

## 1. Greek Wines of Today . An overview.

Although the Greeks have been making wine for over 4000 years it has been only during the last 30 years that the Greek wine industry has undergone a complete transformation. After Greece joined the European Union in 1981, subsidies became available that have initiated a tremendous effort to invest in modern winemaking technology with state-of-the-art wineries being built throughout Greece. In more recent years there has also been a renewed focus on revitalizing the Greek vineyards.

Greece contains well over 300 indigenous grape varieties that account for more than 80% of their wine production. These native varieties, many grown since ancient times, offer the Greek wine industry an opportunity to differentiate itself from other wine producing regions. The driving force behind this renaissance in Greek winemaking has been the new generation of talented & pioneering winemakers that have been educated in the best wine schools around the world. They have returned home to work with and discover the full potential of their indigenous varieties. Although access to cutting-edge technology has helped Greek wine reach world-class standards, Greek wine production has always been on a human, artisanal scale, by people ~~con~~versing with their land, who have cultivated their vineyards long enough to understand the full potential of their *terroirs*.

Greece boasts an amazing array of different *terroirs* and Greek producers understand that ~~terroir-driven~~ wines are what will make them stand apart. The Greek vineyard combines all of the elements necessary for the production of high quality wine, including favorable soil, terrain and weather conditions. Greece has a typically mild Mediterranean climate with lots of sunshine, mild winters, dry summers and cool evenings. Because of the consistent climatic conditions usually found in Greece there is no large fluctuation in vintages from year to year that you may find in many winegrowing regions around the world. The soils range from moderate to poor fertility and vary from sand and rock to clay and limestone with most everything else in between--including the volcanic soils of some Greek islands. Greece, the 3<sup>rd</sup> most mountainous country in Europe, has a dramatically diverse landscape with mountain ranges that traverse the countryside from north to south. In fact, most of the vineyards are found on the slopes of mountains or on remote islands with a typical vineyard size being less than one hectare. Because Greece is virtually surrounded by water many of the vineyards also enjoy the positive, moderating influence of being in close proximity to the sea.

### Greek Indigenous Varieties

Although introducing different grape varieties to a competitive market presents a challenge in and of itself, this also creates an opportunity for Greece to establish a unique niche in the market for their wines. Contemporary Greek wines,

produced predominantly from native varieties are made to show character and individuality with something different to offer than the usual suspects. White varieties display an array of floral and fruity aromas as well as mineral flavors. They have wonderfully crisp acidity that goes well with a variety of international cuisines and support the new trend away from the over-oaked whites that have dominated the international wine scene. In fact, it is in the category of white wine that many experts say Greece will be hard to compete with. The red varieties also show character and typicity and do not suffer from excessive manipulation. The native reds combine fruit and earthy aromas with firm acidities that lend themselves to the production of many different styles of wine that range from fresh, pleasing, aromatic reds and roses to extraordinarily complex, full-bodied wines with long aging potential.

### Food-Friendly Greek Wines

Greek cuisine is based on fresh ingredients, simply prepared. It is this type of cuisine that has influenced the style of wines that are now being produced in Greece-- wines that are subtle, yet complex--designed to compliment food instead of overpowering it. Greeks make wines with moderate levels of alcohol that complement food rather than trying to dominate the palate. The synergy between food and wine is a prerequisite and Greek wines achieve this by their sheer elegance, their texture, the ability to refresh one's palate and their complex, deep, but never overblown, flavor profiles. Food-friendliness, a more moderate level of alcohol and utter drinkability are becoming more important to today's consumer and this is exactly what Greeks have been expecting from a decent glass of wine for centuries. Ultimately, these are the reasons that Greek wine is a good match to virtually all cuisines around the world, not just Greek food.

In Greece there has always been always a holistic enjoyment of food and the eating ritual. While some other cultures view meals as an obligation that can be taken care of on the road, Greeks love the preparation of a meal, cooking and tasting different foods. Human contact and discussion around the dinner table has been the staple of family life for generations and food is always accompanied by wine. You will rarely see Greeks eating food without wine on the table or enjoying a glass of wine without something to eat along with it.

### Quality to Price Ratio

Another positive aspect that Greek wines currently offer is their excellent value. Because of relatively higher costs in the production of Greek wine, they will never be inexpensive enough to compete at the bottom end of the market, but their top quality makes them an outstanding value for the quality they represent. The majority of Greek wines still fall within the \$15 to \$30 price range and it is in this category that they are very competitive. Wines from more well established wine regions around the world offer wines of similar quality that are often 2-3 times the price.

## Challenges for Greek Wine

- The negative publicity that Greece has been receiving worldwide for the past year and a half due to its difficult economic and financial problems.
- Awareness: One of the primary challenges for Greek wine is their lack of awareness. There is no brand recognition for Greek wine, so Greek wine is not a top of mind when someone is about to make a purchase. In retail stores, wines are most often presented by country of origin. Because of uneven distribution it is difficult to find enough good Greek wines to create a separate category in stores, so they are usually found in the "Other" or Eastern European wine categories.
- Distribution: Another primary challenge for Greek producers is increasing their distribution network for those that already have it and finding distribution for many that are still trying to enter the market. Virtually all of the Greek producers initially entered the market with small mom & pop style Greek importers who generally lacked the technical knowledge of the wines they were trying to sell and also sold (and more often) focused mainly on other Greek food products such as olive oil and cheese. These importers were relegated mainly to selling within the Greek communities and were unable to speak the language of the new style, well-educated sommeliers in the mainstream market. There has been some progress made in the last 5 years as we are seeing a new trend of well-established American importers and distributors adding Greek wines to their portfolios.
- Negative image of Greek wine: The devastation of WW II and the Greek civil war took its toll on the Greek wine industry and the first wines to be exported in the 1960s and 1970s were inexpensive, often oxidized wines that helped create a bad image for Greek wine. In addition, (although it now represents only a small amount of the wine produced and consumed in Greece), Retsina, the pine flavored wine from Greece, has been another obstacle to overcome, mainly in the older generation of wine drinkers. On a more positive note, the younger generation of wine drinkers has almost no image of Greek wine, since they have not been exposed to Retsina or the cheaper wines that were being exported years ago. So, there is an opportunity to introduce the modern wines of high quality now being produced by Greek wineries to new generations of wine drinkers.
- Language and Labeling: Greek wines face the same challenge of introducing a new language to wine consumers that other wine regions around the world must overcome. Greek wine labels for the export

markets are often confusing and intimidating with too much information, mixed messages and sometimes include Greek wording. The French, Italians, Germans and many others have overcome this challenge by education and making good wine.

- Handling of wine inventory: Many Greek wines, especially the whites and roses, are meant to be drunk fresh or within the first year of their release. Because of the lower volume of Greek wines being sold in retail shops, the bottles are often left on the shelves beyond their optimum drinking age and when these wines are finally bought and consumed, do not show well and add to the negative image of Greek wines. Another challenge for producers and their importers is making sure the wines are shipped in climate-controlled containers.

### **3. Positive Attributes of Greek Wine**

Authenticity/Originality: Greek wine has an excellent story to tell. The Greeks may not have invented wine, but they did create the first culture of wine+ many thousands of years ago where wine was (and still is) an integral part of everyday life. There are unique and interesting stories to tell about the tradition of winemaking in Greece by combining the old with the new in a way that presents a fresh image for Greek wine. When designing a promotional campaign we need to keep away from folklore stereotypes that are often used to promote all facets of Greek culture.

- Beauty/History/Culture: Greece is already known for its breathtaking beauty, ancient history and a sophisticated culture that has had a profound influence on the development of Western civilization. Greece is also one of the most popular and sought after travel destinations in the world. Greece is the only major travel destination that is not associated with winemaking and this needs to be ameliorated.
- Boutique Production: The majority of Greek wineries are small boutique style wineries with low production, a positive attribute with consumers. Greek wines should try to make a strong connection to being high quality, small scale, boutique style+ wines that are associated with uniqueness and authenticity.
- New World vs. Old World: Greece combines the best of both worlds. They exhibit the intense fresh fruit which is considered an attribute of New World Wines, but also have the structure, acidity and minerality that are characteristic of the Old world.

- Mediterranean Diet: Its top of mind in the world of gastronomy and the basis for the Mediterranean diet is Greece. The Mediterranean diet can be used as one vehicle in the promotion of Greek wine as it has been used for the promotion of Italian wines.
- Gastronomy: Greek cuisine in top North American metropolitan cities is also enjoying a renaissance in mainstream restaurants, which bodes well for Greek wine. Traditional Greek dishes are becoming popular in non-Greek restaurants. These restaurants provide a growing base of non-Greek restaurants that will be open to serving Greek wines to compliment their menus.
- High Quality: Greek wines are consistently achieving high ratings in a broad range of well known trade magazines which is additional support for the image of quality wine being produced in Greece.

### **Past and Current Marketing Activities**

The first coordinated national campaign to promote Greek wine in the US and Canada began in 2003 and was funded privately by a group of participating wineries known as All About Greek Wine. Because of budget restrictions education and awareness activities were focused mainly on media and trade with only very targeted consumer efforts. Activities included annual trade tastings of the participating wineries in major markets such as New York, San Francisco, Chicago, Washington DC, Atlanta, Toronto and Montreal. During these years, the wineries also participated at Food & Wine Magazine's Classic in Aspen and the Epcot International Food & Wine Festival and occasionally at consumer events in Boston, Washington DC and New York. Annual trade and media visits to the major Greek wine producing regions were also included each year. Trade and media contacts were cultivated during the year as much as budgets would allow. In 2006 the private initiative partnered with the National Interprofessional Organisation of the Wine & Vine and the Hellenic Foreign Trade Board, a Greek government agency, to apply and receive European Union subsidies for a 3-year program called Wonderful Wines. This program ran through 2009 and used the moniker of Wines from Greece. In addition to the yearly trade tastings in major cities and Greek winery visits, Wonderful Wines included advertising in major wine and food publications. In 2009 a strategic plan for Greek wine was commissioned by the Greek wine sector that is now being used as the basis for the current 3 year European Union program (Common Market Organisation) using the moniker of New Wines of Greece (see attached strategic plan) The New Wines of Greece campaign includes all of the same activities of the previous programs in addition to the following activities: 1) Greek Wine Bureau for North America with additional

personnel based in New York, 2) New Wines of Greece portal ([www.newwinesofgreece.com](http://www.newwinesofgreece.com)) including Social Media Marketing, 3) Marketing support for NWOOG Website and SMM activities, 4) Creation of a 45 minute promotional video of the major Greek wine producing regions and a 45 promotional video for China market 5) Monthly newsletters to trade and media. The New Wines of Greece campaign, is beginning the final year of its 3-year EU subsidized program that will run from the fall of 2015 until 2017

## **Target Audience**

Focus on top 6-10 beverage markets in the US as well as Ontario and Quebec.

Consumer Target:

1) Millennials: Consumers in the 18 to 30, who are more curious, experimental and thus open to exploring new regions and trying new grape varieties. They follow the latest trends and looking for the next %cool thing+.

2) Women (25-64 yrs) and men (30 to 64 yrs) who are in constant search of new ways to broaden their horizons, who are creative, flexible and confident. Who are passionately seeking unconventional experiences, taking pleasure in a journey of knowledge and self-advancement. Towards more educated consumers with higher disposable incomes.

## **Campaign Goals**

Increase awareness by nurturing the image of Greek wine as unique, authentic, original, high quality, low production, boutique-style, with good value for quality.

With the resurgence of the Greek wine industry, try to position Greece as the next %up-and-coming+wine-producing region of the world.