

WHITEWATER VALLEY WINE SOCIETY
May 2024 Tasting
The Wines of Greece
Presented by Jeremy Lithgow MW

It's always a privilege to welcome a Master of Wine to our Society, especially so when they are presenting to us for the first time. The Master of Wine is globally recognised as the highest qualification and they number just a few hundred across the world. Jeremy has been working in the wine industry since 1995, starting his career in London wine retail. This was followed by five years in Australia, working vintage in the Yarra Valley before a period in Sydney with the country's leading European wine importer. Jeremy then relocated to Melbourne to run a European wine store. Returning to England in 2007 he managed the Harrods Wine Department, then moved to Burgundy specialist Charles Taylor Wines as Sales Director. He achieved the Master of Wine qualification in 2016. And since 2017 he has been Head of Wine for UK national distributor, wholesaler and retailer - Amathus Drinks.

This month Jeremy presented his choice of wines from Greece, one of the world's oldest wine-producing countries. Greek wines have been available in the UK for as long as we can remember. However, it's during the last 10 years that they become recognised as achieving top quality and they now shine alongside some of the world's best known wine regions. The winemakers embrace the country's indigenous varieties, each of which has a distinct character and quality. The Amathus portfolio of Greek wines brings us some of the best available in the UK, including wines which now feature internationally known grape varieties. Jeremy is head of Amathus Drinks.

We started our tasting with an **Avantis Estate Malagousia 2023 Evia** [13%, £17.50] that was very pale in colour with aromas of roses, lime and mandarin on the nose. It was fresh and dry on the palate with tangy, juicy notes - a most pleasant start to our evening!

Next came a **Spiropoulos Mantinia 2023 Peleponnese** [12%, £18.50] that was again very pale in colour; this organic wine produced from 100% Moschofilero grapes had floral notes of lemon grass, lychees and muscatel and was unoaked. It had a dry, light body, was delicate in the mouth with pronounced acidity and would be most acceptable as an aperitif or as a food wine.

An **Artemis Karamolegos 34 Assyrtiko 2021 Santorini** [14%, £33.50] followed from two villages, highly regarded for producing top quality grapes. This pale coloured wine had a pure nose, full of minerality and flint, with notes of stone fruits and the tart of citrus. The palate had considerable depth and genuine concentration; it was rich and dense with balanced acidity and a long after-taste of salt and minerals. This well-accepted wine will last around 10 years - a treat for that special occasion!

Our final white wine of the evening was a **Markou Savatiano Phenomena 2020 Attica** [13%, £21.50]. Low yielding Savatiano vines from the hot plains of Attica, cooled by the sea breezes of the Aegean are used to make this pale wine with a yellow tinge. Fermented in oak for 4 weeks, then spending a month in barrel and 6 months in bottle before release produces a wine that is soft and

rounded. A nose of ripe nectarines, nougat and vanilla leads on to a palate that is full bodied, rich and creamy with appealing depth and texture and a fresh citrus finish - perhaps a take on white Burgundy?

Our final wine before a short break was an **Avantis Estate Falcon's Hill Rosé 2022 Evia** [13%, £20.50] that had a pale pink colour. Vinified from 100% top quality local Mavrokoudoura grapes from mountain vineyards this wine had a vibrant strawberry and raspberry nose, whilst on the textured palate there were flavours of white peach and red berries. This dry and elegant wine had balanced acidity and a long, fine mineral finish.

Our first red, a **Porto Carras LimNeon 2019 Halkidiki** [13%,£18.00] had a familiar Pinot Noir style colour and body in the glass. This organic wine was light-medium bodied, fermented in old oak had,there were hints of spice on the nose and flavours of red cherries and damsons. There was balanced acidity and a long savoury finish - reminiscent of Sangiovese?

We moved north west for our next red - a **Taralas Estate Red Xinomavro 2020 Naoussa** [14.5%, £19.50] that was a touch darker and denser than the previous wine and had a perfumed nose of wild cherries, sundried tomatoes and smoked meats. Tannins were firm, yet ripe with a rich, full body, balanced acidity and a long finish.

Our penultimate wine was a **Papaioannou Old Vines Agiorgitko 2015 Nemea** [15%, £26.52] with a dense, red cherry colour. Agiorgitko is one of Greece's ancient grapes and produced organically on this estate. There were aromas of honeyed red fruits on the nose with hints of herbs. On the palate the wine was rich, powerful and spicy with a firm structure and suggestions of more ageing potential.

Our evening ended with a **La Tour Melas Cyrus 1 2021 Nemea and Achinos** [14%, £32.50] that had a dense black cherry/purple colour with notes of tobacco, vanilla, lavender and chocolate on the nose. This medium-full bodied wine was well-structured with wonderful juicy flavours of red berries, sour cherry jam, chocolate and spice.....the best definitely came last!

Members present enjoyed their introduction to modern Greek wines and Jeremy's well-paced, knowledgeable delivery; his passion for Greece was clearly evident! Our grateful thanks go to him for a most interesting tasting!