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Tinos – the tasting notes

TASTING ARTICLES GREECE TINOS

Tinians and incomers are putting their heart, soul and money into new projects on this beautiful Aegean island. See [The Tinos renaissance](#) for the background to their stories.

The wineries are presented in the order I visited them during my short stay of little more than 24 hours on the island.

Volacus

Volacus is a relatively new project established by Tinos-born Mihalis Kontizas and his wife Eirini Dellatola with the support of consultant Ilias Roussakis. Volacus is named after the granite rocks, or *volakes* (right), that mark this landscape near the village of Falatados in the centre of the island and have to be removed if you want to plant vines. (See [The Tinos renaissance](#) for more on these dramatic boulders.)

When the financial crisis hit Greece a decade ago, Mihalis, whose family own and run a tree and plant nursery, wanted ‘to go back to the land, to be in touch with the earth’. His vineyards are on a plateau at 420–440 m (1,380–1,445 ft) between the island’s two highest points: Tsiknias (750 m) and Exombourgo (640 m).

Kontizas bought his first 1.5 ha (3.7 acres) of land in 2009 and it took him six months to clear the site of those massive granite rocks. He now has several such parcels totalling 12 ha, all farmed organically, which is not always easy because of the sea mist that can create conditions conducive to botrytis and other fungal diseases even with the typically dry north winds that mark the island’s climate.

Current production is just 3,500 bottles but when all 12 ha are planted and bearing fruit, Kontizas expects to produce around 30,000. The main varieties are Malagousia and Assyrtiko for whites, old-vine Rosaki* for rosé, Mavrotragano for red. They are planning to plant more Assyrtiko and Mavrotragano as well as

trailing local varieties such as the dark-skinned Mavropotamissi, which may or may not be related to the light-skinned Potamissi that is indigenous to the Cyclades.

At the moment the wines are made in a rented space using their own equipment but they have restored this old pressing house in the middle of the vines and have built a small tasting room next door. They sell 90% of their wines on the island, particularly to restaurants, and about 10% is sold to the UK, via their importer Maltby & Greek, and to Finland. The wines show surprising intensity for such young vines and the ability to control the fermentation temperature from 2018 has clearly made a difference.

* Ilias Roussakis (below) explains that Rozaki or Rosaki – synonyms Razaki, Kerino, Archaniotiko (from the Cretan town of Arhanes) and Rozaki Aspro – ‘is considered by far the best Greek table grape for three reasons: high yields, resistance to fungus and long post-harvest life. Crete is probably the place with the biggest surface of Rozaki in Greece, followed by Macedonia’. While the Vitis International Variety catalogue shows Rozaki as a synonym for another table grape Avgoulato, it is a different variety. Most Rozaki grapes are gris (pink-skinned like Pinot Gris), notes Roussakis, but there appear to be white-skinned grapes, perhaps a different clone or another variety with the same synonym.

Roussakis is an important figure on Tinos. He studied in both Greece and France and worked at Ch Croix-Beauséjour in Montagne-St-Émilion for two years. He’s also worked at a roster of famous names in Greece including Sigalas and Hatzidakis on Santorini and T-Oinos on Tinos. He now divides his time between Volacus, Vaptistis and X-Bourgo on Tinos and the new and ambitious Vassaltis on Santorini. He spends a lot of time on ferries.

Volacus Malagousia 2018 PGI Cyclades

16.5

First vintage 2015. Fermented at 16 °C. Eight-year-old vines. 2018 was a very dry year – about 300 mm of rain only. Heatwave in mid July.

Harvested early because of an attack of botrytis – lost 40% on the vines. Up in the mountains, there is sea mist around the mountains. If it disappears around noon, then you have high temperatures and moisture and problems with botrytis and powdery mildew.

Fragrant, peachy and sweet blossom/rose petal aromas but there is also something a little steely. Scented on the palate too, peachy, apricot and citrus and a hint of orange. That steely hint is more mineral on the

palate. Crisp and smooth in the mouth. Opens to beautiful but not OTT fragrance. (JH) 13.7%
Drink 2019 – 2022

Volacus Assyrtiko 2018 PGI Cyclades

16.5

Vines three years old. Fermented at 16 °C. pH 3.1.

Delicate aroma of citrus and herbs. Beautifully scented but restrained by the more stony minerality that underlies it. Salty, dry and mouth-watering. Great finesse and the lightest grip you can imagine becoming more chewy with the second taste. Long citrus finish. Delicate but extremely precise and elegant. Alcohol doesn't show. Again, surprising intensity for young vines. (JH) 13.9%

Drink 2019 – 2024

Volacus Assyrtiko 2017 PGI Cyclades

16

Vines aged two years. First vintage. In 2017 they did not expect to harvest and they had a TA of 9.3 g/l – seemed like harvesting unripe grapes. After ferment it had screaming acidity. But better after a year, said Kontizas. pH 2.97.

Rosemary is the first impression. Riper citrus on the nose with a touch of cedar and green fruits. More sour-fruited than the 2018, finely crisp but less interesting. Light grip again. Not as elegant as the 2018, but super-fresh. Intense herbal notes on the finish and a very slight sour aftertaste. (JH) 13.5%

Drink 2018 – 2022

Volacus, Rosé Rozaki 2018 PGI Cyclades

15.5

100% Rozaki. One of the first ever vinifications of this table grape from a very old ungrafted vineyard (more than 60 and possibly 80 years old). Vines traditionally pruned, on the ground but not in the basket shape used on Santorini; long cordon with spurs of 2–3 buds. Like Pinot Gris, the skins are gris in colour, somewhere between white and pink. Also grown on other Cyclades islands and perhaps also on Crete and in Attica. Skin contact for less than 24 hours in tank.

Pale orangey pink but deeper than Provence. Intense aroma of Victoria

plum. Slight oxidative note (experimental and small tanks so harder to control the vinification). Plum jam. Light tannic grip. Flavourful but rustic and something a bit like peach liqueur because of that oxidation.

(JH) 13.8%

Drink 2019 – 2020

Vaptistis

Named after owner Yiannis Vaptistis (Jean-Baptiste) Moraitis, a native Tinian who has always spent his summer holidays on the island but lives in Athens, where he has made his money in concrete and construction.

He started this adventure in 2013 working with consultant Ilias Roussakis and making his first vintage in 2016. Moraitis explained that progress was slow because you have to start from scratch since there are so few vines on the island. So far he has 2 ha (5 acres) planted and aims to reach 10 ha after 10 years. When I asked him why he wanted to make wine, he replied 'for happiness'. He describes himself as a missionary: 'I really believe in Tinos'.

His vines are at 430 m (1,410 ft) on sandy loam soils in the village of Mesi, which was where his grandfather came from. Current plantings are of Assyrtiko, Monemvasia, Mavrotragano and Mavrothiriko. All the vines came from VNB, a prominent and pioneering nursery in Corinthia on the mainland that works with ENTAV-INRA, France's official centre for clonal selection and certification. The owner, Kostas Bakasietas, was at [SupAgro Montpellier](#) at the same time as Roussakis.

Moraitis has now built a small, well-equipped winery which was just about complete when the photo above was taken in May. Working with Roussakis is a young winemaker who studied in Athens and is now continuing his studies in Madrid.

These wines are mainly sold in local gastronomy so they make them light and very fresh, which is why their main wine is a blend, explained Moraitis, 'because the style is less challenging for general consumers'.

The wines are clearly work in progress and the new winery should help them raise the quality level. My feeling was that the use of oak staves in the red blend was a mistake and that unoaked would have been better to highlight the fruit, especially considering the style they say they are after and the current trend away from oak

flavours. Here, as everywhere, our tasting was punctuated by delicious local produce.

Vaptistis 2018 PGI Cyclades

16

A blend of 70% Assyrtiko and 30% Monemvasia (the latter came from Paros by refrigerated boat).

Bright citrus, lemon and lime and just a touch herbal and a hint of apricot and blossom as it opens. Creamy texture from six months on lees but only four months of stirring. Rounded and almost honeyed. Feels like there is some residual sugar but apparently it is less than 3 g/l. Shows more of the floral character of Monemvasia than the 2016 white blend.

(JH) 13.5%

Drink 2019 – 2020

Vaptistis 2017 PGI Cyclades

15.5

55% Assyrtiko and 45% Monemvasia. Fruit from Tinos but made at Vassaltis winery on Santorini (via a truck on the fast ferry), where consultant Ilias Roussakis is the vineyard manager and winemaker. Six months on lees.

More herbal than the 2018, cedar and chamomile. Riper and more honeyed and more openly expressive. Some oxidation of the grapes, perhaps, so it is just a bit developed for its age. (JH) 12%

Drink 2018 – 2019

Vaptistis 2016 PGI Cyclades

16.5

Vines planted 2013. Vinified on Santorini. Two days before harvest they did not know whether to make raki or wine – it's expensive to send the wine to Santorini if it's not good enough. 70% Assyrtiko and 30% Monemvasia. Six months on lees. TA 6.6 g/l, pH 3.2.

Smells salty and very slightly reduced (in a good smoky way). Lovely herbal citrus under that complexity. Creamy texture, great fruit purity, citrus and pear. Bread crust – the step before toasty. Tight and with lovely freshness and such lovely fruit. Good length too. Showing the character of Assyrtiko after time in bottle and the Monemvasia tends to disappear. (Consultant winemaker Ilias Roussakis explains that Vassaltis's Nassitis wine starts with 50% Assyrtiko but after a year in

bottle it starts to look like 90% Assyrtiko.) Deliciously mouth-watering and surprising intensity for such young vines. Salty breadcrumb finish. Another year and likely to be toasty. (JH) 12.8%
Drink 2017 – 2021

Vaptistis, Antara Assyrtiko 2018 PGI Cyclades

16.5

Inoculated. Sometimes they use more reductive yeasts, but this is a neutral one. Antara = the mist that hangs around off the sea and into the mountains in the mornings. Not yet bottled (but about to be) and will be on the market. Lees stirring for six months.

Very slightly smokily reductive in a nice way. Pure stony citrus, slightly herbal, fresh and lively. Moderate intensity and good length. Less phenolic (tannic) than Santorini Assyrtiko because – hotter and drier on Santorini so the skins are thicker. (JH)

Drink 2019 – 2022

€20 in Greece

Vaptistis, Altana Rosé Mavrothiriko 2018 PGI Cyclades

15

Altana = ‘small herb garden’, to suggest colourful and aromatic. Short extraction, an experiment (450 bottles) and made without temperature control, and the first vintage. Not bottled at the time of tasting.

Pale orangey pink. Pretty peachy and apricot nose and a hint of crushed stones and spice. Apparently when this variety is vinified as a red, it is spicy but low in body and colour. More red-fruited on the palate, gentle tannins but a bit lacking in freshness. Peach kernel on the finish. Short and a bit flat on the finish. (JH) 13%

Drink 2019

Vaptistis 2017 PGI Cyclades

15.5

70% Mandilaria and 30% Mavrothiriko. Tank fermented with short time on oak staves.

Deepish cherry red. Slightly reductive with some wild dark-red fruits. A little bit spicy (from the Mavrothiriko). Juicy and chewy with plenty of red cherry and firm, dry but balanced tannins. Slight hole in the middle. But lively and lots of crunchy fruit. Better on the nose than on the

palate. Gentle and harmonious tannins. The fruit stands up better to the staves here than it did on the 2016. (JH) 14%

Drink 2019 – 2021

Vaptistis 2016 PGI Cyclades

15

70% Mavrothiriko and 30% Mavrotragano.

Oak staves more obvious here than on the 2017 blend. More coffee and chocolate. Underneath it is fresh juicy fruit. Quite a bit of spice and nice fruit underneath but suppressed by the oak. (JH) 11.8%

Drink 2018 – 2020

Vaptistis, Mastroianni 2018 PGI Cyclades

16

100% Roditis from Paros, sun-dried for 10 days. RS 42 g/l, champagne yeast. Dedicated to his father-in-law, who does the work in the vines and likes sweet wines. First vintage.

Pale gold. Attractive dusty honeyed apricot. Creamy texture, flavours of sweet dried apricots and orange blossom and a sour freshness from the tannins rather than from the acidity. (JH)

Drink 2019 – 2021

€23 for 50 cl retail in Greece

X-Bourgo

Established by entrepreneur Theodoros Kosmopoulos, who visits the island every week. The name refers to the rugged granite hill of Exombourgo (below, with the X-Bourgo Assyrtiko terraces and Ilias Roussakis in the foreground), the second highest point on the island (630 m/2,100 ft) and the defensive location that was the site of the medieval capital of Tinos.

It was Kosmopoulos's daughter Angeliki (below) who hosted our visit, alongside Roussakis (below left), who oversees the vineyards but not the winemaking, which is currently on the mainland. Andreas (below right) is from Albania but has worked on Tinos for 25 years. He runs a professional team of between five and 10 Albanian vineyard workers who are also specialists in stone and walls – very useful when it comes to rebuilding and maintaining the terraces. They look after vines and gardens across the island and do all the work in the X-Bourgo vineyards.

In 2010 Kosmopoulos bought his first vineyard in the village of Tripotamos (meaning ‘three rivers’), at the time abandoned, with the aim of restoring life to it and making wine for friends. It was replanted in 2011. The vineyard area here now amounts to 8 stremmata (0.8 ha/2 acres) and they have another 8 stremmata in Kalloni, planted in 2015. They have Assyrtiko, Mavrotragano and Mavrothiri (these two reds pictured below) and they plan to try planting Potamissi, the local white variety.

Just like the rest of the island, the vineyards are extremely windy and they sometimes lose up to 10% of young shoots. On the Sunday morning we were there, we heard reports of trees blowing over on Santorini in the face of 30-mile-an-hour winds. On Tinos they were up to 27 miles an hour and we could see the shoots breaking. (Our fast ferry was cancelled the next day and we had to take the slower, more robust one.) Assyrtiko has less vegetative growth and is better able to withstand the winds than the vigorous Mavrotragano, explained Roussakis. Assyrtiko’s wood is also more pliable, which is why it is better suited to the basket-like training on Santorini.

The first professional bottling of X-Bourgo was in 2017. The wine was made and bottled at Gikas Winery on the mainland and the wines are definitely getting better and more precise.

X-Bourgo Assyrtiko 2018 Wine of Greece

16.5 +

This is not labelled as PGI Cyclades because they sent the grapes by refrigerated truck to Athens for the wine to be made and bottled at Gikas Winery. (Ilias Roussakis is consultant only for the vines in this instance and he says he really isn't needed for the winemaking as Gikas do a god job.) They are concentrating on the vineyards at the moment rather than thinking about building a winery. Harvested early September, a bit earlier than in 2017 – the 2017 was almost 14% and had a lowish pH. Bottled February 2019. 600 bottles made.

Very limey fruit on the nose. Almost spicy. Super-crisp and limey on the palate, intense and so pure and precise. Diamond-cut. Much crisper than the 2017 and better balanced. If the 2007 is anything to go by, this should be even better with a bit of bottle age, though it is very good now. (JH) 12.5%

Drink 2019 – 2024

X-Bourgo Assyrtiko 2017 Wine of Greece

16.5

These were the older vines (six years old) as the young vines were not bearing in 2017. Picked last week of August but riper than 2018. A warmer year than 2018.

Deeper colour than 2018. Rich and spicy with very ripe lemon fruit. Powerful and concentrated with an oily minerality, a little cedary after a year in bottle, and a longer finish. Complex and long and more structured. Not as fresh but showing the benefit of extra time in bottle.

(JH) 13.7%

Drink 2019 – 2024

X-Bourgo 2017 Wine of Greece

17

Blend of 70% Mavrotragano and 30% Mavrothiriko. pH 3.6, TA 6.1 g/l. 1,500 bottles. Destemmed, 20 days' maceration. Inoculated. Five or six months in new 500-litre French oak. Grapes harvested last week of August and co-fermented for practical reasons. Mavrotragano ripens first, Mavrothiriko about five days later and Assyrtiko, if picked a bit ripe, is harvested last.

Mid crimson. Sweet and sour red cherry with a light oak sweetness. Juicy and very fresh, lots of bramble fruit, the oak well integrated. Crunchy and spicy red fruit, the tannins, firm and a little grainy, but polished grains. Very good for such young vines. Really impressive. (JH) 13.9%

Drink 2020 – 2024

X-Bourgo 2016 Wine of Greece

15.5

Experimental wine made in Tinos where Mihalis Kontizas of Volacus makes his wines. Just made for Mr Kosmopoulos and his friends. Blend of 50% Mavrotragano and 50% Mavrothiriko. The wine turned reductive during production because harvested early, so they aerated a lot.

Brownish crimson. Much more rustic but still has sweet fruit, slightly reductive on the palate. But you can still see the lovely crunchy red and black fruit. Mavrothiriko showing cloves, cinnamon and liquorice more here. Unoaked. Spice is all from the fruit. Tannins are quite chalky and not green. (JH) 11.2%

Drink 2020 – 2024

T-Oinos

T-Oinos, the spearhead of the Tinos wine renaissance and still the best-known producer, is a partnership between Corfiot philosopher-businessman (electricity generation) and francophile Alexandre Avatangelos (below) and Frenchman Gérard Margeon, executive head sommelier for Alain Ducasse restaurants. Since 2016 they have been advised by Bordeaux consultant Stéphane Derenoncourt and his team. Their wines are exported to France, Switzerland, Belgium, Japan and the UK (Berkmann is their UK importer); 30% is sold in Greece.

The project began in 1999 with the modest aim of creating the best wine in Greece, but at the same time to create something sustainable for the island. The first vines were planted in 2002, the first wines made in 2008, the first commercial vintage 2009. (Avatangelos was also a long-time major investor in Sigalas on Santorini but sold his shares to Stelios Boutaris in 2012.)

Particularly remarkable is the density of the vineyards, typically 10,000 and some up to 11,500 vines per ha (Bordeaux's best vineyards are often around 10,000 vines/ha). This is less surprising when you learn that their advisors at the time were Athanasios Fakorelis (a Greek consultant based in Bordeaux) and winemaker Nadine Gublin from Burgundy (currently at Jacques Prieur and for Labruyère in Moulin-à-Vent).

No expense has been spared in their efforts to revive Tinian wine production at the highest level. According to their website, and the stories I was told as we walked round the organically certified vineyards with associate winemaker Thanos Georgilas, viticulturist Michalis Tzanoulinos (below) and Eleni Blouchou (PR), by 2019 the total investment amounted to €8 million, with £7 million of that 'going into the ground'. They will start on the winery this year so that they can move out of the current rented facility.

Their white varieties, Assyrtiko (below) and Malagousia, are trained as bush vines on sandy soils over granite on a plateau at 470 m in the Stegasta vineyard, named after the press house, or *stegasta*, in the vines (further below). Most of the two dark-skinned varieties Mavrotragano and Avgoustiatis are planted on two terraced vineyards at 360–370 m, on clay-schist and sandy schist soils, though there is some of the former on the plateau too.

Even on the terraces, the vines are densely planted.

I was surprised to hear that they had both underground drainage and drip irrigation installed from the outset in all their vineyards. Thanos Georgilas explained that the irrigation was used mostly to establish the young vines in the first three years of their life and then only once or twice in a year if the vines on the fast-draining sandy soils were suffering water stress in a particularly dry summer and with the effect of the northerly winds.

The drainage was installed ‘in case of an excessive year full of rainfall so we can avoid erosion problems and water logging in the subsoil. It doesn’t happen often but it might happen once in ten years and then it helps us a lot’. Cover crops are very important and are mostly self-sown. The only ones they actually plant are barley to open up the soil and help water penetration.

Current production is around 30,000 bottles, which they expect to grow to 50,000 when they reach 17 ha (42 acres). They have four full-time workers in the vines, all from the local village: permanent, well-paid and educated. They are a very important part of the founders’ view of sustainability.

The T-Oinos wines are extremely impressive. I remember tasting some earlier vintages of the wines, especially the Mavrotragano, and finding them a bit too oaky. I did not feel this with the wines described below, even though they do use quite a lot of new oak and need a lot of time in bottle. Intensity and slow ageing are notable, perhaps the vines are getting into their stride, or perhaps the winemaking has become more deft? They set their prices ambitiously high from the beginning but this does not seem to have hindered sales, and other producers on the island seem to be following suit, so these wines are expensive, especially once they are exported.

T-Oinos, Clos Stegasta Assyrtiko 2018 PGI Cyclades

17.5

Sandy soil over granite bedrock at 450 m. 11,500 vines per ha. Organically grown. Fermented partly in tank and partly in wooden vats and barrels. Aged four months on lees. pH 3.1 (always 3 to 3.1 and TA typically 7–8 g/l). Tank sample. About to be bottled.

More floral on the nose than the 2017 but still that fine citrus, greengage aroma, a little chalky but so scented even though it has the pure drive of Assyrtiko. Great finesse here alongside the intensity. Extremely precise and great length and a stony minerality. Be careful you don’t cut your tongue. Wonderful harmony. Salty finish. (JH) 14%

Drink 2020 – 2028

T-Oinos, Clos Stegasta Assyrtiko 2017 PGI Cyclades

17 +

Sandy soil over granite bedrock at 450 m. An amazing 11,500 vines per ha. Organically grown. Fermented partly in tank and partly in wooden vats and barrels. Aged four months on lees.

Intense on the nose, ripe citrus and green fruits and a touch of cedar but really crisp. Lightly oily mineral nose. Herbal but ripely so. Just a touch smoky. Super-concentrated and yet has fabulous acidity, still very very young. Tastes unoaked. Salty, mouth-watering finish. (JH) 14%

Drink 2019 – 2027

T-Oinos Assyrtiko 2011 PGI Cyclades

17

Delicate, honeyed, cedary aroma. Rich and broad if not as elegant as later vintages. Chewy texture. But it is still extremely fresh and youthful, plenty more years of life still in it. There are hints of lime marmalade on toast, a bit like mature Eden Valley Riesling. Honeyed but dry. (JH)

Drink 2014 – 2024

T-Oinos, Clos Stegasta Rare Assyrtiko 2018 PGI Cyclades

18.5

Tank sample. Rare is from a specific plot within the Stegasta vineyard at 460 m, with a bit more clay. Vine density 10,000 vines per ha.

Organically grown. Fermentation finishes in 500-litre barrels from France and Austria and 30% amphora. 2,000 bottles. Partly ambient yeast – using their own yeasts isolated from the vineyard.

Pretty oaky on the nose but smart oak. Firm, slightly tannic texture and the fruit eats up the oak that was evident on the nose. Cedary character comes more from the oak, perhaps. Deep, even chewy but rounded and precise even within the oak jacket. More finesse than the 2017 and even more youthful and embryonic. Mouth-watering and salty on the finish with a more spicy mineral character than stony. (JH)

Drink 2023 – 2032

T-Oinos, Clos Stegasta Rare Assyrtiko 2017 PGI Cyclades

18

1,500 bottles. Rare is from a specific plot within the Stegasta vineyard at 460 m, with a bit more clay and picked a little earlier than the straight Assyrtiko. Vine density 10,000 vines per ha. Organically grown.

Fermentation partly in barrels and amphora using their own yeasts isolated from the vineyard. 7–8 months on the lees but working them as little possible to avoid oxidation.

Gently oaky nose adding richness and depth to the fruit intensity. More spice and still that fabulous ripe fruit – citrus and green fruits, with some spice on the long, stony mineral finish. Great concentration but also great freshness. A little more smoky in its mineral character. Intense but juicy in its freshness, the pure citrus coming back on the finish. Less cedary than the straight Assyrtiko. (JH) 14%

Drink 2020 – 2030

T-Oinos Avgoustiatis 2017 PGI Cyclades

16.5

Dark cherry red. They extract very gently to achieve dry tannic finesse in this tannic variety that ferments very quickly. Attractively stony texture, dark fruit, the finesse pointing to the vineyard more than the winemaking. (JH) 14%

Drink 2019 – 2023

T-Oinos, Clos Stegasta Mavrotragano 2017 PGI Cyclades

17

Bottled March 2019. Farmed organically on sandy clay over granite. Terraces at 400 m and a planting density of 11,000 vines/ha. Whole berry and a small percentage of whole bunch fermented in open wooden vats. Inoculated with yeasts isolated from their own vineyards. Malo in barrel and 12–14 months in 500-litre barrels (Taransaud and Stockinger), of which 20% new. pH 3.7.

Quite chappy on the palate, dark chocolate, very rounded and creamy in texture. Powerful but super-polished. Gentle acidity. Ripe chocolate-covered black fruit. Lush and plush and just fresh enough. Very long. Doesn't show quite the same edginess of the variety as the Rare does. Beautiful balance and a very fine dry texture. (JH) 14.5%

Drink 2020 – 2030

T-Oinos, Clos Stegasta Rare Mavrotragano 2018 PGI Cyclades

18.5

This comes from a specific plot in Rasonas vineyard, planted in 2003 and farmed organically. Sandy clay over granite. Terraces at 400 m and a planting density of 11,000 vines/ha. Whole berry and a percentage of whole bunch fermented in open wooden vats. Inoculated with yeasts isolated from their own vineyards. Malo in barrel and 16–18 months in 500-litre barrels, of which 20% new. 2,000 bottles produced. Barrel sample. Black core and purple rim. Tiny wild dark berries, the real character for the variety. Black and wild in character and balanced by those amazing dry schist-influenced structured tannins. Dark, savoury and dry and rich. Like boulders rising out of the fruit. Leaves your mouth clean and dry like dark chocolate. Incredible length. (JH)

Drink 2025 – 2035

T-Oinos, Clos Stegasta Rare Mavrotragano 2017 PGI Cyclades

18

Bottled March 2019 but not on the market until March 2020. This comes from a specific plot in Rasonas vineyard, planted in 2003 and farmed organically. Sandy clay over granite. Terraces at 400 m and a planting density of 11,000 vines/ha. Whole berry and a percentage of whole bunch fermented in open wooden vats. Inoculated with yeasts isolated from their own vineyards. Malo in barrel and 16–18 months in 500-litre barrels, of which 20% new. 2,000 bottles produced.

Black core with purple rim. Intense black fruit from this parcel. Cool and dry and really fine dry tannins – the effect of the granite and the schist, I think. This shows the character of the site and also highlights the wildness of the variety. Schist gives the character of the tannins here. A finesse that has wonderful dry texture. Chewy but so refined. Incredibly long and minerally. Likes chewing rocks. Salty. Needs time. (JH) 14.5%

Drink 2023 – 2035

Dom de Kalathas

I was not able to visit Jérôme Charles Binda's Dom de Kalathas, in the village of the same name just 4 km from Falatados, but thanks to his UK importer Maltby & Greek, I was able to taste the three wines they had in stock in London, all made from old-vine Aspro Potamisi, ie White Potamisi (also spelt Potamissi), which is

probably indigenous to the island but has not always been highly regarded. Frenchman Binda's first life was as a graphic designer in France but he moved to Tinos in 2011. His vines and wines are certified organic and he also follows some biodynamic practices.

He is clearly at the 'natural' end of the wine spectrum, fermenting with indigenous yeasts and eschewing all additions, fining or filtration. Since the 2016 vintage he has added no sulphur dioxide, even at bottling. He also works with the local grapes Rozaki, Koumariano, Mavro Potamisi and Gdurra (ie Kondoura, a local clone of Mandilaria) as well as the more well known Assyrtiko and Mavrotragano and a little bit of Syrah.

I believe these are all wines from a specific vintage but could not find a vintage on the label. He doesn't have a website but he does have an [instagram account](#) with lots of pictures of the island. For wines made from a low-acid variety, the wines were remarkably fresh, with great texture, and food friendly.

Dom de Kalathas, 10+12 Vieilles Vignes NV Wine of Greece

16.5

Organic certification. Biodynamic farming on sandy granite soils. 100% Aspro Potamisi (though it does not say so on the label as far as I can see), a variety with naturally low acidity. pH 3.85. Indigenous ferment, zero additions, no sulphites, unfinned and unfiltered. Hand-harvested in 15–20 kg cases, 24 hours in the cases in a cooling room at 14 °C, feet-trodden and slow vertical press. Alcoholic fermentation in stainless-steel vat for 15 to 20 days with its own yeasts. Malolactic conversion. Lot number suggests it is 2017 vintage.

Apricot golden colour. Spice and dried grasses on the nose and a hint of non-sweet apricots. Very gentle tannic grip which seems to give the wine great freshness. It is very hard to believe this is a low-acid variety because it doesn't taste like it. There's also something like mango but without any sweetness, and a more savoury almost bitter side to it with a bone-dry finish. Chewy with no sweetness but plenty of grippy fruit.

Complex and long. Not sure how this will age. (JH) 14.2%

Drink 2019 – 2023

£32 Maltby & Greek

Dom de Kalathas, Notias Vent d'Afrique NV Wine of

17

Greece

Organic certification. Biodynamic farming on sandy granite soils. 100% Aspro Potamisi (though it does not say so on the label as far as I can see), a variety with naturally low acidity. pH 3.78. Whole-bunch maceration, zero additions, no sulphites, unfinned and unfiltered. Hand-harvested. Alcoholic fermentation in separate stainless steel vats for two months with its own yeasts. Natural refermentation in the following spring. Malolactic conversion. Blending with 20% Rozaki fermented separately, before the winter. Binda says the wine reminds him of the warm southern Scirocco winds, hence the name.

Quite a bit darker than the 10+12: deep amber. More intense aroma too, with bitter orange, caramelised pineapple without the sweetness. On the palate, very firm and dry in its tannin texture, giving plenty of grip and a grainy texture. Definitely a food wine and I imagine a versatile one.

There's a refreshing sourness that make this a fresh wine even with low acidity. Long, orange-inflected finish. Makes me want to eat. The alcohol is very well integrated but gives an attractive warmth that rounds out some of those grainy tannins. Should age well though I have not tasted older vintages. (JH) 14.5%

Drink 2019 – 2024

£32 Maltby & Greek

Dom de Kalathas, O Zontanos Très Vieilles Vignes Brûlées 16.5 NV Wine of Greece

Organic certification. Biodynamic farming on sandy granite soils. Aspro Potamisi. No additions, no added sulphites. No oak, no temperature control. Centenarian vines that grow pretty much along the ground. Can't find out anything else about the wine but name suggests very ripe or dried grapes? The lot number suggests this is a 2016 wine.

Deep amber. Spicy, smoky and a touch of apricot (but not particularly sweet smelling) then on the palate sweeter orange and apricot flavours although all the sweetness taken away by the tannins. Off dry but the aftertaste is dry thanks to those grippy tannins. Powerful, almost a meal in itself and very long. The sweetness takes the edge off the tannins but I think I prefer the more rigorous, ie drier, and better balanced Notias.

(JH) 14.4%

Drink 2019 – 2024

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