

## Monthly Wine Review | Interview

1. You have recently arrived in Seoul as a counselor of Greek Embassy. How is your impression of Korea, and what achievements would you like to make during your stay in Korea?
  - Korea really never ceases to impress, be it through the richness of its age-old history and tradition, as it is still reflected on its urban landscape and everyday culture, or through its amazing endeavors to achieve such a stunning level of development in a very limited time frame. I have enormous respect for its people, the calmness and harmony that they conduct themselves with in such a densely populated country. My goal is to do the best possible in order to render my country's products more well-known to the Korean consumer and amplify their distribution network, as well as enhance the overall bilateral economic and commercial relations between Greece and Korea.
  
2. Greek wine has a long history but in recent it has started to receive public attention from all over the world. What would you like to tell people who are not aware of Greek Wine yet?
  - There is no cheating one's tasting buds. Tasting and consuming Greek wine is a unique experience emanating from an unfailingly unique product incorporating an extremely sophisticated know-how perfected over thousands of years and a combination of a bunch of native varieties and a multitude of very varied soil and microclimates.
  
3. Recently, Greek wine industry has been aggressively promoting Greek wine. Do you see the change of the perception or awareness of Greek wine in global market? And what kind of feedback about Greek wine have you received from the market or wine producers?
  - Admittedly, until recently there wasn't a great awareness or appreciation of Greek wine among global consumers, especially due to limited knowledge about it. Greek wine was known and popular enough in the European market and the countries that boast significant Greek expatriate communities, but in other markets it didn't have the same impact. The messages that we are receiving from the Greek winemakers as well as the foreign markets is that this situation is being rectified slowly but steadily thanks to a consistent and aggressive campaign which targets importers, traders and retailers, as well as the general, wine-loving public.
  
4. How do you see Greek wine is performing in the international market, and especially Asian market? Where are the biggest market and the most promising market for Greek Wine?

- The Far East Asian market is a very promising one for Greek wines, even though our actual exports are not currently at a high level. Nevertheless, they are high income, high profile and very demanding markets, which appreciate and value differentiation and uniqueness and are willing to pay a premium for it. Nothing comes easy but the fact that wine is still a relatively new product in the Far East makes it possible to construct and project a strong country brand and product image before the market gets saturated by international competition.
5. How is the economy of Greece and what about wine consumption in the domestic market?
- The economy of Greece has been through the worst phases of the euro crisis and currently finds itself at the early stages of the rebound process. On the other hand, the shrinking of the domestic market due to the income crunch has been a harsh coming-of-age awakening for Greek producers, including wine makers who had long relied upon a strong internal market and considered exports as a side activity. Greeks love wine, they always have and it is still a flagship national product which is widely consumed in the country. With regards to time past, though, consumption has suffered. As a result, the export activity represents nowadays an indispensable part of the wineries' business model and excellent wines may be found in extremely reasonable and competitive prices, in the benefit and delight of the local and foreign consumer.
6. What do you think are strength and weakness of Greek wine?

The greatest strength is undoubtedly its strong, though varied, character, which embodies the unmatched history of a country which was the first to produce and commercialize wine in the then known world thousands of years ago. Again, the existence of many native grape varieties combined with an extremely varied topography which creates a myriad of soil-microclimate combinations contribute to rendering the tasting of Greek wines an endless adventure that fascinates the demanding wine lover. Once again, I strongly believe that the most glaring weakness has been the lack of consistent and aggressive marketing in the past, something we try hard to remedy. The consumer will neither purchase nor appreciate a product that they have heard nothing about.

7. It is the beginning of New Year. What is the marketing strategy of Greek Wine this year? Do you have any plans to promote Greek Wine in Korean market this year?
- During the last few years we have been launching a comprehensive Greek wine promotion strategy, especially put together with the peculiarities of the Korean market in mind and we have been very encouraged by the early results. Said strategy combines participation in wine trade fairs, special wine tasting events for sommeliers in Seoul and Busan, as well as invitations of selected journalists and potential wine importers to Greece in order to be able to appreciate the unparalleled

facets of Greek wine and the mind blowing parameters which go into its production, as well as to meet with the Greek winemakers and discuss all relevant technical and business issues. We strongly intend to intensify our efforts this year and the following ones as well.

8. What is the current issue for Greek wine producers?

- Mainly that most of the wineries are small to medium ones and, though this assists them with differentiating their product from an increasingly homogenous international offer, they lack the economies of scale to offer it in a price that would be more amenable to international traders. As with all things in life, though, you get what you pay for. And a unique, limited production item, though not prohibitively expensive, just cannot be basement cheap.

9. Could you please describe Greek wine in a sentence?

- Socrates, Plato, Aristotle and Alexander the Great were all drinking this – you can too.

10. Lastly, do you have anything else you want to speak to Korean consumers or our readers?

- It is an honor for me to live and work in a country as hospitable as yours. It was also an honor to be able to speak to your magazine and its readers about my country and one of its more characteristic and enjoyable products. I hope I didn't bore them to death.