



## Moschofilero is a Chameleon of a White Wine Grape

*A lively, floral Greek white wine grape from the Peloponnese region of Mantinia, Moschofilero's expression is wide-ranging, as shown in 6 bottles to try.*

BY SUSAN KOSTRZEWA



Photo by Meg Baggot

Moschofilero has existed in various iterations in Greece since ancient times, but its real popularity dates to the 1970s and '80s, when forward-thinking Mantinia producers like **Tselepos**, **Boutari** and **Spiropoulos** drilled down into the behavior of the variety and began producing more elegant and terroir-driven expressions.

“When we began working with Moschofilero in 1979, the wine was used as an enhancer to upgrade other wines, and there was no bottled Moschofilero in the market,” says Yiannis Tselepos, who studied oenology at the University of Dijon in France. He founded his namesake winery in 1989 with his wife, Amalia.

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Better expressions of the variety soon spurred demand. Tselepos says it resulted in “everyone wanting a Moschofilero label in their portfolio.”

That proved a challenge, as the fickle variety’s high yields are prone to alcohol and acidity imbalances, and it’s sensitive to bad weather. Winemakers eager to get in on the action didn’t always find success, and an influx of subpar wines further confused the style’s identity.

“Moschofilero belongs to that category of varieties with a very high degree of difficulty, both because of its location and cultivation conditions,” says Tselepos.

Mantinia, with an average elevation of 2,100 feet, was established as a Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) in 1971. Its cool-climate vineyards sit approximately 2,200 feet above sea level, which can work in the grape's favor or against it. "The conditions of Mantinia in September and October change frequently and rapidly, and make it difficult for grapes to mature properly..., which can prevent its expressiveness and typicality," says Tselepos.

Even within Mantinia, the wines have diverse aromatic and flavor profiles. Higher acidity, crispness and citrus notes typify wines from the foothills, while the plateau yields a more floral, aromatic style. They're all linked by the elegant balancing acidity that reflects the overall elevation and terroir.



Tselepos 2015 Moschofilero / Photo by Meg Baggott

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**Tselepos 2015 Moschofilero (Mantinia); \$17, 91 points.**

This elegant wine typifies Moschofilero's alluring nature, with an opulent nose redolent of rose, violet and citrus, and fresh and elegant flavors of melon and lemon. Cava Spiliadis.

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That unique profile includes ageability, according to Athens-based expert Yiannis Karakasis, MW.

"In the high-altitude plateau of Mantinia, Moschofilero develops a floral and peppery character, with top examples showing strong potential to evolve over four years after the harvest," he says.

Innovation is in the region's DNA. Producers have successfully experimented with oak aging, wild-yeast fermentation and extended skin contact. Tselepos is working on rosé, orange and natural wines that "confirm the multiplicity of Moschofilero." Bosinakis is also producing a Moschofilero rosé, highlighting the crisp, flirty nature of the grape.



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