



— THE —  
**THE ATHENÆUM**  
— PALL MALL, LONDON —

## Northern Greece Luncheon

18th February 2026



Chair: Prof Frank Larkin

Presenters: Dr Stephen Cannon-Brookes  
Victoria Wilson

## **Μεικτοι Μεζέδες**

Τζατζίκι, Χούμους , Ελιές, Αγκινάρες και Τυρόπιτα

### **1 Κύριο πιάτο**

Χταπόδι με ξύδι ή Χταπόδι Ξυδατο  
Μελιτζάνα γεμιστή με πλιγούρι και σάλτσα ντομάτας

### **2 Κύριο πιάτο**

Μοσχάρι στιφάδο, Σπανάκι και νουντλς αυγών

### **Καφέ**

Κέικ σμιγδαλιού

# Menu and Wines

## Aperitif

*Vielles Vignes Blanc Field Blend, Magoutes, 2024*

## Mixed mezze

Tztatziki, Hummus, Olives, Artichokes and Tiropita

*Single Block Latipes Malagouzia, Alpha Estate, 2024*

## 1st Entrée

Octopus in vinegar

Bulgar wheat stuffed aubergine with a tomato sauce

*Limnio, Nerantzi, 2022*

*Limniona, Karanika, 2021*

*Konarios, Nerantzi, 2017*

## 2nd Entrée

Beef Stifado, spinach and egg noodles

*Xinomavro, Naoussa, Dalamára, 2023*

*Xinomavro, Paliokalias, Dalamára, 2021*

*Xinomavro, Paliokalias Dalamára, 2013*

## Coffee

Semolina Cake

# The Wines of Northern Greece

## Context

Northern Greece spans an area between Turkey in the east and the Ionian Sea in the west. It is composed of five provinces and was the last part of the mainland to join the Republic of Greece (Hellas) in 1913, Thrace joining in 1920. Formerly, it was an Ottoman territory. As with most of modern Greece in the 20th Century the area witnessed massive changes in the population, notably the departure of Turks and Jews and the arrival of Greeks from Asia Minor. These exchanges have bequeathed the region a range of legacies, notably in cuisine, that are particularly evident in the city of Thessaloniki. The latter is the largest urban centre in the north and second only in size to Athens, with which it is co-capital.



Northern Greece Wine PDO Regions

## Regions, grapes and wines

Wine has been made in Greece for at least 6,500 years. Today, there is commercial wine making across the northern provinces and in nearly all parts of Macedonia. The terrain is generally less mountainous than southern Greece with vineyards ranging in location from steep hillsides to areas of plain. Generally, the climate is cooler than in the south with more rainfall. Mountains provide protection from wind, particularly from the north, whilst altitude and proximity to water both play a role. Vineyards are often integrated with other crops and orchards. The relative high fertility of the ground in growing areas has influenced systems for training vines and cultivation as well as planting density which is generally low - 4,000 per hectare.

The upheavals of the early 20th century affected wine making, interrupting traditions and local experience. This initially encouraged the emergence of larger producers focused on domestic markets. Entry into EU and latterly the financial crisis in the beginning of this century, has seen a wave of new independent (small) wine makers willing to export around the world. Both have experimented with imported grapes such as Syrah and Cabernet Sauvignon whilst reviving indigenous varieties. Supporting the revival in wine making, recognition of terrior and as well as production quality, has been the formation of an appellations system in three steps introduced in 1972 before Greece joined the EU in 1983. At the top of the hierarchy are 33 P.D.O.s (Protected Designation of Origin), below these are the 69 more extensive P.G.I.s (Protected Geographical Identification) and finally Epitrapezios or *vin de table* which are not necessarily from a specific area.






Northern Greece is best known for its red wines from Macedonia, which by size and output is the most significant wine growing region. This reputation for reds is underpinned by the indigenous Xinomavro grape, often likened to Nebbiolo which is grown throughout the north of Greece. It is generally regarded as reaching its peak of expression in the three PDOs of Naoussa, Amynteo and Goumenissa, west of Thessaloniki. Xinomavro produces aromatic wines with high acid and tannin suitable for long maturation. A profile that has steadily been refined by modern winemakers to find balance and elegance. There is now growing interest reviving other ancient indigenous varieties such as Limnio and Konarios, many of which were close to extinction in the 20th Century. Winemakers are also exploring the potential of newer varieties of which Limiona is a notable example. Alongside indigenous varieties, accomplished wines from international red grapes are made aimed at export as well as local consumption and these are often blended, sometimes with indigenous grapes.

White wine production in Northern Greece shares common varieties with other regions such as Assyrtiko and also imported varieties notably Sauvignon Blanc and Chardonnay. As with reds, indigenous white varieties are now being revived, some such as Debina aided by modern vinification techniques and others, notably Malagouzia, recovered from presumed extinction and now recognised as the base for high quality white wines.

Both red and white varieties are used for producing sparkling wines.

# Wineries presented in this lunch



Northern Greece P.D.O.s	
	Amynteo
	Naoussa
	Goumenissa
	Rapsani
	Cotes de Meliton

## Vielles Vignes Blanc Field Blend, Magoutes, 2024

Magoutes Vineyard, formerly known as Diamantis, is located close to the border with Albania in the Siatista PGI. The Diamantis and Papa-georgiou families specialise in rescuing old abandoned vineyards and reviving indigenous grape varieties, notably a red called Moshomavro, which in the past was blended with Xinomavro to balance the latter's tannins and acidity.

The vineyards at Mogoutes are at 745m-890m, are notably cool and unusually for Greece are on limestone overlaid with rocky soil. Low intervention is practised and grapes are hand picked. A vertical basket press is used to crush whole bunches of grapes to make this wine, followed by fermentation in stainless steel using indigenous yeasts.

Made from Xinomavro grapes, this white wine is a *blanc de noir*. Without the tannin, the high acidity of Xinomavro is clearly present, drawing parallels to a Chablis, whilst the on the palette it is fully dry with chalky and citrus characteristics. It is capable of aging 5-7 years.

Stats:

Alcohol 12.9%

Variety 100% Xinomavro

Total Acidity 7.35g/l

Soil Stony over limestone

Production approx. 1300 bottles

? Organic



## Single Block Latipes Malagouzia, Alpha Estate, 2024

Alpha Estate is one of Greece's best known wineries and symbolic of the renaissance in Greek wine-making in the past quarter century. The winery is located in the Amynteo PDO at 620m-710m. Its 220ha of vineyards are surrounded by lakes and mountains forming a distinctive microclimate. Founded in 1997, Alpha grows a wide range of both international and indigenous varieties.

Wine making at Alpha draws upon up to date techniques and systems such as optical grape sorting, skin contact under inert conditions and 'semi-controlled' fermentation using indigenous yeasts. This wine is kept on the lees in French and Greek oak barrels for 9 months.

Rediscovered in the 1970s, Malgaouzia is now recognized as important gape variety for quality wines. Its strong aromatic character and freshness on the palette combined with roundness of fruit make for an attractive ensemble and also substantial aging potential. This example from a single vineyard is indicative of what can be achieved with Malagouzia with a subtle amount of wood to create balance.

Stats:

Alcohol 13.0%

Variety 100% Malagouzia

Total Acidity 6.24g/l

Soil Sandy clay loam over limestone gravel

Production approx. 7500 bottles



## Limnio, Domaine Nerantzi, 2022

The Nerantzi Winery is located to the north east of Thessaloniki with vineyards on the shallow sloping sides of the flat Serres valley, 150-160m above sea level.



<https://www.nerantzi.com>

Since founding the winery in 1988, the Mitropoulou family have been responsible for the recovery of several local indigenous grapes - Asprouda and Koniaros - and instrumental in their addition to the national grape archive.

Limnio is an ancient red grape originating from island of Lemnos. It is grown in several regions of northern Greece and is now receiving sustained interest from newer wine makers with an interest in indigenous varieties. In their hands, Limnio yields wines of light tannins, moderate acidity and readily balanced fruit with a fresh aroma and hinting of herbs. The Nerantzi Limnio is raised in stainless steel which helps to support these characteristics.

Stats:

Alcohol 13.5%

Variety 100% Limnio

Total Acidity ---g/l

Soil Sandy loam

Production approx. 3000-5000 bottles

Organic Production



## Limniona, Domaine Karanika, 2021

Domaine Karanika is a near neighbour of the Alpha Estate in the Amynteo PDO, sharing its distinctive micro-climate due to the surrounding lakes and mountains. Founded in 2004 by a Dutch couple, Laurens Hartman-Karanika and Annette van Kampen, the domaine is dedicated to natural, low intervention, practices including use of horses. It is best known for its sparkling wines based on Xinomavro and Assyrtiko grapes.

Limniona, not be confused with Limnio, is another northern Greek indigenous red variety thought to originate in Thessaly, where it is most widely grown. As with Malagouzia it is widely tipped to become one of Greece's fine wine varieties. Karanika's Limniona showcases the variety's rich and expressive red fruit on the nose, firm but not overly forceful tannins balanced by bright acidity and relatively moderate alcohol. These together give good aging potential of 5-10 years. The gentle wine-making techniques employed, such as using gravity and pigeage rather pumping, with 16 months in barrique, help to maximise the fruit. The wine is released two years after harvest.

Stats:

Alcohol 12.5%

Variety 100% Limniona

Total Acidity 5.51g/l

Soil Lime, clay, sand and heavy alluvial soil

Production approx. --- bottles

Biodynamic Production



## Konarios, Domaine Nerantzi, 2017

The Nerantzi Winery is located to the north east of Thessaloniki with vineyards on the shallow sloping sides of the flat Serres valley, 150-160m above sea level. The Mitropoulos family has been closely involved in the recovery of several local indigenous grapes notably - Asprouda of Serres (white) and Koniaros (red). Currently they make white from either local varieties as well as several international ones.

Domaine Nerantzi is one of only handful of producers of Koniaros, an ancient variety that had been abandoned due to low yields. It is a late harvested variety, dark in colour with thick skinned berries. Nerantzi Mitropoulos came across vines in 1998. He had them DNA tested, registered as Koniaros (officially termed Koiniariko) and now cultivates the variety with the assistance of his daughter Evanthia. They follow low intervention organic practices and their Konarios is aged for 24 months in 'Balkan' barriques. It has substantial aging capacity, 15+ years. The wine has dried herbs, fruit and ink on the nose, is deeply ruby coloured, well rounded fruit on the palette with supple tannins and smoky notes in finish.

Stats:

Alcohol 14.5%

Variety 100% Koiniariko/Koniaros

Total Acidity ---g/l

Soil Sandy loam

Production approx. 2000 bottles

Organic Production



## **Xinomavro - (arguably) Greece's premier red variety**

Xinomavro (Ksee-NOH-mah-vroh), also known as, Mavro Naoussis, Popolka, Popoliko or Mavro Xino is an indigenous, noble, black grape. It is grown throughout Greece, but excels in the vineyards of Naoussa as well as in the cooler and drier region Amyndeon PDO, to the north and west (see map). Xinomavro (acid/sour), Mavro (black) gives an indication to the grapes attributes, high acid, high tannins, pale to medium ruby, medium to full body depending on wine-making. In Naoussa, the grapes are grown at altitudes of 100m - 400m, on south-eastern facing slopes, which include the changes of temperature that maintains acidity in the grapes and promotes flavours. Aromas included strawberries, plums, raspberries and a bit of tomato leaf tucked in. Parallels are drawn with Nebbiolo, due to abundant tannins and similar aging potential. The flavour profile, however, is quite different with complex, distinct aromas of red fruits, flowers, tomatoes, olives, dried prunes, tobacco and nuts.



## Domaine Dalamára

Since 1840 the Dalamára family have been making wine and distilling spirits in Naoussa. Sixth-generation Kostis Dalamára took over the vineyard and winery fully in 2009 and produced his first single-vineyard organic wine, Paliokalias 2009, now a historic wine. The 6-hectare large vineyard is farmed organically, planted mostly with Xinomavro at about 240-300m elevation and facing South, on the foothills of Mount Vermio. The oldest vines have an age of 85 years. Summers in the area are warm and dry, with plenty of sunshine and winters, are mild with cold spells. The soil is on porous rock (Travertina) and there is evidence of cold water streams running at its lower levels.

Kostis makes three Xinomavros, a ‘village’ Naoussa, a ‘premier cru’ Paliokalias and in the best years a ‘grand cru’ Vieilles Vignes from a parcel of pre-phylloxera vines. Only a single barrel is ever made of what many regard as Greece’s finest red wine with parallels drawn to Burgundy. The three wines shown today are the most recent releases of the Naoussa and Paliokalias and a second older Paliokalias offering a glimpse of the aging potential of Xinomavro in the hands of an accomplished wine maker.

Xinomavro, Naoussa, Dalamára, 2023	13.5%
Xinomavro, Paliokalias, Dalamára, 2021	13.5%
Xinomavro, Paliokalias Dalamára, 2013	13.5%

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## Suppliers and Growers

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