

WINE


ST NICOLAS BAY
RESORT HOTEL & VILLAS

Tasting

Discover the beauties of Cretan wineries with the guidance of our sommelier.

Choose 2 white, one rose and 2 red wines and prepare yourself for a journey of history, culture and taste at the wine cellar of St. Nicolas Bay.



Crete hosts Europe's most historic vineyard - if not the world's. Its presence and active contribution to the productive and social life of the island has been continuous and documented by the archaeological and historical research, from the early Minoan times to the present day.

PGI (Protected Geographical Indication) Crete is, after PGI Peloponnese, the second most developed PGI wine region in Greece. Nearly all Cretan varieties are found in its wide range of PGI Crete wines, either on their own or in blends with foreign varieties. Wines of PGI Crete are produced by 41 wineries within the zone and, with the stipulated joint ventures, by four additional ones outside it.

THE WINE MAP OF CRETE



CRETAN GRAPE VARIETIES



White grapes

- **Plyto**. Plyto is 'herbal, slightly grassy character with a delicate chalky, pear-grained texture and juicy citrus flavours' according to Wine Grapes. We found it perfumed and grapey like a muscat.
- **Dafni**. An aromatic white grape variety, also rescued from near-oblivion by Lyrarakis. The name, which means 'laurel', reflects the distinctively herbal character. We tasted this once at Lyrarakis and once at a Cretan meal. Both times it was distinctively herbal, with notes of rosemary, thyme and Organo with a lemon curd citrusy note. Delicious and unusual.
- **Melissaki**. Almost extinct, Lyrarakis discovered this grape growing in the foothills of Mt. Psiloritis and planted it in a vineyard in 2010. We tasted Lyrarakis's second Melissaki bottling from 2017 which was made with ambient yeast, no sulfur and no filtering. It was distinctive without being funky or labelled as a 'natural' wine. Outstanding.
- **Vidiano**. As with many Cretan wines, the warm climate tends to give Vidiano ripe apricot and tropical notes.
- **Thrapsathiri**. Andrew Jefford says that Thrapsathiri is similar in character to Albarino, with a delicate citrus and floral character and that it is oak-friendly. Mainly used in blends, both in the winery and field blends, but there are some single-variety bottlings, e.g. Lyrarakis's full-bodied version which is aged in acacia and French oak. We felt that it was similar in character to assyrtiko but more floral.
- **Vilana**. The most important white wine variety of the island. Generally fresh and aromatic but can be bland and generic.



Red grapes

- **Kotsifali**. Given the climate, it's no surprise that Crete wine is often high in alcohol. Even whites of 14.5% ABV are not unknown. And Kotsifali is no exception. Otherwise, 'soft, pale and potentially aromatic' according to Wine Grapes. We were told that it was traditional to bury a barrel of this wine when a child was born in order to serve it years later at their wedding. We tasted a deliberately oxidised, almost madeirised, slightly sweet Kotsifali and it worked well but I'm not sure whether decades in the ground would do any wine a lot of good.
- **Liatiko**. This is the most widely planted red grape in Crete and it's used in both rosé and red wines. Light in colour with strawberry, red fruit and cooking herb notes. We felt that the rosés were more successful than the reds, comparing nicely to Provençal wines. The sommelier in our hotel says that she prefers Cretan rosé with meat in the summer rather than solid red wines that may be harder work in the heat. It certainly drinks well on a sunny terrace overlooking the sea.
- **Mandilari(a)**. Known as the Xinomavro of the Aegean because it is deeply coloured and tannic.