

HOME > TASTING ARTICLES

Cyprus wines – onward and upward



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MONDAY 13 APRIL 2026 • 3 MIN READ

CYPRUS

WHITE WINE

RED WINE

SWEET WINE

DISCUSSION



The Cyprus wine revolution continues, with indigenous varieties in the vanguard. Pictured above, son and father Marcos and Akis Zambartas.

As wineries have moved closer to the vineyards and vineyards have moved up to cooler sites in the Troodos Mountains on this eastern Mediterranean island, increasing attention has been given to recently rescued local varieties and to making better and better wines from the long-established Xynisteri, the white variety that, along with the dark-skinned Mavro (dominant but less exciting), is one of the two most widely planted on the island.

Most wine production is concentrated in the southern, Greek part of the island, which is why Cyprus wines have been included in last two editions of [Great Greek Wines](#). Long gone are the days of the popular, sweet and fortified Emva Cream (sold for many years as ‘Cyprus sherry’) and massive exports to Russia, though the sweet Commandaria, sometimes fortified, is still going strong and, according to Cyprus specialist Dr Caroline Gilby MW, enjoying [its own renaissance](#).

Current production on the island, according to Demetri Walters MW, who is based in London but has a house on Cyprus and whose grandfather owned vineyards there, is 50,354 hl (1,107,633 gallons) from 7,338 ha (18,134 acres), based on official 2023 and 2022 figures respectively.

In his 2017 article [Cyprus’s vineyard treasure trove](#), grape geneticist Dr José Vouillamoz wrote: ‘I’m definitely convinced that the salvation of Cyprus viticulture will be via safeguarding the study, and the planting, of indigenous grape varieties.’ This was after he visited the island to investigate varieties such as Promara and Yiannoudi, which were not even in commercial production in 2011, when Vouillamoz, Jancis and I finished writing [Wine Grapes](#). In our introduction to the book we listed five indigenous varieties in production on the island. In his article Vouillamoz lists 15.

More recently Gilby picked up this theme in [Cyprus – return of the](#)

more recently, Gilby picked up this theme in [Cyprus – Return of the native grape varieties](#), pointing out that many of these varieties have survived because [phylloxera](#) has never been found on the island, so that there is a repository of old vines – some varieties still unidentified – and most vineyards are ungrafted.

As Gilby explained, a rescue mission began in the early 1990s thanks to a project started by Akis Zambartas, formerly chief winemaker and managing director at KEO, one of the four big wineries located far from the vineyards – and close to a port – that dominated production on Cyprus at that time. (See the *Oxford Companion to Wine* [entry on Cyprus](#) for more on the history of the island’s wines.)

His son, Marcos Zambartas, a leading light in today’s quality revolution, was one of the 14 producers who came to London late last year to show their interpretations of the revolution.

Two masterclasses led by Walters demonstrated the character and quality – current and potential – of the nine local varieties described below, both better known and still rare. His selection also shaped the wines I tasted on the day, which included five of the varieties Zambartas Senior had identified as having potential 30 years earlier: Lefkada, Maratheftiko, Yiannoudi, Promara and Morokanella.





- PDO Larnaka Akama
- PDO Vouziti Panagias Ampelitis
- PDO Krasochoria Lemesou 600m
- PDO Krasochoria Lemesou Larnaka 750m
- PDO Krasochoria Lemesou Afamis 750m
- PDO Pitsilia
- PDO Commandaria
- PGI Larnaka
- PGI Lemesos
- PGI Lefkonia
- PGI Pafos
- Kyrenia
- Ammochostos

White-wine varieties

Morokanella: there are just 22 ha (54 acres) of this variety on the island. It produces spicy, cinnamon-flavoured grapes (*kanella* means ‘cinnamon’) with loose bunches of fairly large berries. Most plantings are in the west of the island but Dafermou’s Morokanella Selection comes from the western edge of the Larnaka district. It certainly had a marked spicy character and real power. Aes Ambelis’s was simpler and more citrusy.

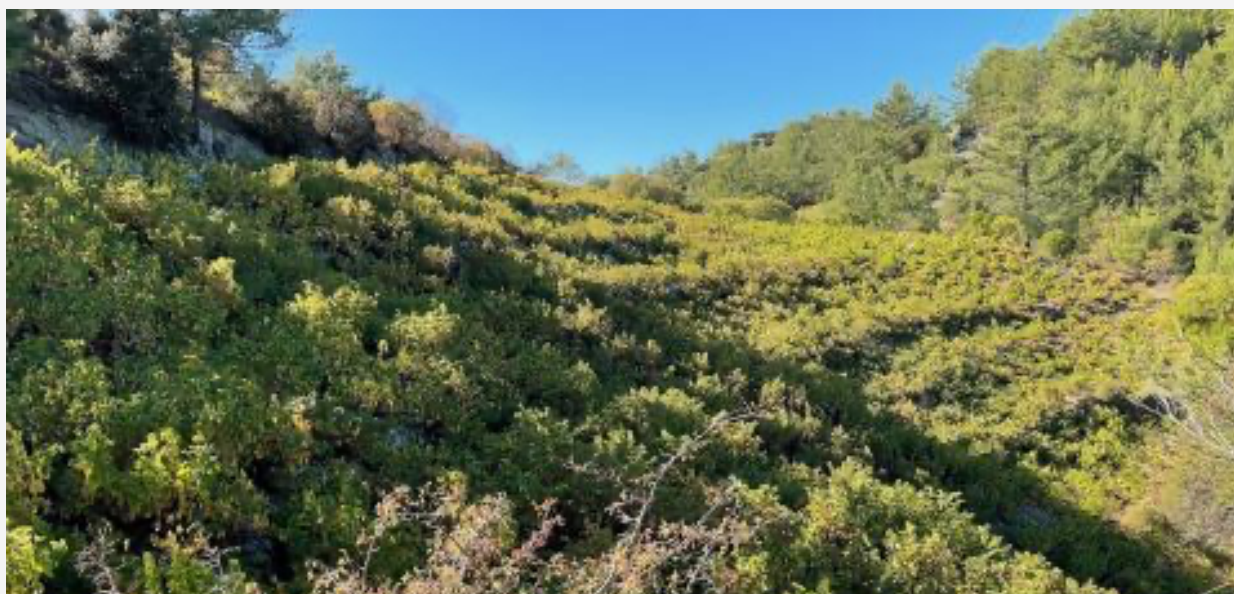
Promara: a long-forgotten variety, an early ripener, now planted on just 31 ha (77 acres). Walters suggested it might have fallen out of favour because it yields less juice (therefore less wine) than other varieties. It has a low pH (typically high acidity), which shows well in Makarounas’s Amphora version. While the vessel and the more oxidative winemaking may partially obscure the varietal characteristics, this is piercingly pure and salty-fresh. Promara is often marked by stone-fruit flavours, which I found in Zambartas’s firmly textured bottling, part-fermented in older barrels.

Spourtiko: Makarounas also make an excellent Spourtiko, of which there are 28 ha (69 acres) on the island. It has just 10.5% alcohol – moderate alcohol is one of the variety’s important characteristics. Although it is a relatively subtle variety, Makarounas conjure flavours of dried citrus and herbs from their vines. The name comes from the word *spourto*, meaning ‘to burst’, because of the berries’ thin skins. In the past it was planted mainly as pollinator for

Yiannoudi, Maratheftiko and Vasilissa.

Vasilissa: there was only one example of this variety in the tasting, made by Oenou Yi in the Krasochoria Lemesou region at an elevation of 800–1,050 m (2,625–3,445 ft). Not easy to cultivate because of problems at flowering, there are just 15 ha (37 acres) planted. It used to be grown for the table but this wine is spicy and broad with notes of clementine and nectarine. According to Walters, it produces big berries and can make ‘complex, sherbet-flavoured, sometimes saline’ wines. Its synonyms include Aspri Fraoula (white strawberry) and Tsaousis (Captain).

Xynisteri: the most widely planted white variety (1,961 ha/4,846 acres) and used for both dry table wines and the sweet Commandaria (alone or blended with the dark-skinned Mavro). Acidity is generally modest (the name means ‘low in acidity’) unless it is planted at higher elevations. [Malolactic conversion](#) is commonly avoided for this reason. Kyperounda Winery’s Anatoli described below is from a vineyard at 1,300 m (4,265 ft), the texture as well as the acidity creating freshness. Zambartas’s single-vineyard wine shows how beautifully the variety can be enhanced by a subtle mix of oak and acacia thanks to the underlying intensity of the fruit.





Kyperounda Winery's Anatoli vineyard, planting in 1950 according to official records, is a field blend of Xynisteri and Mavro with some Maratheftiko. Their winery is at 1,200 m in the village of Kyperounda in Pitsilia and is apparently Europe's highest winery.

The white-varieties masterclass also included a Commandaria made from 100% sun-dried Xynisteri: Evangelou's first vintage, an unfortified version that had spent the obligatory two years in wood (clay is another option). Their vineyard is quite high for a wine destined for Commandaria but the elevation brings balance to the sweetness of caramel and raisins.

Red-wine varieties

Lefkada: the local name for the Ionian variety Vertzami, a heat-loving vine from the Greek island of Lefkada. There are 83 ha (205 acres) on Cyprus, where it prefers elevations of below 700 m (2,300 ft). It tends to make deeply coloured aromatic wines with firm tannins. Vasilikon's barrel-aged version was a bit too oaky to reveal its full varietal character but the barrels had smoothed the tannins.





Maratheftiko growing together with Spourtiko (image courtesy of Makarounas)

Maratheftiko: regularly tipped as Cyprus's best, upcoming red, Maratheftiko is not easy to grow because it's dioecious (has female-only flowers) and needs a [cross-pollinator](#) such as Spourtiko, which is why it was traditionally grown in field blends. According to Kyperounda's Minas Mina, 'In traditional vineyards (more than 50 years old) the vines were planted randomly, typically Mavro, Xynisteri and some Maratheftiko. In new vineyards, they are planted in alternate rows.' There are now 166 ha (410 acres) of Maratheftiko. It's also known as Vamvakada in the Pitsilia region. Kyperounda's

Alma and Vouni Panayia's Barba Yiannis were good examples in this tasting, showing the variety's firm tannins, deep cherry flavours and light notes of violets.

Mavro: still Cyprus's most widely planted variety (2,814 ha/6,954 acres), Mavro is often 'improved' by blending, traditionally with Xynisteri to make Commandaria but also with the less productive but better-quality Maratheftiko. Vouni Panayia's Plakota, in which the 65% Mavro does not go through malolactic conversion because it needs to keep its acidity, shows that a lot of effort it needed to make something really good from the workhorse Mavro, which is also suitable as a table grape.

Yiannoudi: like Maratheftiko, this variety has only female flowers though it is not quite as difficult to grow, ripening more evenly, and has gentler tannins. There are 32 ha (79 acres) planted and this is also a contender, according to Walters, for Cyprus's best dark-skinned variety. Fikardos, one of the first to make a varietal Yiannoudi, and Tsiakkas, both showed good examples. The former was peppery and slightly leafy, reminding me of Cabernet Franc, the latter dark and peppery, with an echo of Syrah (a variety that also does well in Cyprus). Makarounas's Yiannoudi was also very good but more rustic than their Maratheftiko.

The majority of these 39 wines were tasted at the event organised in London by the Cyprus High Commission and the Cyprus Ministry of Energy, Commerce and Industry but a few were tasted at the portfolio tasting of Greek specialists Maltby & Greek, who import the wines of Zambartas into the UK. They are grouped by colour/style and then ordered alphabetically by producer but you can change that.

Select sorting option ▼

White

Aes Ambelis Morokanella 2024 Cyprus

16/20

WHITE

Vineyards in Polemi. Fermented in tank after 24 hours' skin contact. Three months on lees with stirring. All their whites are acidified, as are many on the island. RS 4 g/l.

Pure citrus that is mostly clementine and grapefruit. Rich in fruit and freshness, rounded texture, vibrant and mouth-watering. (JH)

Alcohol: 12.5% Drink: 2025 – 2026

Aes Ambelis Promara 2024 Cyprus

16/20

WHITE

Fermented in tank after 24 hours' skin contact. Three months on lees with stirring.

Intense peachy sweetness on the nose, with a light herbal and spice note. Tastes dry and crisp and finishes with a creamy roundness and tastes not bone dry. (JH)

Alcohol: 12.5% Drink: 2025 – 2026

Dafermou, Selection Morokanella 2023 Cyprus

17/20

WHITE

Fruit from Larnaca, where Dafermou is the only commercial winery. There are just 22 ha of Morokanella on the island. It is typically both drought- and disease-resistant. Kanella means 'cinnamon'. Grown at 1,200 m in 3 vineyards.

Spicy and oily aroma – smells relatively evolved. Really spicy and rich, mouth-filling. Definite note of cinnamon. Powerful, rich and long. Moderate acidity but the spice adds freshness. (JH)

Alcohol: 13% Drink: 2025 – 2029

Fikardos Xynisteri 2024 PGI Pafos

16/20

WHITE

A family business that took off after the fall of the Iron Curtain. From two vineyards. Alluvial soils and cooling breezes from the Mediterranean, at 250 m of elevation.

Bright and fresh citrus, salty and dry. Very fresh, direct. (JH)

Alcohol: 12% Drink: 2025 – 2028

Krasopoulin, Yiayia Xynisteri 2024 Cyprus

15.5/20

WHITE

Vineyard at 1,500 m of elevation, on the slopes of Madari, the second-highest peak on the island. Old bush vines on basaltic soil that holds water well.

Lightly spicy citrus. Notably salty but a little bit flat overall. Almost too salty. (JH)

Alcohol: 12.5% Drink: 2025 – 2026

Kyperounda Winery, Petritis 2024 PGI Lemesos

16.5/20

WHITE

100% Xynisteri from the middle of the island at 1,400 m of elevation. Fermented in tank, 20% aged in barrel.

Fragrant herby citrus with a hint of lime-leaf. Taut and with an attractive, very slight grip. Bone dry and nicely textured. (JH)

Alcohol: 13% Drink: 2025 – 2026

Kyperounda Winery, Anatoli 2023 PGI Lemesos

17/20

WHITE

100% Xynisteri. Anatoli means 'east'. Single vineyard at 1,300 m of

*elevation – a low-yielding sloping site, so no acidification needed.
Fermented and aged 9 months in amphora.*

More intense than the Petritis – ripe citrus and even a touch floral. More savoury, too, with a leesy richness. Sour-fresh tension on the palate. Moderate acidity but with freshness from the lightly grainy texture. Pure and salty on the finish. (JH)
Alcohol: 13% Drink: 2025 – 2028

Makarounas, Aerides Xynisteri 2024 PGI Pafos

17/20

WHITE

Cold pre-fermentation maceration. Spontaneous fermentation in tank. Four months on lees. Total SO₂ at bottling 40–60 ppm.
Intense aroma of sour quince. Distinctive flavour of quince and green apple. A light but definite texture. Long, salty-sour finish. Mouth-watering and likely to age well. (JH)

Alcohol: 12% Drink: 2025 – 2032

Makarounas, Amphora Promara 2024 PGI Pafos

17/20

WHITE

Grown at 500 m of elevation. A low-pH variety. Cold maceration then fermented and aged in 800-litre amphorae.
Has a similar sour-fresh impression as their Xynisteri; but this is much more cedar-like and green-fruited, giving an impression of well-managed oxidative winemaking. Extremely high acidity, piercing and long. Salty-sour finish. (JH)

Alcohol: 12% Drink: 2025 – 2029

Makarounas Spourtiko 2023 PGI Pafos

17/20

WHITE

Only 28 ha of Spourtiko on the island. The name of the variety refers

to the fact that the skins are thin and the grapes are liable to burst. Spourtiko was used in the past as a pollinator for Yiannoudi, Maratheftiko and Vasilissa. So interplanting is important. Ungrafted vineyards east of Pafos at up to around 600 m of elevation. Spontaneous fermentation in stainless-steel tanks. The wine stays in contact with fine lees for approximately 7 months. Total sulphites at bottling 40 to 60 ppm. Certified organic. Intense lemon aroma, relatively high acidity. Kumquat, lemon, dried citrus and lightly herbal. Mouth-watering and intense with a salty finish; nicely fresh. NB very low alcohol. Extremely fragrant. (JH)
Alcohol: 10.5% Drink: 2025 – 2027

Oenou Yi Vasilissa 2024 PGI Lemesos

16.5/20

WHITE

Vasilissa is a rare indigenous Cypriot variety. There are only 15 ha on the island but plantings are increasing. It used to be grown as a table grape in the west of the island. Not an easy variety to handle in the vineyard. Grown at 1,300 m of elevation on rocky limestone-rich soil.

Pure, lemony freshness. Relatively soft but with the freshness that comes from grapefruit-like flavour, with a touch of clementine/nectarine. Sherbet-like and a little spicy. Rounded and slightly grainy on the finish. (JH)

Alcohol: 12.5% Drink: 2025 – 2027

Price: £26.50 RRP

Tsiakkas Xynisteri 2024 PGI Lemesos

16.5/20

WHITE

Ungrafted vines at 1,000 m of elevation. Four days' cold ferment. All in tank.

Bright, stony lemon-and-lime freshness. Dry, with an attractive grip.

Pure and straightforward. (JH)

Alcohol: 12.5% Drink: 2025 – 2026

Price: £19 RRP

Tsiakkas Promara 2024 PGI Lemesos

16.5/20

WHITE

From two sites – in Pafos at 600 m of elevation and in Pitsilia at 1,200 m. Ungrafted vines. 3–4 days' cold soak and fermented in tank. RS 3.3 g/l.

Peachy citrus. Sweet-sour freshness. Bright and a little bit stony but relatively one-dimensional. (JH)

Alcohol: 12.5% Drink: 2025 – 2026

Vasilikon Xynisteri 2024 Laona Akama

15.5/20

WHITE

Vines at 700 m of elevation in Kathikas, Pafos. Fermented cool in tank and aged on lees.

Lively and open herbal citrus. Nicely textured and chewy, like fresh pear grain. Leesy texture. Relatively straightforward. (JH)

Alcohol: 12.5% Drink: 2025 – 2026

Vasilikon, Single Vineyard Xynisteri 2024 Laona Akama

16.5/20

WHITE

Vineyard at 700 m of elevation, planted in 1965. Fermented at cool temperatures in tank, long lees-ageing and 30% aged in oak.

Dry, chewy – more about texture than flavour. Pears and herby citrus flavours. A lot of presence for a wine of 12.5%. (JH)

Alcohol: 12.5% Drink: 2025 – 2028

Vlassides, Alátes 2022 Krasochoria Lemesou

17/20

WHITE

Old-vine Xynisteri (50+ years old), dry-farmed at 900 m of elevation, on limestone and clay. Xynisteri apparently means 'light in acidity'. From the Afamis subregion, which has to be above 750 m of elevation. Chilled overnight. Fermented in 2,000-litre untoasted oak just to add some tannin for ageing; not for flavour or oxidation. Stony lemon and pear aroma. Lovely sour-salty freshness and finish, with just a slight grip in the texture. (JH)

Alcohol: 12.7% Drink: 2025 – 2030

Vouni Panayia, Alina Xynisteri 2021 PGI Pafos

16.5/20

WHITE

Spontaneous fermentation in tank. 9 months on lees. Certified organic.

Sour-fresh and cedary. Lots of freshness. Straightforward, tight and clean-cut. (JH)

Alcohol: 12.5% Drink: 2025 – 2027

Vouni Panayia, Woman in the Wine Press Morokanella 2022 PGI Pafos

16.5/20

WHITE

Old ungrafted bush vines. Spontaneous ferment in tank, 9 months on fine lees. Certified organic.

Much riper-tasting than the Xynisteri – spicy stone fruit. Dry, chewy and deep. Sweetness of fruit balanced by relatively high acidity. Very youthful for a 2022. (JH)

Alcohol: 13.5% Drink: 2025 – 2028

Zambartas Xynisteri 2024 PGI Lemesos

16.5/20

WHITE

A blend of 6 different lots. Vines at 500–1,000 m of elevation. Cold maceration. Fermented in tank with 3 months on lees.

Cedary, herbal aroma with lemon-and-lime fruit. Salty-sour citrus freshness. Clean, stony and pure. Dry and mouth-watering. (JH)

Alcohol: 13% Drink: 2025 – 2027

Zambartas, Single Vineyard Xynisteri 2024 Krasochoria

17/20

Lemesou

WHITE

Vines at 900 m of elevation, on calcareous-clay soils. Fermented and aged 6 months in oak barrels with acacia heads. Certified organic.

Smells completely different from their classic Xynisteri. Toasty and spicy. Depth and spice on the palate, too. The wood has added another dimension and given breadth but not notably more concentration. Salty-sour aftertaste. (JH)

Alcohol: 12.5% Drink: 2025 – 2029

Zambartas, Single Vineyard Xynisteri 2024 Krasochoria

17/20

Lemesou

WHITE

Fermented and aged in oak barrels with acacia heads – the acacia accentuates the floral side of Xynisteri, says owner/winemaker Marcos Zambartas. And the barrels are steamed, not toasted.

Serious wine: both fragrant and savoury, the way white Rhône can be. A little bit of spice. Gently chewy and with delicious sour freshness. Lightly scented on the palate. Very long and distinctive – not a fruity wine but no lack of fruit. (JH)

Alcohol: 13% Drink: 2026 – 2029

Price: £24.50 Maltby & Greek, Strictly Wine

Zambartas Promara 2023 PGI Lemesos

16.5/20

WHITE

50% aged in older French oak.

Fragrant with citrus, herbs and green fruits. Fresh and slightly cedary on the palate. Rounded and mouth-watering at the same time. Perfect balance. (JH)

Drink: 2026 – 2028

Price: £20 Maltby & Greek

Zambartas Promara 2024 PGI Pafos

16.5/20

WHITE

This is a variety that needs cool nights and slow ripening, it is usually the first to be harvested. Third-generation Marcos Zambartas runs the winery with his wife Marleen. His grandfather used to run the massive co-operative KEO and brought it into the modern age.

Regenerative farming, very old bush vines on limestone at 800–1,200 m of elevation. Cold maceration, 50% fermented in old oak barrels, 50% in stainless steel including whole berries. Certified organic.

Herbal citrus with a touch of spice. Ripe and peachy with stone fruits. Floral, too. Tight and herbal on the palate. Something nutty/almondy on the palate but also something that reminds me of lychee – and a rounded, creamy texture. Just fresh enough for harmony. (JH)

Alcohol: 13.5% Drink: 2025 – 2028

Red

Aes Ambelis, Omiros Maratheftiko 2021 PGI Pafos

15.5/20

RED

Vineyards in the Nikosia district at 700–1,000 m of elevation, but

they also buy grapes. Aged mostly in used barrels for a year.

Deep crimson. A little overripe on the nose, slightly raisiny. Firm tannins and the fruit seems to have lost its freshness. A touch of dried fruit on the finish. (JH)

Alcohol: 13.5% Drink up

Dafermou, Selection Yiannoudi 2023 Cyprus

15/20

RED

Fruit from Larnaca grown at 1,200 m of elevation in their highest vineyards. Aged in a mix of French and American oak.

Rich, sweet and spicy – lots of oak sweetness. Red-cherry intensity. A little too much oak has thickened the tannins and finishes a little bit harsh. (JH)

Alcohol: 13.5% Drink: 2025 – 2029

Fikardos Yiannoudi 2021 PGI Pafos

16.5/20

RED

Vineyard in the village of Choulou. Aged 10 months in old oak.

Mid crimson. Peppery and slightly leafy dark fruit. Has a touch of Cab Franc about it. Dry and fine-grained. Subtle, with good freshness. (JH)

Alcohol: 13% Drink: 2025 – 2028

Kyperounda Winery, Alma Maratheftiko 2024 PGI Lemesos

16.5/20

RED

Alma means 'leap' or 'jump'. Winery in Pitsilia at 1,100 m of elevation, the highest on Cyprus. Basaltic and granitic soils. 10 days' cold maceration, fermented at 23–25 °C so as not to extract too much tannin.

Very dark with purple rim but apparently lighter colour than many Maratheftikos. Gorgeous aroma of deep dark and floral fruit. Bright

acidity. Floral as well as purple-fruited. Tannins are gentle for this variety. Smooth and juicy with a burst of varietal character. (JH)

Alcohol: 13% Drink: 2025 – 2027

Makarounas Maratheftiko 2023 PGI Pafos

16.5/20

RED

Spontaneous fermentation in tank after a cold soak. Aged 12 months in oak of various sizes and ages, both new and used.

Mid crimson. Firm, chewy-smooth tannins, with lively dark-red fruit, both sweet and sour. Powerful and long, just a little bit jagged at the moment, needing time to mesh more fully. (JH)

Alcohol: 13% Drink: 2026 – 2030

Makarounas Yiannoudi 2023 PGI Pafos

16/20

RED

Spontaneous fermentation in small tanks without temperature control. Aged 18 months in oak of various sizes and ages, both new and used.

Mid crimson. Dark-fruited and a touch spicy. Very chewy texture. More rustic than the Maratheftiko. Firm, deep, full of flavour. (JH)

Alcohol: 13% Drink: 2026 – 2029

Tsiakkas Yiannoudi 2022 PGI Lemesos

16.5/20

RED

Bush vines at 700–1,300 m of elevation, on ophiolite, basalt and granite with some volcanic component. Aged 2 years in French and American oak. Certified organic.

Deep purplish crimson. Dark and peppery – not unlike Syrah. But sweeter-fruited on the palate. Full, smooth and chewy, the tannins not Syrah-like. Maybe more like Shiraz in its build? Dry, fine, sweet

and sour. (JH)

Alcohol: 13.5% Drink: 2025 – 2030

Vasilikon Lefkada 2020 PGI Pafos

16/20

RED

Lefkada is Greece's Vertzami grape variety, an Ionian variety that doesn't like elevations above about 750 m, apparently, and thrives in the cooler west of the island. Grown in Kathikas at 650 m of elevation in a windy site with some maritime influence. Six months in French oak barrels and 2 years in bottle before release.

Mid crimson. Sweetness and spice of oak as well as a suggestion of crushed stones. Evolved dark fruit with the start of dried cherries. Oak is still evident, but the tannins are smoothed by the barrel and bottle age. Chewy, juicy, wholesome. (JH)

Alcohol: 13% Drink: 2024 – 2030

Vlassides, Óroman 2021 PGI Lemesos

16/20

RED

95% Yiannoudi, 5% Shiraz. Yiannoudi is related to Maratheftiko, apparently, and needs a pollinator. It's quite difficult to grow but not as difficult as Maratheftiko. There are 32 ha on the island but plantings are growing rapidly. Yiannoudi has finer tannins than Maratheftiko. Grown mainly above 500 m of elevation. The harvest takes place at the beginning of September. After fermentation and malolactic conversion, the wine matures in French oak barrels, which are 3 and 4 years old, for 12 months.

Deep crimson. Peppery and black-fruited, a little Syrah-like. Fine tannins and peppery on the palate, too. (JH)

Alcohol: 13.5% Drink: 2025 – 2029

Vouni Panavia. Barba Yiannis Maratheftiko 2017 PGI Pafos

16 5/20

RED

Maratheftiko from old bush vines in Panayia. Spontaneous fermentation and aged in large old French oak. Certified organic. Complex aroma of black and red fruit, with cherry sweetness and violets. Fragrant, and seems so much younger than 2017. The tannins are still firm but this would be fine with food. Chewy and long. (JH)

Alcohol: 13.5% Drink: 2024 – 2032

Vouni Panayia, Plakota 2021 PGI Pafos

16.5/20

RED

65% Mavro, 35% Maratheftiko, grown on the edge of the Pafos forest. Mavro is also a very good table grape and the berries are sweet, so it is good for Commandaria. Maratheftiko suffers from shatter and needs a pollinator, hence the field blend. 40-year-old vines, interplanted at 800–1,500 m of elevation. Spontaneously fermented in stainless-steel tanks. Matured on the fine lees of Xynisteri to add texture and aroma. The Mavro did not go through malolactic conversion as it has low acidity. Certified organic.

Mid crimson. Peppery and lightly spicy. A little bit minty/herbal (a sign of the elevation of the vineyard). Deep, chewy, smooth. Just enough freshness. Ageing well. Deep-fruited and full of flavour. Needs food. (JH)

Alcohol: 13.5% Drink: 2024 – 2031

Zambartas Maratheftiko 2023 PGI Lemesos

16.5/20

RED

Extended maceration, malolactic conversion while still on the skins. Aged 12 months in French oak, 15% new.

Deep purplish crimson. Dark-fruited, peppery and fragrant. Chewy,

rich and full of flavour. A big, warm wine, but the Maratheftiko tannins have been well tamed. Sweet-sour aftertaste. (JH)

Alcohol: 15% Drink: 2025 – 2030

Zambartas, Koukouvagia 2023 PGI Lemesos

16.5/20

RED

A blend of Shiraz and Mataro. Shiraz is, surprisingly, the third most planted variety on the island after Mavro and Xinisteri. Unoaked, apart from a little bit of stave use.

Mid cherry red. There's both fruit sweetness and a hint of oak sweetness from the staves – really well done. Light but proper tannins, dark-fruited and **VG**V. Juicy, fresh but not simple. (JH)

Alcohol: 13% Drink: 2026 – 2028

Price: £15.50 Maltby & Greek, Strictly Wine

Sweet

Evangelou 2018 Commandaria

17/20

WHITE

100% Xynisteri grown at 820-920 m of elevation, which is quite high for Commandaria. Today, Commandaria is rarely fortified. Grape-growing, winemaking and ageing have to take place in the demarcated zone; but it can be fortified outside the zone. This is their first vintage. Sun-dried grapes (10 days), aged for 2 years in wood. RS 200 g/l.

Brownly amber-gold. Intense aroma of dates and raisins. Intense flavour of raisins and caramel but, even with all this sweetness, it is balanced. Super-sweet, intense caramel with just a touch of bitter orange. (JH)

Alcohol: 11% Drink: 2024 – 2035

WHITE

Sun-dried Xynisteri. Spontaneous fermentation. Aged for 2 years in oak. In conversion to organics.

Deep gold. Much brighter fruit than the 2018 vintage (which was in the masterclass during this tasting). More apricot and bitter orange. Toffee'd apricots on the palate. Very, very sweet and could do with a little more acidity for harmony. (JH)

Alcohol: 11% Drink: 2025 – 2029

KEO, St John 2017 Commandaria

16/20

WHITE

A fortified blend of sun-dried Mavro and Xynisteri from the Krasochoria Lemesou region. 2017 is the base wine, but it was aged in a solera in 600-litre barrels. RS approx 160 g/l.

Browny green. A little spicity with the raisiny aroma of sun-dried fruit. Very, very sweet and lacks balancing freshness, raisiny. One of the other tasters in the room said it reminded them of carob syrup – a good call. Simple and sweet. (JH)

Alcohol: 15% Drink: 2025 – 2029

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CYPRUS

WHITE WINE

RED WINE

SWEET WINE



JULIA HARDING MW