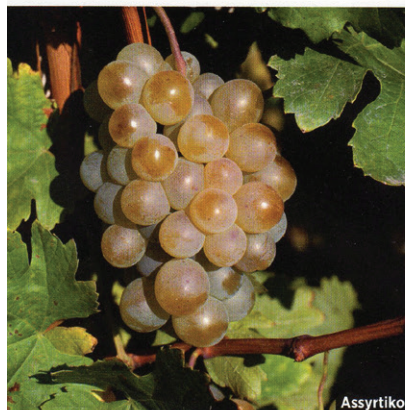




## GREECE



largest island in the Santorini archipelago, is sparsely populated, officially part of the Santorini terroir and almost identical in soil and climate, except that it actually receives more hours of sunshine on its extensive western slopes. Moreover, according to Vamvakousis, the population of Thirassia (little more than 300) prefers agriculture over mass tourism. 'They are conservative people and do not want to see their island going the same way as Santorini.'

### Wine excursions

Santo Wines has been harvesting grapes on Thirassia for several decades now, using them mostly for traditional Vinsanto. Next year it may be bottling a Santorini Assyrtiko labelled Thirassia. And Boutari is offering its production facilities on Santorini to a new vineyard on Thirassia called Mikra Thira. In 2019, Vassaltis intends to start planting on Thirassia with a view to harvesting in 2023.

Soon visitors to Santorini will be able to take the ferry across the caldera – passing the eastern Mediterranean's youngest volcano, Nea Kameni – to visit Thirassia's wineries. For the moment, however, a number of tour companies take visitors on a full or half-day excursion round Santorini's vineyards. It's also very easy for visitors with a hire car and a designated driver to tour the wineries following the maroon 'Wine Road' signs.

As well as luring wine lovers away from the tourist hotspots of Oia and Fira, Santorini's 20km of Wine Road encourage visitors to see the island itself and to talk to the real people of Santorini, rather than the amiable waiter who is over from Athens this summer. **D**

Photograph: Mick Rock/Capitas

## Island white: Terry Kandylis' top 10 Assyrtikos from Santorini

### ① Karamolegos, Ancestral Vines 34 2017 96

£28-£30.49 Christopher Keiller, Eclectic Wines, Noel Young, Wine & Greene, WoodWinters  
100% Assyrtiko from very old vines. On the nose it's a volcano in a glass: crushed stones and a chalky-spicy nature reminiscent of a great Chablis, with wild flowers and citrus fruit in the background. On the palate there's grapefruit and tangerine too, with salinity and oyster shell complexity. Phenomenal wine, truly world class: wonderful to drink now or keep. **Drink** 2019-2028 **Aic** 14%

### Volcanic Slopes, Pure 2015 95

£36.17 (2014) Clark Foyster  
100% Assyrtiko. Gently aromatic nose with lots of ripe nectarine, peach and apricot nuances – almost tropical. Precise, taut and mineral, almost salty, and very citrusy with a green apple character that lingers on the palate. An underlying power and depth shows lots of potential. **Drink** 2020-2028 **Aic** 13.5%

### ② Estate Argyros, Assyrtiko 2016 94

£19.95-£25.95 Clark Foyster, Davy's, Philglas & Swigot, Roberson, Tanners  
A little reserved at the moment, but

the palate is generous, with weight and structure at the same time. Has lovely mouthfeel and roundness, the refreshing acidity hiding well a warming effect from the alcohol. Really long and mouth-coating. **Drink** 2019-2024 **Aic** 13.5%

### ③ Gaia Wines, Wild Ferment 2018 93

£24-£31.95 Carruthers & Kent, Davis Bell McCraith, Exel, Great Wines Direct, Hallgarten Wines, Nickolls & Perks, Noel Young  
100% Assyrtiko. A whiff of white nectarine with a gunflint minerality and hint of spice. Lemony freshness, grapefruit and hints of wild flowers. Bone dry, with more peach and white plum characters on the palate and a softness on the acidity. Fresh and moderately aromatic; a pleasing alternative to a grand cru Chablis. **Drink** 2020-2025 **Aic** 13.5%

### ④ Hatzidakis, Nykteri 2016 93

POA Eclectic Wines  
100% Assyrtiko. Deep golden colour. Extended skin contact brings ripe aromas of peach skin, honey, bruised apple and almonds. A sweet core of fruit is balanced by fantastic acidity and low-level tannins. The alcohol adding spice and warmth. Vigorous and full, sharp and giving.



Nutty oxidative notes and bergamot/marmalade hints make it food-friendly for rich creamy dishes, meaty fish or mature hard cheeses. **Drink** 2019-2022 **Aic** 15%

### ⑤ Vassaltis, Assyrtiko 2017 93

£25-£30.99 Handford, Master of Malt, Roberson, Soho Wine Supply, The Dorset Wine Co, The Wine Reserve, Wimbledon  
Wine Cellar, Virgin Wines  
Moderately aromatic, with candied lemon, grapefruit and tangerine characters. More to discover on the palate, where leesy notes give texture and a riper, fruit-driven character gives notes of white plums, melon and juicy peach. Bone dry, but balanced by fantastic acidity that keeps the wine lingering on the palate. **Drink** 2019-2024 **Aic** 13.8%

### Sigalas, Barrel Fermented 2017 92

£30 Maltby & Greek  
100% Assyrtiko. Ripe stone fruit aromas, orange, hints of vanilla and oak sweetness, with a salted almond character. The palate is round with a saline intensity – quite mouthwatering. Has an unmistakable gunflint note that gives a smoky sensation, and an almost tannic aspect on a quite prolonged finish. **Drink** 2019-2024 **Aic** 14.5%

### Thymiopoulos Vineyards, Acroterra 2016 92

POA Eclectic Wines  
Assyrtiko blended with 10% Athiri and 5% Aidani. Golden

colour with a slightly cloudy appeal, revealing a nutty phenolic character on the nose with apple and peach skin and an underlying spiciness and crushed pepper character. The palate is fresher, while calling to mind a Savennières or a grosses gewächs Riesling in style. Not one for the faint-hearted. **Drink** 2019-2022 **Aic** 14%

### Gaia Wines, Thalassitis 2018 90

£18.49-£26.99 Carruthers & Kent, Exel, Fintry Wines, Hallgarten Wines, Noel Young, Strictly Wine  
100% Assyrtiko. A fruit-driven, aromatic nose shows green apple and pear notes, underripe peach and nectarine and some fermentation aromas. On the palate it is crisp, with a refreshing hint of residual CO<sub>2</sub>. Saline and easy to appreciate; wonderful as an aperitif or with light dishes. **Drink** 2019-2022 **Aic** 13%

### Santo Wines, Assyrtiko 2017 89

£15.70-£20 Christopher Keiller, Exel, Maltby & Greek, The Fine Wine Co, Vinvm  
Charming fruit and easy appeal on the nose, with a white flower and nectarine character. It's beautifully dry, with juicy fruit on the mid-palate and moderate alcohol. Makes for a very good introduction to Assyrtiko from Santorini without breaking the bank. **Drink** 2019-2021 **Aic** 13.5%



Born in Greece, Terry Kandylis is head sommelier at London private members club 67 Pall Mall, and a DWWA judge