Assyrtiko

LOCATION

Santorini, Cycladic Islands

CLIMATE

Arid, windy, very low rainfall

KNOWN FOR

*Volcanic soils; mineral whites;
kouloura basket-trained vines*

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ✓ Santorini is one of the world's most distinctive wine regions.
- ✓ It is the home of Assyrtiko.
- ✓ Volcanic soils, wind and low rainfall shape the wines.
- ✓ Kouloura vine training is a defining feature.
- ✓ The island is also known for Vinsanto.

CHAPTER 38

Crete

4,000 years of winemaking history



Crete combines ancient history, dramatic landscapes and a rapidly evolving wine industry. As Greece's largest island, it possesses a remarkable diversity of climates and terroirs.

Winemaking in Crete stretches back more than 4,000 years to the Minoan civilisation, one of Europe's earliest advanced societies. Wine was part of daily life, trade and ritual long before many famous European wine regions emerged.

The island is home to important indigenous varieties including Vidiano, Liatiko and Kotsifali. In recent decades, renewed focus on these varieties has transformed perceptions of Cretan wine.

Modern producers are investing in better vineyard practices, improved winemaking and clearer regional identity. Vidiano in particular has become a symbol of Crete's modern wine revival.

Crete's cuisine, history and landscapes add to its appeal. Wine forms part of a broader cultural experience rooted in hospitality, agriculture and local tradition.

CRETE

SIGNATURE GRAPES

Vidiano, Liatiko, Kotsifali

LOCATION

Greece's largest island

HISTORY

*Winemaking traced back over
4,000 years to Minoan civilisation*

KNOWN FOR

*Modern revival led by Vidiano;
wine as part of a wider cultural experience*

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ✓ Crete is Greece's largest island.
- ✓ Wine has been produced there for more than 4,000 years.
- ✓ Indigenous varieties are central to its identity.
- ✓ Vidiano is a key part of Crete's modern wine revival.
- ✓ Crete combines wine, history and gastronomy.

PART SIX

Featured Wineries



The producers featured in this part represent some of the people bringing Greek wine's revival to life — from Santorini's volcanic slopes to the mountains of Macedonia and the hills of Crete. Each profile is written to stand on its own, whether or not you visit in person, as a lasting introduction to who they are and why they matter.

PAPAGIANNAKOS
Attica
GAIA
Nemea / Santorini
GEROVASSILIOU
Epanomi
BIBLIA CHORA
E. Macedonia
MIKRO KTIMA TITOS
Goumenissa
ZAFEIRAKIS
Tyrnavos
THYMIPOULOS
Naoussa
ESTATE ARGYROS
Santorini
MIKRA THIRA
Santorini
DOULOFAKIS
Crete

CHAPTER 39

Papagiannakos

Attica

Papagiannakos is one of the leading producers helping redefine Attica and its traditional grape varieties. The winery combines modern winemaking with respect for local tradition.

REGION	Attica
SIGNATURE VARIETIES	Savatiano, Retsina, Assyrtiko

Why It Matters

It has played an important role in demonstrating the quality potential of Savatiano and premium Retsina.

Why We Visit

Papagiannakos provides an excellent introduction to modern Greek wine and shows how traditional styles can be reinterpreted through quality-focused winemaking.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ✓ Each producer offers a distinct regional perspective.
- ✓ Indigenous grape varieties are central to modern Greek wine.
- ✓ Winery visits provide insights that cannot be gained from books alone.

CHAPTER 40

Gaia

Nemea and Santorini



Gaia is one of Greece's most influential producers, with important work in both Nemea and Santorini.

REGION	Nemea and Santorini
SIGNATURE VARIETIES	Agiorgitiko, Assyrtiko

Why It Matters

Gaia has helped elevate the reputation of Agiorgitiko and Assyrtiko through a commitment to quality and innovation.

Why We Visit

Gaia provides an opportunity to experience two of Greece's most significant wine regions through one of its leading producers.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ✓ Each producer offers a distinct regional perspective.
- ✓ Indigenous grape varieties are central to modern Greek wine.
- ✓ Winery visits provide insights that cannot be gained from books alone.

CHAPTER 41

Gerovassiliou

Epanomi, near Thessaloniki

Gerovassiliou is one of Greece's most respected wineries and a central figure in the modern Greek wine revival.

REGION	Epanomi, near Thessaloniki
SIGNATURE VARIETIES	Malagousia, Assyrtiko, red blends

Why It Matters

The estate helped rescue Malagousia from near extinction and remains one of the variety's most important producers.

Why We Visit

Gerovassiliou demonstrates how vision, technical skill and respect for local varieties can transform a country's wine industry.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ✓ Each producer offers a distinct regional perspective.
- ✓ Indigenous grape varieties are central to modern Greek wine.
- ✓ Winery visits provide insights that cannot be gained from books alone.

CHAPTER 42

Biblia Chora

Eastern Macedonia

Biblia Chora is one of northern Greece's respected wineries, located beneath the slopes of Mount Pangaion.

REGION	Eastern Macedonia
SIGNATURE VARIETIES	Assyrtiko, Sauvignon Blanc, red blends

Why It Matters

The winery combines indigenous and international varieties while maintaining regional identity.

Why We Visit

Biblia Chora offers insight into the modern evolution of Greek wine and the growing reputation of Macedonia.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ✓ Each producer offers a distinct regional perspective.
- ✓ Indigenous grape varieties are central to modern Greek wine.
- ✓ Winery visits provide insights that cannot be gained from books alone.

CHAPTER 43

Mikro Ktima Titos

Goumenissa

Mikro Ktima Titos is a boutique producer that reflects the energy and diversity of modern Greek wine.

REGION	Goumenissa
SIGNATURE VARIETIES	Local and regional varieties

Why It Matters

Smaller producers often provide intimate experiences and show another side of the wine industry.

Why We Visit

Mikro Ktima Titos offers a more personal perspective on Greek winemaking and the wine-producing heritage of northern Greece.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ✓ Each producer offers a distinct regional perspective.
- ✓ Indigenous grape varieties are central to modern Greek wine.
- ✓ Winery visits provide insights that cannot be gained from books alone.

CHAPTER 44

Zafeirakis

Tyrnavos

Zafeirakis is closely associated with Tyrnavos and has become a leading advocate for Limniona.

REGION	Tyrnavos
SIGNATURE VARIETIES	Limniona, Assyrtiko

Why It Matters

The estate has played a significant role in bringing attention to this elegant, emerging Greek red variety.

Why We Visit

Zafeirakis offers a chance to discover one of Greece's most exciting indigenous grape varieties.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ✓ Each producer offers a distinct regional perspective.
- ✓ Indigenous grape varieties are central to modern Greek wine.
- ✓ Winery visits provide insights that cannot be gained from books alone.

CHAPTER 45

Thymiopoulos

Naoussa



Thymiopoulos is widely regarded as one of Greece's leading producers of Xinomavro.

REGION	Naoussa
SIGNATURE VARIETIES	Xinomavro

Why It Matters

The winery has helped redefine international perceptions of Xinomavro, producing wines that combine elegance, authenticity and a strong sense of place.

Why We Visit

Thymiopoulos provides one of the finest introductions to Greece's flagship red grape variety.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ✓ Each producer offers a distinct regional perspective.
- ✓ Indigenous grape varieties are central to modern Greek wine.
- ✓ Winery visits provide insights that cannot be gained from books alone.

CHAPTER 46

Estate Argyros

Santorini



Estate Argyros is one of Santorini's most important and historic wineries.

REGION	Santorini
SIGNATURE VARIETIES	Assyrtiko, Vinsanto

Why It Matters

The estate is internationally recognised for exceptional Assyrtiko and its role in preserving Santorini's viticultural heritage.

Why We Visit

Estate Argyros offers one of the clearest expressions of Santorini's volcanic terroir and winemaking traditions.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ✓ Each producer offers a distinct regional perspective.
- ✓ Indigenous grape varieties are central to modern Greek wine.
- ✓ Winery visits provide insights that cannot be gained from books alone.

CHAPTER 47

Mikra Thira

Thirassia / Santorini

Mikra Thira represents a newer generation of Santorini producers focused on the island's distinctive identity.

REGION	Thirassia / Santorini
SIGNATURE VARIETIES	Assyrtiko

Why It Matters

The winery highlights traditional varieties through a contemporary lens and offers a different perspective on the Santorini wine story.

Why We Visit

Mikra Thira shows the continuing evolution of the Cyclades as a serious wine destination.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ✓ Each producer offers a distinct regional perspective.
- ✓ Indigenous grape varieties are central to modern Greek wine.
- ✓ Winery visits provide insights that cannot be gained from books alone.

CHAPTER 48

Douloufakis

Crete

Douloufakis is one of Crete's leading wineries and an important ambassador for Cretan wine.

REGION	Crete
SIGNATURE VARIETIES	Vidiano, Liatiko

Why It Matters

The winery has helped promote indigenous Cretan varieties and demonstrate their quality potential.

Why We Visit

Douloufakis provides a fitting conclusion to the guide, showing the diversity, history and future potential of Crete's indigenous grapes.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ✓ Each producer offers a distinct regional perspective.
- ✓ Indigenous grape varieties are central to modern Greek wine.
- ✓ Winery visits provide insights that cannot be gained from books alone.

Glossary

Acidity	The freshness or mouth-watering sensation in wine.
Alcohol	Produced during fermentation when yeast converts sugar into alcohol.
Body	The weight or texture of a wine in the mouth.
Bouquet	Complex aromas that develop as a wine ages.
Dry	A wine containing little or no residual sugar.
Fermentation	The process by which yeast converts sugar into alcohol.
Finish	The length of time flavours remain after swallowing.
Oak	Wooden barrels used to mature some wines.
PDO	Protected Designation of Origin, a defined wine origin with specific production rules.
PGI	Protected Geographical Indication, a defined wine origin with greater production flexibility.
Residual Sugar	Natural grape sugar remaining after fermentation.
Tannin	Compounds found primarily in grape skins that create a drying sensation.
Terroir	The combined influence of climate, soil, geography and tradition on a wine.
Variety	A specific type of grape, such as Assyrtiko or Chardonnay.
Vintage	The year in which the grapes were harvested.
Viticulture	The cultivation and management of grapevines.

Further Reading and Resources

For readers wishing to continue their wine journey, the following resources are useful starting points.

Books: The World Atlas of Wine, The Oxford Companion to Wine, and Wine Folly: Magnum Edition.

Education: Wine appreciation courses, structured tastings, and formal wine education can all help build confidence.

Greek Wine Resources: Winery websites, regional producer associations and specialist Greek wine importers are useful sources for current releases and producer information.

The best education remains tasting widely, asking questions and remaining curious.