

Tasting notes

Mavrodaphne, 28/08/2021

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1 Introduction

Mavrodaphne is a Greek grape used so far in making sweet red wines. It has an AOC in Patras area and in the island of Cephalonia. To my knowledge, the first use of the grape in a blend of a dry red wine, was by Merkouri Estate in Korakochori, Elias, to complement at about 20% the dominant clone of Refosco.

More recently, starting first with Taos of Parparousis, dry red wines made of 100% Mavrodaphne were made. Here we will assess four dry red wines made of 100% Mavrodaphne to learn something about the grape.

2 Tasting Notes

• **Monambeles 2020 (Sclavos-Zisimatos Estate, Cephalonia)** Brilliant and transparent dark red color. The first nose opens on red fruits as well as sour-cherries in alcohol/kirsch aromas. A minute later and after some coaxing the nose becomes more intense along similar aromatic lines, producing also some hints of spices. After 90 minutes in the glass the nose is more developed with spices now evident, mostly all-spice, cinnamon and cloves.

In the mouth, the attack is very vivid and is dominated by acidity and some tannin. In the midpalate the acidity is massive, the tannin important and the fruit evident. The balance is spoiled by the acidity. The finish is long and dominated by the acidity first, then the tannin and the fruit.

Remarks: Here is info about this wine from the producer:”This wine comes from organic grapes of the local variety Mavrodafni Kefallinia that are grown in a biodynamic way in cup-shaped ungrafted vines. The age of the vineyards is over seventy years, the altitude is about 250 meters and the soil composition is limestone (mar-limestone - Maltese slab). The harvest takes place in the first fortnight of September. The winemaking process is biodynamic and includes a long extraction, completion of the alcoholic and malolactic fermentation with native yeasts, aged in French five-liter Allier oak barrels and in a three-ton oak winemaker for at least twelve months. The bottling process does not involve further procedures. The wine produced has excellent density and dyeing capacity. The character is robust with aromas of spices, ripe fruits and vanilla flavor, has a strong body, the acidity is quite good with crunchy delicious tannins and long aftertaste. Organic wine with Demeter certification.”

It is clear that as a young wine, it need oxydation to show its best. It should be at its peak after 10-15 years time (under standard cellar conditions²).

²12° C constant temperature and 80% acidity.

• **Taos 2015 (Paraparousis Estate)** The color is light ruby and the wine is brilliant and transparent. The nose gives aromas of kirsch, sour-cherries and red-fruit marmelade, with a hint of spices. The attack in the mouth is vivid with solid acidity. The midpalate is fruity, with huge acidity present and a bit of tannin that does not detract. The wine is on the light side and this is evident both from the color and the mouthfeel. The finish is long but light and dominated by acidity.

The wine was again tasted 90 minutes after being in the glass in contact with air. No major differences were observed.

• **Taos 2008 (Paraparousis Estate)** The color is solid dark red and the wine is brilliant and transparent. The nose starts with red-fruits, sour-cherries kirsch and red-fruit marmelade. Later-on it also develops spices (all-spice, cinnamon, cloves). The attack in the mouth is vivid with solid acidity and evident fruit. The midpalate has important acidity present, a bit of tannin that is well integrated, and a lot of fruit with the aromas of nose developed also here. The finish is long and dominated by fruit and acidity.

The wine was again tasted 90 minutes after being in the glass in contact with air. The aromas become a bit more prominent and more clearly defined.

• **Taos 2004 (Paraparousis Estate)** The color is dark red-brick with more brick at the rim, and the wine is brilliant and transparent. The nose is intense and starts with red-fruits, sour-cherries, kirsch, red-fruit marmelade and mushrooms. It slowly develops the spice component (liquorice, all-spice, cinnamon, cloves). It is finer, more delineated and more complex than the 2008.

The attack in the mouth is vivid with solid acidity and evident fruit. The midpalate has important acidity present, the tannin is absent, and a lot of fruit is present as in the nose. The finish is long and dominated by fruit and acidity.

The wine was again tasted 90 minutes after being in the glass in contact with air. It did not show any important difference.

The same wine tasted in 2016, showed also a menthol component in its nose.

Remarks: From the winery we learn that: This wine has 13.5 % alcohol, and it was aged for two years in French oak barrels. The soil of the vineyard is gravel-sand with alluvial deposits. Vinification: Classic red vinification, 25 days extraction.

3 Final remarks

- The wines showed their best at 18° C.
- They consistently present fruity characteristics, even after many years, and provide an interesting aromatic profile.
- They uniformly have high acidity that is off-balance. It can be checked by serving the wines with heavy dishes (like fatty lamb in the oven). Indeed, the wines were served afterwards with meat dishes and the acidity appeared integrated well into the rest.
- I suspect that the presence of marmelade flavors in the aromatics suggests that one cannot wait much longer before picking the grapes for the acidity to go down. If that is the case, then 100% Mavrodaphne does not promise balanced wines but rather austere ones. This probably explains why its most common form is in fortified sweet red wines where the sugar balances the acidity.
- Another technique to balance the acidity is blending. In particular, blending it with a low-acidity red grape might produce more balanced wines with even more complex character.