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Wine & Spirits

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AUGUST 2012
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YEAR'S BEST GREEK WINES

Our blind panels tasted **292** new-release Greek wines over the past 12 months.

Tara Q. Thomas, our critic for Greece, rated **41** as exceptional (90+) and **44** as Best Buys.

Find a complete list of wines tasted and all reviews at wineandspiritsmagazine.com.

GREECE SPARKLING

93 | Tselepos \$28
Arcadia Amalia Brut (Best Buy) With its delicate florality, scents of violets, honeysuckle and rose, as well as its sweet, peachy fruit, this sparkling wine captures all of moschofilero's best elements with clarity and precision. The acidity provides a fine, graceful line of flavor, while the rising bubbles lift the wine higher. It's not Cristal, but in the world of fragrant sparkling wines, this is hard to beat for elegance and drinkability. *V.O.S. Selections, NY*

GREECE WHITE

GREEK ISLANDS: CRETE

89 | Lyrarakis \$18
2011 Crete Okto (Best Buy) A blend of muscat with vilana and sauvignon blanc, this soars in a honeysuckle scent, a sweet fragrance that carries into the flavor, where the wine seems tighter and greener. It's a little astringent, but that note may dissipate with a few months in bottle. For fish in a light curry sauce. *Stellar Importing Co., Astoria, NY*

CEPHALONIA

88 | San Gerassimo \$13
2011 Cephalonia Robola (Best Buy) Juicy with lemony fruit and firmed by a sense of chalk, this is a palate-whetting white for fish and *horta*, bitter wild greens doused in olive oil and lemon. *Fantis Imports, Carlstadt, NJ*

PAROS

90 | Moraitis \$15
2010 Paros Monemvasia (Best Buy) Lightly floral with a broad, satiny texture, this is an elegant white from the monemvasia grape, an ancient variety thought to have played a part in the blend that became known as Malmsey. It balances its richness with a lemony acidity. A terrific match for pike-perch with summer peas. *V.O.S. Selections, NY*

SANTORINI

94 | Estate Argyros \$45
2011 Santorini This feels like a blast of cool air off seawater, with a refreshing snap to its crisp, savory fruit. The lemony acidity gives it a chiseled feel, holding the broad, full flavor to an elegant line. It's monumental, a summation of the sun-blasted, wind-buffed volcanic island in its flavor. *Athenee Importers & Distributors, Hempstead, NY*

93 | Hatzidakis \$19
2011 Santorini (Best Buy) This is Santorini magnified, a huge mouthful of sun, salt and chalk. It feels leesy and broad, supported by strident, grapefruit acidity and a savory wash of seawater saltiness. For all its size, it lifts off the palate in a cloud, a long-lasting blast of island air that lingers indefinitely. Drink it now with rich dishes, or cellar it another decade. *Tyreme Imports, Huntersville, NC*

92 | Sigalas \$30
2010 Santorini Fermented in Oak Barrel Paris Sigalas builds this Santorini like a grand cru Burgundy, with oak bolstering an impressive weight of chalk and broad, concentrated fruit. That fruit has a rare succulence for Santorini, a tangelo sweetness that lingers long into the finish, a gentle edge to a wine structured for the long haul. Tuck it away for a good six to twelve years. *Diamond Importers, Chicago, IL; Michael Skurnik Wines, Syosset, NY*

91 | Santo Wines \$20
2010 Santorini Nykteri (Best Buy) This is a powerful wine built on superripe assyrtiko. It tastes of pineapple and oranges but it's not at all sweet, equally concentrated in chalk and orange pith notes. Alcohol lends it a warm spice, while saline notes add to its savory appeal. This is a Santorini for meat, and a terrific example of a more traditional style. *River Horse Imports, Hicksville, NY*

90 | Boutari \$23
2011 Santorini (Best Buy) A classic Santorini, staunch and chalky, this wine's acidity adds a pleasantly bitter pithiness to its structure. Austere in flavor and rich in texture, it will become more complex and expressive with another five to seven years in the cellar, or with a plate of grilled octopus dressed in olive oil and capers. *Terlato Wines Int'l., Lake Bluff, IL*

90 | Gaia \$30
2011 Santorini Thalassitis Uncompromisingly savory, this feels like sucking on a stone. It's chalky and firm, the acidity precise, the only fruit a hint of salted lemon. Tight and mouthwatering, it's made for food, like a lamb chop amply ringed in charred fat. *Athenee Importers & Distributors, Hempstead, NY*

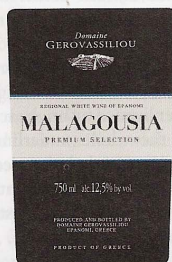
90 | Santo Wine \$30
2011 Santorini Grand Reserve Assyrtiko An oxidative style, this is golden in hue and flavor, the chalky flavors rich with notes of nutmeg, mace and roasted nuts. It ends dry and clean. Served cold, it's an opulent match for chicken liver crostini or *kokoretsi*. *River Horse Imports, Hicksville, NY*

88 | Koutsoyiannopoulos \$21
2009 Santorini (Best Buy) Caught in between youth and maturity, this offers Santorini's characteristic minerality deepened by notes of petrol and wood spice. It's relatively mellow in texture, with a softly herbal edge. A Santorini for fava purée. *Frederick Wildman and Sons, NY*

87 | Gavalas \$17
2011 Santorini (Best Buy) Sharp and broad, this balances its rich, chalky flavor with a razor-sharp acidity and a saline tang. It benefits from lots of air, shedding its reductive funk and relaxing into a sunnier flavor profile after a day open. Decant it for clams tossed with spicy sausage. *Dionysos Imports, Manassas, VA*

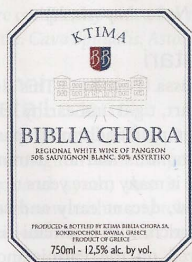
87 | Santo Wines \$18
2011 Santorini Assyrtiko (Best Buy) Young and reduced, this backs its tart green fruit flavors with richer burnt orange notes. It's firm and chalky, a staunch Santorini for meat pies. *River Horse Imports, Hicksville, NY*

MACEDONIA



92 | Domaine Gerovassiliou \$19
2010 Epanomi Single Vineyard Malagousia (Best Buy) Honey-sweet and floral in scent, this wraps its orange and peach flavors in jasmine fragrance. It feels like satin, the fruit soft and a little jammy, with a nectarine juiciness at the center. It might not have the structure of Gerovassiliou's best vintages, but it hits on all the pleasure points. A luscious malagousia for grilled lobster. *Cava Spiliadis, Astoria, NY*

90 | Alpha Estate \$20
2011 Florina Ktima Alpha Sauvignon Blanc This captures the coolness of its far northern vineyards in its delicate flavors, a combination of violets, limes and slate, played off a texture that's broad and savory. At once rich and restrained, it's a quietly opulent wine for chicken in a lemon sauce. *Diamond Importers, Chicago, IL; Michael Skurnik Wines, Syosset, NY*



90 | Biblia Chora \$38
2011 Pangeon A blend of assyrtiko and sauvignon blanc grown in Kavala, 60-some miles east of Thessaloniki, this layers notes of grass, grapefruit, green pepper and red

currents on ripe guava fruit. It's a rich, sophisticated white with international appeal. *Cava Spiliadis, Astoria, NY*

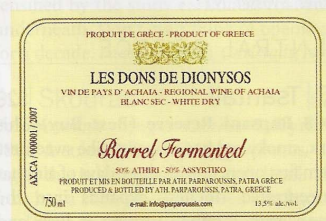
90 | Domaine Gerovassiliou \$16
2011 Epanomi (Best Buy) Assyrtiko's tight, savory flavors balance malagousia's lush fruit, turning it toward peach blossoms. A chalky minerality runs underneath the wine's broad, waxy texture. Firm and elegant with clarity and precision, it's especially impressive at the price. *Cava Spiliadis, Astoria, NY*

90 | Ktima Pavlidis \$35
2010 Drama Emphasis Chardonnay Impressively restrained, this firm chardonnay frames its lightly toasty fruit and skin spice flavors in lemony acidity. It's vibrant and savory, a lasting chardonnay for chicken roasted with orange and coriander. *Athenee Importers & Distributors, Hempstead, NY*

90 | Ktima Pavlidis \$35
2010 Drama Emphasis Assyrtiko This combines the sunny ripeness common to assyrtiko grown on the mainland with the sort of firmness and minerality usually confined to Santorini's examples. With a cold soak and four months on the lees, the wine highlights the juiciness of its fruit, a citric character that nears kumquat in its richness. *Athenee Importers & Distributors, Hempstead, NY*

87 | Tsantali \$15
2010 Agioritikos Metoxi Chromitsa (Best Buy) A blend of equal parts assyrtiko and sauvignon blanc, this is lemon-crisp and fresh, with a passionfruit richness at its center. Firm and mouthfilling, it's a lot of wine for the price, a bottle to keep in the fridge for summer drinking. *Fantis Imports, Carlstadt, NJ*

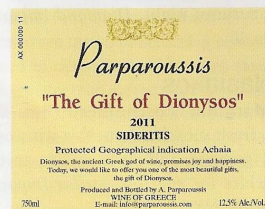
PELOPONNESE



92 | Parparoussis \$17
2007 Achaia Les Dons de Dionysos (Best Buy) A savory, powerfully chalky white with mere suggestions of fruit, this may be the most successful take on assyrtiko outside of Santorini. Athiri (25 percent of the blend)

YEARS BEST GREEK WINES

gives it a hint of florality, but otherwise it's unbending, a crisp, salty, mineral wine that holds its mouthwatering flavor long, ready to pierce a fillet of seared mackerel. *Cava Spiliadis, Astoria, NY*



92 | Parparoussis \$17
2011 Achaia The Gift of Dionysos Sideritis (Best Buy) Parparoussis is the guardian of this rose-hued grape, whose name is derived from *sidero*, the Greek word for iron. It's completely savory, with flavors that bring up a range of associations from woodruff and rue, to pink peppercorns, eucalyptus, rosewater and chalk. In other words, it's not like anything else, and it's lovely, a full-bodied white with a firm grip. Ready for fried anchovies or a chunk of Arahova feta doused in olive oil and sprinkled with herbs. *Cava Spiliadis, Astoria, NY*

90 | Boutari \$17
2011 Mantinia Moschofilero (Best Buy) A touch pink, this moschofilero stands out for the juxtaposition of its delicate florality and stony, salty minerality. The combination is mouthwatering, firm without being weighty, bringing to mind an image of Mantinia's cool, stony moonscape with flowering peach trees. It will make an elegant companion to light white fish. *Terlato Wines Intl., Lake Bluff, IL*

90 | Katogi & Strofilia \$30
2010 Ioannina Averoff Traminer This is crisp and spicy, juicy with white peach and orange notes. It's expansive in fragrance, the honeysuckle and lily notes set firmly into a base of honeysuckle and stone. It feels firm, cool, elegantly structured. A white for boudin blanc. *Frederick Wildman and Sons, NY*

90 | Mercuri Estate \$18
2011 Peloponnese Fológi Exceptional roditis, this is rose-scented and lemon-pithy, a cool, stony flavor following it up on the finish. It's firm enough for a pork loin, delicate enough for a shaved asparagus salad, balanced enough to drink anytime. *Athenee Importers & Distributors, Hempstead, NY*

YEARS BEST GREEK WINES

88 | **Domaine Skouras** \$15
2010 Peloponnese Almyra Chardonnay (Best Buy) Rich and toasty with a satin texture, this packs in a lot of wine for \$15. The oak spice and buttery apple flavors will make a warming match to a roast chicken on a cool autumn night. *Diamond Importers, Chicago, IL*

87 | **Nasiakos** \$14
2011 Mantinia Moschofilero (Best Buy) Young, fresh moschofilero, this wins on its breezy freshness and citric acidity, an easy, floral white for aperitifs. *Stellar Importing Co., Astoria, NY*

87 | **Nasiakos** \$16
2011 Mantinia Green Label (Best Buy) Fragrant as Turkish delight, this is light and floral, with honeysuckle sweetness. Chill it lightly for a citrusy seafood salad. *Stellar Importing Co., Astoria, NY*

86 | **Skouras** \$15
2011 Peloponnese Moschofilero (Best Buy) This is simple and firm, its sweet peach flavors underlined with stony mineral notes. Chill it for beach drinking, with grilled shrimp. *Diamond Importers, Chicago, IL; Michael Skurnik Wines, Syosset, NY*

THESSALY

90 | **Dougos Winery** \$25
2011 Thessaly Sauvignon Blanc-Roditis From a winery in Larissa started in the early 1990s, this is ripe and rich with a creamy texture, roditis's citric flavors taming the sauvignon's guava-like fruit. It's luxurious and elegant, balanced for chicken in a cream sauce. *Stellar Importing Co., Astoria, NY*

87 | **Domaine Zafeirakis** \$20
2010 Tyrnavos Chardonnay (Best Buy) This is yeasty and leesy, a gentle, soft-textured chardonnay with a lemon pith spice. It's impressive in its restraint, and would make a good match with halibut in a butter sauce. *Frederick Wildman and Sons, NY*

RETSINA

86 | **My Big Fat Greek Wine** \$7
Retsina (Best Buy) Light and fresh, this is a cleaned-up version of the traditional retsina, for newcomers to the style. *Hellas Import, Brookline, MA*

GREECE ROSE

88 | **Zacharias Vineyards** \$15
2011 Peloponnese Rosé Agiorgitiko (Best Buy) Spicy and bright with juicy cherry fruit, this is shot through with a lemony acidity that makes it immediately thirst-quenching. Chill it for sausages on the grill. *Stellar Importing Co., Astoria, NY*

GREECE RED

GREEK ISLANDS

92 | **Sigalas** \$60
2009 Cyclades Mavrotragno Or Mavrotroglodite, one taster suggested. This is dark and craggy, tasting as if it were squeezed out of red volcanic pumice. With time, a bloody mulberry flavor comes out, complex with dark spices like mace and frankincense. It's wild and exotic, otherworldly in its composition and ready to tear into a wild boar stew. *Diamond Importers, Chicago, IL*

90 | **Boutari** \$40
2009 Herakliotikos Skalani Dark and earthy, this pairs syrah's plummy, bacon-smoke pleasures with the gritty meatiness of kotsifali. That grape's impressive tannins make for a firm structure rendered approachable by an ample padding of fruit. The wine gets more expressive with air, suggesting it would be even better with another few years in the cellar, not to mention a Cretan meat pie. *Terlato Wines Int'l., Lake Bluff, IL*

87 | **Alexakis** \$13
2008 Crete Syrah (40%)–Kotsifali (60%) (Best Buy) Chocolate-cherry fruit meets earthy, savory *sub bois* notes in this Franco-Cretan blend, a warm, rustic red for a cinnamon-tinged *stifado* this winter. *Diamond Importers, Chicago, IL; Michael Skurnik Wines, Syosset, NY*

CENTRAL GREECE

90 | **Tsantali** \$23
2008 Rapsani Reserve (Best Buy) This dark, smoky red has a ripasso-like sweetness when first opened; with three days of air, that concentrated ripeness expands into the wine's gruff tannins, turning it lush and smooth. The tannins take on a velvet nap, the wine a fragrant dark cherry flavor with a growl of stony, dark earth. Put it away for another five to eight years, or decant early for a pork *stifado*. *Fantis Imports, Carlstadt, NJ*

88 | **Domaine Papagiannakos** \$17
2008 Central Greece Kalogeri Cabernet Sauvignon (Best Buy) Claret by way of Greece, this is light and herbal, with dusty cocoa notes underlining the firm black currant fruit. For steak frites, Greek-style, dusted with oregano and olive oil. *Fantis Imports, Carlstadt, NJ*

87 | **Tsantali** \$13
2009 Rapsani (Best Buy) Check this out as an alternative to Chianti: It's juicy with cherry fruit enlivened by bright acidity and a rose scent, the whole underlined with a smoky earthiness and clove spice. With its raspy tannins and relatively light weight, it would make an easy match to pasta with fennel sausages and broccoli rabe. *Fantis Imports, Carlstadt, NJ*

MACEDONIA

93 | **Boutari** \$27
2007 Naoussa Grand Reserve One whiff says this is the real thing, a stony, truffley scent like the wet earth beneath a rock in a forest. From the midst of that scent comes a luminous ray of cherry fruit, carried on the wine's vibrant acidity. Everything, even the oak notes, is all of a piece, and feels like it will stay that way for the next decade at the very least. *Terlato Wines Int'l., Lake Bluff, IL*

92 | **Voyiatzis** \$18
2007 Velvendos A blend of xinomavro, merlot and cabernet sauvignon, this slowly reveals layers of flavor as it develops in the glass. It starts out oaky, then ferrous, then smoky with tea leaf notes; all the while, the wine grows fuller, the merlot adding plumpness without weight. It's made by Yannis Voyiatzis, the head enologist of Boutari, from vineyards in his hometown in the far north of Greece. *Nestor Imports, NY*

91 | **Boutari** \$19
2008 Naoussa (Best Buy) This is textbook Naoussa: tart, tight and earthy with sweet-tart pomegranate and tomato paste notes. Iron-hard tannins and an extreme, lively acidity give it many more years to go. If you open it now, decant early and serve with something rich, like a porcini risotto, no holds barred on the Parmigiano. *Terlato Wines Int'l., Lake Bluff, IL*

91 | **Kir-Yianni** \$25
2008 Naoussa Rammista Selected from a range of estate vineyards at about 1,000 feet in altitude, this is still a baby, its raspberry

flavors encased in firm, ferrous tannins even three days after opening. But the fruit inside is well worth coaxing out, as red and juicy as the day it was picked. Austere now, it should grow more elegant with another ten years in the cellar. *V.O.S. Selections, NY*

91 | Tsantali \$30

2007 Agioritikos Metoxi X Chromitsa Single Vineyard Lush, floral and spicy, this is a kaleidoscope of flavors, the characteristics of each of its three grape varieties showing through. The xinomavro is the most expressive right now, scenting the wine with roses, dried fruit and iron, while limnio contributes a succulent purple fruit; cabernet pulls it all together with its lean structure and peppery berry notes. It's sophisticated and lovely, for pork with spiced fig compote. *Fantis Imports, Carlstadt, NJ*

90 | Alpha Estate \$17

2008 Florina Axia (Best Buy) This is all about syrah in its fragrant, floral, plummy flavor that expands tenfold on the palate. The 50 percent xinomavro in the blend is hidden at the moment, perceptible in a savory earthiness that comes up on the finish, a ferrous backbone that gives the lush syrah fruit structure and grace. Give it another three or four years to settle down, and pull it out for a leg of lamb. *Diamond Importers, Chicago, IL; Michael Skurnik Wines, Syosset, NY*

90 | Domaine Gerovassiliou \$55

2007 Epanomi Avaton There's nothing showy about this vintage of Avaton, just pure, natural-feeling fruit. A blend of the indigenous limnio, mavroudi and mavrotragano, it smells like a patch of raspberries, sweet, fresh and slightly leafy, and tastes just as juicy and layered, with a freshness that lasts far into the finish. The structure is firm, approachable now, although it's likely to develop more complexity with a few more years in the bottle. *Cava Spiliadis, Astoria, NY*

87 | Domaine Costa Lazaridi \$18

2009 Drama Oenodea (Best Buy) Mostly cabernet sauvignon with 20 percent each agiorgitiko and syrah, this is fresh and plummy with new leather and tobacco notes. An international style. *Nestor Imports, NY*

87 | Thymiopoulos Vyds. \$17

2010 Naoussa Young Vines Xinomavro (Best Buy) A new style of Naoussa, this is young and fruity, a Beaujolais-like combination of jammy, fresh raspberry fruit and bright, tart acidity. Give it a chill for back-

yard drinking on a warm night. *Athenee Importers & Distributors, Hempstead, NY*

87 | Tsantali \$16

2007 Agioritikos (Best Buy) This is soft and gamey, the plum compote flavors exotic with their spice and coffee ground notes. It's rustic and mouthfilling. For braised lamb. *Fantis Imports, Carlstadt, NJ*

PELOPONNESE

91 | Gaia \$50

2007 Nemea Estate Agiorgitiko This is a huge wine, Nemea magnified but not distorted. The youthful, sweet cassis fruit is layered in licorice and spice, fully supported by tannins that are ripened to a chocolate richness. Once the oak lifts off the fruit (it took two days), it's easy to imagine the forested, rocky mountaintop vineyard where this grows, perceptible in the wine's structure and cool herbal notes. Give it at least two to three years, or eight to ten if you can. *Athenee Importers & Distributors, Hempstead, NY*

90 | Papaioannou \$40

2005 Nemea Ktima Microclima Agiorgitiko From an old-vine, estate-owned vineyard, this is unreservedly modern, a flashy, heavily oaked style. It works because there's plenty of fruit to match it, cassis-sweet and concentrated, as well as a rich earthiness that directly recalls Nemea's warm, lush landscape. Put it away for another eight years, or pull it out at a steakhouse to impress friends more used to Napa cabernet. *Fantis Imports, Carlstadt, NJ*

90 | Papaioannou \$50

2004 Nemea Ktima Terroir Agiorgitiko With lots of oak boxing in the wine, this is built for the long haul. Tannins hold the sweet cherry fruit in a vice grip, further intensified by the stony earthiness that runs underneath. Don't even think of opening it for a decade. *Fantis Imports, Carlstadt, NJ*

90 | Skouras \$30

Peloponnese Megas Oenos Labyrinth 9906 A solera blend of Megas Oenos vintages, this is baroque in size and detail. The fruit has a cherry cordial sweetness, backed by darker notes of molasses and balsamic; what keeps it firm is a meaty density, while a mouthwatering acidity keeps it from feeling too heavy. It finishes with a salted caramel note, making it more a meditation wine to serve with cheese after dinner than with the main course. *Diamond Importers, Chicago, IL*

how we taste

● **Wine & Spirits tastings are a two-step process.** First, all wines submitted to us or purchased are tasted by screening panels, who are asked to determine which wines stand out as being better than average for their variety and appellation. These panels, conducted by W&S staff, are composed of retailers, sommeliers, winemakers and other wine professionals whom we invite to taste with us.

The goal is to draw on a broad universe of tasters to help us decide which wines are worth recommending, and to avoid the prejudices any one critic might exercise, consciously or not, which might prevent certain styles or classes of wine from being considered.

● **The wines recommended by our screening panels—generally between 20 and 30 percent of those originally assessed—are then presented at a later date to our critic, who scores each wine and writes the reviews.** A second, unopened bottle of each is used for this step. The critic's ratings are based on how well a wine performs within its category as labeled (varietally or regionally).

● **Wines rated 95 or higher are superlative, rare finds; wines from 90 to 94 are exceptional examples of their type; from 86 to 89 are highly recommended; and wines from 80 to 85 are recommended as good examples of their variety or region.**

● **The wines recommended in W&S have been selected by a broad range of educated palates, but then rated and described by an individual critic.** Our goal with these ratings is for each critic to provide a consistent point of view against which you may measure your own taste over time.

● **The label reproductions that appear in our tasting reports are a form of advertising.** After our tastings are completed and the results have been recorded, our marketing team offers wineries the opportunity to draw attention to their reviews with label reproductions. There is no obligation to advertise, and our scores and reviews are in no way affected by a winery's decision regarding advertising. Neither does advertising influence our selection of the wines we taste; our tastings are open to all.

● **All bottle reproductions in the magazine are purely editorial art.**

YEARS BEST GREEK WINES

90 | Tselepos \$45

2009 Arcadia Kokkinomilos Merlot This competes for the title of best merlot from anywhere in Europe, Bordeaux's Right Bank excepted. The crushed velvet color and juicy purple fruit scents suggest a ripe, Mediterranean red, but the palate reads otherwise: It's savory and cool with a foresty herbal element that lifts the fruit, turning it toward black and green pepper and raspberry leaf tea. The only rustic element is the gruff tannins, but that will not be so important next to a rare rack of lamb. *Distinctive Imports, Antioch, IL*

90 | Tselepos \$36

2009 Arcadia Avlotopi Cabernet Sauvignon (Best Buy) Dark and herbal in scent, this is a chewy, dense cabernet from Avlotopi, at close to 2,500 feet in altitude. Oak notes give it a chocolaty richness, but in the end it feels balanced, a solid, warm climate cabernet with structure and freshness. It would be equally at home in a Greek restaurant as in a high-end steakhouse. *Distinctive Imports, Antioch, IL*

88 | Katogi & Strofilia \$18

2008 Peloponnese Strofilia (Best Buy) This is firm and spicy, with a foresty note to its fresh red fruit. It wins in its simplicity, a straightforward and honest red for everyday drinking. *Frederick Wildman and Sons, NY*

88 | Papaioannou \$17

2010 Corinthia Pinot Noir (Best Buy) Spicy and tart, this couches its pomegranate-dried cherry fruit in darker tones of oak. It's tannic and earthy, but the minerality gives it lift. Pick up the spice with a pork loin rubbed with Aleppo pepper. *Fantis Imports, Carlstadt, NJ*

88 | Tselepos \$22

2008 Nemea Agiorgitiko (Best Buy) This has all of Nemea's hallmarks: plummy fruit, black olives, a chocolate richness combined with a foresty spice. It's firm and stony, a Nemea for drinking now or over the next five to seven years. *Distinctive Imports, Antioch, IL*

87 | Gaia \$16

2011 Peloponnisis Nótios Agiorgitiko (Best Buy) Fresh and modern, this is rich in cherry fruit licked with wood smoke and spice, a red for drinking around a campfire. *Athenee Importers & Distributors, Hempstead, NY*

87 | Domaine Skouras \$14

2010 Nemea St. George Aghiorgitiko (Best Buy) An easy-going introduction to Nemean

reds, this is cherry-fruity with abundant oak spice. Give it a slight chill for a backyard barbecue. *Diamond Importers, Chicago, IL; Michael Skurnik Wines, Syosset, NY*

86 | Monemvasia \$18

2007 Peloponnese Laloudi (Best Buy) Earthy and mature, this plays herbal notes off its caramel-toned fruit. Drink soon. *Mina Distributors, Milford, CT*

86 | Skouras \$15

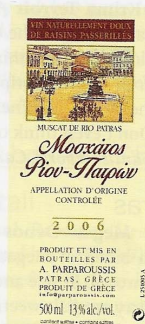
2010 Peloponnese St. George-Cabernet Sauvignon (Best Buy) Agiorgitiko makes up 95 percent of this wine in blend as well as flavor, a bright red note as sweet as cherry candy, skirted with herbal and spice notes. Give it a chill for char-grilled burgers. *Diamond Importers, Chicago, IL; Michael Skurnik Wines, Syosset, NY*

WESTERN GREECE

90 | Gentilini \$25

2010 Cephalonia Eclipse A dry version of mavrodaphne, this elicited excited comments from the tasting panel for its wild range of flavors. Spice, rosewater, frankincense, bitter chocolate and sausages were some of the words thrown out. None of them really do justice to the panoply of flavors here, wild, herbal, purple and spicy. "Give me a bottle and I'll finish it off," someone said, summing up the general feeling: With its light texture and cool, vibrant acidity, it's eminently drinkable. Grill some *loukaniko* sausages and enjoy. *Athenee Importers & Distributors, Hempstead, NY*

GREECE DESSERT



93 | Parparoussis \$22/500ml

2006 Muscat de Rio Patras This is show-stopping wine, able to silence an entire tasting panel on first whiff. Made from old vines grown on the northern coast of the Peloponnese, just east of Patras, it smells

like an orange grove in full bloom. The flavor is no less expansive, a tapestry of orange, honey, jasmine and chamomile woven into its satin texture. For all that flavor, it's as light as a meringue, able to stand as an aperitif or a dessert wine for fig ice cream. *Cava Spiliadis, Astoria, NY*

91 | Estate Argyros \$45/500ml

2006 Santorini Vinsanto 4 years barrel aged A gentle introduction to the wild world of Argyros Vinsantos, this sweet, young, barrel-aged assyrtiko tastes of toasted nuts and orange blossom honey, with a beeswax richness to the texture. It's very pretty, a pairing for something creamy and rich, like crême caramel. *Athenee Importers & Distributors, Hempstead, NY*

90 | Sigalas \$25/500ml

Santorini Apiliotis (Best Buy) A powerful interpretation of mandilaria, this is sweet and tart with pomegranate fruit, chiseled by spicy acidity and finishing with a note of sea salt. Pour it with *rizogalo*, the milky, cinnamon-scented Greek variation on rice pudding. *Diamond Importers, Chicago, IL*

88 | Kourtaki \$14

Muscato of Samos (Best Buy) Deeply gold, this plays slightly bitter notes of candied orange peel off the sweet honey notes, a whiff of jasmine adding delicacy. It ends cleanly, suggesting a match with soft cheeses as well as fruit desserts. *Nestor Imports, NY*

86 | Kourtaki \$13

Mavrodaphne of Patras (Best Buy) Think figs and molasses and you'll be close to the flavor of this wine, a rich, heavy red for nut cakes. *Nestor Imports, NY*

86 | Tsantali \$8

Samos Moscato (Best Buy) Deeply honeyed, this has herbal notes of chamomile and verbena that relieve the sweetness. Chilled, it makes a good companion to a bowl of sliced peaches. *Fantis Imports, Carlstadt, NJ*