

VASSALTIS POST

QUARTELY EDITION

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Vassaltis Showcases Its Latest Releases

Santorini Soils & Their Impact on Grapes

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A Month in South Africa

by Yiannis Papaoeconomou

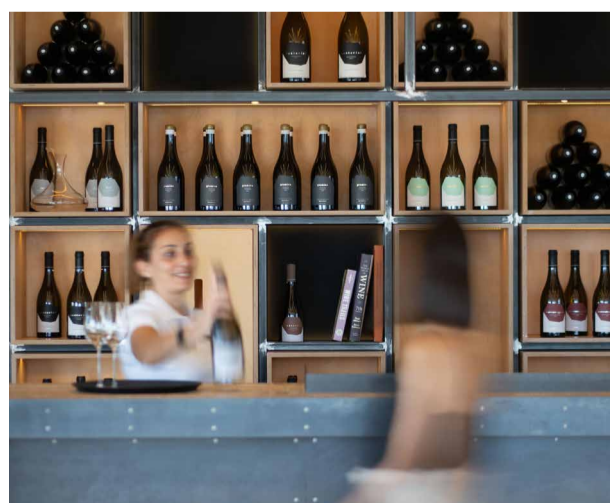
2022 was a wonderful year for our winery! After our harvest, I had the chance to visit South Africa. I landed in Cape Town on the 3rd of February and, until I returned home on the 28th my trip was solely dedicated to wine. It took me more than 10.000 km and some serious lack of sleep in order to be able to meet the personas and people that shape South African wine today. • P. 04

The Vasilicos, Caldera Heritage Suites

Santorini is a paradise of almost unimaginable beauty. How could you possibly elevate your visit here? By staying in a hotel that itself embodies the island’s spirit and is as much of a destination experience as the island itself. Welcome to The Vasilicos, Caldera Heritage Suites. • P. 05



The extraordinary growing season last year gave us grapes with greater than usual phenolic maturation which we suspected would lead to more complexity and concentration in our wines. We need no longer merely assume that; with the release of three of our 2022 wines, we now know it! Get ready to fall in love with our PetNat, Nassitis, and Santorini wines all over again. • P. 02



Tasting Room is Back!

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Making New Friends in Canada

by Yiannis Valambous

The vision that prompted the creation of Vassaltis has been the driving force behind everything we do ever since 2014 when Elias, Yiannis, and I vinified our inaugural vintage. To both create world-class wines and make them known to the world has been an integral part of this vision. • P. 06

Vassaltis Showcases Its Latest Releases



The **Nassitis 2022** features Santorini's three signature grapes, singing in perfect harmony! A blend of 50% Assyrtiko, 40% Athiri, and 10% Aidani expresses a combination of tropical and stone fruit complimented by flowers and a thread of Santorini's characteristic racy minerality.

Abv: 13%
pH: 3.21
Yield: 18,000 bottles
Suggested Retail Price: 21,10 Euros

Our Santorini always holds a special place in our hearts as the first wine we ever made. The **Santorini 2022** shows the true essence of what the island and Assyrtiko are about with aromas of basalt and mingled with ripe tropical fruits, honeysuckle, and sea spray and a showcase of salty green fruits with high levels of minerality and acidity on the palate.

ABV: 14%
pH: 3.05
Yield: 49,000 bottles
Suggested Retail Price: 31 Euros

Who said sparkling wines are only for special occasions? Our **PetNat**, made with 100% Savvatiano, is a tasty, refreshing sparkling wine suitable for everyday pleasure. Its fruity and toasty flavors, coupled with moderate alcohol and cheerful bubbles make it an appropriate wine to sip as an aperitif or pair with light foods.

ABV: 12%
pH: 3.38
Yield: 4,700 bottles
Suggested Retail Price: 16,20 Euros

Every year, Vassaltis celebrates the release of two different collections of wines: the latest harvest - in this case the three wines from 2022 - and those wines that have been sleeping in the cellar until we believe that they

are perfected. Normally, they go to market at different times during the year. This year, for the first time, we are releasing both collections at the same time. In addition to the new 2022 wines above, we are pleased to also announce the release of five wines from the 2018, 2020, and 2021 vintages.

The **Santorini Barrel Aged 2021** defeats criticism that Assyrtiko shouldn't be aged in oak to preserve its volcanic characteristics. This 100% Assyrtiko wine ages in 3rd use, 500 liter French oak barrels on its lees which does not mask but enhances the beauty of the grape.

ABV: 14%
pH: 3.05
Yield: 3.756 bottles
Suggested Retail Price: 37 Euros

Our **Santorini Barrel Aged 2018 Late Release** follows the same winemaking and barrel maturation process as the 2021. Where it differs is in the cellar additional length of time resting in the cellar, thus the 'Late Release' name! The extra time in the cellar adds more layers of complexity to be discovered in every glass.

ABV: 13.5%
pH: 3.1
Yield: 553 bottles
Suggested Retail Price: 62 Euros

Made from a single vineyard of 100% Assyrtiko, **Gramina 2021** has spent the last 12 months maturing on its lees adding depth and roundness to Assyrtiko's racy personality and resulting in an astonishingly elegant wine with dense citrus and stone fruits wrapped in pastry with an intense mineral and smokey character.

ABV: 14.2%
pH: 3.18
Yield: 2.684 bottles
Suggested Retail Price: 65 Euros

Vassaltis **Plethora 2020** is a wine worth waiting for. The combination of overripe grapes, maturation in partially filled barrels, gentle oxidation, and a total of three years ageing (one in oak, two in bottle) create a wine of great sophistication and concentration with citrus peel, salty fruits, flowers, dried herbs, a broad texture laced through with briney, racy acidity.

ABV: 15%
pH: 3.03
Yield: 2.400 bottles
Suggested Retail Price: 89,30 Euros

Santorini is not only for white grapes as Vassaltis **Mavrotragano 2020** proves. Full-bodied with big tannins and equally exuberant aromas of red berries, spice, and mineral, it provides a perfect counterpart to the island's racy white wines.

ABV: 13%
pH: 3.28
Yield: 2.690 bottles
Suggested Retail Price: 37 Euros ●

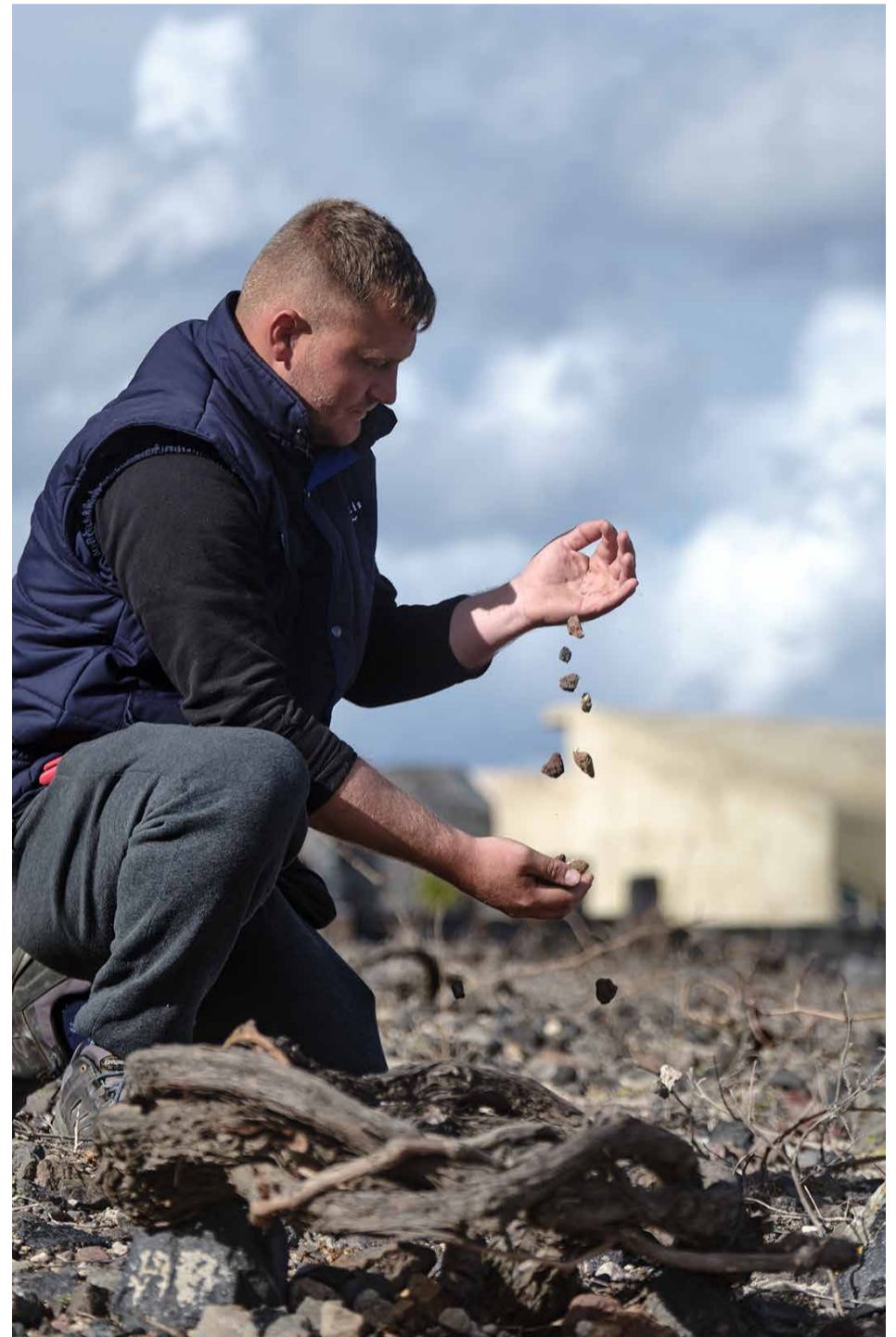
Santorini Soils & Their Impact on Grapes

Volcanic soils, like those found on Santorini, are generally thought among wine lovers (a thought perpetuated by wine writers no less) to create wines that are “mineral” or “linear” or somehow distinct from other wines. But what is it that makes these soils so special?

First, it is important to note that, while we use “volcanic soils” as an umbrella term, not all are created in the same way. Some come from lava flows, others are the result of rocks explosively ejected during an eruption, others contain or are covered in ash, etcetera.

There is so much diversity in volcanic soils. That, combined with other factors like different climates, slopes, grape variety, etc makes it difficult to pinpoint a single signature for “volcanic wines”. If such a thing can even be done. That does not, however, in any way diminish how special these wines are.

Santorini is one of the islands in a semicircular archipelago of volcanic islands that have been constantly subjected to volcanic eruptions since ancient times. The soil composition, born from extremely violent eruptions over the centuries includes andesite, rhyolite, tuff, and obsidian covered in volcanic ash. The pH levels of the soils are high (meaning they are low in acidity), low in organic materials, and shallow. These extreme soils lead to lower yields and smaller, concentrated berries because there are less nutrients to support large crops, and vines have to grow deep and strong to seek nutrients.



What does it mean to have concentrated grapes and how does it affect the wine they make? While water is necessary to make grapes grow, it is in many ways a double-edged sword because too much water leads to swollen grapes that have more water than flavor. Concentrated grapes are smaller and contain less water which equals less ripe fruit flavors and more acidity and texture compounds. These grapes often lead to wines with a character more savory with salty flavors than fruity.

Regardless of whether or not we in the wine community use “volcanic soils” too cavalierly, we can all agree that the wines created in them are indeed special. The next time you sip a wine from Santorini, think about all the elements including the complex soil, the breezes off the Aegean Sea, the hot Mediterranean sun, the grape variety, and of course the winemaker that went into creating it. ●

A Month in South Africa

by Yiannis Papaoeconomou



2022 was a wonderful year for our winery! After our harvest, I had the chance to visit South Africa. I landed in Cape Town on the 3rd of February and, until I returned home on the 28th my trip was solely dedicated to wine. It took me more than 10.000 km and some serious lack of sleep in order to be able to meet the personas and people that shape South African wine today.

I had the chance to be guided by Ian Naudé, one of the most talented and noble winemakers of this wonderful country, and who, after this trip, I have the honor to call a dear friend of mine. I received such a generous and hearty welcome from him, but most of all, he gave me the chance to see South Africa through his eyes while he rediscovered his own country through mine.

I spent most of my time visiting wineries and helping harvest for some winemakers I highly appreciate such as Chris Alheit, owner and head winemaker of Alheit Vineyards; Restless River's owner and head winemaker, Craig Wessels; Emul Ross, head winemaker at Hamilton Russell, as well as Peter-Allan Finlayson winemaker at Gabrielskloof & Crystallum. Even though harvest is the busiest time of the year, each and every one of them spent time with me, tasting their wines with me and explaining the story behind every label. We had such interesting conversations, and they were more than willing to answer all my questions.

While in Stellenbosch, I had the chance to spend a whole day in the vineyards of Spier Wine Farm. Along with Bennie Liebenberg, their highly experienced vineyard manager, we visited their 70ha planted to Chenin, Merlot, Pinotage, Semillon, Sauvignon Blanc, Cabernet Franc, Cabernet Sauvignon, and Syrah. We also visited another plot of 45yr old vines covering 20ha in Durbanville. Their viticulture precision is so legit and guided by a "keep it simple" mindset. I also met Bernhard Bredell, owner and winemaker of Scions of Sinai. He is the perfect example of the new generation of winemakers in South Africa. A real vigneron and an exceptional person who knows how to encapsulate both terroir and personality in a bottle. The exact same feelings occurred to me, when I met Sakkie Mouton, maybe THE most talented vigneron of his generation. He managed to put Vredendal on the wine map; the same as Ian Naudé and Eben Saddle once did with Swartland.

The key to the success of Swartland is Eben Saddle and Adi Badenhorst whom I got to meet. They have both proven that Swartland is a region that can give terroir-driven fine wines. We could say that in a way, they became the "guardians" of their region by helping those who are passionate and committed enough to make fine wines and by keeping away those who are not. Hard work, transparency, simplicity, and lots of love are the basic traits one needs in order to stand next

to them; and younger winemakers like Jasper Wickens will ensure Swartland's reputation skyrockets.

Another remarkable moment of my trip was the day I spent at the University of Elsenburg. We talked about Santorini and Assyrtiko for more than two hours. We tasted some of our [Vassaltis] wines -that I brought especially for the students- and I was astonished by the focus and specialized questions they all asked. They made me realize that, with such a high educational level, one thing is for sure; the already elevated quality of South African wines will only get even better in the near future when this new generation of winemakers are active.

The one thing I can't fail to mention, is my visit to Jordan winery in Stellenbosch. Four years ago, Gary Jordan, planted 3ha of Assyrtiko; This year, I was lucky enough to have the chance to help him and his winemaker, Sjaak Nelson, through their second harvest. Their first vintage of Assyrtiko set the standard so high that, one thing is for sure; the future of South Africa's Assyrtiko is certainly so very bright!!

On the 25th of February, we arranged a tasting at their winery. We started with a vertical flight of our Vassaltis Santorini (2022-2020-2017) and then tasted another flight of Gramina 2019, Santorini barrel aged 2017, Plethora 2020, and our new red wine label, Kaloupi 2020. All our guests were South African winemakers, and it felt like in their mind, Assyrtiko is a new challenge; a mission waiting to be accomplished. A variety well-adapted to their terroir, that waits to stand out of the crowd and become an international sensation.

To sum up, I would like to conclude with some of my thoughts. The terminology we use to describe wine helps us to communicate the character of a wine to readers. I wish there were such terminology for travel so I could better share some of the magic I experienced and help you appreciate what I did while in South Africa. How wonderful and full of potential that country is! Maybe the only way to get a better taste of it is to try some the amazing wines its people make. People who are inextricably linked with the terroir and serve its needs, not vice versa. ●



Tasting Room is Back!

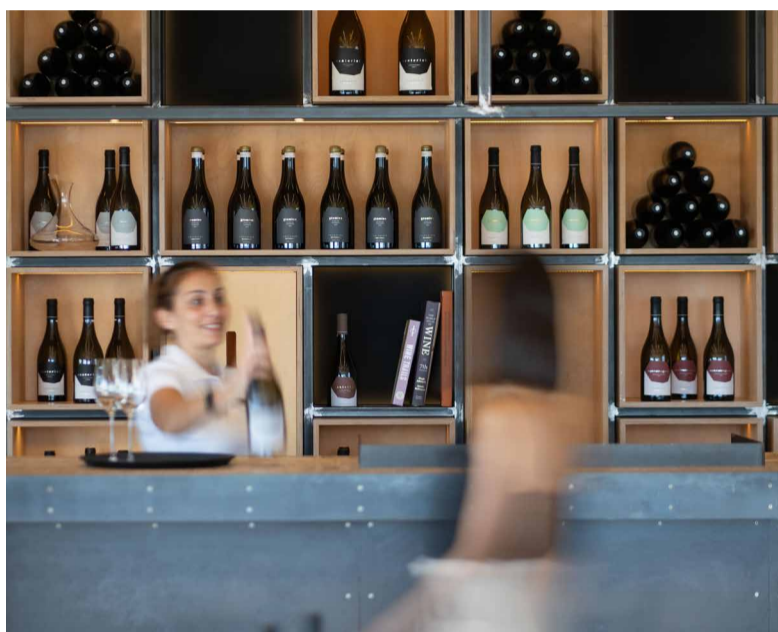
We are excited to announce our winery has been opened to visitors on April 7! We are thrilled to be able to host old friends again and welcome new ones to our tasting room. Over the (quiet) winter period, we designed a number of changes! Firstly, we are in a position to once again be able to offer the full line up of our wines, as this year sees the 2019 Vassanos being released as well as a great Aidani from the 2022 vintage. Of course, this would be incomplete without the relevant pairings. We have created a couple of new dishes for our menu as well as re-introduced some all-time favorites like the popcorn calamari!

Apart from the a la carte menu, or the coming season, we offer three tasting flight options:

- Assyrtiko Expressions gives a crash course on this incredibly versatile grape that calls Santorini its spiritual home.
- Grand Vassaltis offers a selection of our rare wines and vintages.
- Cellar Tour gives behind the scenes glimpse at our winery coupled with a tasting in the cellar.

However, the most exciting news is that for the first time ever, Vassaltis will be open for dinner service 3 times a week! Our dinner seating will be for a limited number of guests, offering five-course wine and food degustation meal.

Don't forget to check our website for full details and booking information. We look forward to seeing you soon! ●



The Vasilicos, Caldera Heritage Suites

Santorini is a paradise of almost unimaginable beauty. How could you possibly elevate your visit here? By staying in a hotel that itself embodies the island's spirit and is as much of a destination experience as the island itself. Welcome to The Vasilicos, Caldera Heritage Suites.

A boutique hotel run by Daphne Valambous, The Vasilicos at once retains its authentic Greek summer experience, created with intention and love, while offering guests the opportunity to relax – in luxury – in the comfort and safety of a home. While the island has thousands of accommodation options; many are simple, soulless repetitions of other hotel rooms from other cities that are merely a place to lay your head. But at The Vasilicos, with an eye towards bespoke details and services, Daphne has created a hotel unlike any other.

Each room has a private terrace and sweeping views of the Caldera. You can relax here by the

pool with a book from your room's own library, curated in cooperation with Atlantis Books or gather up the Vlychada beach bag and Sun & A Leaf beach towels available for guests' use and head to one of the island's beaches. When you've had too much sun, return to your elegantly appointed room where you can enjoy the hand-made soaps in your hammam-like bathroom, book an in-room massage, or just unwind and take in the one-of-a-kind, locally crafted ceramics crown the hotel's décor.

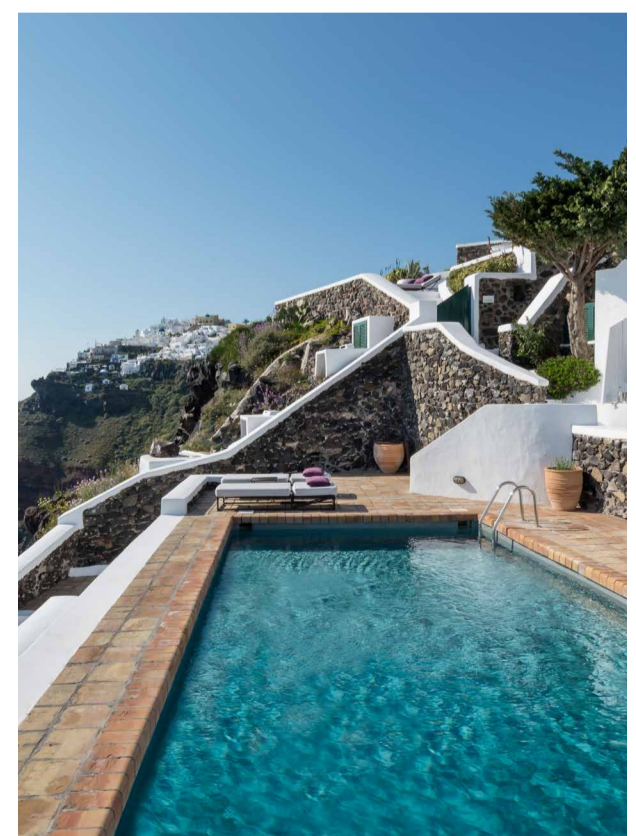
And then there's the food!

The Vasilicos caters unique dining options for its guests. Savor the morning quiet over an elaborate breakfast spread filled with fresh, seasonal ingredients. Cap off your day with sunset drinks and an intimate, candlelit dinner. The men and women at The Vasilicos take special care to provide the best culinary experience on the island because of their own passions for wine and food.

While the hotel does not have a cellar, that doesn't stop it from being a wine lover's paradise. The Vasilicos and Vassaltis share a special relationship, evident in the wine list and

preferential treatment for guests when visiting the winery.

Come to Santorini and fall in love with the romance of the island; and come home to a sanctuary where the refreshing aroma of summery basil scents the air. ●



Making New Friends in Canada

by Yiannis Valambous



included a presentation to the NPW team, a full day of restaurant visits, a meeting with the Liquor Control Board of Ontario, (LCBO the state monopoly and largest wine merchant globally), and a masterclass to about 15 sommeliers. For all of them, it was the first encounter with Vassaltis and, thankfully, a very positive one!

In Quebec, our wines are represented by Rezin Selection, another agent with a stellar portfolio known for delivering interesting wines to the Quebecois market for over 30 years. The story in Montreal was quite similar with restaurant visits, a masterclass with trade members, and a meeting with the province's monopoly the Societe des Alcools du Quebec (SAQ) on the agenda. As an added bonus, I attended a wine dinner with selected clients on my last evening there; ensuring the trip ended on a high.

All in all, the trip was a big success. Assyrtiko is barely known as a variety in Canada and there is great potential for it to capture wine lovers' attention there. It fills my heart to see such a warm welcome for our wines in such distant markets where competition is so high. It is a big reward for the whole Vassaltis team who have been working tirelessly since Day 1 to see the vision that inspired us materialize.

P.S. A big thank you to both the NPW and Rezin teams for the effort they put in to deliver perfectly organized itineraries and for making me feel so welcome. ●

The vision that prompted the creation of Vassaltis has been the driving force behind everything we do ever since 2014 when Elias, Yiannis, and I vinified our inaugural vintage. To both create world-class wines and make them known to the world has been an integral part of this vision. Every time I come across a wine lover abroad, who hasn't tried Greek wines before, I get the feeling I'm representing the whole Greek wine industry. And, as they say, you don't get a second chance to make a first impression.

With that in mind, I decided to travel to Canada in February to showcase our wines to wine lovers and professionals. These trips are extremely important as it gives people a chance to taste the wines (and on some occasions, limited bottlings or older vintages) and for us to share our story, our passion, and our vision.

Nicholas Pearce wines (NPW) represents our wines in the Ontario province. NPW is a very dynamic agency focused on fine wines. My visit to Toronto

