

Welcome

I hope you are all eager and prepared to take a journey where few of you, I suspect, have been, vinously speaking! My interest in the Eastern Mediterranean stems from historical curiosity, a love of travel, and the knowledge that so much of I/we know of wine is predicated on a false understanding of where fine wine began.. Much of what we will cover today results from the research and travels for our book, *Divine Vintage: Following the wine Trail from Genesis to the Modern Age*. The middle east, particularly Turkey, Georgia and the Levant are the cradles of wine.

While researching the book, it became very evident that today's wines in the region represent the revival of millennia old traditions for quality, which were abandoned or forgotten in several places because of religious persecution, climate change, lost knowledge and poor economic/social conditions over the last 2 millennia.

I contend that the resurgence of wine in places most people today have never considered ("I didn't know they made wine in Washington?") signifies a. economic resurgence;

b. An effort to reconnect to the larger society and 'civilization' of the Mediterranean culture that evolved through Roman rule; c. reclamation by societies of their agricultural and socio-cultural heritage; and d. a portal by which those of us in the "west" can develop a better understanding and acceptance of those societies alienated from participation in the transition to modern cultural amenities and pleasures!

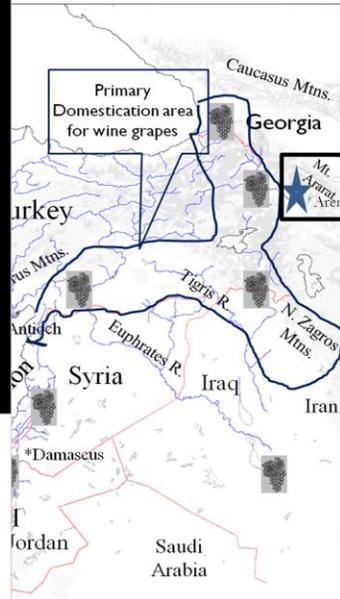
Our journey today will hopefully pique your curiosity about the renaissance of fine wine-making where the grape was first domesticated and the technology of wine-growing was transmitted from across the Mediterranean basin.

Map depicting principal ancient wine-growing regions



Visiting the excavations of the Areni-1 cave complex in Armenia, archaeologist Levon Petrosyan contemplates the 6,100-year-old wine-making equipment discovered by an international project co-directed by Boris Gasparyan, Gregory Areshian and Ron Pinhasi. Petrosyan's left foot points toward the wine press designed to drain into a vat, which had not been excavated when this photograph was made. While crumbled today, the edge of the wine press would have kept grape juice from spilling over the sides of the press, archaeologists believe.

*Photo: Hans Barnard/National Geographic*



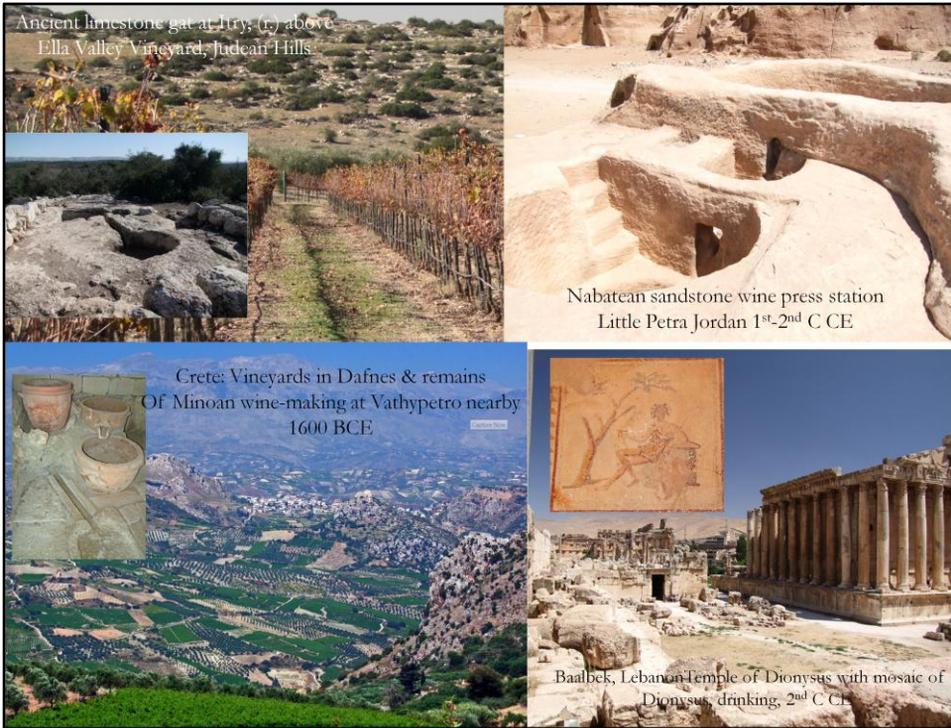
In the beginning...! The map shows the area of primary vitis domestication, and where many of the finest ancient wines came from in the Eastern Mediterranean and nearby. Note the location of Areni, near Ararat, where the oldest dated winemaking facility found; 4100 bce

*Ancient World, Modern Wines; a satellite view*



Seeing this view of the ancient world regions, what important aspects does this map reveal to you.

- Dry Climate
- Definite areas of highlands
- Proximity to bodies of water



Here you see some of the remains of ancient world wine-making and dedication, still evident if you know where to look

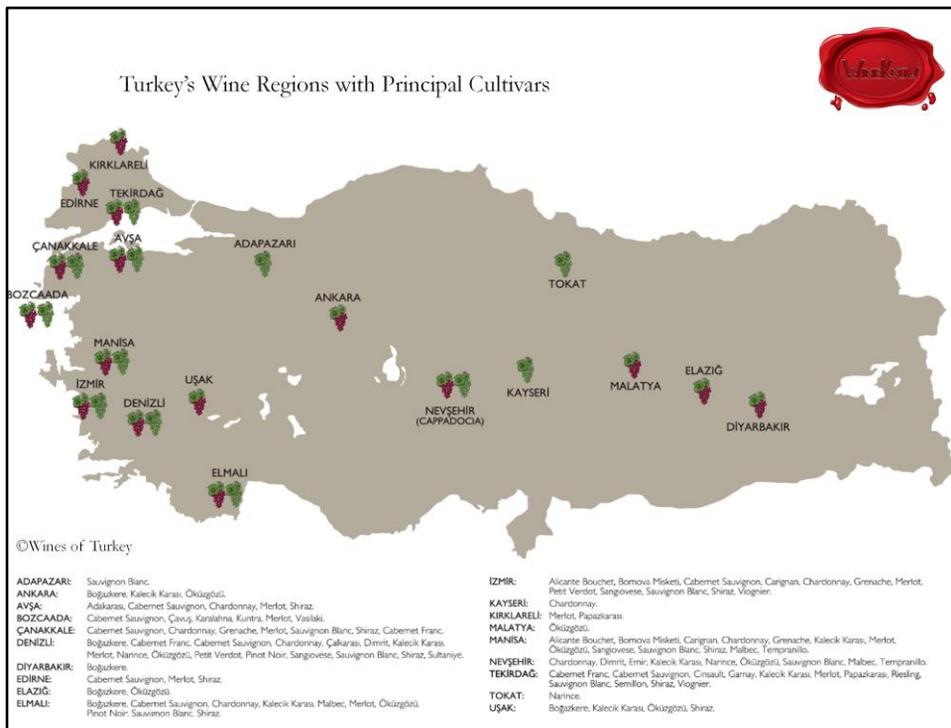


Golan Heights Vineyard & Mt Hermon, N. Israel  
 Ancient vineyards near Pyrgos, Santorini

(above)  
 (below)

Coteaux du Botrys Vineyard, Batroun Mtns, Lebanon  
 Kayra Vineyard at Lake Keban, Elazığ, eastern Anatolia

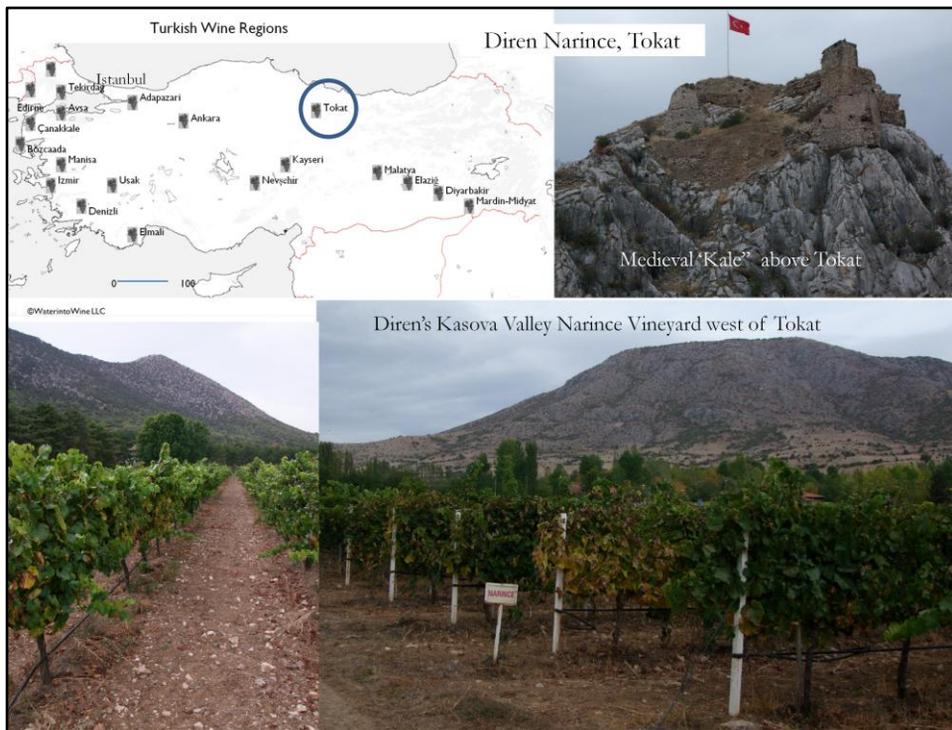
And here to get us in the mood, modern vineyards in some of the most ancient wine-growing districts of the eastern Med!



**Two modern countries forcefully claim the title of 'founder wine country', historically and even biblically; Turkey and Georgia. We begin with Turkey because... Noah supposedly landed the Ark here and planted his vineyard near Mt Ararat Many wines from Asia Minor figure prominently in the literature of Pliny and others, while the Biblical texts, particularly the New Testament, often describe places in Turkey that were noted for their wine, such as Pergamum, Ephesus and elsewhere.**

**Turkey has been burdened with over 1000 years of Muslim rule, with its prohibitions on alcohol (not so strict at some times!). Yet until the early 20th century, Turkey was also greatly influenced by its Greek, Armenian and Syriac Christian populace who maintained wine traditions. In the late 19th Century, Turkish vineyards supplied millions of liters of wine to France and Italy, whose industries had been devastated by the phylloxera invasion beginning in the 1870's. in 2009, Turkey ranked 6th worldwide in grape production and growing area, producing 3.85 million tons of grapes from 1.2 million acres of vineyards (486,000 ht). The truly telling figures, however, are that only 2% of total vineyard acreage is for wine grapes, with about 77,000 tons of wine grapes harvested Turkish wine is not inexpensive and is still primarily a 'big city' drink. Partly, this is due to a high per bottle tax equal to about \$1.25, paid when the wine is labeled for sale. The import tariff on wines made in EU countries is 50% on value, while non-EU country wines carry a 70% import tax!**

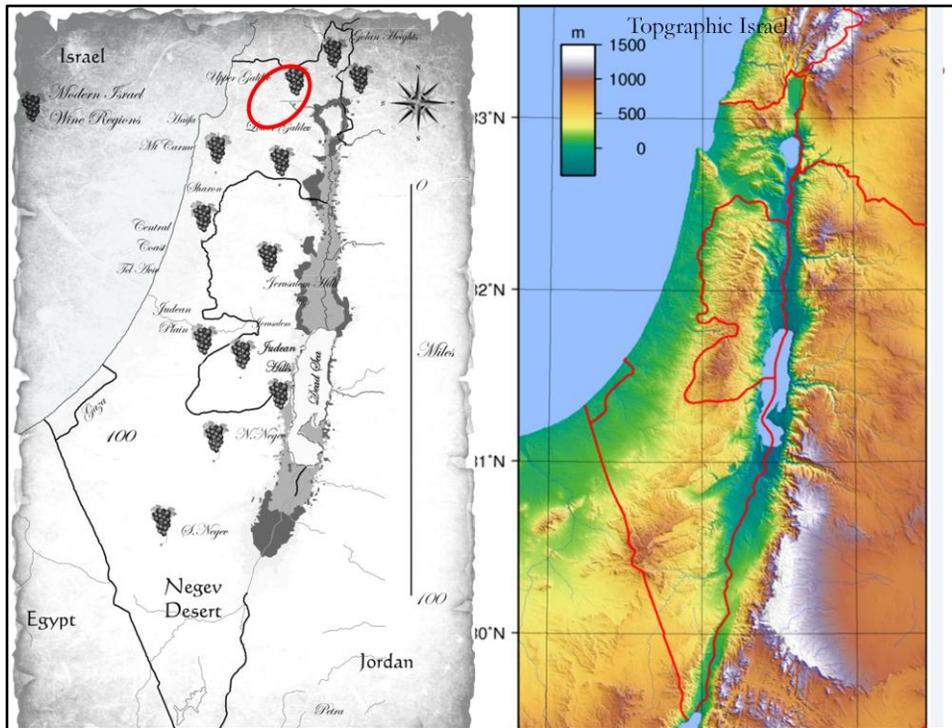
in 2009.



We will start with three completely different white wines, the first being my favorite Turkish white variety, Narince (nar-eeen-jay), native to the north central area of Turkey around the city of Tokat. Some background 1<sup>st</sup>

Narince, originally from the Tokat Region in northern central Turkey closer to the Black Sea, seems a composite of Sauvignon Blanc, the rare Italian variety Arneis, and Albariño from Spain! We find citrus, pink grapefruit, herbal and mineral or chalky flavors with excellent fresh acidity and crisp finish. **Diren first produced wine in 1958, under the guidance of its founder, Mustafa Vasfi Diren. A native of Tokat, an old city about 100 km south of the Black Sea coast in northern Anatolia, and perhaps 150 km northeast of the ancient Hittite capital, Hattuşa. During WW II, Diren studied agriculture in Bursa, where he became interested in viticulture, partly because he knew of Anatolia's ancient history with wine, and also due to his familiarity with the locally important Narince grape.** His children also were brought into the winery, one of his sons taking a degree in Enology from Dijon University in Burgundy. Currently, wine production is supervised by Mr. Özgür Erceyes. **Tokat is a totally different winegrowing zone than most elsewhere in Turkey! At a lower altitude (650 meters) overall compared to the main Anatolian plateau regions, and with direct proximity to cooler, wetter conditions from the Black Sea to the north, there is a certain lushness to Tokat not found elsewhere, with the exception of parts of Thrace.** No doubt vines from this part of Turkey were planted millennia ago, when it was called Pontus. Younger, citing Pliny the Elder comments that 'a high proportion of the finer wines of the Greek world came from...the mainland of Asia Minor. From Pontus, north Asia Minor, came Naspercenian, a good wine.' (Younger, 1966; 147).

The best areas for Narince, where some of the old terraced slopes still produce grapes, are to the west between Tokat and Turhal, the Kazova District, and the Erbal District east of Tokat on lower hills. These are where Diren sources its Narince from, paying local producers a 10% premium for quality on a base of 1.2TL/kg.

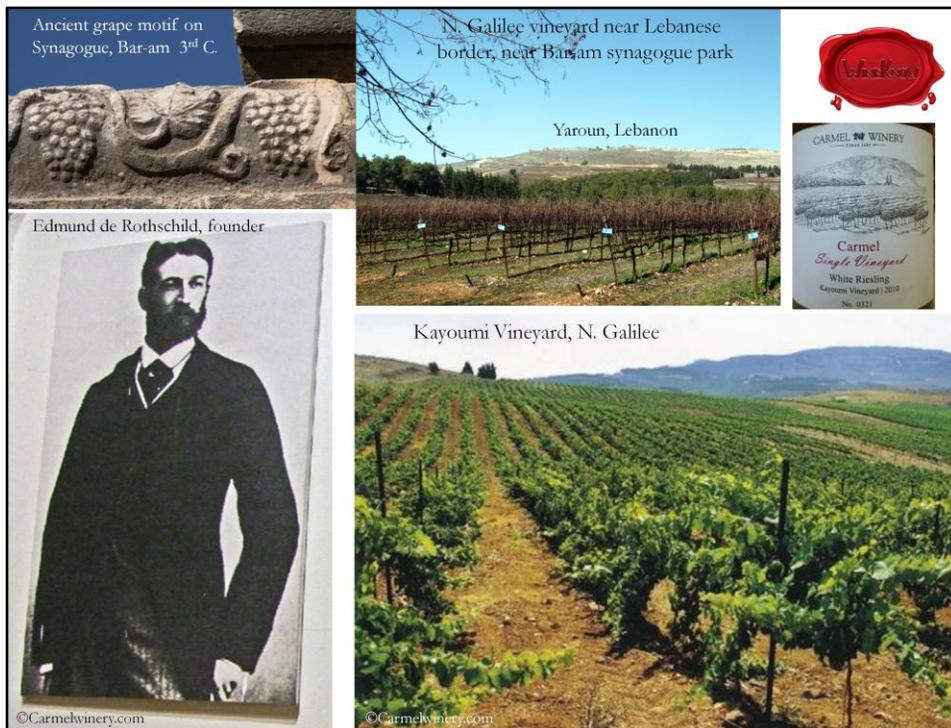


Before 1970's most of Israeli wine production focused on the coastal plain areas. The ancient, and highly praised vineyards of Galilee and the Golan Heights, not to mention Jerusalem Hills, had long been deserted. In 1972, Dr Cornelius Ough of UC Davis visited Israel. His report electrified the industry; after visiting the Golan Heights in northern Israel on the border with Syria and Jordan, Ough concluded that it had ideal soils and climate for wine grapes. 1976 saw the first vines planted on the Golan, and not much later, again in Galilee

There are now around 300 wineries in Israel producing nearly 4 million cases, not all Kosher, either! (Carmel is, however). Regarding Appellation, Israel has no real official system like France or Greece. Rather, a more general division of the country into five growing regions: Galilee, Shomron, Samson, Judean Hills and Negev. Each of these is further sub-divided into smaller ones.

Israel's climate ranges from hot Mediterranean-maritime in southern Israel to warm maritime/mediterranean along the coastal areas north to Haifa. In the Negev Desert and above the Dead Sea, it's a desert climate - hot dry days and cold nights. As one moves into the uplands and areas like the Jerusalem Hills, the altitude 700-1000m, cools things off considerably; snow is not uncommon in winter.

By the time one drives north into the mountains of Galilee and the Golan Heights towards Mt Hermon, you could be forgiven for thinking you were in northern Italy or France in winter. It can be quite cold, but sunny, the climate more continental. Rainfall is mostly in winter, and ranges from a paltry 200-300mm (25 mm = 1") in the desert areas to over 1000mm further north along the coast. Compared to the earliest period of wine-growing in Israel 5-7 thousand years ago, the climate is drier and warmer.



Carmel: Israel's oldest active and largest winery, founded 1882. Three Israeli Prime Ministers worked here: David Ben-Gurion, Levi Eshkol and Ehud Olmert. Control 3500 acres. Winemaker Lior Lacser studied in Burgundy. Vineyards throughout Israel from this one in N. Galilee to the Negev at Yatir Forest Winery. Kayoumi Vineyard has elevation of 780 meters above sea level on the slopes of Mt Meron. The vineyard is high in Eocene marl limestone and very rocky, the climate semi-continental.

The grapes were night harvested, and the must was fermented at cold temperatures in stainless steel tanks to preserve the delicate fruit and flavors. Then the wine was left to age in bottle for 6 to 7 months before release, to allow the complexity of the wine to develop.

Carmel Riesling is off dry, but at 5 grams per liter residual sugar., which could partially account for the really mineral, citrus-apple aromas and flavors. A flinty undertone, high acidity balanced by just a touch of residual sugar (.5%), and a long chalky-lime finish similar to the fine Rieslings of Australia's Eden Valley make this a very successful, if unexpected wine that can age 3-5 years.



Greece, like Turkey, has a number of excellent indigenous varieties and none more famous and excellent than Assyrtiko, a native of Santorini, and (possibly), given the island's isolation, unique geology, among the oldest varieties on the planet, perhaps existing prior to the cataclysmic eruption which destroyed the island around 1600 BCE. There is vine history on Santorini, evidenced by the large number of wine remains discovered at Akrotiri, so long buried under the protective ash. This ash, pumice as light as a feather and heavier lava rocks that ejected from the volcano provided a layered terrain for making assertive and unique ancient wines. Theran wine mixed with 'pulse' sprinkled into it instead of barley meal was common to the island after the eruption period. (Younger 1966; 97).

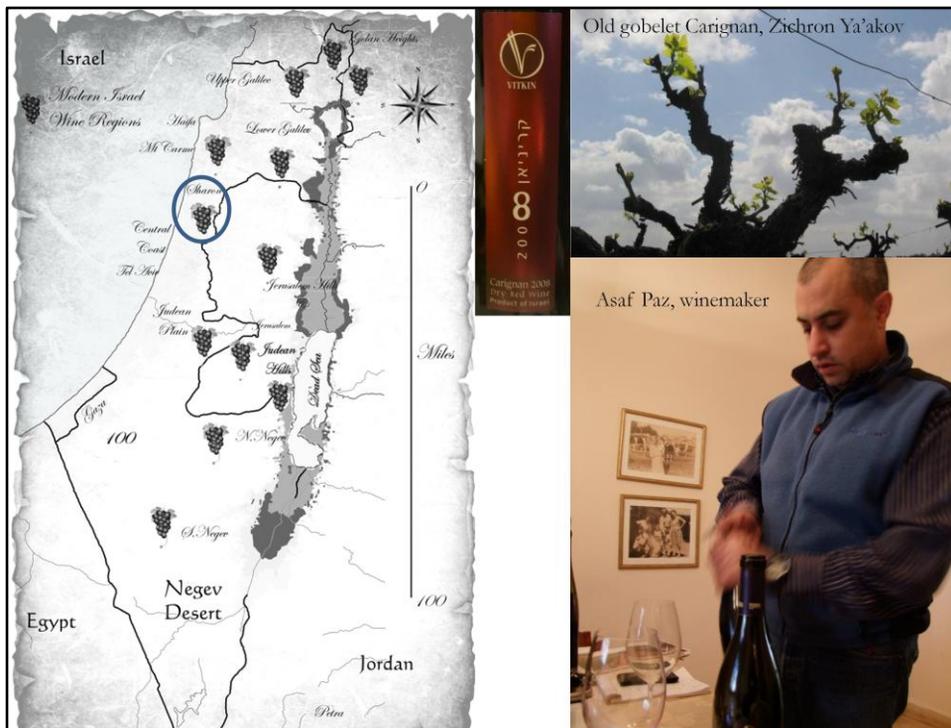
The deep, sandy character of the soil with no clay makes Santorini phylloxera immune. Given that Assyrtiko is still grown on the one part of Santorini that escaped the volcanic destruction, original sedimentary limestone soils, there is reason to believe the grape is an ancient native.



Yiannis Paraskevopoulos ("Johnny P" his English nickname) came to Santorini in 1995 to try his hand with white wines on the island. He found that "Santorini's extraordinary conditions provide numerous surprises. "I didn't realize when I arrived," he remarks, "that the two traditional training systems require about four times more labor than typical trellising, nor that the minerality of the wines was so strongly linked to vine age. If I had two centuries to find out if trellising would produce the same degree of minerality and as long lived vines, I might try it, but I don't think so."

What is unique about Assyrτικο on Santorini, due to the volcanic sandy soils, high wind, low moisture (no rain 8 months of year—salt-laden morning mist off the sea provides humidity), is the unique Kouloura (basket) style of management. Ampeliá involves 'coiling" and weaving of the pruned branches coming out of the very short trunk, where the leaves shade the fruit from harsh sunlight and conserves water evaporation while absorbs nightly dew.

When the vine reaches becomes old and less productive, the grower cuts off the oldest and thickest branches and takes from the trunk young shoots, prolonging the life of the vine. As the age of the vine is determined by its root system, this process can be repeated, we are told, four or five times, leading to vines of 300-400 years age! The Wild ferment wine Fermented with indigenous yeasts, followed by partial oak-aging.

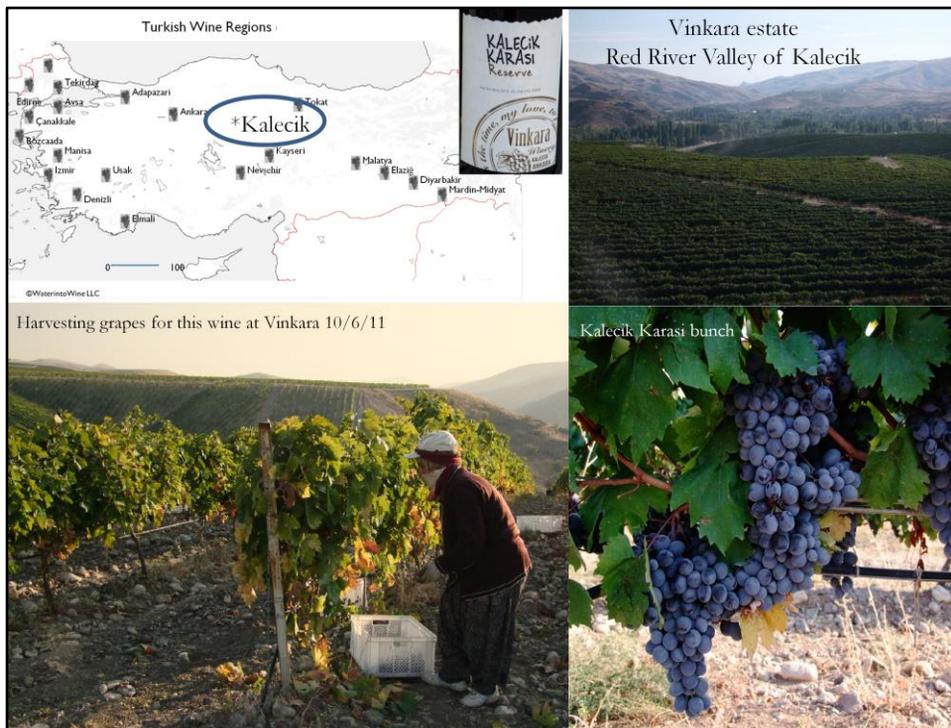


Vitkin is a family affair; Sharona and Doron Belogolovsky, and Sharona's brother Asaf Paz, started their winery next to their house on the moshav Doron's grandparents founded decades ago. Asaf, who studied in California and Bordeaux, convinced Doron, a stonemason by profession, that they should make wine in 2001. Sharona, the architect in the family, figured out how to adapt the barn into a winery! By 2002, the family decided to focus on Mediterranean varieties, as well old Israeli standards like French Columbard, and given Asaf's travels, Pinot Noir and Riesling, too.

Fruit is sourced from the whole country; "our Israeli Journey" as Asaf wryly calls it, from primarily cooler locations in the Judean Hills and Upper Galilee, except the superior old vine Zichron Ya'akov Carignan. The family now makes 5000 cases of kosher wine per year. Asaf's wide experience has expanded their thinking. Vitkin now only uses 350L puncheons for the Mediterranean varieties; new barriques being too strong for them

#### Vitkin Old Vine Carignan, Shomron 2008

Carignan currently hails from three vineyards in Binyamina, Zichron Ya'acov and the Carmel Mountain. These are primarily effectively limestone and sandstone-based uplifted sea bed The vines range from 25 to 40 years old, a rarity in Israel as many Carignan vines were pulled out after only a decade or so. This wine spends 14 months in 350L puncheons, mostly used.



Kalecik Karasi (the black grape of Kalecik) is my favorite indigenous Turkish variety. Think Nerello Mascalese meets with Nebbiolo, and they have a menage a trois with Pinot Noir! Anatolia is a cradle of winegrowing; The climate is continental, such that the higher altitude, 600- 1200 meters (1950-3900 feet) tempers the propensity towards hot summer daytime temperatures with cool nights. The low rainfall helps to alleviate strong fungal pressure on vines and forces them to work harder by growing deeper roots to seek water. In many parts of Anatolia, including where Vinkara is located an hour east of Ankara, strong winds, often from the north, also serve to cool things down and retard vine maturation. Yet summers can be harshly hot, and winters deadly cold, with icy winds and snow common depending on where you live.

Vinkara started by Ankara businessmen in the Kalecik Valley in 2003. Under guidance of enologist Çağlar Gök, more vineyard land was planted (another 60 ht) on the rolling hills surround the Red River which irrigates the region, eventually flowing southeast into Kapadokya. Kalecik is slightly lower and warmer than Ankara, about 650 meters as it is surrounded by mountains rising 2,000 meters to the West and has the Red River to also mitigate temperatures. During sunny periods, the mountains allow the flow of air to the plain and in the spring and fall, the accumulated rain provides a natural water supply for the vineyards.

Much of southern Anatolia has volcanic origins, but here in the northern areas, the land was under water in ancient times, ultimately forming limestone, including large cobbles in the lower vineyards; likely a result of the Red River changing course and leaving deposits over millions of years. Marco Monchiero of Alba is consultant, and says there is also a lot of wind-blown loess soils, so high clay

"Kalecik has a color issue, and small clusters that generally do not set in a homogenous way, similar to your Zinfandel. You should realize that in the 1960's, due to phylloxera, virtually all of the Kalecik vineyards were lost. New plant material was developed starting in the 80's, and genetic selection was limited to just two high yielding clones; the old selections were lost. In our experimental blocks we are trying to use mass selection techniques to see if we can re-discover better clones for planting. It's a long process."

Aged in oak for 14 months but less than 30% new, the color is typical of KK, a medium ruby-violet, similar to young Pinot Noir or Nerello Mascalese from Mt Etna. The bouquet reflects



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Christos Zafeirakis

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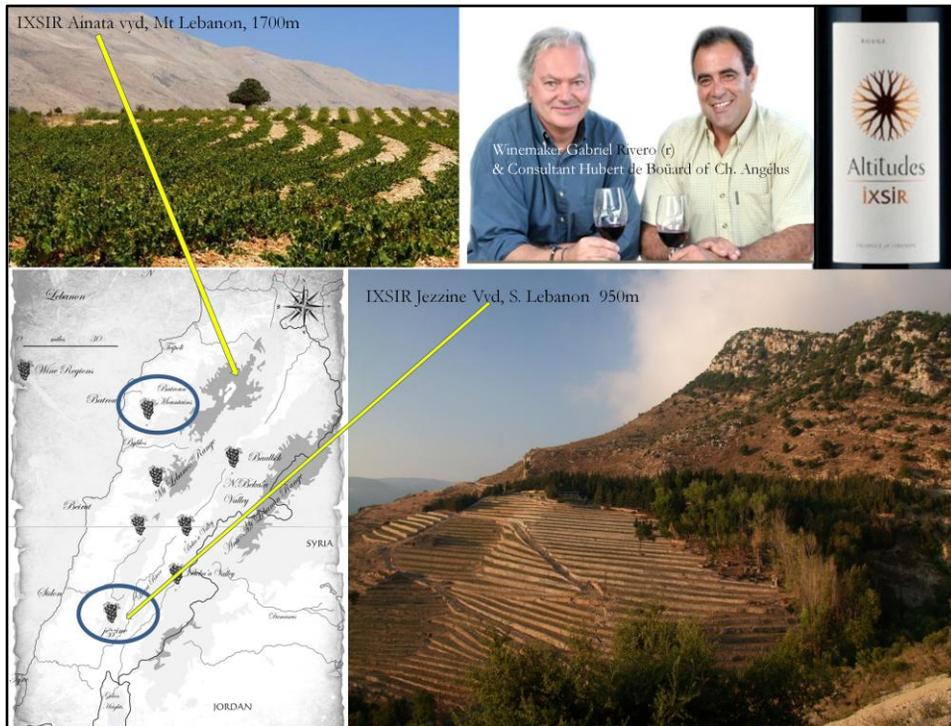
Limniona, along with Mavrotragano from Santorini, is in my mind the finest, least-known Greek variety that deserves more visibility. Christos Zafeirakis has single-handedly revived this rare delicately intense red wine, beginning in 2005. It is not related to Limnio, and is a thick-skinned variety, resistant to oxidation. . While possible that this is the same grape mentioned by Aristotle 2300+ years ago, no doubt it is one of the finest, most elegant greek varieties being made, though very limited (25 acres in Greece!)

**Zafeirakis did wine studies and worked in Piemonte before returning to his native land**, working this land near Mt Olympus in the area of Larissa.

**Organic cultivation** even if expenses are actually 30% higher than practicing conventional grape-growing.

Soil's composition is made from 50% clay with high content of tiny flint stones that are responsible according to Christos for the characteristic **saline minerality** in his wines.

When discussing the “hot” issue of clonal selection, he argues that after observing Limniona for all these years he prefers **positive massal selection** in the vineyard. What he does is marking up the vines that bear the best characteristics (such as smaller berries), he observes them closely for a couple of years and having ensured that they are free of viruses he takes cuttings from them for his new plantings. Vinified in large 3 ton oak uprights and aged in older barriques.



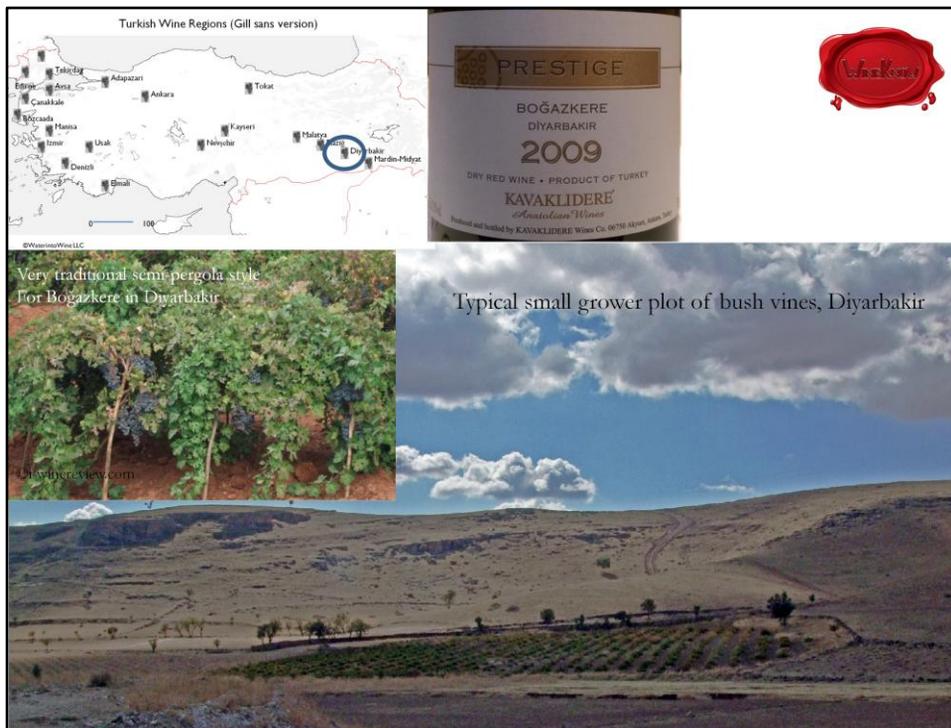
The history of wine in Lebanon, biblically or historically speaking, is nearly as old as wine itself. As noted previously, the spread of the domesticated vine and production of wine into “the Lebanon” from the north began as early as the 6<sup>th</sup> Millennium BCE (McGovern, 2003). Lebanon, the “original” home of Canaanites and their successor culture, the Phoenicians, can lay claim to being one of the two primary distributors of wine, wine culture, language and alphabet from eastern Mediterranean origins throughout the Mediterranean basin to the west beginning as far back as the beginning of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Millennium BCE, possibly, even earlier.

Modern Lebanon’s wine scene was nearly ruined by the Civil War of the 70’s and 80’s’. Further disrupted by political and military issues like the Israeli incursions in 1982 and then against Hezbollah forces in 2006, torn by tensions due to the current Syrian crisis next door (Damascus is only a 40 minute drive from the Beka’a Valley). Oldest winery is the Bzummar Monastery, dating from 1749. French control of the region after WWI led to the development of a fairly sophisticated culture including wine. From 2000, new wine laws accepted by the EU have helped Lebanese wines in export, and quality is now at a level unseen since the Roman era.

. Perhaps the most controversial and exciting new wine project in Lebanon, IXSIR (Arabic for 'elixir'). Three Lebanese friends decided to develop this proeprty on the site of an old 17<sup>th</sup> C Seigneurial House (kept above the modern underground cellars. Their 4<sup>th</sup> partner is Carlos Ghosn, CEO of Renault-Nissan motors (also Lebanese). Washington’s Columbia Valley area is not dis-similar to the Beka’a in climate, and dependence on mountain generated water for sustenance.

Wines come from a range of vineyards from 400-1700m in altitude (hence the name of this wine. From Batroun and Mt Lebanon sites in north to the Beka’a Valley east and south to Hezbollah-controlled Jezzine. Limestone, terra rossa, and abundant springs/aquifers and high altitude make Lebanon somewhat unique in the mid-East, and ideal for viticulture.

Ultra-modern approach and size of investment has created some envy, as well as as



Diyarbakir in SE Anatolia is the Kurdish ‘capital’ of Turkey, Boğazkere originates from the southeastern Anatolian region of Diyarbakir; a warmer area than Elaziğ to the north. A mid-to late ripening variety notable for its deep color, historical records allude to ancient origins. It appears related through DNA analyses to three extinct grapes, two from the Diyarbakir area (2006 Vouillamoz)

A highly desirable eating grape, a combination of high color, rich blackberry-tar fruit flavors, moderate acidity, and elevated tannins make this grape complex. The name means “throat burner” for its tannins. Think Syrah married to Nebbiolo! Presenting a great wine-making challenge, many producers blend Boğazkere with Öküzgözü to soften the astringency of Boğazkere and to add a more gentle red-fruit character. Boğazkere has very good aging potential, provided that the winemaker manages the tannins. This is grown in reddish-, chalky-clay rocky soils, with the altitude about between 600-800 m.

Kavaklidere is Turkey’s largest winery and oldest (1929) based orig. in Ankara, run by the Başman family which owns about 1400 acres across Turkey. They now receive consulting advice from Stephane Derenoncourt of Bordeaux, whose guidance has ably contributed to a more refined style than in the past for wines such as this. Diyarbakir’s tricky politics, traditional, ancient family tribal relations makes it difficult to own vineyards here if an outsider. Consequently, it is mostly small family farmers from whom Kavaklidere buys from. The Prestige wines like this are the top level wines aged in partially new (20%) French oak barriques. This wine comes from century old gobelet trained vines near Cermik, and showcases the dense flavors and large-framed structure of the variety in its home area.



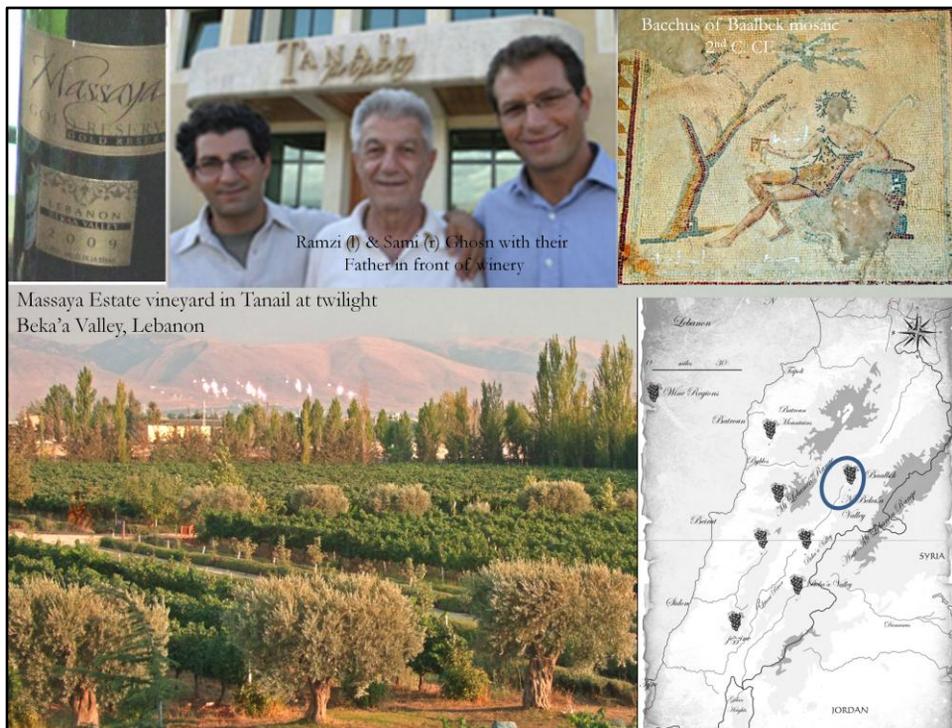
Not far from Eli Ben Zaken's Domaine de Castel in the Jerusalem Hills, west of Jerusalem about 10 miles, & next to his neighbors at Tzuba winery there lies a very large Canaanite Wine pressing station cut out of the limestone rock, dating to about the 9<sup>th</sup> C BCE. The wines of these hills were highly praised in antiquity, used at the Temple, and due to the high altitudes [650-950 meters], semi-continental climate and well drained slopes) it is an area that today hosts some of Israel's top wineries.

Domaine de Castel is a leader here. Zaken was a Jerusalem restaurateur, but gave it up to plant his vyds on the terra rossa limestone slopes in 1988, with the first wine in 1991. The vineyard in this picture near Tzuba was planted a few years later. About 40 acres in production, densely planted (for Israel-4400-6700 vines/ha) at average 700m elevation mostly to bordeaux varieties, his favorites and chardonnay, and on north-facing slopes. Microclimatically, the vineyards create wines that indicate more northerly, cool climates. Yield per plant is relatively low, and most of the work is done by hand, and hand harvested.

His wines are kosher

Most Israeli wineries produce kosher wines for economic reasons; if you want to sell wine in grocery stores, you can only sell kosher wines. Plus, most Jews in Israel, even secular, still hold to some old traditions, but this increases costs, and also means that he cannot even handle his own wines, but must rely on devout Jew (haredim male) to actually do all of the work (his cellar *schlub*) I call them (see upper picture!)

The Grand Vin is generally a high percentage of CS (70%) with merlot and petit verdot, and shows just how classically structured and finely elegant Israel's best bordeaux blends can be and is aged up to 2 years in all new French barriques, the reference point is 1<sup>st</sup> growth claret in methodology and in character. When I first had his 2008 Grand Vin, it reminded me of St Julien Cru Classé!



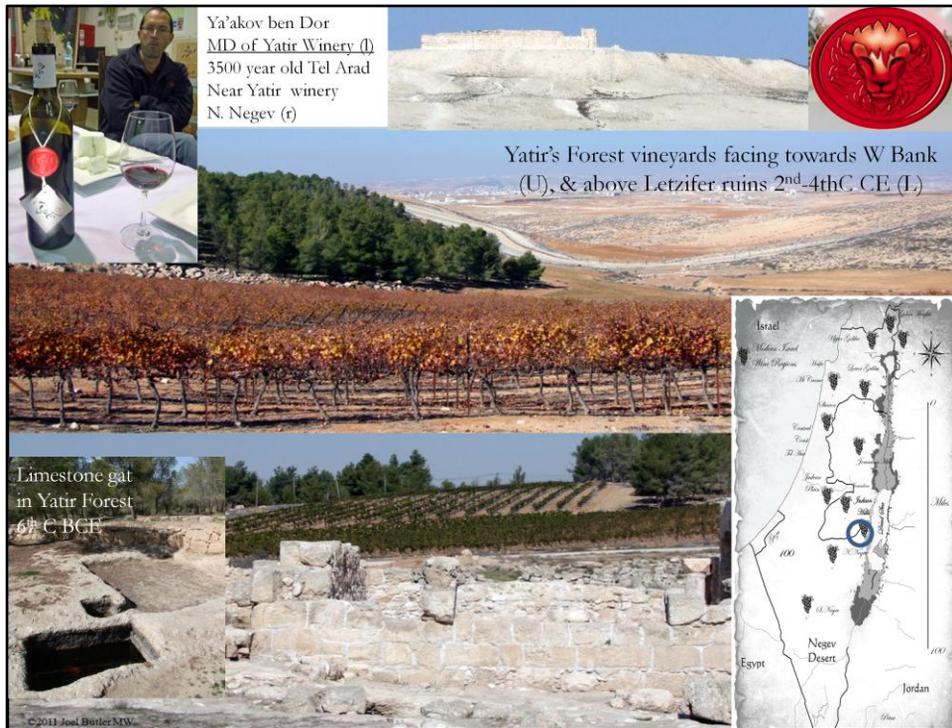
Massaya in Arabic means “twilight”, denoting the rosy color the Anti-Lebanon Range gains at dusk, seen from Massaya Winery's position on the Beka'a Valley floor in Tanail, the Ghosn brothers hometown. From its founding in 1997, Massaya has been the bell-wether winery highlighting Lebanon's wine renaissance after the Civil War period.

The Two brothers were forced into exile when their property in the region taken over by Syrian army. Both wound up in US after studies, Ramzi in business, Sami an architect. But Sami came back in 1992 wanting to see what he could do to redevelop family land, eventually creating a popular and large selling arak, before reviving the vineyards. Ramzi returned in 1996 and they began making wine from purchased grapes, but realized they needed investors for capital and expertise. Enter:

1998, the Brunier brothers invested in Massaya winery in Lebanon, as did Dominique Hebrard, whose family had just sold Cheval Blanc. These Frenchmen provided the impetus to finance the growth of a completely new winery and estate, dedicated to crafting wines that would truly showcase the ancient grandeur of the Beka'a, revive the land and "honor this Temple of Bacchus."

Ramzi is the winemaker, 30 ht (75 acres) under vine they own plus buying some additional fruit. "Most of our red wine vineyards are near Baalbek to the north," Ramzi notes. Ramzi was also the first to use screw-caps for their Classic range; The vineyards are farmed organically.

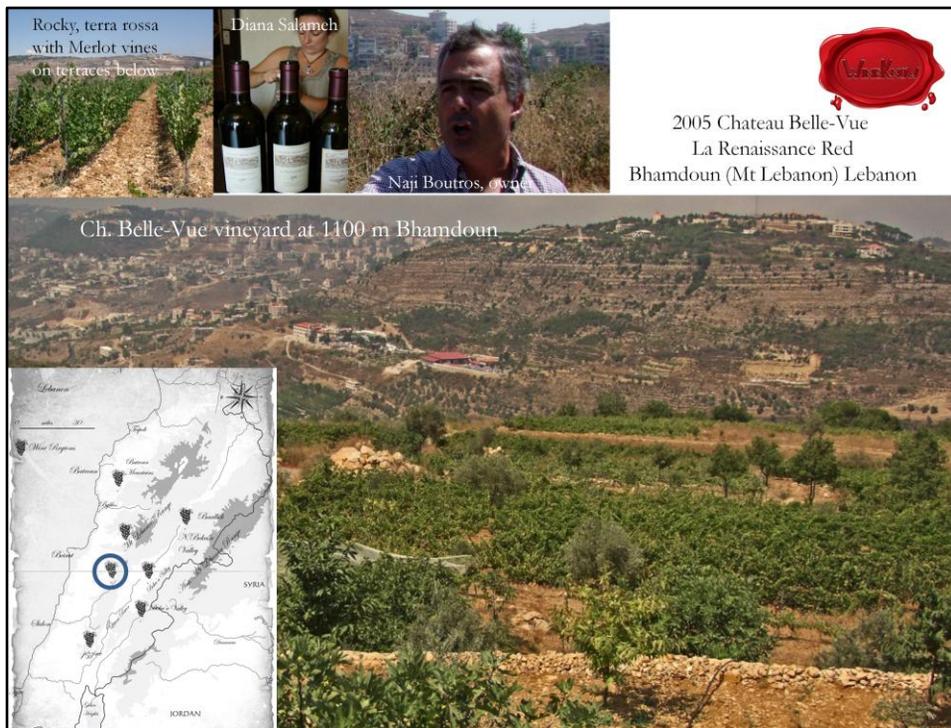
Gold Reserve is Massaya's top wine; 50% CS, 40% Mourvedre the balance Syrah. Fermented on skins 2-3 weeks and aged in new French oak barrels for nearly 2 yrs & limited to about 1k cs. The idea came from discussions with Daniel Brunier, combining the favoured rhone varieties of Lebanon with the traditional go-to grape, Cab. Vineyards are at 900-1200 m. Mostly sandy-clay limestone soils.



Located just a five minute drive from the great archaeological site of Tel Arad's Canaanite ruins in the northeast Negev Desert at 500m (1625'), Yatir is a small and high quality winery which was founded in 2000 as a joint venture between the grape-growers of the area and Carmel Winery. The winery is situated in the north eastern Negev, fulfilling the dream of David Ben Gurion, Israel's first Prime Minister, of making the desert bloom. However the high altitude (900m), cool climate vineyards of Yatir Forest are only ten minutes away in the southern Judean Hills. The climate is significantly cooler where wine has been made for 3000 years, evidenced by the large number of stone wine presses found. It is the connection with Judea which encouraged the winery to choose The Lion of Judah as the logo of Yatir Winery.

Ya'akov Ben-Dor is managing director and a member of the group of vineyard owners (moshavim) who originally planted the vineyards in the Yatir Forest in 2000. Then partnership with Carmel who now fully owns/controls. Ben Dor, Yatir's agronomist and amateur archaeologist, revealed that the Romans took a lot of wine "from this area as taxes. We also think this is where Lot and his daughters took refuge in the caves where wine was stored(it is not far from Hebron). King David bought wine from here as well. Today, we have to use electric fences, as we still have problems like the ancients with jackals and gazelles, even hyenas, who come and eat the grapes."

Eran Goldwasser, head winemaker, graduated from Adelaide university in Australia, working in many Australian wineries before joining Yatir. Yields are naturally low, he says due to the poor, thin, gravelly limestone-clay-loess soils, getting only about 350mm rain/yr. about 3tpa. Wines are kosher. This 2010 Bordeaux blend is 67%CS, 25% PV, 8% Merlot (15%), about 16 mo in 1/3 new FO.

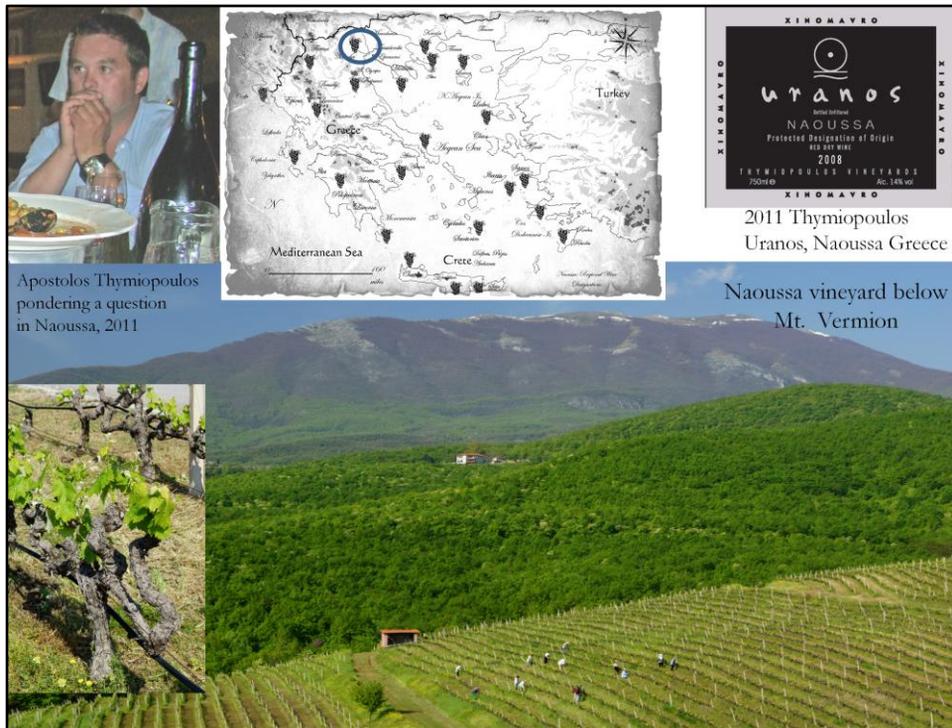


Chateau Belle-Vue lies 1100 m high in the mountains east of Beirut, in Bhamdoun, known for its swank new houses, a destination for wealthy Gulf Arabs and Lebanese to get away from the summer heat, was once a famous grape-growing region, going back at least to the Roman era. Then...Over 500 people from the town were killed during the War in the early 1980's, decimating the population and destroying much of the town, including the old landmark Hotel Belle-Vue. Created by the father of Chat. Belle-Vue's owner, Stanford Educated Naji Boutros. He remembers getting up early to work in the fields, but also the Israeli tanks that occupied Bhamdoun (ostensibly to protect the overall Christian populace), and the Syrian/Lebanese artillery that shelled the town.

After university with His wife and co-owner Jill, they lived and worked in New York and London, raised the kids, peacefully. When Naji returned home in 1996 & saw the devastation, the despair of his townspeople, the destruction of farmland, he decided to return home and see if he could give back to Bhamdoun.

Returning in 1999, he met Joseph Khairallah, a Bhamdoun native, who heard about this crazy young guy who had returned from abroad to re-plant vineyards in their home town. Khairallah had spent many years working in agriculture in the Cameroons and spoke French well. On his return after the Civil War in 1997 he opened a shop. Overhearing a conversation among friends about Boutros wanting to plant several thousand vines, his response to them was, "No one will plant those vines but me-It's my valley." Offering his service and knowledge about farming to Boutros for free, he just wanted, as Boutros says, 'to participate in making the valley green again'. Khairallah has been with Belle-Vue ever since. Consulting oenologist Diana Salameh who studied in Dijon and is one of only two women winemakers in Lebanon.

While land costs are high, Boutros now has about 60 acres, w/first vintage 2003., all planted at 950-1350m around the town, situated in the Mt Lebanon ranges. This area



Apostolos Thimiopoulos pondering a question in Naoussa, 2011

2011 Thymiopoulos Uranos, Naoussa Greece

Naoussa vineyard below Mt. Vermion

Naoussa vineyards cover 600 hectares, which lie on the northwestern slopes of Mt Vermion (2052 m.) at altitudes between 150 to 350 meters. Naoussa PDO zone (100% Xinomavro—'black acid') was established in 1972 and constitutes the largest vineyard planted on xinomavro in Northern Greece. It is not related to either PN or Nebbiolo.

Like the latter, it is a vigorous grower, and late-ripening requiring well-drained soils, and is susceptible to bunch rot (Zinfandel) and downy mildew.

The great diversity of soil, as well as climate conditions, give to the variety of xinomavro and its vigorous red wines multiple expressions. Green hills, natural springs, cold winters and warm summers compose the ideal climate for the cultivation of xinomavro and render the relation Naoussa-Xinomavro a premier wine duo worldwide. Naoussa doesn't appear to have a history of ancient wine production, but over the last several decades the apparent quality of Xinomavro and its affinity for the cooler climate and limestone-clay and sand sedimentary soils of the area has convinced people this is a remarkable area. Forty years of work in the area has certainly improved the quality of most Naoussa wines. But Xinomavro is a difficult grape, requiring low yields, and very attentive viticulture to make a successfully balanced wine, similar to Barolo due to relatively high vigor, low color intensity, strong tannins and high acidity. "We have found," Yiannis Boutaris (Kir-Yianni winery) notes, "that for Xinomavro to be successful, it (the viticulture) needs to be changed in the vineyard to make it more palatable."

The Thimiopoulos family has owned vineyards in Naoussa for several generations. Until recently, the family grew grapes and supplied fruit to the local cooperative. Upon matriculation from The University of Athens oenology program, Apostolos Thimiopoulos realized the potential in his family's land. The family vines were on average 35 to 50 years old with established root systems and excellent drainage. 1<sup>st</sup> vintage 2003.



*Thank you*



*Nemea*