

# VASSALTIS POST

Quartely edition

Editor in Chief @quirkycork



## Experience the culinary delights of the new tasting room menu!

We all love wine but experiencing it with well-paired food elevates even the best wines.

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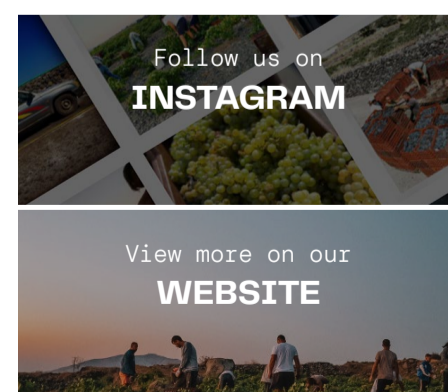
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# Welcome to the first edition of Vassaltis Post

Dear Friends,

It is with great pleasure that I welcome you to our first Vassaltis newsletter! Ever since our first vintage a lot of you have been following us closely, filing us with your love for our wines and your appreciation for what we do.

As we grow, we do not want to lose this feeling of community, a closely knit group of friends and family. We also want you to know we appreciate you being by our side and supporting us since the early days when Vassaltis was relatively unknown.

The idea of a newsletter has been in the works for some time; only to be accelerated by the pandemic. This is not about spamming you or overwhelming you with endless emails. This is a quarterly newsletter through which I'm hoping you will feel closer to the winery and know what's going on with us.

The content will range from our news (read about my trip to London!); sharing some of our highlights with you, to giving you a little insight into what's happening in the vineyards and winery throughout the year. You are going to hear first about our new product and vintage releases and last, (but certainly not least!). I am looking

forward to using this newsletter as a way to give you access to some rare, old, and unreleased vintages and present some special offers to you.

**Our goal is not to have a one-sided conversation. We want this to be interactive and to hear back from you!**

What would you like to read about?

Send us your questions! You will also notice that this is not a standalone effort. It is another step towards fulfilling our vision for Vassaltis. Along with it, you will see a friends & family club with some great benefits, an upgraded website, enhanced social media and even nine awesome Spotify playlists to listen to, while you sip on our wines! Stay tuned!

I hope that you will enjoy this newsletter and getting to know us better. **Once again, the team and I would like to thank you for all the love and support you've shown us throughout the years.**

Yours,  
Yannis V. Valambous ●



This edition's most popular photo comes from our July full moon event at Loggia wine Bar in Sifnos!

## Experience the culinary delights of the new tasting room menu!

**We all love wine but experiencing it with well-paired food elevates even the best wines.** At Vassaltis, we want your experience to go beyond simple cheese and crackers with wine. In our tasting room, we offer our guests multiple options from small bites to full degustation menus.

Our chef Alex and his team create magic in the kitchen with seasonal ingredients that highlight our wines. Perhaps the best part is that you won't find any complicated foods here. Our goal is to inspire you to go home and recreate these flavors in your own kitchens...and eat them with some Vassaltis wines!  
Guests may choose from four different main experience options.

### FLIGHTS & BITES:

Three different flights with seasonal bites that perfectly pair with each wine!



- Vassaltis Tasting  
Includes 5 wines (PetNet, Nassitis, Santorini, Santorini Barrel Aged, and Vassanos)
- Assyrtiko Expressions  
Includes 4 wines (Santorini, Gramina, Santorini Barrel Aged, and Plethora)
- Grand Vassaltis Tasting

Includes 5 wines (Aidani, Gramina, Santorini Barrel Aged Late Release, Mavrotragano, and Plethora)

### SEASONAL LUNCH MENU:

- 3-course meal paired with wine - and if you can't decide what you want, the tasting room experts will help put together a meal for you!

### DEGUSTATION MENUS:

- Vassaltis degustation  
A 4-course meal with dishes from the winery's own chef paired with Vassaltis wines
- Private degustation menu  
This 5-course meal is the epitome of culinary wine pairing!

### MEET THE WINEMAKER:

After a tour of the winery by one of Vassaltis's winemakers who will answer all your questions about the winery and Santorini's wines, you will enjoy the 4-course Vassaltis degustation menu.

We look forward to sharing this new experience with you. Γεια μας!

ALWAYS THE RIGHT SPOT AT THE RIGHT TIME. THIS IS PINK SOPHIA MARIA.

## Restaurant Presentation: Pink Sophia Maria

On the walk along the Caldera from Fira to Imerovigli you will find a bistro that is always the right spot at the right time. This is Pink Sophia Maria.

Created by Daphne and Makis, the creative forces behind award-winning The Vasilicos sister hotel nearby, Pink Sophia Maria illustrates how honest food does not need to be fancy or incorporate esoteric ingredients to be good. The café presents simple dishes that highlight fresh ingredients and flavors. The experience here is that of a Greek kafeneio: small mezze, a thimble of tsipouro, or a coffee with glyko tou koutaliou, the famous Greek spoon sweets - a little corner where time stands still for a bit while you catch your breath and enjoy the view.

In the morning, the comprehensive brunch menu is international in feel but quite Greek in execution, a delicate culinary exploration of Greece that still feels familiar. Moving towards lunchtime, out come fresh mezzes, Greek delicacies and dishes paired with selected Greek wines under the breezy shade of the pergola.



Later this summer, Pink Sophia Maria looks forward to inviting you to experience its wine-paired dinner menu.

For this, Yannis Kourtesis, of The Vasilicos fame, will be doing what he does best: his dishes combine uncomplicated Greek ingredients that respectfully bring out the flavors and aromas hidden in the wine. The food, the wine, and the atmosphere blend together in a way that makes magic happen.

You won't find a cheap house wine on this menu. The wine list pays homage to the wines from the bistro's sister winery Vassaltis Vineyards, complimented by bottles from around Greece including red wines and well-recognized international grape varieties to offer more familiar options. However, according



to the team at Pink Sophia Maria, "...our visitors have shown us that they are quite happy to go native!" And who could blame them?

Daphne and Makis are themselves consummate hosts who enjoy those moments with friends when the wine is plentiful, when the food on the table is authentic and made with love, and the surroundings show intention. When you visit the bistro, you very much become one of their guests.

If you're wondering how the deli got such a delightfully eccentric name; it was a promise kept. When she was just two years old, Daphne and Makis's daughter Sophia Maria loved the color pink and her father promised that if he ever had his own place, he would name it Pink Sophia Maria. She's 13 now and maybe no longer loves pink so much, but that dedication is just one more facet to this jewel of a bistro. And the forces behind this jewel put extra love into the details to ensure their visitors' experience here is perfection. From elegant food to wine pairings, to the olive oil you can buy at the deli, made from their very

the olive oil you can buy at the deli, made from their very own 355-year-old, adopted olive tree.

Be it a coffee with oat milk or a cold, artisanal IPA from Santorini's own Ftelos brewery, and sheltered spot to recharge, Pink Sophia Maria anticipates your needs almost before you think of them. Conjured up almost by magic, the café is, on the one hand, a well-designed study in honest food and curated simplicity, and on the other, whatever you need it to be ●



# Salinity in wine

## HAVE YOU EVER HEARD SOMEONE DESCRIBE A WINE AS BEING SALINE?



Photo by charlesdeluvio on Unsplash

Notes of sea spray, salt water, seashell, etc. often come up when describing wines from Santorini, especially Assyrtiko. But what does that mean? If someone describes a wine as “saline” or “salty” does that mean there’s actual salt in the wine??

### No, no one is adding salt to the wine! How then, does the flavor get there?

Much like its cousin, minerality, salinity in wine and exactly how it gets there is a debated topic. It is most often associated with the proximity of vineyards to sea, sand, and salt air. Many such wines originate from grapes grown near or within coastal regions. The theory holds that sea breezes and rains deposit chlorides, phosphates, and sulfates, as well as potassium,

sodium, calcium, and other salts onto vines, grapes, and the soil. Ted Vance, owner of US-based The Source Imports likens this affect to a person swimming in the ocean. If you’ve ever swum in salt water, you know that residual salt sticks to you until you wash it off. Without heavy rains or irrigation to wash off the grapes, they [the grapes] bring the salt in with them to fermentation tanks where it can dissolve into grape must.

Soils also play a part in wine salinity. Santorinian soils, for example, are layers of volcanic ash, pumice, sand and a huge amount of rocks with different elements such as Silicon, Copper, Sulfur, Zinc, Iron and much more. They tend to be very alkaline with sodium carbonate, a water-soluble salt.

And to further the argument that proximity to coastal waters increases salinity in wine... salt spray near coastlines can also cause salts to build up in the soil.

Usually, the wines described as being “salty” are those made from grapes with a high acid content. Those drying and zingy feelings from high acid wines intensify that salty sensation. Coincidentally, seaside vineyards often produce grapes with a level of acidity. These areas have what we call “high diurnal temperature swings” which means that while it’s hot during the day, the closeness to the sea keeps the evening temperatures cooler. This allows grapes to ripen more slowly and therefore retain a higher amount of acidity. Santorini is one of the world’s well-know “salty”

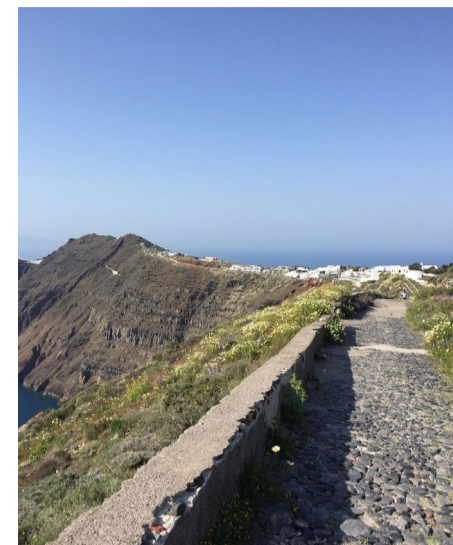
wine regions; specifically, for its Assyrtiko. While Assyrtiko is most often associated with Santorini; but it also grows on the Greek mainland in Nemea (in the Peloponnese). One Santorini-based winery did a study of the difference in the Assyrtiko it grows on Santorini and the Assyrtiko it grows in its Nemea vineyards. The test results showed that the “mainland sample had 19.4 milligrams per liter of sodium, while the two vintages of Santorini wine held 54 and 68.5 milligrams per liter—on average, a 216 percent increase in sodium concentration.”

Okay, blah, blah, blah science. How does that all translate for you when you’re drinking wine?

First of all, saline-forward wines have a tang. For real, think about the last time you were near the sea or even the last time you worked out a lot and got sweaty! Remember how licking your lips imparted the salt from them. That’s the tang. Think big old salt crystals marinated in tart lemon juice and you’re there.

Also, consider how you use salt while cooking. Adding just the right amount of salt enhances flavor. It highlights sweetness, brings out fruit, and helps cut through the fat and tannin in food. Salinity in wine does the same thing for its flavors all while giving them a mouthwatering, tangy energy.

Do you have to know all of this to enjoy wine? No, of course not. But maybe you now have a better understanding of one of the aspects of wine that makes Santorini wines so special ●



### Traveler Tip: Hiking from Fira to Oia

There is no end of things to do on Santorini from sunbathing on the beaches, wine tasting at one of the many wineries, shopping, and of course, taking in the amazing beauty of the island. One of the best ways to experience the latter is by following the trail from Santorini’s capital Fira to Oia.

From Fira you will walk through the charming villages of Firostefani (briefly passing by Pink Sophia Maria, see article on page 3!) and onto Imerovigli. Leaving them behind, your walk takes you along the famous Caldera where you can take in the spectacular views of both sides of the island. Enjoy the beautiful nature while working on your cardio! If getting in your steps for the day doesn’t appeal, concentrate instead on the endless photo opportunities!

### Descending from the Caldera into Oia during sun set is breathtaking... but the hike is beautiful at any hour of the day.

If getting in your steps for the day doesn’t appeal, concentrate instead on the endless photo opportunities!

Once you get to Oia, if you’re brave enough, you can walk down the 200 steps to Amoudi where you can enjoy a seafood dinner by the sea before (likely) arranging a cab to take you on to your next adventure.

Keep in mind that that we’re not joking about the cardio aspect of the hike! Make sure to wear trainers or sturdy sports sandals and bring a hat and sunscreen and a bottle of cold water! ●

## Vassaltis on the Road

The UK is a big fan of Vassaltis Vineyards. It is one of our largest export markets, proving that wine knows no borders, and everyone loves Assyrtiko! In May, Yannis headed to London to meet with old friends of the winery and to make new ones. But he did not go alone!

Travelling with him were several

older vintages of Vassaltis Santorini and Barrel Aged Santorini from our library. While Assyrtiko is undoubtedly the most well-known Greek variety abroad, many still haven’t had the opportunity to experience the full extent of what it can do. We all love fresh and zingy Assyrtiko, but it is also a grape capable of complexity when it takes on flavors from lees ageing, barrel, and age.

One of the highlights from his trip was the chance to share these older vintages with members from the 67 Pall Mall wine lovers club. In addition to that tasting, Yannis capped off the week by sitting down with Master of Wine, Demetri Walters to talk about Assyrtiko, Santorini, and Vassaltis Vineyards on 67 Pall Mall TV.

# We are proud to present, after five long years, our newest wine: Vassaltis Vinsanto

## WHAT IS VINSANTO... AND HOW DID IT GET ITS NAME?

On Santorini, only a small portion of wine production is dedicated to Vinsanto due to the time and expense making it requires. Even for those who make it; not all Vinsantos are created equally. Traditionally a winery might use any white or red grape it has in its vineyards to make this wine. However, only wines made with white grapes, specifically a minimum of 51% Assyrtiko blended with other native grapes like Aidani, Athiri, Katsano, Gaidouri, or Platani, can carry the PDO Vinsanto status.

Vinsanto is a wine created out of patience. First, the winemaker must allow the grapes to hang on the vine past their usual harvest date where they continue to ripen and develop sugar. Then, after finally harvesting them, grapes are laid out to dry under the sun for around two weeks; essentially creating raisins. These desiccated grapes do not give up a lot of juice (one of the many reasons Vinsanto usually carries a higher price tag), but the juice they offer is richly flavored with concentrated amounts of sugar. After vinification is complete, the wine must age for several years in a barrel.



## Several theories exist about how Vinsanto got its name.

Two prevailing theories are that the name is an abbreviation of "vino di Santorini" (wine of Santorini) or of "vino santo" (holy wine). Regardless of how it got its name, this wine has been enticing sweet lovers since around the 12th century.

**Vassaltis Vinsanto:** At Vassaltis, we craft our Vinsanto from 75% Assyrtiko blended with small amounts of Aidani and Athiri. After we harvested the grapes, we laid them out to dry in the sun for about 11 days. And to make sure that all grapes on each bunch received a good amount of sun exposure, we turned them over halfway through their drying period!



Next, we gathered all the bunches and placed them in a vertical pressing basket where we pressed them slowly and gently, getting only 40 liters of juice every day. Because this process took several days, the grapes started to ferment spontaneously spurred on by the natural yeasts present on the grapes. We let the must continue to ferment in open tanks until it reached an alcohol by volume amount of 11%.

From the fermentation tanks, we moved the wine into 225-liter French oak barrels where it rested for four and a half years. Some of the barrels we topped up as the wine inside evaporated, but not for all of them. This allowed some of the wine to develop more adding additional notes of dried fruits, toast, nuts, and dark honey to the final blend.

Did you know? Vinsanto regulations allow us to blend multiple vintages together as long as we put the newest year on the label. So, while our label says Vassaltis Vinsanto 2017, the wine is, in fact, a 50/50% blend from 2016 and 2017.

Our Vinsanto is unctuous with 226 grams per liter of residual sugar! Don't let that scare you off.

Like the well-crafted dessert wine that it is, that sugar gets balanced with a spectacular racy acidity of 8.96 g/l (or a pH of 3.16) that keeps the wine from being cloying. The nose bursts with layers of ripe orange peel, caramel, warm fresh butter, toast, honey, and dried fruits such as figs, raisins, and apricots. The palate ushers in the flavors sensed in the nose along with a refinement and balance from the play between residual sugar and the striking acidity. Pleasant viscosity and a lightly tannic sensation contributes to the wine's sense of "dryness" adding another layer of complexity that last throughout the wine's lingering finish.

Like all our wines, you don't need to wait before opening this wine. However, should you decide to cellar it for a few years, it will continue to develop in the bottle becoming thicker, darker in color, and intensifying the flavors of dried fruits, nuts, and even a hint of petrol.

Certainly, you can enjoy our Vinsanto, but you can also enhance the experience by sipping it with dried fruits, nuts, and cheese. For cheese, try something with a strong flavor profile like Roquefort, Camembert, or Kariki from Tinos ●

# Staff Interview: Artemis



Our Vassaltis Vineyards team works hard to create our wines and put together experiences for all our friends at the winery. As such, we spend a lot of time together and

have come to know one another really well. In each newsletter, we will feature an interview with one of our team in the hopes that you feel like you know us all too.

Let's get to know Artemis Kardoula, our Hospitality Manager. Whether it is taking bookings for a visit to the winery, greeting friends and guests when they arrive, managing sales in our shop, to keeping our tasting room running smoothly, Artemis brings Greek hospitality to life.

**Vassaltis Vineyards Newsletter:**  
What did you study at school?

**Artemis Kardoula:** I studied philosophy, pedagogy and psychology at the University of Athens.

**VVN:** How long have you been with Vassaltis?

**AK:** I have been working at the winery for two years now and before that I was at The Vasilicos for five years.

**VVN:** What's your favorite part of working at the winery?

**AK:** Apart from unlimited access to wines (just kidding!) I really like communicating with and talking to people from around the world about wines.

**VVN:** What got you interested in wine?

**AK:** I always had a thing for wines and when I arrived in Santorini, I fell in love!

**VVN:** What's your favorite wine of the (Vassaltis) range?

**AK:** I think my favorite one is Gramina, but as you know it's quite difficult to pick only one!

**VVN:** If you could do any other job at Vassaltis, what would you like to do?

**AK:** I could easily work in

the production area, it's very interesting following the process from grape to wine.

**VVN:** What do you like to do on the island when you're not working?

**AK:** It's always a good option to visit the restaurants on the island and explore the different flavors [in them] and wines with good friends.

**VVN:** Are there any non-Greek grapes/regions that you like?

**AK:** A glass of Cabernet Sauvignon always makes me happy.

**VVN:** What's your next trip or wine making region you'd like to visit?

**AK:** I would love to visit Chile! Hope soon!

**VVN:** If you were a grape, which grape would you be and why?

**AK:** I think I would be Aidani as it is quite flowery and a happy wine but crispy and aggressive because of the acidity ●

## Smoked eel with egg-lemon sauce and bottarga

We asked our friend Fanis Maikantis owner of Panigyri Festival Food in Fira, to cook his ideal dish to pair with Vassaltis Santorini Barrel Aged. He shared with us his recipe for smoked eel with egg-lemon sauce and bottarga.

Grab a bottle of our barrel aged Assyrtiko, give it a try, and let us know what you think!

200gr smoked eel  
250gr prepared salicornia (samphire)  
50gr bottarga  
400gr egg-lemon sauce  
Salt & pepper  
Extra virgin olive oil

### STEP 1

We blanch the Salicorn for 1 minute, strain, add salt, black pepper extra virgin olive oil, and lemon zest to taste and set to the side.

STEP 2: Egg-lemon sauce

### Ingredients:

250 gr warm vegetable broth  
70 gr egg yolks  
25 gr lemon juice  
5 gr salt  
25 gr butter cubes

Have the vegetable broth warm and ready to hand. In a big bowl combine the egg yolks and lemon juice and stir vigorously until homogenized and thickened. Next, slowly add the warmed vegetable, carefully bringing the temperature of the yolk to the temperature of the broth, until all broth is fully combined.

Season with salt and pepper to taste and then add the butter cubes while gently whisking the mixture. Set to the side.

### STEP 3

Cut the smoked eel in portions of 50 gr and warm it in a preheated oven on 220 degrees C for 2 minutes.

### STEP 4

Remove the outer part of the



bottarga, then cut in thin slices.

### STEP 5 Plating:

Use a plate that is slightly deep, such as a wide, shallow bowl.

Begin by sticking the prepared salicornia in a mound on one side

of the dish, then place the smoked eel on top of the greens.

On the other half of the plate, pour the egg-lemon sauce and add olive oil. As the final touch, randomly place 5 slices of bottarga around the plate and you are ready to serve! ●