Island white: Terry Kandyli’s top 10 Assyrtikos from Santorini


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 2019-2024 Alc 14%.


100% Assyrtiko. A whiff of white nectarine with a gunflint minerality and hint of spice. Lemon freshness, grapefruit and hints of wild flowers. Bone dry, with more peach and white plum carácter on the palate and a softness on the acidity. Fresh and moderately aromatic; a pleasing alternative to a grand cru Chablis. Drink 2020-2025 Alc 13.5%.

3. Hatsidakis, Nykteri 2016 93 Estate Argyro, Assyrtiko 2016 94 £19.95-£25.95, Clark Foytner, Doggy’s, Philpott & Swigart, Robertson, Tanzer

100% Assyrtiko. Deep golden colour. Extended skin contact brings tpa aromas of peach skin, honey, brulèd 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.


Modestly 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 peaches, melon and juicy peach. Bone dry, but balanced by fantastic acidity that keeps the wine lingering on the palate. Drink 2019-2024 Alc 15%.

5. Siggelis, Barrel Fermented 2017 92 £80-£90, Bontà & 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 Alc 14.5%.

6. Thymiopoulos Vineyards, Acrotomera 2016 92 POA. Eclectic Wines Assyrtiko blended with 10% Allhni 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 carácter. The palate is fresher, while calling to mind a Savennières or a grassy gewurztraminer. Fruity in style. Not one for the faint-hearted. Drink 2019-2022 Alc 14%


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 mineral CO₂. Saline and easy to appreciate; wonderful as an aperitif or with light dishes. Drink 2019-2022 Alc 13%


Charming fruit and easy appeal on the nose, with a white flower and nectarine carácter. It’s beautifully dry, with a light hint of alcohol. Makes for a very good introduction to Assyrtikos from Santorini without breaking the bank. Drink 2019-2021 Alc 12.5%

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 Nitriasis. And Kontani is offering its production facilities on Santorini to a new vineyard on Thirassia called Milia Trina. In 2018, Vassilis 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 channel – 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.