

A scenic landscape of a vineyard in Cyprus at sunset. The foreground is dominated by a large, clear wine glass filled with red wine, which is slightly tilted. The background shows a vast, rolling landscape of green vineyards and hills under a dramatic, colorful sky transitioning from orange to blue. The overall mood is serene and evocative of a wine-tasting experience.

TASTING  
— *is* —  
BELIEVING

WINES FROM CYPRUS



#### TASTING IS BELIEVING...

"Among some of the world's most famous wines, one stands out: Commandaria."

- Olivier Poussier, 2000  
World's Best Sommelier.

*"The local wine industry has committed itself to producing superior quality wine with a true expression of the Cypriot terroir and typicity of the local varietals. Their vision is to reflect the rich history of Cyprus wine and the feelings and character of the Cyprus soil and its people."*

**Ron Kapon, The Society for Wine Educators, The Wine Media Guild, Tasters Guild International, Emeritus of Acker, Merrall & Condi.**

*"[In Cyprus,] stretches of beach miles long ascend to the high Troodos Massif. Magnificent mosaic floors from Greek and Roman villas make you feel as if you are walking on diamonds. Churches painted with breathtaking murals centuries old grace every vineyard."*

**Susanna Hoffman, Author of the book**

*The Olive and The Caper, Adventures in Greek Cooking.*

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# A TASTE SENSATION FROM THE LAND OF APHRODITE

YOU HAVE YET TO EXPERIENCE; WINES FROM CYPRUS

"I was impressed by the commitment of the local wine industry to producing quality wine with a true expression of the Cypriot terroir and typicity of the indigenous varieties."

Ron Kapon

Lying in the sparkling blue waters of the Eastern Mediterranean Sea, at the crossroads between Europe, Africa and Asia, Cyprus is a country of alluring beaches and fragrant mountain peaks, vineyards studded with olive trees and ancient ruins that stir the imagination.

It is a place of great diversity and balance where the latest trends meet the oldest traditions, where investing and business opportunities are as exciting as dancing on one of its long sandy beaches.

Cyprus is one of the first countries in which viticulture and wine production were practiced. The oldest named wine in the world with appellation of origin, Commandaria, still in production has been made there with the same method since at least 1,000 B.C.

Grapes have been grown for winemaking in Cyprus as far back as 5000 B.C., and both Babylonian and Jerusalem Talmuds specifically mention "Ya'in Kafrisin" - Hebrew for "Cypriot wine" - as a sacrament in religious rituals during the time of the First and Second Temple in Jerusalem.

Today, a great deal of resources and effort have been invested into the rediscovering of Cyprus indigenous grape varieties, many of which date back to classical times, producing not only superior quality wine but also with an original Cypriot character.

After his recent visit to Cyprus, Ron Kapon, wine and travel writer wrote "I was impressed by the commitment of the local wine industry to producing quality wine with a true expression of the Cypriot

terroir and typicity of the indigenous varieties. Their vision is to reflect the rich history of Cyprus wine and the feelings and character of the Cyprus soil and its people".

The island's long, sunny Mediterranean summers are a great asset to winemaking ripening the fruit and giving it its full flavor. Winters are mild and the gentle winds and breezes check the frosts, dispel the fogs and protect the vines and grapes from fungus diseases. Cyprus remains one of the few phylloxera-free wine-producing countries in the world.

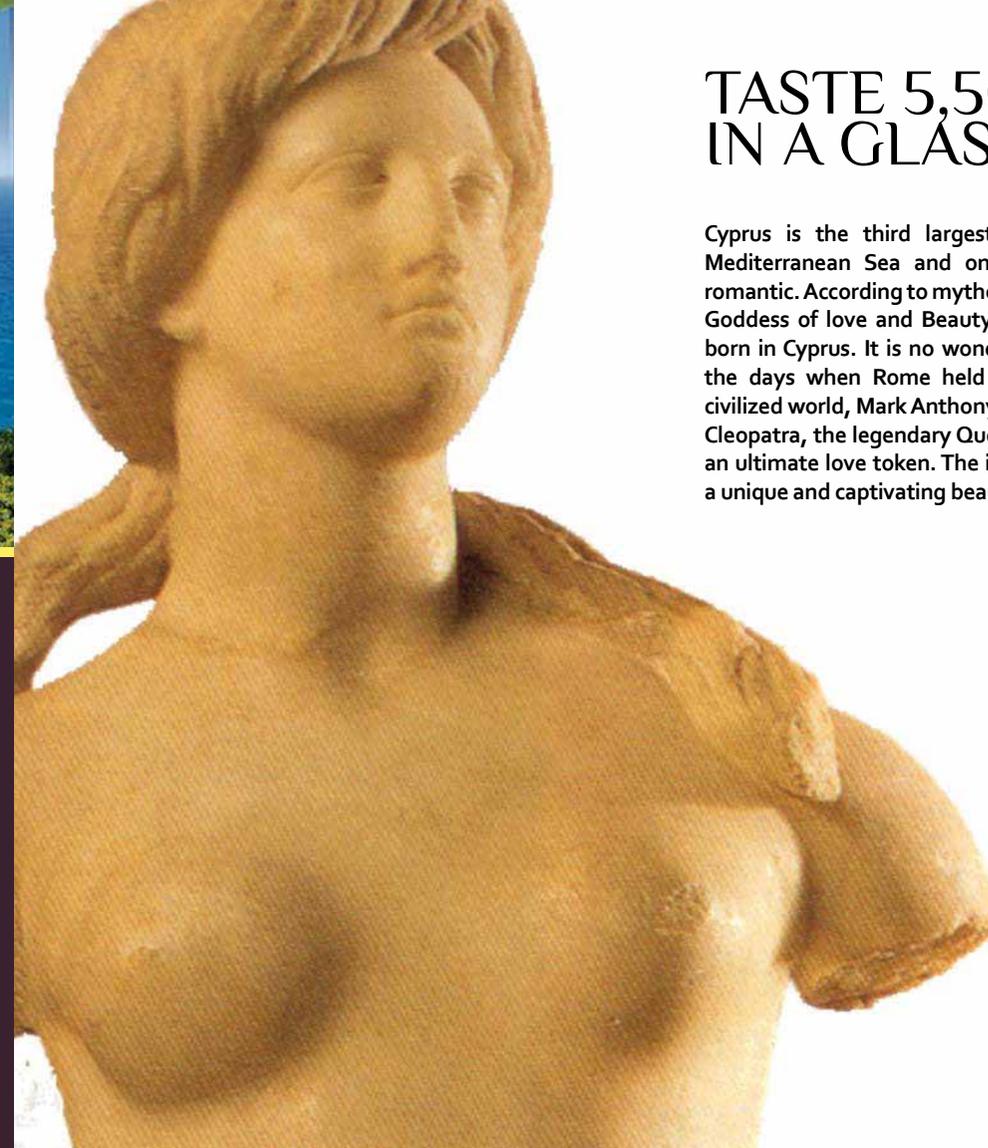
Try treating your taste buds to the flavors and aromas of five thousand years of winemaking. Taste to believe it!



# TASTE 5,500 YEARS OF HISTORY IN A GLASS OF WINE

Cyprus is the third largest island in the Mediterranean Sea and one of the most romantic. According to mythology, the Greek Goddess of love and Beauty Aphrodite was born in Cyprus. It is no wonder that back in the days when Rome held sway over the civilized world, Mark Anthony gave Cyprus to Cleopatra, the legendary Queen of Egypt, as an ultimate love token. The island possesses a unique and captivating beauty.

4,000 years ago settlers from the mainland coast to the east came to Cyprus and, although there is no firm evidence to prove it, it is virtually certain that they would have brought their wine - producing vines with them. When the Greeks settled in Cyprus around 1200 B.C. it is likely they would have found wine already here, but of a different style to the wines they were accustomed to. Thus, it is likely that there has been a wine industry in Cyprus continuously longer than anywhere else in the world. Facts are supported by legend and history. The Song of Solomon praises Cyprus wines. In 800 B.C., Hesiodos described the making of Cyprus wines. The Greek poet Euripides wrote of vast pilgrimages to Cyprus to taste the wine, or as it was then known "Cyprus Nama". Legend has it that the first mortal to be taught to make wine was Ikarios, whose teacher was Dionysus, the god of wine himself. The scene is, in fact, depicted in a mosaic scene in the house of Dionysus at Pafos, in Cyprus, in the Pafos Archaeological Park where other vinous scenes are also to be viewed. As well as this, fascinating archaeological evidence of vine culture and wine making is to be seen in museums and other places.





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## MAVRO

Is a red varietal and dominates the Cypriot vineyard covering 5,700 hectares. It is very productive and characterized by large juicy grapes that make it a superb table variety. Its grapes produce balanced, slightly astringent wines with a weak color and aroma which are not amenable to long-term ageing. The best results come from grapes grown in the mountainous regions of Pitsilia, Laona (Lemesos region), and Afames. The poor barren soils in these areas make for lower productivity but higher concentration, in contrast to lower altitudes and more fertile soils. Until recently, Mavro accounted for over 80% of Cyprus' vineyards. However this percentage has been decreasing year by year as new varieties are imported.

## MARATHEFTIKO/VAMVAKADA

Is a very rare red variety scattered around Cyprus' vineyards (150 hectares) but most densely concentrated through the mountain regions of Paphos and in Pitsilia, where the variety is known as Vambakada. It can produce rosés and light reds to red wines suitable for ageing. It gives high quality wines of intense color and full body with distinctive fruity aromas of cherries and blackberries. Cypriot producers are increasingly investing in this variety, enchanted by the wines it produces and enticed by its potential. Maratheftiko has a serious propensity to bud loss which limits its productivity and is one of the world's few non-hermaphroditic vines. Its buds are females and have to be planted in mixed vineyards to ensure pollination.



# CYPRIOT VINEYARD & GRAPE VARIETIES

The vineyards of Cyprus are among the very few vineyards of the world not affected by the vine louse, known as phylloxera, a disease that fell upon the greatest part of Europe's vineyards at the beginning of the 20th century. Having escaped phylloxera, the Cyprus wines are self-sown plants of the European Vitis Vinifera retaining their classic organoleptic characteristics as well as the potential of a long life.

Cyprus displays several native grape varieties, which account for the vast majority of the production, and provide truly unique wines with distinct tastes and aroma profiles. There are approximately 15 indigenous varieties of which the most largely cultivated are Xynisteri, Mavro, Othhalmo and Maratheftiko or Vamvakada. These grapes constitute truly undiscovered, new and breathtaking alternatives to the varietals that have dominated the market.

## IMPORTED VARIETALS

Although most of the wine-grapes grown on the island are indigenous varietals, there has been a large variety of grapes imported to the island (approximately 60). Chardonnay, Riesling, Semillon and Sauvignon Blanc constitute the international team of white wines grown in Cyprus which are produced in small quantities and have a characteristic that is essentially Cyprus. Some of the highlights of the red wines imported to Cyprus include Cabernet Franc (France), Cabernet Sauvignon (France), Syrah (Australia), Grenache Noir (France) and Mourvèdre or Mataro (Spain).

## WINE TASTING SECRETS

The important point about wine tasting is not so much what you find, it is the simple act of looking.

- How much aroma does this wine have?
- Is it pleasant or unpleasant, simple or complex?
- How much flavor, and of what sort?
- How dominant is its acidity?
- How long does it last on the tongue after you swallow?
- Is the flavor awkward or balanced?
- Is it multilayered or monotone? What about texture?
- How allusive is it?

After practicing on answering these questions, you will start approaching what you drink in a new way. Just remember to mobilize both the eye, the nose, the mouth and ask yourself questions.



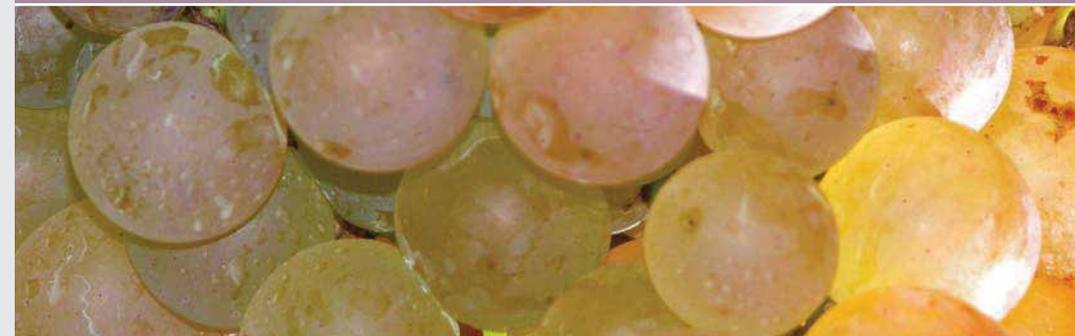
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## OFTHALMO

A red local variety that is cultivated in small quantities (about 170 hectares) scattered all over the Cypriot vineyard but predominantly in certain areas of the Pitsilia region, such as Agros and Ayios Theodoros, in the Paphos region and in the Wine Villages of Lemessos. This grape can produce wines of light color, distinctive intense aroma and very low acidity which are not ideal for ageing. The regions of Pitsilia and the Wine Villages of Lemessos yield the best quality results.

## XYNISTERI

Is the prevailing white grape variety of Cyprus with 2,200 hectares planted. It produces excellent light-colored white wine with low alcohol levels (11-11.5% vol.) and low to medium acidity. It is mainly found in the regions of the Akamas Laona, Ambelitis, Vouni Panayias and Pitsilia. Xynisteri wines are not suitable for ageing and must be drunk when young one year at most after production. This is the only other grape, with mavro, that is used for making Commandaria.



# WINE CLASSIFICATIONS & REGIONS

There are four viticultural regions in Cyprus, which acquire the right of producing wines with the OEOP label (Wines of Controlled Appellation of Origin). These wines are constituted on a large scale, by the local varieties of Mavro and Xynisteri, and on a smaller scale, by Ofthalgo and Maratheftiko. Here are the four viticultural regions in Cyprus, which are granted the permission for producing quality wines bearing the classification of Controlled Appellation of Origin. Outside the four designated regions of origin, table wines may be produced which may or may not bear a regional indication on the label. When they have such an indication, they will fall into one of the four categories of Lefkosia, Lemesos, Larnaca or Pafos Regional Wine, which correspond to the French "Vin de Pays" wines.

## 1. Vouni Panayias

Ambeliti is in the western part of the island, in Paphos district, at an altitude of over 2,600 foot and comprises the regions of Ambelitis, Galataria, Kilinia and Panayia. White wines must use Xynisteri as the basic constituent, at least 85%. Red wines are produced in two ways: the basic constituent must be either one of the two indigenous varieties of Maratheftiko or Ofthalgo to a level of at least 85%, or the local Mavro variety, at least 60% supplemented by over 30% of one of the specified recommended varieties such as Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc and Syrah.

## 2. Akamas Laona

Akamas Laona lies near the northwest coast of Cyprus and comprises the six village communities of Drousia, Inia, Kathikas, Kritou Terra, Panos Arodes and Kato Arodes. White wines of the region may bear the AOC classification as long as at least 85% of the blend is derived from the local white variety of Xynisteri, while in the case of red wines, at least 85% of the blend should come from one or two local red varieties of Maratheftiko or Ofthalgo.

## 3. The Wine Villages of Lemesos

The Wine Villages of Lemesos, 20 in total, lie on the southern slopes of the Troodos mountains, facing Lemesos. Prominent in the Wine Villages are two sub-regions: Afames, which lies on the east of Ha-Potami river, and Laona, which lies on the west of the river. The production of both white and red wine in the Wine Villages is based on the same grape varieties and regulations as those of the Pitsilia region.

## 4. Commandaria

Only grapes of the native varieties of Xynisteri and Mavro harvested from the registered vineyards of the 14 villages in the Commandaria Region that lie at the foothills of the Troodos mountains can be used for the production of Commandaria.

## 5. Pitsilia

This region comprises no less than 32 villages, all situated on the slopes of Madari (one of the highest mountain peaks in the island), Papoutsia and the northwest slopes of Maheras. For the production of white wines, Xynisteri may constitute at least 85% of the blend and for red wines either Maratheftiko or Ofthalgo must constitute at least 85% of the blend, or the blend may be made up of 60% Mavro and 30% of one of the specified recommended varieties.

- 1. Akamas Laona
- 2. Vouni Panayias
- 3. The Wine Villages of Lemesos (Limassol)
- 4. Commandaria
- 5. Pitsilia





**FACT.01:** Winemaking in Cyprus has a history going back thousands of years. In Medieval times Cyprus wines were successfully exported, as the sweet wines that were produced there travelled well. Conversely the relatively dry wines produced in Europe were more vulnerable to bacteria and turned into vinegar within days. This all changed in the 16th century when Sulphur Dioxide (SO<sub>2</sub>) began to be used as a preservative.

**FACT.02:** Cyprus vineyards amount to 17,000 hectares— about 10% of the island's agricultural land, producing some 90,000 tons of grapes a year and some 20% of agricultural labor is employed in looking after them. In terms of the percentage of land dedicated to grapevines, Cyprus is among the world's top producer of vine products.

**FACT.03:** A typical year in Cyprus winemaking starts in December when the vines are pruned. The new vines are planted right after, from February to April. Harvesting takes place between August and October. Unlike most of Europe, the best Cyprus grapes are grown on north-facing vineyards which receive less direct sunlight and are grown in conditions of higher humidity. This produces a grape that matures later.

**FACT.04:** The use of oak barrels in the production of dry white and red wines is a comparatively new practice on the island. Most winemakers tend to prefer French oak, but barrels from American oak are not uncommon.

# FACTS & WINE

## AMBROSIA FROM CYPRUS

Commandaria is an exciting wine in a history-filled bottle! The oldest wine still in production has been made in Cyprus since at least 1,000 BC.

Commandaria is a wine celebrated by Homer and poured as the wine of choice by the Pharaohs of ancient Egypt. Marc Antony and Cleopatra are said to have toasted each other with it. How amazing that this very same wine is available to us now, made in essentially the same way and from the very same places of Cyprus.

It is not only the history but also Commandaria's taste that takes it beyond that of many other dessert wines. The aromas in the mouth are similar to those that reach the nose and remind one of grape juice syrup, raisins, dried figs and apricots, nuts, quince-pulp jelly, coffee and chocolate! However, the concentration of its taste is closely linked to the length of ageing period, the wine has gone through. Only grapes

of the native varieties Xynisteri and Mavro are used for Commandaria, harvested from registered vineyards in 14 mountain villages in the Commandaria region that lie on the foothills of the Troodos mountains.

### PRODUCTION

The grapes, Xynisteri and Mavro, are exposed to the sun for one week after harvesting (regulations set the minimum ripeness) to concentrate the sugars and reach between 19-23 Baume. After slow pressing, the sugar-rich-wine ferments slowly until the process stops naturally due to the high sugar content. At this point, Commandaria can be viné, a process which fortifies the wine with alcohol after fermentation.

Then the wine is taken down to Limassol, on the southern coast of Cyprus, to start a minimum of two years of aging much like the soleras system in Spain.

*"Here, the mythical Commandaria, a true nectar, develops incredible aromatic complexity, in the great tradition of the passerillé Mediterranean wines made with grapes dried by over-maturation," said Olivier Poussier.*



## HOW TO SERVE COMMANDARIA

### 01. temperature

Commandaria should be well chilled at 43 to 48° F before served to bring out all its aroma and flavor.

### 02. the right glass

Commandaria is served in small stemmed glasses with a comparatively short stem and a long cup with inwardly sloping sides to retain the wine's rich bouquet.

### 03. gustatory crescendo

In a course of a meal, it should be served at the end with or instead of the dessert.

### 04. perfect foodmate

Prof. Michael Weiss suggests that Commandaria complements dessert flavors as diverse as maple, chocolate, caramel, ice-cream, baklava and cheesecake. It also goes well with preserved sweets many of which are found in the Cypriot and Greek cuisine, and are prepared from fruits, such as figs, quinces, bitter oranges and others.

# HISTORY

## CLASS

1191 A.D.  
Richard The Lion Heart occupied Cyprus and finally sold it to Guy de Lusignan, the French "King of Jerusalem" who became the founder of the Lusignan dynasty that reigned over Cyprus for over 3 centuries.

1192 - 1489 A.D.  
During Lusignan reign, Cyprus swarmed with Western European settlers, mainly Catholic crusaders. Among those were the knights of St. John (after whom one of today's Commandaria was named). Their headquarters, the Commanderie or Commandaria, were on Kolossi Castle (picture right), and the area around it, known as "Grande Commanderi," was covered with vineyards and plantation of sugar, cotton and wheat. The knights of St. John became involved with the production of Commandaria, improved its quality and elevated the wine to its greatest demand at the time.

### TIMELESS

As much then as now, Commandaria has been praised for its exceptional quality by distinguished personalities of their times. Commandaria of today still bears the name that was given by the knights of St. John, and is produced with the same method as then.



# WINERIES

There are now more than 40 wineries in Cyprus, most of which are situated in the traditional vineyard regions of Paphos and Limassol districts. The traditional Big Four wineries (KEO, ETKO, SODAP and LOEL) produce several million bottles a year. Others are small boutique wineries, that produce a few hundred thousand bottles and still others are lilliputian, with a production below one hundred thousand bottles per year. Besides size, the wineries vary in age as well. Some have been in existence for several decades, while others were set up only a few years ago. Irrespective of size, age and location, all have the same objective – to produce superior quality wine with the distinctive and unique character of Cyprus. Indeed, certain local winemakers have to their credit gold medals won in recognized international wine competitions. One can familiarize with the wineries and their products by visiting the websites listed under Directory in this booklet. Additional information on Cyprus Wine Routes and Regions at: [www.visitcyprus.com](http://www.visitcyprus.com)

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Web: www.keogroup.com

### **LOEL LTD Limassol, Cyprus**

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### **SODAP LTD Limassol, Cyprus**

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