

# Lyrarakis, tasting notes

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# 1 The 2017 comprehensive Vertical Tasting

On April 17, 2017, we have assisted in a extensive tasting of Lyrarakis wines at the winery.

We have tasted several wines on several years, the Plyto wines, the Vidiano wines, the Asyrtico wines, the Dafni wines, and the Mandilaris wines. All come from the homonymous, mostly Cretan varietals.

The bottles of the tasting came from my cellar<sup>2</sup> as well as from the Winery's cellar<sup>3</sup>.

The wines were tasted open (not blind), in flights of two wines at a time (mostly)

Below I present my tasting notes marking the origin of each bottle, interlaced with a few comments. Several factual notes on the vineyards and grapes were provided by the Nikos Somarakis, the genius chef cultivator of Lyrarakis vineyards, whom I thank for the information.

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<sup>2</sup>Where they were kept at 11.5 °C and 80% humidity. All bottles from my cellar started their life in pristine condition as they were bought directly from Lyrarakis, just after bottling. As it turns out, unfortunately, Lyrarakis, as well as other worthy Cretan producers, use more than one bottlings for their wines. The reason is antique tactics, local market pressure and the fact that they do not expect their wines will be aged. This is however detrimental to the evaluation history, and we will have more to say on this later on.

<sup>3</sup>The winery's cellar has semi-regulated temperatures that are around 16 °C but can rise higher in the summer. Since the effect of the cellar temperature is expressed exponentially on the evolution of wines, one can expect substantial differences for older wines.

## 1.1 Plyto wines

**Introductory remarks.** Plyto is a Cretan grape variety from the Heraklion area. It was resurrected rather recently by Lyrarakis and a handful of other producers although I think Lyrarakis has had the most significant impact so far. It has a very subtle and refined profile and seems to be easily oxidized. Lyrarakis Plyto vineyard, “Psarades”, dates from 1992. The first date a plyto wine was produced was in 1996. The average production is 67 hectoliters per hectare or 900 Kgr fruit per 1000 m<sup>2</sup>.

- **Plyto 2008** (from the winery’s cellar): Intense yellow color. The first nose is dominated by aromas of yellow fruits intermingled with oxydative aromas of dried fruits. In the mouth, it has a smooth attack, a good body with some oxydative aromas and a spike of aldehyde. The finish is austere but long.
- **Plyto 2011** (from my cellar). Brilliant yellow color. The first nose is expressive with aromas of yellow fruits, apples and bee-wax. After some coaxing it becomes more focused and presents also aromas of Helichrysum flowers (Helichrysum stoechas is a common mediterranean flower whose flowers are dried but smell throughout for several years, Αμάραντος in Greek). In the mouth, it has a lively attack, lifted by zesty but well integrated acidity, lots of fruit in the mid-palate, excellent balance and a long finish. This wine is drinking beautifully now and will drink well for at least another 5 years.
- **Plyto 2011, Psarades Vineyard** (from the winery’s cellar). Dark yellow color. The nose is dominated by aromas of overripe fruits and marmelade indicating that wine is past its prime. In the mouth, it has a lively attack, with pronounced acidity that seems off balance, thin fruit and body and short finish. It is clear that this wine is over its peak.
- **Plyto 2014, Psarades vineyard** (from my cellar). Color light-yellow to yellow limpid. The first nose is subtle with aromas of yellow fruit, and a hint

of Helichrysum flowers. Upon coaxing and some wait the nose becomes more sustained and complex adding bee-wax to the palette. In the mouth, it has a lively attack, with substantial acidity that is prominent but in-balance with the fruit, and medium to full body and a long fruity finish ending in a wax tail. This wine needs another 3-4 year in bottle and can then be drank in the next 5-8 years.

- **Plyto 2014, Psarades vineyard** (from the winery's cellar). Dark yellow color. The nose is dominated by oxydative aromas with some hints of fruit and marmelade. In the mouth, it has a sharp attack with a lot of acidity, not quite off-balance, a good fruity mouth-feel, with some off aromas of overripe fruit, and a finish dominated by a strange bitterness that challenges the taster.

**Concluding remarks:** Proper cellaring is key to Plyto wines to properly preserve and evolve their subtle aromas. Otherwise the grape is showing a lot of promise. Although young, the wines are mostly innocuous, except in very good years. They age nicely offering a palette of interesting flavors that resemble no other grape. They are recommended, only for refined palates. An effort to reduce yields and evaluate the effect is recommended.

## 1.2 Vidiano

**Introductory remarks:** Vidiano is a Cretan grape variety, originally found in the Amari area, south of Rethymnon. It is now cultivated by many good producers, because it combines an interesting profile for its wines, together with high yields. The minimum yields I have seen in the top producers are at or above 75 hectoliters per hectare, and reaching more than 100 hectoliters in others. Manousakis' winemaker Galanis claims that the only way to curb the productivity of Vidiano is to have old vines. Apparently all current plantings are young. Lyrarakis is the only winemaker that passes all his Vidiano juice from barrels, mostly new, although, lately, he tried to tone-down a bit the influence of wood.

The Lyrarakis' Ippodromos vineyard, was planted in 2006. The first year of bottling was 2009. The yearly yields range from 45 to 82 hectoliters per hectare, or 600-1100 Kgr of fruit per 1000  $m^2$ .

- **Vidiano 2012, Ippodromos vineyard** (from my cellar). Brilliant yellow color. The first nose offers herbal aromas intermingled with camomile and empyreumatic notes of vanilla and noble resins originated in the new oak cask used for the wine. In the mouth, the attack is smooth and seamless, the aromas of the nose reappear, there a salty taste in the mid-palate that intermingles with the fruit, the acidity is well integrated and the wine is medium-bodied. The finish is medium and is dominated by the oak aromas. This is a example of a good wine that has been overoaked.

- **Vidiano 2014, Ippodromos vineyard** (from the winery's cellar). Color yellow to dark yellow. The nose is evolved and is dominated by aromas of loquat, herbs and a palette of oak related flavors. In the mouth, the attack is lively, with CO<sub>2</sub> present (strange), with an aromatic medium body, and a long finish that ends in a slightly bitter tail with herbal overtones including laurel aromas, typical of older Vidiano.

### 1.3 Asyrtico

**Remarks:** Asyrtico is an indigenous grape of Santorini that has subsequently been planted, in the last 25 years, everywhere in Greece including Crete. It has a characteristic high acidity, relatively low yields and is rarely interesting young<sup>4</sup>, but ages superbly acquiring a (more than) full body and its tertiary aromas remind those of Alsatian Rieslings. It is difficult to think of a white grape (except may be Chenin) which give such full bodied whites. Needless to say that 99.9% of Asyrtico wines are consumed in their youth.

Lyrarakis used to source his Asyrtico from two vineyards. The first is the Voila vineyard on the Ziros plateau in Eastern Crete. The age of the vines in this vineyard are around 40 years old. The first year of bottling is 2011. The average yield is 900 Kgr of fruit per 1000  $m^2$ , or 75 hectoliter per hectare.

The other is the Petrokalyva vinergard in the Heraklion prefecture. The vineyard was planted in 2006. The yields varied between 600 and 800 Kgr of fruit per 1000  $m^2$  or 45 to 60 hectoliters per hectare. The first bottling was in 2009. After 2014, unfortunately this last vineyard ceased to exist.

- **Asyrtico 2011, Voila Vineyard** (from my cellar): Limpid yellow color. The nose is rather aromatic dominated by the typical mineral aromas of Asyrtico, reminding stones, hydrocarbons, citrus fruit and safran. With time and coaxing it becomes more focused and complex. In the mouth, it has a smooth attack, seamlessly integrated acidity, very good aromas between the mineral and the fruit, excellent balance and a full body. It has a medium long but nice finish. This wine has reached its plateau of maturity and is expected to stay there, continuously evolving for another 10 years.

- **Asyrtico 2011, Voila Vineyard** (from the winery's cellar): Dark yellow color. The nose is well developed and very aromatic, dominated by the typical mineral aromas of Asyrtico, reminding stones, flint, hydrocarbons, citrus fruit, and safran. In the mouth, it has a smooth attack, seamlessly integrated acidity, very good aromas between the mineral and the fruit, excellent bal-

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<sup>4</sup>In the last 2-3 years, winemakers in Santorini and Crete learned how to polish young Asyrtico and give it a nice mineral profile while young.

ance and a full body. It has a long finish dominated by mineral flavors. This wine is more evolved than the previous one and is more expressive at the moment predicting also a glorious future for the previous one.

• **Asyrtico 2011, Petrokalyva Vineyard** (from my cellar): Brilliant yellow color. The first nose is expressive and complex showing stone, hydrocarbon and other mineral aromas intermingled with empyreumatic flavors of resins and smyrna, citrus fruit, a bit of caramel and hints of bee-wax. Upon coaxing it becomes more prominent and focused. In the mouth, the attack is very smooth, the large acidity completely hidden in the full body, the aromas of the nose are mirrored in the mid-palate and the wine possesses extraordinary balance. It ends in a long, flavorful finish. This wine is drinkable now and in the next 10 years. Sadly, this vineyard does not exist anymore.

• **Asyrtico 2014, Petrokalyva Vineyard** (from the winery's cellar): Brilliant yellow color. The nose is very expressive and complex showing mineral flavors, flint, hydrocarbons smyrna, citrus fruit, bee-wax and safran. As time goes by, it becomes more extrovert and focused. In the mouth, it has a vibrant attack with lively acidity, most of the aromas in the nose appearing in the mid palate, excellent balance and full body. It has a long and very interesting finish with a slightly bitter aftertaste that does not detract.

• **Asyrtico 2016, Voila Vineyard** (from the winery's cellar): Limpid yellow color. The nose is extrovert and starts with fruit aromas: citrus, lemon, and quince, continues with empyreumatic notes (smyrna) and ends in mineral flavors. This a rather complex nose that continues to evolve with coaxing. In the mouth, it has a smooth attack, the substantial acidity is well integrated with the fruit, the body is full and the balance exemplary. The finish is long and fruity, ending in mineral flavors. This is a very promising wine.

• **Asyrtico 2016, Voila Vineyard** (from my cellar): Limpid yellow color. This wine has many similarities to the previous bottle, albeit it is less evolved

(expectantly, see the introductory notes). The mineral flavors are less pronounced, and some of the aromas in the mouth are still in their infancy. This needs another 4-5 years of cellaring and can last another 10+ years. Like the previous bottle suggests, this will be a very promising wine.

## 1.4 Dafni

**Introductory remarks:** The Dafni grape is indigenous to the Heraklion area. It is currently cultivated only by Lyrarakis<sup>5</sup>. Its name refers to "laurel" = ΔΑΦΝΗ =Dafni in Greek. It is a highly original grape, that with proper vinification, reveals rather prominent laurel aromas that I have not seen in any other grape<sup>6</sup>. It is also a wine that evolves at a glacial pace with age<sup>7</sup>. Like also the muscat grape, it is an ideal wine to accompany dishes with strong herbal character like asparagus, artichokes, various green bean and okra dishes (so common in the Greek cuisine) as well as the famous and omnipresent and various "horta" (χόρτα) (boiled wild greens) dishes that accompany many a fish and other dishes in the Greek cuisine. Lyrarakis planted the Dafni "Psarades" vineyard in 1992 and started bottling the wine in 1996. The average yield is 1100 Kgr per 1000  $m^2$ , or 75 hectoliters per hectare.

- **Dafni 2005, Psarades vineyard** (from the winery's cellar): The color is dark yellow. The nose is expressive but is dominated by oxydative aromas. In the mouth, it has a lively attack that gives place to a prominent acidity component that seems off-balance compared with the rest of the (medium) body. The fruit is scarce in the mid-palate but the finish is long.

- **Dafni 2011, Psarades vineyard** (from my cellar): Color yellow. The nose is nonexistent, even after serious coaxing. In the mouth, it has a smooth attack, a full body, good balance but few aromas showing. It has a long, austere finish. This wine seems to be in a dormant state, or needs extensive carafing before tasting.

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<sup>5</sup>Nikos Douloufakis once told me that he tried to cultivate it in the village of Dafnes, but did not have very promising results.

<sup>6</sup>Except hints in the finish of old Vidiano.

<sup>7</sup>This is very similar to the property of the muscat grape

- **Dafni 2011, Psarades vineyard** (from the winery's cellar): Color yellow. The nose of this one is closed as well, but upon serious and extensive coaxing some laurel aromas can be felt. In the mouth, it has a smooth attack, the aromas are more extrovert and remind clearly laurel, the wine has an excellent balance and a full body. The finish is long, with laurel aromas and a slight bitterness that ties nicely with the laurel. As this wine is more evolved than the previous one, it suggests that there is more future for this millesime, although it is difficult to make precise predictions.
- **Dafni 2012, Psarades vineyard** (from the winery's cellar): Color yellow/dark-yellow. The nose is dominated with oxydative aromas. In the mouth, it has a smooth attack, good balance, more of the oxydative aromas showing up, and medium to long slightly bitter (but not unpleasant) finish.
- **Dafni 2013, Psarades vineyard** (from the winery's cellar): The color is bright yellow. The nose is expressive, with laurel as the dominant component, accompanied with herbal aromas and helichrysum flowers' scent. In the mouth, it has a vibrant attack, with lively acidity that is well integrated in the wine. The aromas of the nose reappear in the mid-palate and the wine has a full body. The finish is long, on laurel aromas that tie well with a slightly bitter aftertaste.
- **Dafni 2013, Psarades vineyard** (from my cellar): The color is bright yellow. The nose is shy, with a few laurel aromas surfacing. In the mouth, it has a vibrant attack, well integrated acidity, medium to full body, less aromatics than the previous one and a medium finish. It seems to be, expectantly, a backward version of the previous wine.
- **Dafni 2014, Psarades vineyard** (from the winery's cellar): The color is light yellow. The nose is expressive with laurel as the dominant component, accompanied with herbal aromas and a touch of citrus. In the mouth it has a vibrant attack, with lively acidity that is well integrated in the wine. The

wine has a full body and perceptible bitterness that is becoming dominant during the long finish.

- **Dafni 2014, Psarades vineyard** (from my cellar): The color is light yellow. The nose is very expressive , with the laurel aromas dominating, accompanied by herbal aromas, hay and citrus scents . In the mouth, it has a smooth attack, well-integrated acidity, medium to full body, expressive aromas in the mid-palate and a long fragrant finish. This is a textbook profile of a young Dafni wine.

**Final comments:** The “young” profile of the Lyrarakis Dafni cuvée is more or less understood and prominent in this tasting. It is highly original. Its evolution in time remains, in my opinion, not well understood, despite the very useful present tastings. It should be revisited in the future.

## 1.5 Mandilari

**Introductory remarks:** The (red) Mandilari grape is indigenous to Crete and eastern Aegean islands. It is a late ripening varietal with a substantial phenolic content. When I arrived to live in the island of Crete in the late 90's, Mandilari was used as a coloring component in local red wines based on the Kotsifali grape. It was harvested completely immature in the second part of August, together with the Kotsifali grapes, giving wines with high astringency and acidity. I had tried to persuade a few producers then, that the Mandilari must be harvested much later, fully ripe.

Lyrarakis, was the first producer to do things right with Mandilari. He "discovered" Plakura vineyard with relatively old Mandilari vines (planted in 1996) and he harvested in October. His single varietal Mandilari wine, released since 2006, is a very interesting wine that continues to evolve higher as we shall now see. The yields are 500-600 Kgr of fruit per 1000  $m^2$  or 37-45 hectoliters per hectare.

- **Madilari 2005, Plakura vineyard** (from the winery's cellar, early experimental bottling): Color red-brick. The nose is interesting, with aromas of leather, tar and empyreumatic notes (resin, smyrna) but not very focused. In the mouth, it has a lively attack, with relatively high acidity, a lot of tannin, and scarce fruit. Medium finish.

**comments:** This wine was not officially released by the winery. Its organoleptic properties indicate that it was harvested relatively early.

- **Madilari 2007, Plakura vineyard** (from the winery's cellar): This is the first official release of this cuvée. The color is red, with brick towards the rim. The nose is fully dominated with phenolic aromas that make it rather monotonous and strong. In the mouth, the attack is smooth, the tannins are present and a bit dry, the acidity is present, but well integrated, the aromatics are still dominated by mono-phenols<sup>8</sup>in the mid-palate and the

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<sup>8</sup>Many of the aromatic components in red wines are due to the anthocyanines, that are large poly-phenolic compounds that exist in the skin of the red grapes and pass into the wine. With slow oxydation they decompose into smaller molecules that are cyclic (phenolysis), and provide a whole range of tertiary

wine shows good overall balance. The finish is long, but it is dominated by a light bitterness as well as the dry tannins.

- **Madilari 2007, Plakura vineyard** (from my cellar): Color bright dark-red. The nose is expressive, enticing and complex, showing aromas of blackberries and cherries, notes of smoke, leather and tar as well as hints of spice, notably black pepper and muscade. In the mouth, the wine has a luscious attack, the tannins are imperceptible, but the structure is there. The mid-palate aromatics are as enticing as those in the nose. The wine has a superb balance, and a full body. The finish is very long, and as complex aromatically as the nose and the body. This is a terrific wine, probably at the peak of its plateau of maturity and will probably stay there for another 5+ years.

**Comments:** Although the winery has the (unfortunate) strategy of making several bottlings of the same cuvée, such strategy does not affect older wines like this one. Therefore, the substantial differences between the two previous wines must be sought in their different rates of evolution, the winery's bottle being much more evolved.

- **Madilari 2008, Plakura vineyard** (from my cellar): Color bright dark-red. The nose is expressive, showing aromas of blackberries and notes of leather and tar. In the mouth, the wine has a smooth attack and the tannins are present but well integrated. The wine has fruity mid-palate, good balance and a full body. The finish is medium.

- **Madilari 2012, Plakura vineyard** (from my cellar): The color is bright dark-red. The nose is expressive and complex, showing aromas of blackberries and cherries, notes of leather and tar as well as black pepper. In the mouth, the wine has a smooth attack, the tannins are important, but well-integrated. The mid-palate aromatics are mimicking those of the nose in the nose. The

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aromas in aging red wines. After a long aging process they end up into two possibilities: (1) they eventually become mono-phenols, single cyclic ring compounds with the strong characteristic smell of phenol, which some people like and others hate. Independent of this, aromatic complexity in this case is not high. (2) Before mono-phenols are produced they become solid non-odorous compounds that eventually precipitate, or remain suspended in the wine. This endpoint is wine-death.

wine has a superb balance, and a full body. The finish is very long with the aromatic complexity remaining for a while. This wine should be drank probably in 4-5 years from now and might last for another 7-10 years.

- **Madilari 2012, Plakura vineyard** (from the winery's cellar): The color is dark-red with brick at the rim. The nose is showing complex aromas of leather and tar as well as kirsch. In the mouth, the wine has a vivid attack, the tannins are substantial, and there is red fruit in the mid-palate. The wine has good balance, and a full body. The finish is long and fruity.

- **Madilari 2013, Plakura vineyard** (from my cellar): The color is bright dark-red. The first nose is non-existent. Even after some time and a lot of coaxing, the nose is null. The wine seems completely closed. In the mouth, the wine has a smooth attack, few traces of fruit, and appears thin and medium bodied in the mid-palate. The finish is short.

- **Madilari 2013, Plakura vineyard** (from the winery's cellar): The color is bright dark-red. The nose is expressive with aromas of blackberries and cherries, smoke, leather and tar cinnamon and muscade. In the mouth, it has a smooth attack, supple tannins that are well integrated, good and well balanced acidity, plenty of fruit and spice in the mid-palate, and a full body. The finish is long with a lingering, somewhat bitter aftertaste.

**comments:** The age of the two previous bottles cannot explain the important organoleptic differences. As we found out afterwards, they belong to two different bottlings of the 2013 cuvée. My bottle belongs to an earlier bottling while the winery's bottle was bottled almost a year later, spending the extra time in barrel. This may explain the difference. Of course, after some time, the two bottlings will eventually converge.

- **Madilari 2014, Plakura vineyard** (from my cellar): The color is bright dark-red. The first nose is beautiful with blackberries and cherries, smoke, leather tar and black pepper. In the mouth, the wine has a smooth attack and

all aromatics of the nose appear in the mid-palate. The balance is excellent and body is full. The finish is long expressive and fruity.

• **Madilari 2014, Plakura vineyard** (from the winery's cellar): The color is bright dark-red. The nose is superb and complex with aromas of blackberries and cherries, smoke, leather and tar, cinnamon, muscade liquorice and black-paper. In the mouth, it has a smooth attack, important tannins that are well integrated, good and well balanced acidity, plenty of fruit and spice in the mid-palate, and a full body as well as a lingering bitterness towards the end. The finish is long with an important bitter component.

**Concluding remarks:** It seems that the Mandilaria grape, as vinified by Lyrarakis is showing a consistent character: Full-bodied wines with important but reasonable tannins. The aromas range from red fruits (primary+secondary aromas), leather, tar and smoke (mostly tertiary aromas) and spices (probably mostly due to the barrels but could also originate in the grapes). The bitter aftertastes in some of the bottles may be also traced to the barrels, although this is not certain. The wine is showing at its peak, remarkable complexity and balance and is therefore a very promising Cretan and Greek red varietal. It is not unthinkable that it may, one day, challenge the present complete reigning dominance of the remarkable Xinomavro grape in Greece.

## 1.6 Epilogue

This tasting was for me an eye opener on several indigenous varieties of the Cretan vinous landscape. It seems that several varieties have an aptitude in aging, and for others there is promise. Almost all white varietals tasted here are age-worthy, albeit with different details and profiles, and the sole red varietal tasted, mandilaria, is very promising. As is usually the case, this exercise is only the beginning.

The Lyrarakis winery has pursued the exploration of local varietals with vigor, and contributed importantly, until now, in their resurrection. I would like to thank them for giving me interesting material and pleasure. If the results of this tasting are indicative, more pleasure is expected to come in the

future.

## 2 Thapsathiri in April 2021

On April 2, 2021, I have tasted, in the presence of George Lyrarakis, two bottles of their Thapsathiri cuvée one from 2015 and another from 2016. Thapsathiri is a variety indigenous of Eastern Crete, where it is mostly cultivated. It was believed to be a relative of Athiri, cultivated in the Cyclades but it turns out that this is not correct.

So far it is a varietal that has not attracted the attention of good local wine-makers with minor exceptions. When it is produced, it is blended in wines with other varietals. It is produced so far by Economou on the Ziros plateau (and usually blended with Vilana another Cretan wine variety), Lyrarakis (since some time) and more recently by Idaia winery. So far the last two producers make a 100% Thapsathiri wine.

From young examples I had tasted, mostly from Lyrarakis, I was not convinced that this grape is up to something. But Economou's aged efforts indicate that Thapsathiri ages well and puts on weight and complexity in the process. This is the reason I asked George Lyrarakis to provide older bottles in order to judge the aging potential of this wine and he obliged. Since the bottles come from the winery's cellars and are kept at variable and relatively high temperatures, his 2015 or 2016 wines are like having aged about 10-14 years in my temperature controlled cellar. Here is what I saw:

- **Thapsathiri 2015, Armi vineyard, (13.5% alcohol).** The color is bright yellow, beautiful, bright and limpid. The first nose is expressive, unusual and complex with mostly tertiary aromas of quince, bee-wax, helichrysum flowers and minerals. Upon further aeration, the nose becomes stronger and more delineated, while remaining complex. In the mouth, it starts with a smooth entrance, and then develops the full arsenal of aromas in the nose, now in the mid-palate. The acidity is present but balanced and well-integrated. The wine has a good volume and balance in the mid-palate. The finish is long, smooth and aromatic. This is a superb, complex wine at its peak.

- **Thapsathiri 2016, Armi vineyard.** The color is bright yellow, beautiful, bright and limpid. The first nose is more expressive than the previous one and more complex, with mostly tertiary aromas of quince, bee-wax, he-

lichrysum flowers and minerals, but now seconded by empyreumatic notes of muscade, allspice and smyrna. Upon further aeration, the nose becomes even more expressive and results in a layered feeling of the many aromas. In the mouth, the wine enters with a very lively note, fueled by its high acidity. It then develops the palette of aromas appearing in the nose, in a rather prominent fashion. The body is full but the high acidity somehow stands out. The finish is long and aromatically very complex, but here also the acidity plays a dissonant note. This is a grand wine despite its acidity being somewhat off-balance. It can be coaxed by serving this wine with the appropriate food.

I am now convinced of two things: Thapsathiri is worth the trouble, but, it must be imperatively aged.

### 3 Mazi wines in late April 2021

On April 22, 2021 I opened and tasted a bottle of white Mazi wine 2012, from my cellar. The name of the wine means “together” in Greek and was one of two wines that were produced together, between the Lyrarakis and Manousakis wineries in Crete.

This particular wine is a blend of equal parts of Asyrtico wine from the Lyrarakis winery sourced from the Sitia region and Roussanne wine from Manousakis winery. I always thought that this type of blend must be very interesting, as the two grapes have complementary properties and aromatic profiles. Here is what I saw:

- **Mazi white 2012.** Bright and clear yellow-straw color, not as deep as one would expect from the age. The first nose starts with the aromatic palette, characteristic of aged asyrtico, namely mineral flavors, include flint, wet stone, hydrocarbons as well as citrus notes. Then, the tertiary aromas of Roussanne start mingling in: bee-wax, quince, papaya, although they are understated. At that stage, the nose is in full bloom and gives the feeling that with additional aging one can expect more. In the mouth, the wine enters smoothly and then develops a full body with the impressive weight of mature asyrtico, a complex aromatic profile that mirrors the nose, a well-balanced acidity and a long finish. This is drinking very well now, but I feel it needs another 5 years to reach its peak.

Sadly, this blend was discontinued from the next vintage, and the Mazi series was discontinued a few years after.

For completeness I include here my tasting notes for the red Mazi wine from 2012, from the 29/8/2020 tasting at Manousakis winery (the bottle was from my cellar).

- **Mazi red, 2012 ( 50% Romeiko, 50% Mandilar ):** Brilliant ruby-red color. A first nose with elegant aromas of leather, red fruits, tar and other phenolic tails while developing blackberries in the sequel. A second nose after some coaxing, gives a more focused palette of aromas, with some extra alcohol-macerated cherry flavors. In the mouth, it has a smooth attack, with hints of tannin adding some structure, a lot of fruit, with aromas mirroring the nose, excellent balance and medium body. It has a long finish with lingering

aromas of cherries and kirsch.

**Remark:** This wine shows its best at a service temperature of  $18^{\circ}$  C unlike most other red wines (with the exception of Bordeaux reds). It is pleasant to drink now and in my opinion it will evolve nicely for the next ten or so years.

## 4 Dafni 2014 in late April 2021

On April 30, 2021 I opened and tasted a bottle of white Dafni 2014. The wine originated from the winery's cellar, courtesy of G. Lyrarakis. In that respect, to normalize its age in a 12 °C constant temperature cellar, I would say this is a 12-15 year-old wine. Here are my impressions:

- **Dafni, 2014, Psarades vineyard** ( 100% Dafni grape): The color is bright, limpid straw-yellow, not deep enough for its actual age. The nose, soars from the glass and its fully tertiary and expressive and complex with aromas of quince, chrysanthemum flowers, helichrysum flowers, and empyreumatic aromas of smyrna and hints of Chios mastic<sup>9</sup> The attack on the mouth is smooth, rounded and evolves into a medium-bodied wine in the mid-palate, with balanced acidity, a slight bitterness that does not detract, and an expression of the aromas appearing in the nose. The finish is long, with a hint of bitterness that suggests the laurel aromas of its youth, although this is a perfect placebo effect.

**Comments:** The wine's original youthful laurel flavor has disappeared. However the wine is markedly more complex and balanced, although it retains a certain herbal character. Like the young wine, it can still match difficult herbal dishes, like asparagus, "horta"<sup>10</sup>, green fava beans, green beans, and green peas.

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<sup>9</sup>This is a resin with a flavor widely known in the middle east but essentially unknown in the west. It originates from Pistacia lentiscus plants grown on the south of Chios island, only.

<sup>10</sup>Various concoctions of wild greens, an emblematic (usually side) dish in Greece and especially Crete.

## 5 Asyrtico, Thapsathiri and Mandilar tasting in Sept. 2021

- **Thapsathiri 2015, Armi vineyard, (13.5% alcohol).** The color is bright yellow, beautiful, bright and limpid. The first nose is expressive, unusual and complex with mostly tertiary aromas of quince, bee-wax, dried helichrysum flowers noble resins and minerals. Upon further aeration, the nose becomes stronger and more delineated, while remaining complex. In the mouth, it starts with a smooth entrance, and then develops the full arsenal of aromas in the nose, now in the mid-palate. The acidity is present but balanced and well-integrated. A hint of bitterness also appears but it does not detract, blends nicely with the rest of the tertiary aromas. The wine has a good volume and balance in the mid-palate. The finish is long, smooth and aromatic.
- **Asyrtico 2016, Voila Vineyard:** Limpid and bright straw-yellow color. The nose is expressive with a host of mineral aromas (stone, hydrocarbons), fruits (citrus) and noble resins (smyrna). In the mouth the attack is lively. The mid-palate is rich with mineral and citrus favors and important but well-balanced acidity. The body is huge. The finish is long and is dominated by mineral flavors and the acidity.
- **Madilari 2007, Plakura vineyard :** Color bright dark-red with some brick at the rim. The nose is expressive, enticing and complex, showing aromas of blackberries notes of smoke, leather and tar, olive paste and dried tomatoes as well as hints of spice, notably black pepper. In the mouth, the wine has a smooth attack with a bit of perceptible tannin. The mid-palate aromatics are as enticing as those in the nose. The wine has a superb balance, solid structure and a full body. The finish is long, and as complex aromatically as the nose and the body. This is a terrific wine at its plateau of maturity.