Sigalas Assyrtiko 2009 Santorini

6 Jul 2010 by Jancis Robinson

From €10.95 and $18.98

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As I explained in my account of the recent Masters of Wine Symposium in Bordeaux, the Greek Wine Federation treated us to some of the their best wines, presented by Konstantinos Lazarakis MW, at lunch on the Saturday. It seemed entirely appropriate to be sipping wines made in a relatively hot climate as we fanned ourselves in the blazing hot restaurant on top of the Mercure Cité Mondial hotel in whose conference centre the event was held.

One of the most impressive wines served at this lunch (see my tasting notes on all of the wines we were served in Bordeaux) was the latest vintage of an old favourite, **Sigalas Assyrtiko 2009 Santorini**. We were served it alongside Boutari, Kallisti Assyrtiko 2007 Santorini and I must say that I found the younger wine much purer and more exciting. The Boutari wine seemed sweeter and rounder. It was 'pleasant' but had none of the razor-sharp minerals and citrus of the 2009 hand-crafted by ex-mathematician Paris Sigalas into this really delicate but assertive 13.5% bone-dry wine.

Anyone who has visited the volcanic island of Santorini will have been struck by the extraordinary vine 'training' here whereby the vines creep along the ground in low basket shapes to withstand the winds (as shown here chez neighbour Hatzidikis). It is not surprising that fine wines made here taste intensely of the volcanic rocky soil. This delicate wine, crammed with extract in the way of a fine German 2009 Riesling (on which we will be publishing hundreds of tasting notes tomorrow), would make a great aperitif but was also delicious with the mezze that formed our first course. That smoked aubergine puree, baba gaboush, seemed a particularly fine match.

Fortunately this delicious dry white is relatively easy to find in the US (and in Germany) but unfortunately for us Brits does not seem to be available in the UK at the moment. The traditional UK importer Vickbar Wines reports, 'The combination of Santorini ex cellars (Greek winemakers act as if there is no crisis and there is nothing that a bit of price inflation won't solve) and current Euro/£ would result in a retail price of around £16 (at the current VAT rate) for a bottle and that before any age. A bit venturesome, I thought. However, if you think it's a snip at the price, let me know and the pallets can tumble in.' And Berry Bros, who have sold it in the past, are not currently offering the 2009 either. Shame!

I'm not sure it is quite worth £16 a bottle but I would happily pay, say, £12 for it.

Find this wine