

GREECE

Greek lettering and words do not come easily to most English-speaking wine drinkers. It is therefore difficult for the wines to become accepted in these countries, added to which the spectre of Retsina is still present and puts many people off Greek wines. Many of the Greek wines are made from interesting local varieties, making a change from the usual run of Chardonnays, Sauvignon Blancs, Cabernets and Merlots, although these grapes are being experimented with. The majority of Greek wine is produced for blending and local consumption, less than 8 percent is of a controlled appellation, for which there are 28 designated regions. The best of these are for red wines and sweet muscat wines.

Greek wines are now classified under the 2009 EU regulations of Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) which requires 100 per cent of grapes used to be from the stated region and Protected Geographical Indication (PGI) which requires 85 per cent to be from the stated region, the remainder may come from other regions.

The PDO covers the previous classifications of 'Wines with controlled Appellation of Origin' (OPE) and 'Wines with Appellation of Superior Quality' (OPAP). The OPE and OPAP classification is being phased out so these letters will not appear on the wines from the most recent vintages.

The PGI designation includes all Regional Wines and those classified with "Traditional Designation" which includes Verdea and the 15 sub-districts of Retsina. There are three levels, Area wines which have the most defined origin usually being a part of a district, District wines which may come from the whole of a district, and Regional wines. Eight of the country's nine wine growing regions produce PGI Regional Wines the Ionian Islands being the exception, but this region does produce PDO, Area and District PGI wines.

The term Reserve may be used with white PDO/OPAP wines which have been aged for a minimum of two years, with at least six months in wood and six months in the bottle, and red wines which have been aged for a minimum of three years, with at least six months in wood and six months in the bottle.

Grande Reserve may be used with PDO/OPAPA white wines which have been aged for a minimum of three years, with a minimum of one year in wood and one year in the bottle, and red wines which have been aged for a minimum of four years with a minimum of two years in wood and two years in the bottle.

Thrace

Probably the least known and least important wine region of Greece. It produces PGI wines but no PDO wines at present.

A name to watch for is Arcadia Vineyards which had its first vintage in 2002 and is planted mainly with 'European' rather than indigenous varieties.

Côtes de Meliton PDO/OPAP in the north of Greece is producing some good red and dry white wines, including those from Domaine Carras. Château Carras, modelled on a Bordeaux Château.

The wine is a blend of Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc and the Greek varietal Limnio, producing an excellent red wine. The white wines are produced from Assyrtiko, Athiri and Rhoditis.

Macedonia Slopes of Meliton

Located on the Sithonia Peninsula. Produces Red wines from Lemnio, Cabernet Sauvignon and Cabernet Franc and White wines from Athiri, Assyrtiko and Roditis. Château Carras was the first Greek appellation to include international varieties. (1982)

Amynteo

Amyndeio PDO/OPAP is the most northerly region producing wines made from the Xinomavro varietal. A number of good-quality wines are made which include other varietals and therefore do not qualify for a PDO.

Alpha Estate is the outstanding producer.

Naoussa

Naoussa PDO/OPAP is a small area in the north of Greece producing sound red wines from the Xinomavro grape, which can age well. They must be aged at least one year in oak.

Boutari, a good reliable producer, makes excellent Naoussa and Amynteo wines: the Naoussa Grande Reserve is outstanding.

Goumenissa

Goumenissa PDO/OPAP is further north and makes light red wines from Xinomavro plus a minimum of 20 per cent Negoska grapes.

Thessaly

Thessaly is south of Macedonia and has three PDOs,

Anchialos

Anchialos PDO/OPAP is known for dry white wines and is produced from a minimum of 80 per cent Rhoditis the balance from Savatiano.

Rapsani

Rapsani PDO/OPAP produces dry reds from Xinomavro, Stavroto and Krassato.

Messenikola

Messenikola PDO/OPAP is a dry red wine produced from a minimum of 70 per cent Mavro Messenikola plus Carignan and Syrah

Epirus

Epirus is in the north west of Greece between Thessaly and the Mediterranean coast and is the most mountainous in Greece.

Zitsa

PDO/OPAP may be still or sparkling wine from the Debina grape. This is the only appellation wine of the region. The red wines of the region are produced mainly from Bekari and Vlachiko grapes with a little Xinomavro, and there has also been some Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and Cabernet Franc plantings in Metsora by the Katari Averott winery.

Central Greece Retsina/Retinitis Oenos TA

Retsina is the best-known wine from Greece: the main grape varietal is Savatiano with Rhoditis and Assyrtiko. There are three controlled appellations for Retsina TA, for which 20 percent of Retsina production qualifies. The main region is Attica, plus Viota and Evia, all of which are close to Athens. It is classified as a PGI. Most Retsina is white, 10 percent is rosé and a small amount is red. This wine has had resin from the Aleppo pine (best) added to it so that it is really an aromatized wine. Originally, when wine was stored in amphorae, these vessels were sealed with resin to prevent oxidation of the wine. It was thought that as the wine was better than unsealed wine, resin must contain some preservative qualities. Soon pine resin was added to the wine itself, and then to the must prior to fermentation. The Greeks became accustomed to this flavour and grew to like it. However the flavour of Retsina has very little appeal to Western European palates.

Peloponnese

The Peloponnese forms the southernmost part of the Greek mainland and includes a few islands. It is the mainland where the quality wine regions are found.

Nemea

PDO/OPAP is a sound wine-producing area producing good-quality red wine from the native grape Agiorgitiko. Boutari again produces high-quality wine here. The vineyards of both Naoussa and Nemea are planted high up, thus experiencing a cooler climate.

Mavrodaphne of Patras

PDO/OPE (15 percent abv) A slightly fortified sweet red dessert wine made from the grape of the same name plus some Korinthiaki grapes. It is one of the better-known Greek wines.

Patras

PDO/OPAP is for a dry white wine made from the Roditis grapes. Muscat of Patras PDO/OPE and Rio of Patras PDO/OPE are both from the Muscat Blanc à Petits Grains and are VDNs.

Mantinia

PDO/OPAP is a dry, still or sparkling white wine produced from a minimum of 85 per cent Moschofilero plus some Asproudes.

Aegean Islands

There are PDO and PGIs on Crete, Rhodes and Samos.

Sitia

The Sitia PDO/OPAP probably produces the best red and white wines on the island of Crete. The reds are produced from a minimum 80 percent of the Latiko varietal and the whites from a minimum 70 per cent Vilána.

Rhodes

Rhodes PDO/OPAP red wines are 100 percent Mandilaria and the whites are 100 percent Athiri. Muscat of Rhodes AOC is perhaps the best wine from this island.

Samos

The Island of Samos is within touching distance of the Turkish coast. The Samos PDO is the appellation of the famous sweet white dessert Vin Doux Naturel (VDN) and Vin de Liqueur (VDLs) wines made from the Muscat à Petits Grains.

Lemnos

Lemnos has an PDO for its dry to semi-sweet table wines from Muscat d'Alexandrie. This is a group of islands roughly between the south of Greece and Crete. Two islands have a PDO/OPAP, Santorini and Paros. Both islands are very dry and are subject to extreme winds. Their vines are grown in low bush form and in Santorini they are also trained in a *stefani* (crown) or round basket shape which provides protection for the grapes from the wind and sun. The grapes hang in the middle. Being so close to the ground, the vines obtain water from the dew which forms on the ground and leaves of the vines overnight.

Paros

Paros PDO/OPAP is for red and white wines.

Santorini

Santorini PDO/OPAP. Sigalas and Boutari produce excellent wines from a minimum of 75 per cent Assyrtiko grapes. There are also isolated good-quality blends with no PDO.

Although Santorini is best known for its high acid and good alcohol white wines, reds are becoming more sought after, although they do not have an PDO. An example is the excellent Cava Tsantalis, which is a blend of Xinomavro and Cabernet Sauvignon, which has been aged in small oak casks.

There is also an PDO for the high-quality sweet wines made from a minimum of 51 per cent Assyrtiko, Aidani, Aspro and Athiri varieties. These may be VDL, VDN or Vin de Paille.

Ionian Islands

These islands are off the western coast of Greece. The only one of importance for wine is Cephalonia.

Cephalonia /Kefalonia

The Robóla grape is unique to the island of Kefalonia /Cephalonia and produces Robóla PDO/OPAP dry white wine. The Muscat of Cephalonia PDO/OPE is for its sweet dessert VDL Muscat wine, and the Mavrodaphne of Kefalonia PDO/OPE is for its sweet red VDL wine.

Crete

Péza, Sitía and Dafnes have PDOs/OPAPs for red wine, Péza and Sitia for white wines as well. Other PDOs are Archanes, Candia, Malvasia Candia and Malvasia Sitali.

HUNGARY

Red (Vörös), (Fehér) and Rosé (Rozé) wines are produced all over the country, which is divided up into the Great Plain, Trans-Danube and Northern Hungary.

There are 22 regions producing every type and style of wine. The majority of the wines are whites ranging from dry to very sweet, but red wines are on the increase.

Quality wine is indicated on the label by the words *Különleges Minőségi Bor*.

Trans-Danube covers everywhere west of the Danube which contains 15 of the wine regions, the Great Plain is the southern part of Hungary between the rivers Danube and Tisza and contains three regions. Northern Hungary or Northern Massif is the northern part

between the same two rivers and contains the remaining four regions. All the regions listed were classified under the *Districtus Hungaricus Contollatus* but have changed to PDOs under the 2009 EU regulations.

Lake Balaton has four PDO regions, Balatonfüred-Csopak, Badacsony and Balatonfelvidék on the north side and Balatonboglár on the south side. The wines are white and produced from Pinot Gris, Olaszrizling (Welschriesling), and Kéknyelo, although Chardonnay and Sauvignon Blanc are also planted. Some good-quality Hungarian table wines are produced along the northern shores of Lake Balaton, the largest lake in Europe. Balatoni Riesling is a medium-sweet, full-bodied white wine, which is at its best when young. Balatoni Furmint is made from the Furmint grape and is a full-bodied sweet and luscious wine.

Nagy-Somló

Nagy-Somló PDO is the smallest region of Hungary, but its wines have a high reputation. They are strong-flavoured, powerful white wines from the Furmint, Háraslevelű, Olaszrizling and Juhfark grapes. A small amount of Chardonnay is also grown.

Szekszárd

Szekszárd PDO produces red, white and rosé wines but is known for its dark red colour and strong flavoured red wines. Some of the best are made from Kadarka, which is a traditional grape. 'Bulls Blood' - is produced here as well as in Eger - Egri Bikavér, where the name originated. It is produced from the same grape varieties with similar restrictions to Eger. Other red varieties include Kadarka, Kékfrankos, Kékoportó, Cabernet Franc, Cabernet Sauvignon, Pinot Noir and Merlot. There is a little more white wine produced and made from Királyleánykas, Zöld Veltinisz (Grüner Veltliner) and Chardonnay.

Villány

Villány PDO is in the far south, close to the Croatian border. Villány produces some of the best red wines in Hungary, the full-bodied quality red wines which age well in oak, light reds and rosés.

The main varieties are Kékoportó, Kékfrankos, Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot.

Siklós is better for white wines from Olaszrizling and Háraslevelű.

Sopron on the Austrian border, Aszár-Neszmély and Mór are other important regions in the Trans-Danube.

Trans-Danube Balaton Eger

Eger PDO produces red, white and rosé wines but is most famous for Egri Bikavér (Bull's Blood of Eger), which is probably the best-known Hungarian red wine. It is made from a blend of a minimum of three varieties from a list of twelve including Kékfrankos, Kadarka, Kékoporto, Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, Merlot, Pinot Noir and Syrah. Wines

labelled Superior must have been produced from a minimum of five varieties of which 30-50 per cent must be Kékfrankos.

Tokaj-Hegyalja

Tokaj PDO is a town in the north-east of Hungary, close to the Slovakian border. Tokaji is the sweet dessert wine produced in the Tokaj-Hegyalja region which is on the border of Slovakia.

The subsoil is volcanic rock with clay and sedimentary soil on top and the climate is cool. The wines come in various styles, but they are all made from the Furmint, Hárslevelű Sárga Muskotály (Muscat Blanc à Petits Grains) and Zéta grapes. Wines made from non-Aszú grapes are sold as Tokaji Furmint, Tokaji Hárslevelű and Tokaji Muscat. A small amount of sparkling wine is produced.

Tokaji Szamorodni is a full-bodied white wine, which is made from a mixture of Aszú and non-Aszú grapes, all picked together. It may be made dry (száras), semi-sweet or sweet. (Edes) This will be stated on the label. *Tokaji Aszú* is made from grapes from the same vineyards as Tokaji Szamorodni. However, some grapes are left on the vine to be attacked by *Botrytis cinerea* (giving noble rot); and are called Aszú grapes. The Aszú grapes are picked

separately. The grapes are pressed into a paste and this is added to the must in measures of 20–25 kg or 28 L which is the capacity of a putton (a wooden bucket or tub).

The Puttonyos system was abolished in 2014 and minimum sugar requirements for Aszú wines is now 120gr/ltr. Tokaji Aszú must be matured for a minimum of three years, 18 months of which must be in wood.

Eszenzia is made from the free run juices from aszu berries and must have a minimum of 450gr/ltr of sugar. The concentration of sugars in the must make it very difficult to ferment. The minimum requirement is 1.2% and the maximum 8%

The Great Plain

There are three regions: Csongrád, Hajós-Baja, and Kunság. Kunság is the largest wine region of Hungary. The ground is extremely sandy and does not have phylloxera. The wines are very light and like the other two regions it produces a vast amount of light red and white wines, mainly for local consumption, although Hajós-Baja produces some higher quality reds.