

# VASSALTIS POST

QUARTERLY EDITION

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## Vassaltis Scores High with James Suckling and Robert Parker

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# 10<sup>th</sup>

a n n i v e r s a r y



r e l e a s e

## The 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Release

With 2024 in the rear-view mirror, one of the moments we look back on is the completion of our 10th harvest. It's not a big number and most wineries have been around for much longer than we have, but it is still a milestone. In fact, what makes this such an important milestone is that the first years are always the hardest. As with any business, trying to set up, grow, and establish your product, without any compromises, is challenging enough. Add to this, sky-rocketing grape prices and climate change, COVID, and tariffs, it has been anything but smooth sailing over the first ten years. That we persevered and triumphed through all these hardships gives us even more reason to celebrate. • P. 02

### Exploring Mandilaria

Santorini, as a wine region, has both never been affected by phylloxera and also is fortunate to possess rich varietal potential. Its own-rooted vineyards consist of mixed plantings of grape varieties that have adapted to the extreme conditions of the area—varieties we respect primarily for this reason. • P. 04

### Assyrtiko in Stellenbosch

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# The 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Release

*by Yannis Valambous*

With 2024 in the rear-view mirror, one of the moments we look back on is the completion of our 10th harvest. It's not a big number and most wineries have been around for much longer than we have, but it is still a milestone. In fact, what makes this such an important milestone is that the first years are always the hardest. As with any business, trying to set up, grow, and establish your product, without any compromises, is challenging enough. Add to this, sky-rocketing grape prices and climate change, COVID, and tariffs, it has been anything but smooth sailing over the first ten years. That we persevered and triumphed through all these hardships gives us even more reason to celebrate.

To mark the occasion, we will be launching our "10th" campaign. A series of events, tastings, and releases that will take us back in time to the very beginning. A time to pause and contemplate where we started. The essence of the campaign is to celebrate two things: The fact that we got this far while sticking to our core values, and that we couldn't have done it without your support. Oh, and the fact that we have a lot of great wines to drink!

We have prepared a few events which will unfold as the year progresses. The first is a major photography exhibition at the winery featuring the works of iconic photographer, Robert McCabe. McCabe travelled through Greece in

the 1950s and 1960s capturing Greece's post war hardship in an incredibly vivid way. On Santorini, he took some fascinating pictures that will help us travel back in time to see the unsoiled, virgin island. We are planning to show his works from April 15th through to November 6th when the tasting room closes, and we would love to welcome you.

Another way we will celebrate the occasion, is to release some back vintages. Our Wine Club members will have exclusive access to magnum bottles from the 2016 to 2022 vintages, while normal sized bottles will be served at a number of fine dining spots around Greece, and the world. A list of the restaurants participating in the campaign will be available later on during the year and you will be able to enjoy them there with some exceptional food pairings.

In the winery of course we will also be celebrating. For those who would like to delve into the history of Vassaltis, we will make two anniversary flights with back vintages available. Finally, a dinner for Wine Club members and friends is on the cards in autumn. We hope that you will grab the opportunity to visit us at either of the two events. We would love to host you and enjoy a wine or two together. The team and I are working with a lot of excitement to make all these actions a reality, so stay tuned! ●



# Vassaltis Scores High with James Suckling and Robert Parker

While we are never in doubt about the quality of the wine we produce, it is always nice when the experts agree. Last year, we submitted a number of our wines to both James Suckling (JamesSuckling.com) and Robert Parker's The Wine Advocate (RobertParker.com). Before the year closed, we received an amazing Christmas gift, high scores from both websites!

Of the 13 total wines we submitted, all scored 90 points or higher, putting all our wines in the 'outstanding' category for both websites. What does this mean for us? And more importantly, what does this mean for you as a consumer?

For us, this is a validation of everything we try to achieve each year, especially in vintages, like 2023, that are particularly difficult. It also gives us guidance as we strive to achieve the fabled 100 points. Hopefully as a friend of Vassaltis, you already trust that we bring you only the highest quality wine possible every year. But excellent scores like these not only underpin that faith, but give those new to our wines the confidence that they are making the right choice when they select one of our wines.

## How do rating systems work?

Both James Suckling and Robert Parker use

the 100 point system developed by Parker in the early 1980s. The system is based on the American school grading system and while Parker originated the 100 point wine scoring system, Suckling is more transparent as to what makes up those points. Under his scoring system, points are awarded for each aspect of the wine:

- (up to) 15 points for color
- 25 points for aroma
- 25 points for wine structure
- 35 points for overall quality

The 100 point system has become remarkably popular over the years with a number of major (mostly American) publications using it as their scoring benchmark. Other users of the 100-point scale include: Wine-Searcher, Wine Enthusiast, Wine Spectator, Vinous, Decanter Magazine, Jamie Goode, Jeff Leve (The Wine Cellar Insider), and Wine & Spirits Magazine.

Language and scoring differ ever so slightly among its users though. For example, most score their top wines 90-94 and 95-100, whereas in Robert Parker's original system, scores are 90-95 and 96-100. Language also differs slightly with many sites labeling those 95-100 point wines as "classic" versus Parker's "Extraordinary".

## Our Scores

All the wines we submitted scored 90 points or higher, putting us well within the 'outstanding' category, wines of "exceptional complexity and character" for both James Suckling and Robert Parker.

### • James Suckling —

- Vassaltis Santorini Plethora 2021 94 PTS
- Vassaltis Santorini Plethora 2018 93 PTS
- Vassaltis Santorini Alcylene 2022 93 PTS
- Vassaltis Santorini Assyrtiko 2023 92 PTS
- Vassaltis Santorini Gramina 2022 91 PTS

### • Robert Parker —

- 2022 Vassaltis Vineyards Santorini Gramina 95 PTS
- 2022 Vassaltis Vineyards Santorini Alcylene 94+ PTS
- 2018 Vassaltis Vineyards Santorini Vinsanto 94 PTS
- 2023 Vassaltis Vineyards Santorini Assyrtiko 94 PTS
- 2022 Vassaltis Vineyards Santorini Assyrtiko 93 PTS
- 2018 Vassaltis Vineyards Santorini Assyrtiko 92 PTS
- 2022 Vassaltis Vineyards Kalupi 92 PTS
- 2023 Vassaltis Vineyards Nassitis 91 PTS
- 2021 Vassaltis Vineyards Mavrotragano 91 PTS
- 2019 Vassaltis Vineyards Mandilaria Vassanos 90 PTS





# Exploring Mandilaria

by *Yannis Papaeconomou*



Santorini, as a wine region, has both never been affected by phylloxera and also is fortunate to possess rich varietal potential. Its own-rooted vineyards consist of mixed plantings of grape varieties that have adapted to the extreme conditions of the area—varieties we respect primarily for this reason. Among them is Mandilaria, the most recent addition, which was subsidized for planting in Santorini about 50 years ago.

Mandilaria is a variety found in Crete, almost all the Aegean islands, and mainland coastal areas. Its success lies in its excellent adaptation to dry regions and its high productivity. It has a very vigorous and strong root system that dig deep to find water sources, robust foliage to protect the berries, and sturdy shoots. It is late ripening variety characterized by its compact, large berries and relatively thin skins. In Santorini, it is usually pruned using the “kouloura” method, which means the grapes are likely to touch the ground. Combined with their thin skins, this often results in damage to the fruit. On the plus side though, on Santorini, Mandilaria shows significant resistance to both powdery and downy mildew.

At Vassaltis, we harvest Mandilaria last. We sun dry some of it for the production of Kalupi, while we use the rest (of the fresh grapes) to produce Vassanos. After sorting to remove undesirable green parts, we vinify the grapes without destemming, using the semi-carbonic maceration method. Once fermentation is complete, the wine ages in French oak barrels for three years.



Mandilaria is a variety that presents challenges in attaining balance. Its dry and astringent tannins are difficult to harmonize with its high acidity and light body. Aging contributes to achieving this balance, as do gentle extractions during vinification, which is why we use semi-carbonic maceration. It is a variety we greatly respect and strive to showcase through the production of our Vassanos and Kalupi wines, as well as through experimental plantings for research and development. ●





## Assyrtiko in Stellenbosch

by Yannis Valambous

My long friendship with Ian Naude of Naude wines has given me the opportunity not only to travel a few times to South Africa, but to meet some lekker people as well (including some of you reading this!). The last chance was in November. Even though I was visiting for some personal downtime, I didn't let the prospect to share a great tasting go to waste. In -unusually for the time- rainy Stellenbosch weather, we tasted our Santorini, Gramina, and Alcyone white wines and our Kalupi and Mavrotragano from the reds.

When we started the winery back in 2012, one of our missions (beyond making high quality wines) was to increase awareness around the world about Santorini grapes and the

appellation. In light of that, tastings like this are a great opportunity to introduce new people to Santorini and its wines. It is also very important for us to share the wines with people from the industry whom we admire and respect; both to show them what we do and to get their feedback on our wines as well. Even more so when it comes to sharing our wines with new Assyrtiko producers such as Gary Jordan and Sjaak Nelson from Jordan Wines, who are already producing fantastic Assyrtiko in Stellenbosch. This dynamic interaction is mutually beneficial, first for the wines produced but also for everyone in the industry. At Vassaltis we pursue it as much as possible and enjoyed it very much.

*Thank you all for attending, to the next one!* ●

## Alcyone Cuvée Mythologique 2022, Tasting The New Vintage!

by Aris Sklavenitis



The philosophy of Alcyone lays in its careful crafting. First, we blend premium from vineyards in from Pyrgos, Megalochori, and Vourvoulos, then employ different fermentation and ageing vessels (wooden tank, and 500 lt barrels), along with *battonage* and finally resting the wine

for seven months in the winery's cellar before releasing it to the market, all in the aim of creating a full-bodied wine.

In the glass, the wine glows a brilliant, light gold with yellow reflections. The nose is intense and expressive with aromas of dough, grapefruit peel, and lime, along with hints of unripe peach and green apple. Its mineral character is evident from the first moment, with top notes of flint and wet stone, while oak aromas and a petrol character complete the wine's bouquet.

On the palate, the wine is dry, complex, with high acidity, and an intricate and rich texture and structure. Aromatically, the salty and mineral character of the wine dominates, with a full body, balanced alcohol, and a long finish.

A very typical sample of Assyrtiko from Santorini, where every sip reminds you of the island's terroir, with great aging potential that easily exceeds 8 to 10 years. I would suggest tasting it slightly warmer than the temperature at which

you enjoy other white wines, in a glass with a larger diameter, and swirling and "opening" the wine, all of which will help to transport you to the edges of the caldera. Grilled large fish, such as a wreckfish, would be an ideal pairing alongside the Alcyone! ●

