

# Greek Wine Industry

The progress of the Greek wine industry is widely and greatly commended. **The new generation of wine growers that have so considerably contributed to the rebirth of the Greek wine industry has attracted almost exclusively positive comments.** On the other hand, the various drawbacks that still exist as well as the challenging global and national environment are also considered. In addition, **dominant wine producing regions** such as Macedonia, Cephalonia and Santorini **hold their own distinct place in the global public rhetoric.**

## An evolving industry <sup>141</sup>

Most of the references to Greek wine in the public domain almost never fail to mention how much ground has been covered by the industry in recent years. The developments are hailed with much optimism, however, cautious.

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*Greek wineries have gone beyond those old favourites, importing international grape varieties and modern techniques from the best wine schools of France, California and Australia.*

## A pleasant surprise <sup>142</sup>

This evolution, consisting mainly of refinement and sophistication of the new Greek wines is regarded as a pleasant surprise principally due to two reasons. Firstly, because of the **previous reputation of the Greek wine production**, which failed to live up to the expectation, especially considering the fame of the ancient Greek wine. Secondly, because there is a widespread notion that the **wine industry is in need of new tastes**, and the introduction of some variety. As a result, the distinctive Greek Grape varieties are a welcomed option.

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*You may be surprised to learn that contemporary Greek wine is well worth trying. Today's best Hellenic vintners are employing state-of-the-art techniques to fashion wines from both international and indigenous grape varieties. As a result, Greece, which many Americans associate only with pine-flavoured retsina, is one of the world's most exciting emerging wine countries.*

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<sup>141</sup> **St. Petersburg Times:** *A champion of Greek wine* – 05.12.07

<sup>142</sup> **The Washington Times:** *Cradle of vintners rocks with quality ; Greeks were first to mark grape as part of civilization* – 03.04.02

These new wines earned a new and considerably better reputation compared to past products. The new equipment and updated know how were appreciated by experts and wine fans.

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*These wines had little in common with the oxidized whites and tart, tannic reds that had dominated the Greek wine market for so long. These winemakers used up-to-date equipment and techniques - temperature-controlled fermentation, stainless steel tanks and French oak barrels - to produce wines that tasted rich and ripe. Soon the large negociants also began to hire younger, foreign- trained winemakers and to upgrade their equipment. By the early 1990s, the country's wine revival was well under way.*

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The Greek wine industry is considered to **produce high-class red and white wines**, as well as a small amount of rose. In addition, the country has long been known for the quality of some of its dessert wines, particularly those made from muscat on the island of Samos.

### **More ground to be covered** <sup>143</sup>

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*There certainly still are many dull if not actually flawed wines made in Greece, some of which unfortunately are exported to the United States. Today's best Greek wines, however, can hold their own with fine wines made anywhere.*

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Despite the extraordinary progress, it is a popular opinion that this progress has not characterised the entire Greek wine production. The new image of Greek wine does not apply to all products in a uniform way.

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*Greece is a country that has benefited enormously from the shrinking planet. It has now mastered modern techniques of wine-making and for the first time since the age of Pericles it can hold head and glasses high. Of course the popular image of Greek wine has not changed that much. There are still rustic wines being made. On the Homeric island of Ithaca I came across grapes that turned to vinegar before they were picked.*

### **Rebranding efforts** <sup>144</sup>

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*Greek wine producers are desperate to shake off their rough and rustic image and reinvent themselves as quality wine producers.*

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<sup>143</sup> **Financial Times:** FT REPORT – GREECE - The old new world exploits its vineyards WINE: The message will soon be out of the bottle, writes Giles MacDonogh – 20.06.06

<sup>144</sup> **The Grocer:** The new face of Greece – 20.05.00

The efforts made by Greek wine producers have not gone unnoticed by the interested audience on international level. Efforts are being made to promote the new sophisticated Greek vintages in the various fairs and other events, to present a new image for Greek wines. However, winemakers admit it will be an uphill struggle to reverse consumer perceptions, particularly in the UK.

*"We are not starting from zero like the Chileans, Argentinians and Australians did. We are starting from below zero because in the past we have exported very bad wines and that has contributed to negative opinion."* says Yiannis Paraskevopoulos, oenologist with Gaia Wines.

Greek wineries have made major investments over the last few years in state-of-the-art equipment and have drafted in oenologists to ensure they produce much better quality wine and not any more of "the cheapest, baddest stuff".

Moreover, many estates have preserved their indigenous grape varieties, which, when made into quality wines, are expected to help give Greek producers an advantage.

## **A new generation of oenologists** <sup>145 146 147</sup>

A new generation of young Greek wine-makers with oenology degrees from Bordeaux, Dijon, Montpellier and California are appreciated to have been behind the drive that has seen more than 100 'boutique' vineyards created across Greece. With the aid of home-grown and European Union funds, Greek producers have set up estates which have adopted the latest technology in an effort to produce quality wines.

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*Fortunately for wine lovers, Greece is in the midst of an enological renaissance that resembles what's been happening in Southern Italy and Spain during the past few years, but is far more profound. Italy, at least, had Barolo, Barbaresco and Chianti. Spain had Rioja and Jerez. In Greece, the whole country needed to be turned upside down, from Macedonia, where Alexander started his empire, to the Cyclades islands that Odysseus was once condemned to traverse.*

*For the past two decades a phalanx of intelligent, educated and ambitious winemakers have strained to improve their country's wines. Foreign education—French, Italian, Australian and American—taught them how to*

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<sup>145</sup> **The Guardian:** *Greek wine reborn in ash of Atlantis* Greeks are toast of the wine world – 09.08.99

<sup>146</sup> **The Age:** *It's all Greek to me* – 25.09.07

<sup>147</sup> **Winemag.com:** *A new Generation of winemakers is re-energizing one of Greece's ancient industries* – 01.09.04

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*make good wine. Respect for the traditions within the land of their birth, and for more than 300 indigenous grape varieties, has shown them the way to make good Greek wine.*

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*"What we are seeing is the result of 10 years of new techniques and a lot of fine-tuning," says Yannis Paraskevopoulos, a Bordeaux-trained oenologist credited with much of the Greek wine industry's success. "There's still a long way to go."*

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*"The sons of Greek winemakers went overseas to Bordeaux, learnt their winemaking and then went back home and said, 'Screw chardonnay and sauvignon blanc. Let's go with grape varieties that reflect our history and our homeland."*

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### **International techniques** <sup>148</sup>

Greek wineries have gone beyond those old favourites, importing international grape varieties and modern techniques from the best wine schools of France, California and Australia.

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*So they do make sauvignon blanc and syrah, but the best new winemakers blend them with local grapes into new tastes. Red grapes like agiorgitiko, limnios, mavrodaphne and xynomavro can be compared to merlot and pinot noir, but their flavours are their own, having ripened in the endless Mediterranean sun within a whiff of the seas.*

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### **Challenging environment** <sup>149 150</sup>

As a wine producer, Greece faces several natural handicaps, which are recognised and discussed in the global public rhetoric. Its vineyards are small - producing an average of 17,000 litres a year, compared with 800,000 litres for Australia - and are often spread over more than one site, making them hard to cultivate. The mountainous terrain means that whether they are destined for table wine or more sophisticated bottlings, grapes must be picked by hand rather than by machine.

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<sup>148</sup> **St. Petersburg Times:** *A champion of Greek wine* – 05.12.07

<sup>149</sup> **The Wall Street Journal:** *Greece Offers New Wave of Wines - Vintners Aspire to Global Markets, But Production Costs Are High And Marketing Remains Poor* – 04.08.04

<sup>150</sup> **The Journal, Newcastle:** *Greeks make the earth move* – 11.04.08

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*But the stress of growing on arid hillsides has a Darwinian effect: only the strongest, juiciest grapes survive. But for Greece's wine industry, improving the product is only part of the solution.*

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*"Greece is now producing good-quality wine which can appeal to international tastes, but needs to do more to promote them to buyers and to increase the awareness among international consumers," says Mary Pateras, co-founder of Eclectic Wines based in the U.K., which sells top quality Greek wine into a discerning British market. The country closed its London bureau in 1997 and ended subsidies to producers for foreign promotion the next year.*

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*It seems that Greek winemakers thrive on battling with such challenges. The quality of dry white wines is sometimes remarkably good from wonderfully characterful local grapes such as Assyrtiko (especially from the extraordinary volcanic soils of the island of Santorini - try my wine of the week), Malagousia, Athiri, Robola and the pink-tinged Moschofilero and Roditis (both usually vinified as white wines).*

*Stunning sweet wines are made from Muscat as well as the black Mavrodaphne and a host of other black varieties are very promising.*

*The best known is Agiorgitiko, (alias St George), which makes some excellent wine from vines grown on the steep slopes of the mountains of Nemea just south of Corinth. The northern grape Xinomavro is also very good.*

*Other high quality old varieties are being rediscovered almost every year, mostly thanks to the work of individual grape growers who are convinced that Greece's rich heritage of grapes has many more surprises to offer.*

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## **Production regions** <sup>151 152 153</sup>

### **Appellations** <sup>154</sup>

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*There are about 20 areas in Greece that produce controlled appellation of origin wines and there are also numerous "country wines" (or vin de pays as they are more widely known) all over Greece. Some of these denote a whole region (for example Peloponissiakos), others a department (a smaller administrative division, such as Attica) and others still a specific micro-region as in "country wine from the northern slopes of Corinth". It certainly helps to know your geography!*

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<sup>151</sup> **St. Petersburg Times:** *A champion of Greek wine* – 05.12.07

<sup>152</sup> **The Sunday Times:** *Wine regions - Pick of the bunch* – 08.04.01

<sup>153</sup> **The Washington Post:** *New Greek Classics* – 07.09.94

<sup>154</sup> **Athens News:** *How to judge a bottle by its label* – 16.03.01

The various Greek appellations are slowly but gradually gaining ground in the popular perceptions internationally. As the varieties are unique to Greece and they do not share the usual international varieties, they have not become household names yet. However, the fame of the geographical places where these wines are produced as travel destinations, is an important factor that facilitates their gradual establishment in the public debate.

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*If those grape names don't roll off tongues or labels as easily as, say, chardonnay, look for place names like Nemea and Patras in the Peloponnesian peninsula, Naousa in Macedonia and Santorini and Crete.*

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## **A most welcome individuality**

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*Any wine drinker complaining of sameness in world wines should embark on an odyssey into Greek wines.*

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Wine making in Greece is regarded to take place mainly in four regions: the Peloponnese, Macedonia, Attica and the islands, such as Santorini. In addition, the reputation of the growers in these areas is improving constantly, so much so that in certain cases some are seen as rivals to the better-known European vineyards.

*"I have been a huge fan of Greek wine producers for years, and now more than ever they are leading the way and making world-class wines that are making other wine regions pretty nervous", says wine expert Steve Daniel.*

Greek wine regions, which generally are subject to either "appellation of origin" or "country wine" regulations, are for the most part planted with native grape varieties. The true and special flavours of these varieties are gaining advantage by the new breed of professionals who know when to harvest and how to process their grapes.

## **Region: Central and Northern Greece**

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*In northern and central parts of Greece grow the big, tannic, muscular red grape Xinomavro. Often compared to Pinot Noir for its fussy growing requirements, a Nebbiolo for its intensity and power, or a Tempranillo for its spice, this Greek still remains unique and should be tasted with souvlakis ( skewers of grilled meat) and zesty tzaziki sauce.<sup>155</sup>*

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<sup>155</sup> **Into wine:** *Greek Wine Travel: An Overview*

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**Region: Macedonia** <sup>156 157</sup>**Naoussa**

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*Although terra incognita for foreigners, Naoussa is the heart of a top Greek wine region, surrounded by mountains and archaeological sites linked to Alexander.*

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*Located two hours' drive from Thessaloniki, Naoussa is Greece's answer to Piedmont. Its only permitted grape, Xinomavro, shows a resemblance to Nebbiolo, especially with age. Despite its proximity to the sea, mountainous Naoussa is more Balkan in climate than Aegean, which lengthens ripening time and preserves acidity. Producers to look for: Boutari, Tsantalis, Kir Yianni, Karydas, Melitzanis.*

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**Region: Thessalia** <sup>158</sup>**Rapsani**

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*Yes, there is the effort to plant the same-old-same-old chardonnay, cabernet sauvignon and merlot trilogy and age them in new French oak barrels, giving us wines that are barely distinguishable regardless of geography. But fortunately, change for some Greek wineries doesn't mean throwing out the indigenous grapes that have provided unique aromatic and flavoured wines like Tsantalis Rapsani Reserve 2000.*

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**Region: Ionian islands** <sup>159 160 161 162 163</sup>**Cephalonia**

Cephalonia is a renowned Greek wine producing region.

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*The wines of Cephalonia - a verdant island in the sparkling Ionian sea - were once prized across the Mediterranean, before centuries of colonisation, war and poverty brought Greek winemaking to its knees.*

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<sup>156</sup> **The Sunday Times:** *Summer in Greece;Travel;Greece;Cover Story* – 05.02.06

<sup>157</sup> **Winemag.com:** *A new Generation of winemakers is re-energizing one of Greece's ancient industries* – 01.09.04

<sup>158</sup> **The Star – Ledger:** *Ancient Greece goes modern - A GLASS OF WINE* – 25.01.06

<sup>159</sup> **Bangkok Post:** *Greece's mythical wines returning* – 21.09.08

<sup>160</sup> **Reuters:** *RPT-FEATURE-Greek wines seek to regain their mythical status* – 18.09.08

<sup>161</sup> **The Scotsman:** *Captain Corelli's karaoke* – 24.08.02

<sup>162</sup> **Express and Echo:** *Greek island odyssey FORGET Captain Corelli LE the beautiful island of Kefalonia has a fascinating...* – 22.06.02

<sup>163</sup> **The Spectator:** *Island bliss* – 19.07.08

The Gentilini vineyard, known to be run by a distant relative of a 16th-century Venetian commander, is part of a new generation of winemakers using unique local grape varieties to put the country's vintages back on the map.

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*In the sun-bathed vineyards outside Argostoli, where the fictional Captain Corelli wooed his love Pelagia, the descendants of a real-life Italian soldier are conducting their own love affair with Greek wine. ...*

*It's a good idea to kick off your holiday in true Dionysian style with a visit to the Robola wine producers' co-operative in the Omala Valley for a taste test and introduction to the local grape.*

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## **Region: Aegean Islands** <sup>164 165 166</sup>

### **Samos**

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*Moving east, to the island of Samos, we find what is possibly Greece's most famous wine after Retsina, Muscat of Samos. This wine appears in three styles, the finest being Samos Nectar, made from sun-dried grapes and reaching an alcohol content of 14%.*

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*Samos: The island of Samos has one grape, Muscat, and one winery, the Cooperative of Samos. Though dry wines are made, attention is clearly paid to the sweet wines, which range from fortified, unaged wines to unfortified, dried-grape wines aged in oak. Several wineries purchase and sell the co-op's wines under their own labels.*

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### **Santorini**

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*Santorini is clearly dominating the race to the top of the Greek wine charts. Its wines are based on the native grape Assyrtiko and at their best present distinctive flavor profiles. Creamy and minerally, with apple, pear and hints of citrus, they are backed by firm structures and an unusual depth of richness that draws on high levels of dry extract—the measure of the nonvolatile components in wine, such as sugar, proteins and glycerol.*

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<sup>164</sup> **Tablewine.com:** *It's Greek to me*

<sup>165</sup> **Winemag.com:** *A new Generation of winemakers is re-energizing one of Greece's ancient industries – 01.09.04*

<sup>166</sup> **Wine Spectator:** *Santorini Success – 15.11.07*



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*Known for black, volcanic soil beaches, and whitewashed houses, the Aegean island of Santorini is also ideal for very dry wines made primarily from Assyrtiko grapes. With age they take on the petrol-like qualities of Riesling. In one version of the story, vin santo is supposed to have its origins on the island. Some reds from local varieties are also made. Producers to look for: Sigalas, Boutari, Gaia, Hatzidakis.*

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### **Region: Peloponnese** <sup>167 168 169 170 171 172</sup>

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*Superb white wines are found in the Peloponnese. And thus my first award goes to the Domaine Gaia, in particular the 2003 Rinitis wine, made from the Roditis grape varietal on the hills in Nemea, not far from Corinth. This is a retsina, but it is unlike any other I have tasted throughout my sommelier career. Here, the resin from the Aleppo pine is subtly blended with beautifully made wine from healthy grapes (and not from damaged grapes, as is all too often the case), without any notes oxidation. A perfect example of what retsina can be, a true Epicurean wine.*

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### **Mantinia**

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*Mantinia is a prime example of where the future of Greek wines may lie. While popular images of Greece draw largely on languorous beaches baking under a hot summer sun, the heart of Mantinia rests in a broad valley at about 2,000 feet in altitude surrounded by rugged mountains. The climate is thus much cooler than the coast's, and winter snows are common. The soils are well-drained mixtures of sand, clay and gravel.*

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*In the centre of the Peloponnese, Mantinia is white wine country, focused exclusively on the charmingly floral grape Moschofilero. Grown at the relatively high altitude of 2,100 feet above sea level, Mantinia wines offer fine aromatics and fresh acidity. Producers to look for: Tselepos, Spiropolous, Boutari.*

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<sup>167</sup> **Olivier Poussier:** *Greek wine: Dionysos would be proud...* – January 2005

<sup>168</sup> **Wine Spectator:** *Greece at the Crossroads* – 31.12.06

<sup>169</sup> **Winemag.com:** *A new Generation of winemakers is re-energizing one of Greece's ancient industries* – 01.09.04

<sup>170</sup> **Bangkok Post:** *Greece's mythical wines returning* – 21.09.08

<sup>171</sup> **The Wall Street Journal:** *A wine-taster's tour of Nemea* – 03.11.06

<sup>172</sup> **Winemag.com:** *A new Generation of winemakers is re-energizing one of Greece's ancient industries* – 01.09.04

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## Nemea

*In the Nemea valley at the heart of the Peloponnese, where Hercules performed the first of his 12 labours, lies Greece's largest wine appellation, home to the Agiorgitiko grape.*

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*If Naoussa is reminiscent of Barbaresco, Nemea falls somewhere in style between Médoc and Chianti. Made exclusively from the Agiorgitiko (St. George) grape, on the east-leaning edge of the Peloponnese, Nemea wines have soft, perfumed red-berry flavours and firm acidity. Producers to look for: Gaia, Palivou, Papatonis, Papa Ionnaou, Tsemeli.*

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## Famous varieties <sup>173 174 175 176 177</sup>

It is popular knowledge that there are over 300 native grape varieties in Greece. Among those some are regarded higher than other. The following varieties with their associated wines are those considered to be some of the most important ones in the global public rhetoric.

## White wine

### Assyrtikos

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*This is a major grape in the Aegean and particularly noteworthy from the island of Santorini. It makes a dry aromatic wine that is citric crisp with mineral tones from the island's volcanic soil. Assyrtikos is also blended with Mandelari grapes to produce a sweet wine called Visáto.*

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### Moschofilero

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*This is an aromatic grape with pinkish skin that comes from Mantinia in the Peloponnese region. It is crisp and floral with spice and delicacy.*

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### Muscat Blanc

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*This white Muscat produces a sweet and aromatic slightly fortified wine from Patras or from the island of Samos.*

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<sup>173</sup> **Wine.lovetoknow.com**

<sup>174</sup> **National Post:** *If it's good enough for the gods* – 11.08.07

<sup>175</sup> **Off Licence News:** *It's not all Greek to shop range - some is Italian* – 12.05.06

<sup>176</sup> **NBC News:** *Interview: Jim Botsacos of Molyvos restaurant prepares traditional Greek dishes* – 02.10.02

<sup>177</sup> **The Plain Dealer:** *Wine buy of the week* – 15.05.02

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**Savatianó**

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*Not that it makes a great white wine but Savatianó is the most prevalently planted varietals. It is common to find with the wine's quality and character all over the map. At best it is a blank slate to work with. However, when made well it produces grassy and peachy wines. Are you surprised that most Retsina is made from Savatianó?*

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**Red wine****Kokkineli**

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*Kokinelli - the Greek equivalent of French rosé. It is made from a blend of must from red and white grapes fermented together. What makes it unusual is that you will not find it under this name on my list or any other list. This is because Greek producers prefer to use the French word rosé on their labels - apparently, they opt to support the French marketing effort.*

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**Agiorghitiko**

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*Probably the most important red, Agiorghitiko is prominent in Nemea wines from the Peloponnese. Soft in tannins but with deep aromas and complexity that produces supple wines with spice and cherry flavours. Nemea wines are reliable picks.*

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**Limnio**

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*An ancient grape from the island of Lemnos. It makes a robust red with acidity.*

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**Mandelaria**

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*This is a red that is common on Crete and Rhodes and makes distinctive and flavorful wines, although on the tannic side.*

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**Mavrodaphne**

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*This grape is found in the Peloponnese and Ionian Islands. The black-skinned grape makes a sweet fortified wine from Patras called, Mavrodaphne.*

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*And what we've done is we've already started the stew. And in this pot, we have a reduction of sweet wine, which is a Mavrodaphne wine, which is a type of port wine, if you want to say, like Greek wine.*

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### **Xynomavro**

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*Best known as the major grape in Macedonia's Goumenissa. Xynovaro produces a rich and flavorful red with complexity and earthiness. It's the type of wine Alexander would have drunk.*

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### **Roditis**

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*Greeks have been making wines for thousands of years. If you're like me, it's been years since you had a Greek wine. Rodytis, the classic Greek rose, is what many have sampled - especially if you first tried the pine-resin flavoured wines that were once so popular in Greek restaurants.*

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## **Greek wine producers in the global public rhetoric**

### **Boutaris** <sup>178 179 180 181 182 183</sup>

Boutari Wines enjoy the highest publicity among the Greek wine companies and the press refers to the long history of the company, quality of Boutaris wines and the fame of Yannis Boutaris. **The company is described as a pioneer in the Greek wine industry and there was a high level of coverage when Boutaris invested in France.** There is also an important number of articles concerning the financial progress of the company and the exports in the international market. It should be noted that it is not easy for the reader to understand that Yiannis Boutaris is running his own winery with a name different than "Boutaris".

The Boutaris family have been wine makers since 1879 and are now considered a leading Greek company which continues to expand inside Greece and abroad. Not satisfied with having a solely domestic market or with placating traditional palate expectations, the firm became aggressive in its technology.

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<sup>178</sup> **Greek Press Digest:** *Greek Boutaris Eyes Expansion Abroad* - 22.07.04

<sup>179</sup> **Nation's Restaurant News:** *Classic grapes help Greece boost wine quality* - 22.03.04

<sup>180</sup> **Off Licence News:** *Tuning into the Classics.* - 18.07.96

<sup>181</sup> **Off Licence News:** *Greek Wine First.* - 31.03.96

<sup>182</sup> **Greek News:** *Wine and the World* - 23.02.04

<sup>183</sup> **Greek News Digest:** *Greek Boutaris President To Buy 200,000 Co Shares April 2004* - 17.04.05

Boutari Wines were the first food and drink company in Greece to use an official quality assurance system for its production and bottling. **Recognizing that Roditis and Retsina were dead ends, Boutari Wines seized the opportunity to expand from its base at Naousa in cool Northern Greece and now manages eight separate wineries in disparate parts of Greece and one in France.** Boutaris Holdings comprises the parent company Boutaris Holdings and a number of subsidiaries such as Boutaris Winery, Mythos Brewery and Kambas.

The company is experimenting with international varieties like Cabernet, Merlot and Chardonnay and also works with about 25 native Greek varieties like Assyrtiko, Agiorgitiko and Xinomavro. **Boutari has long been the main public face of Greek wines in the UK** and the company is actively trying to increase consumer awareness about the quality of Greek wines.

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*"..One firm that has led the renaissance of Greek wine is Boutari.."*

*Nation's Restaurant News: Classic grapes help Greece boost wine quality*

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### **Domain Kir Yiannis** <sup>184</sup> <sup>185</sup> <sup>186</sup> <sup>187</sup> <sup>188</sup>

There are limited references to Domain Kir Yiannis but several for Yannis Boutaris himself. However, although it is mentioned that Yiannis Boutaris has left the family operation in 1996 because he did not want the company to be listed in the Stock Market, **the name of the winery is mentioned rarely.** The wine reviews give high credits to the company's wines.

**The press refers to Yiannis Boutaris as a "Greek Wine Guru" who has played an important role in the development of the Greek Wine Industry.** Boutaris has worked for the common good of the Greek wine business and many of Greece's most important young winemakers have come through the ranks of the Boutari wineries. **Yiannis Boutaris is a winner of Time Magazine's 2003 "European Hero Award", an award given to a three individuals for their initiative on a "Green Cause".**

Yiannis Boutaris rocked family tradition in the late 1960s by planting a vineyard, buying land in the Náoussa appellation, at 1,150 feet, to grow vines. At one of their estates, Yianakohori, Yiannis lowered crop yields, built a new winery and introduced modern winemaking techniques and single-vineyard

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<sup>184</sup> **Agence France Presse:** *Europe rendezvous* – 22.12.04

<sup>185</sup> **Off Licence News:** *Greek Wine First.* - 31.03.96

<sup>186</sup> **Food and Wine:** *Greece's New Wine Gods* - 10.06

<sup>187</sup> **Wine Spectator:** *Greece's Enduring Wine Heritage* - 19.11.03

<sup>188</sup> **Greek News:** *Wine and the World* - 23.02.04

wines. **In 1996, Yiannis Boutaris left J. Boutari and Son Wineries to found Ktima Kir-Yianni winery in Naoussa, which is on the forefront of viticultural and oenological research today.**

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*"..Greek wine guru Yiannis Boutaris is an iconoclastic pioneer, an environmental activist.."*

*Agence France Presse: Europe rendezvous*

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## **Domaine Gerovassiliou** <sup>189 190 191 192</sup>

There is a number of articles about the role of Evangelos Gerovassiliou in the development of the Greek wine industry and the winery is considered one of the most modern in Greece. Most of the references are from Greek newspapers but there are some in the international press describing the facilities and the quality of the wines.

Domaine Gerovassiliou was established by Georgios Gerovassiliou.

**Evangelos Gerovassiliou, who studied in Bordeaux with the famed French professor Emile Peynaud, is one of the leaders of the Greek wine renaissance.** He began experimenting in the late '70s with international varieties—Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Syrah and Sauvignon Blanc—as well as Assyrtiko, Santorini's Muscadet like grape. Then at home in Epanomi, since 1983, he worked to bring back the native white grape Malagousia from virtual extinction.

The Gerovassiliou vineyards are near Thessaloniki, Greece's second-largest city. They benefit from a maritime influence, so despite hot summer temperatures, the whites taste bright and refreshing. The winery was built in 1986. It includes a production area with a bladder press, special tanks of skin contact extraction and stainless fermentation tanks with an automated cooling system. The bottling area forms the second part of the production area. It includes a washing system, filling, corking and labelling.

Domaine Gerovassiliou grows vineyards on a total area of 380,000 sq m and produces about 300,000 bottles of four white and two red wines. The company sells 75% of its annual production on the domestic market and exports the remaining 25% to the European Union, the United States and Canada. **The wines of Domaine Gerovassiliou were awarded at the**

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<sup>189</sup> **The Washington Times:** *Domaine Gerovassiliou, Malagousia, Regional Wine of Epanomi* - 31.05.06

<sup>190</sup> **Greek News Digest:** *Greek Domaine Gerovassiliou Invests Up to 1.5 Mln Euro in Conference Centre* - 17.02.05

<sup>191</sup> **Greek News Digest:** *Greek Domaine Gerovassiliou Posts Pre-Tax Profit of 600,000 Euro for 2002* - 27.03.03

<sup>192</sup> **Food and Wine:** *Greece's New Wine Gods* - 10.06

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**3rd International Exhibition of Food and Wine (DETROP) in Thessaloniki, northern Greece, and at the international wine competition Vinalies Internationales 2003 in Paris, France, in 2003.**

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*..we drank his Malagousia and the Gerovassiliou White, a blend of Malagousia and crisp Assyrtiko, and I thought, these whites are amazing..*

*Food and Wine: Greece's New Wine Gods*

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**Gaia Estate** <sup>193</sup> <sup>194</sup> <sup>195</sup> <sup>196</sup>

Gaia Estate enjoys a level of publicity mainly because of the fame of winemaker Yiannis Paraskevopoulos and the high quality retsina the Estate produces. Most of the publicity consists of interviews of the winemaker in top magazines of the global wine industry.

Gaia Wines Vineyard was founded in 1994 by Leon Karatsalos who runs the business with oenologist/winemaker Yiannis Paraskevopoulos, a top viticultural consultant in Greece. Wines from Gaia -- "mother earth" in Greek - - have received numerous awards in Greece and abroad **and it was the first company that focused only on Greek grapes**, Agiorgitiko and Assyrtiko.

**Gaia Estate applies modern French winemaking technology to the production of wines from Greek grape varieties.** The wine is aged in new oak for 12 months and is designed to last for as long as 10 to 15 years. **The winery also produces a unique retsina, designed to overturn the strongly negative image of that wine.** Most retsina is made from a tart, insipid base wine doctored with copious amounts of pine resin. Gaia's starts with wine good enough to be enjoyed on its own, aromatized by just enough pine resin to provide earthy, foresty flavours, but not so much as to overwhelm.

Gaia Wines exports 40% of its production of 350,000 bottles a year to markets in Europe, Australia, the U.S. and Brazil.

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*There is no better case for this than Gaia's Retsinis Nobilis, Paraskevopoulos's modern take on retsina.*

*Wine Magazine: Greek revival*

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<sup>193</sup> **Dow Jones:** *On The Trail Of Greece's Agiorgitiko Grape* – 03.11.06

<sup>194</sup> **Wine Magazine:** *Greek revival* – 09.01.04

<sup>195</sup> **Wine Spectator:** *Greece's Enduring Wine Heritage* - 19.11.03

<sup>196</sup> **Καθημερινή:** *Το παράδειγμα του Κτήματος Gaia* - 16.12.05

## **Tsantalis S.A.** <sup>197 198 199 200</sup>

There is relatively a small level of publicity, about Tsantalis S.A. dealing with the history of the company and the exports of the firm in the international market. Considering the size of the company a higher level of rhetoric would be expected. However, **all of the articles mentioning Tsantalis S.A. are positive and describe the company as one of the leading Greek wine producers owing one of the most modern wineries in Europe.**

Tsantalis S.A. is located in Agios Pavlos, in the Chalkidiki region, northern Greece. The founder of the company is Evangelos Tsantalis who revived the abandoned Athonite vineyards. Today, the wines of Chromitsa have become premier Tsantali products. **The company has the privilege of being the only one in Greece allowed vineyards on Mount Athos**, where it cultivates 100 hectares of native varieties of grapes which are grown organically, picked by hand and ferried to the mainland for vinification by boat.

**Tsantalis S.A. is one of the largest wine producers and one of the leaders of Greek wines renaissance.** The company produces 18 million bottles of wine a year in seven Greek regions. The Tsantali brand wines are exported to 35 countries most of it to Germany. **Tsantalis has found an effective method of exporting by selling medium-priced wines to Greek restaurants in Germany.** Most popular are the white Athos varieties, light and slightly fruity, which fit well with German taste. The company has recently also entered the Turkish and Russian markets. **Tsantalis wines have been awarded numerous times in international wine competitions.**

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*"..Tsantali leads a wave of huge change in Hellenic wine production that has seen standards and quality rise in recent years and the image of Greek wine improve."*

*Sunday Tribune: The gifts of Bacchus and Dionysus, Greek wine has seen a revival recently, with an improvement in standards, and a greater awareness worldwide*

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<sup>197</sup> **Greek Press Digest:** *Greek Tsantalis To Invest 5.0 Mln Euro 2004-2006* - 23.10.03

<sup>198</sup> **Sunday Tribune:** *The gifts of Bacchus and Dionysus, Greek wine has seen a revival recently, with an improvement in standards, and a greater awareness worldwide* - 10.08.03

<sup>199</sup> **Greek News Digest:** *Greece's Tsantalis Awarded with Four Medals in France* - 05.04.01

<sup>200</sup> **Turkish Daily News:** *Greek wine Tsantalis in Turkish market* - 24.01.08



## Domain Skouras <sup>201 202 203</sup>

Domain Skouras enjoys some publicity mainly from interviews of the owner of the company who is considered a Greek wine expert. There are several positive reviews of the company's wines.

Domaine Skouras was founded in 1988 by George Skouras near his home town of Argos in the Peloponnese. **Wine maker George Skouras studied oenology at the University of Dijon and uses a combination of modern and traditional methods and grape varieties in producing his two lines of wine.** They are Cambello white and red named for his winery's Venetian architect made from native Greek grapes and Megas Oinos white and red, which are blends of European and native grapes. Domain Skouras exports an average 45% of its annual output to the Scandinavian countries, the U.S. and Japan.

*..George is one of the new breed of young Greeks who have turned the wine trade around in the past ten to 15 years..*

*The Times: Greek wine ripens in the sun*

## Greek Wine Abroad

### Market issue: Inadequate production

Although the achieved progress has been recognized and the benefits deriving from the policy have been visible, there are still some challenges noted by the interested audience. Probably the most significant issue discussed is that **the majority of vineyards are in the hands of farmers, not wine producers**, and yield only half as much wine per acre on average as those in France and Italy due to low rainfall and rarity of irrigation. **Therefore, many vineyards are small, hand-tended and uneconomical.**

For this reason alone, Greece will never be a major player in the high-volume, low-price wine category as most producers work on a small scale.

### Market issue: In need of better promotion

In recent years many small, boutique brands have emerged which could have great exportation potential and could go far in improving the reputation of Greek wine. Yet vintners still need to work on better promoting their industry, particularly in major markets such as the USA and UK.

<sup>201</sup> **Patriot-News:** *Greece glories in its wines* - 05.10.94

<sup>202</sup> **The Times:** *Greek wine ripens in the sun*- 12.05.01

<sup>203</sup> **Greek News Digest:** *Greek Wine Maker Skouras Invests 2.2 Mln Euro in New Winery* - 12.12.01

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*For Greek wine producers to break on the world market, they will need to work together and be more aware of what is happening in the rest of the wine world, something that is currently not happening to the extent that it should.*

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### **A promising environment** <sup>204</sup>

Greek wine exports have increased considerably in the recent past. Due to the improvement of the vintages, the new more sophisticated Greek wine has replaced to a great extent notorious retsina. As a result, as Greek wine finds its footing in the global market, its presence and its success are eagerly anticipated, though due to small production, it is not expected to become the market leader.

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*The Greek wine industry languished in the doldrums for hundreds of years, then thoroughly modernised itself in less than twenty. Major companies and boutique producers now enter interesting wines of gold-medal, even trophy, quality in international competitions. So how is it that Greek wines, apparently so full of promise, remain so difficult to market outside Greece?*

*The question has no simple answer. But as a growing number of consumers in Britain, the United States, Ireland, Scandinavia and elsewhere move off their fixation with wines made from noble grape varieties like Chardonnay and Cabernet Sauvignon, the problem begs attention. Wine writers broadcast the news that there is a deep new interest in different varietal flavours—a situation from which Greece, with its constellation of fascinating, unknown grapes, should stand to benefit—and yet exports rise slowly.*

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### **Weak presence** <sup>205</sup>

With Greece enjoying a relatively mature domestic wine market, it is the export market which offers opportunities for growth.

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*In fact it is surprising to see that European and US retailers have not caught on to the Greek phenomenon. Germany is currently the most important market for Greek wine exports, with volumes sales reaching 13.9 million litres in 2002, some 49% of total exports. The remainder is distributed primarily to other countries within Western Europe with France and Italy heading these but with a fairly low amount of between 2 and 2.5 million litres each.*

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<sup>204</sup> **Ezine Articles:** *The Greek Wine Industry*

<sup>205</sup> **Euromonitor:** *Greek wine goes for Olympic gold* – 03.11.03

### **Lack of continuity** <sup>206</sup>

Marketing efforts for the promotion of Greek wine abroad have been characterised by lack of continuity in the efforts made. Consequently, the achievements often remain unexploited and there has been no consistent build up on previous efforts in order to maximize benefits.

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*I once wrote to the editor of a leading on-trade magazine that if we can promote the Greek culture then the culture will sell the products. Marketing boils down to confidence. Merchandising boils down to mediocrity. So long as the renaissance in business mentality continues to lag behind the renaissance in the wine industry, Greek wine will continue to experience a stop-go presence of different brands alternating, but no continuity of brand.*

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### **Relatively expensive with complicated names**

There are a number of reasons for the absence of Greek wines from European shelves. In addition to **poor marketing and consumer education, Greek wine suffers from the onslaught of 'New World' wines, which are more price competitive and have simpler brand names.**

**Many retailers claim that Westerners can be put off by the difficult pronunciation of several varieties of the indigenous wine grapes, such as Moschofilero and Assyrtiko.**

### **Coordinated action initiative** <sup>207</sup>

The fact that Greek winemakers have begun to work together has not gone unnoticed. According to wine industry experts results are not expected overnight but there is confidence that success lies ahead.

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*It took the Italians 10 years to overcome the Lambrusco-and-Chianti-only image...But if the Italians could do it, she says, so can the Greeks: no more Retsina-only.*

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### **Opportunities for wider promotion** <sup>208 209</sup>

In the period before the 2004 Athens Olympic Games, there was extensive publicity on the opportunities Greek wines were presented with due to the

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<sup>206</sup> **Off Licence News:** *It's not all Greek to shop range - some is Italian* – 12.05.06

<sup>207</sup> **The Wall Street Journal:** *Greece Offers New Wave of Wines - Vintners Aspire to Global Markets, But Production Costs Are High And Marketing Remains Poor* – 04.08.04

<sup>208</sup> **Euromonitor:** *Greek wine goes for Olympic gold* – 03.11.03

<sup>209</sup> **Off Licence News:** *An Olympian effort required* – 22.08.03

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Olympics. Greece was in the spotlight and as a consequence so could be Greek wine.

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*With the Olympic Games approaching, producers now see this event as an opportunity to raise consumer awareness of Greek wines like they have never done before. Companies and associations, in co-operation with the State, are going headfirst into carrying out special marketing and promotional activities. This is hoped to bring Greek wine to a larger international audience as well as to serve to strengthen its image in traditional tourist nations already familiar with Greece.*

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### **Promotional events** <sup>210 211 212 213 214</sup>

Fairs and wine tasting events as well as Greek restaurants abroad are the principal promotional events. They are also frequently and extensively documented in the national newspapers of the given country.

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*On the second Thursday of each month, Greek wine and ouzo flow at Kyma's Greek Festival. The restaurant hosts live Greek music and hookah smoking on the patio. Grab something from the souvlaki menu, share a carafe of Greek wine or nibble on mini desserts.*

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<sup>210</sup> **The Age:** *Cellar Door* – 20.05.08

<sup>211</sup> **The Star-Ledger:** *Opa! Greekfest hopes you're hungry* – 02.05.08

<sup>212</sup> **The Atlanta Journal - Constitution:** *Nightlife: Nightwatch: Go greek* – 10.01.08

<sup>213</sup> **Omaha World-Herald:** *A big fat festival of Greek food, footwork* – 10.09.07

<sup>214</sup> **The Northern Times:** *Sample Greek culture* – 24.08.07