



## Photiades expand their Cyprus wine portfolio

A couple of weeks back some interesting new wines reached the Cyprus Gourmet office for tasting. The titles of the wines and the presentation of the bottles were very modern. But it was the words in small type that intrigued most. Firstly, that the wines were produced by Photos Photiades, and secondly that they had been made at the SODAP winery at Kamanterna. What goes on? I asked myself. So, I went to see Minas Mina, the much respected winemaker at Photiades Kyperounda winery. He would surely tell me, and he did.



Minas Mina, 35, commutes across country every day from Nicosia to Kyperounda, where he heads up the winemaking team at the five year old Kyperounda winery. With a degree from Athens in oenology, biology and chemistry, he went on to a Masters at Strathclyde University in Glasgow in Food Biotechnology and it was to the food industry he gravitated on his return to Cyprus. But wine was a pull – he enjoyed its variety and diversity and was a source of.

He moved from food to wine in 2001 when brewery and wine importer Photiades bought a 50% interest in a small winery hidden away in the hills at Kyperounda and he was asked to assist in the making of the wines. The first commercial vintage was in 2002 and the company developed its present range of Andesitis (red), Petritis (white), a Rosé, Chardonnay and Cabernet Sauvignon. This was

done with the help of Greek wine giant Boutari, whose wines Photiades import, in the vineyards, in the winery and in marketing.

Capacity at the Photiades majority-owned and greatly expanded 2005 plant at Kyperounda is 300,000 bottles a year: "We have stabilised production at this figure and it will remain there," Minas told me. "But the company desired to expand its Cyprus wine portfolio, which called for something new and additional to what we are doing here."

That new development was imaginative and collaborative. The

brief was fresh young wines, using both local and international grape varieties, to be sold at a modest to medium price. The solution was to use grapes grown in the Paphos district and vinify them there, at the big SODAP winery at Kamanterna, Stroumbi. Not only did Minas Mina and his colleagues have the expertise of Boutari on hand, but the knowledge and skills of SODAP's winemaker Alexis Machuca, who has established a fine reputation with varieties and blends in the Island Vines, Mountain Wines and Kamanterna ranges. A fine example of co-operation and teamwork.

The wines are available in leading supermarkets and wine stores. All are well worth trying and represent good value-for-money. These are our tasting notes.

### 7 Playies ("Seven Slopes") Xynisteri. Around €5.20 \*\*\* AbV 12% VFM 7 1/2/10

These days you would have to be a bad winemaker to make a bad Xynisteri and the boys have made a medium bodied, fresh and friendly little dry white here. A jolly quaff, well chilled with a Retro Prawn Cocktail, or grilled sea bass.

### 7 Playies ("Seven Slopes") Medium-sweet Xynisteri – Muscat. Around €5.20 \*\*\* AbV 12% VFM 7 1/2/10

Back label recommends this as a wine for fruits and Asian cuisine – OK, but I know a lot of people, particularly of the fair sex, who like a medium-sweet wine with fish and white meat. There's acidity here, too and a good body in a well blended wine.



### 7 Playies ("Seven Slopes") Rosé, Cabernet Sauvignon, Lefkada. €5.25 to €5.50. \*\*\* AbV 12.5% VFM 7 1/2/10

I reckon 2010 is going to be an even bigger year than 2009 for rosés and this wine, at a moderate price will suit those who like a very dry one with their buffet or Asian spread (nice with Sushi). So, get out the Wok. Neither grape dominates and the finish is dry with some bitterness.

### 7 Playies ("Seven Slopes") Mourvèdre – Syrah. Around €5.20 \*\*\* AbV 12% VFM 7 1/2/10

Mourvèdre and Syrah have both settled well in Cyprus. A few good red Mourvèdres (also known

as Mataro – not a notable varietal anywhere else) are coming through now and the grape looks, like Lefkada, to have a bright Cypriot wine future. The blend has appeal and it's one for steaks, grills and kebabs. Now (open before serving) till 2013.

### Aelios (Xynisteri – Semillon – Chardonnay) €8.45 - €9.50 \*\*\* AbV 12% VFM 6/10

At SODAP's Kamanterna winery they know a thing or two about blending and their co-operation may be a factor here. A gentle pleasing wine, for sipping not glugging and for grilled sole rather than Scampi Provinciale. The Semillon reminds you of its presence with Chardonnay quiet. Definitely for

*aficionados* of Cyprus wines. Interesting, if not cheap, addition to our country's portfolio.

### Selana 2007 (Maratheftiko – Syrah) €8.45 - €9.50 \*\*\* AbV 13% VFM 6/10

Quite light, with some very traditional Cyprus wine aromas and flavours, in a modern setting you might say. Syrah well back. Demonstrates the different styles our winemakers are getting from Maratheftiko – this is the gentlest I have yet come across. 12 months oak maturation is hardly noticeable in a moderate attack. An unusual offering that benefited from air getting to it (like late in the meal). Rather nice with braised chicken and garlic and grilled pork. Open an hour before serving. Till 2013.

## Panini! What they are... and how to make them

Pictures and story by NICHOLE DAKE

During the 20th century, Panini slowly evolved from being a worker's portable lunch to achieving a recognised place in the Italian food scene. In the 1980s, Milan became the centre of a short-lived teen fashion named after the Panini: the so-called 'Paninari' who frequented the first Italian fast-food joints dressed in a ridiculous combo of mismatched fashionable designer gear. Nothing to do with Panini actually, but the expanding fast food fashion pushed some Milanese establishments to go against the trend and offer real Italian gourmet Panini. Twenty years later some of these bars, or Paninoteche, are still leaders in the world of the fashionable sandwich

So what makes an Italian Panino? Firstly the bread, of which there are several types commonly used: Rosette, an airy roll slashed with a pattern resembling a flower; Francesini, a sort of baguette style roll; and, Ciabatta.

Then the Panino filling which, for the majority of the Italians, should contain cured meats: cheeses are quite common, as are sauces of all sorts, from flavoured butters to mayo. Outside Italy, they're inevitably grilled in a Panini press, but in Italy opinions are split; some love the crunchy bread holding warm meats and melted cheeses; others argue it's just a trick to disguise tired flavours. If bread, meats and other ingredients are fresh, they claim, the grilling is not only unnecessary but also counter-productive, erasing the fresh fragrance of the ingredients.

For anyone growing up in Italy, Panini are often connected with memories of school breaks, seaside snacks in summer and maybe healthy mountain walks. The Panini would mostly be of the simplest kinds with a single filling, not grilled and often prepared just before eating. Cured meats are the filling of choice: salami, prosciutto and mortadella are for many a sort of holy trinity of Panini. Cheeses are a common filling too and usually the local availability will determine which particular cheese is used. Summer favourites are Panini with tomato and mozzarella or tomato and tuna. There's also a sort of rustic category: pane e frittata, i.e. flat Italian omelette.

The main thing Panini lovers all agree upon is that bread and stuffing should be balanced: they should highlight each others taste instead of fighting for which flavour is stronger.



### Product Review – the Krups Panini Press (Toasted Sandwich Maker if you prefer!)

Panino in Italian means both roll and stuffed bread which is why a Panini press differs from the ubiquitous British toasted sandwich machine; the lid has adjustable hinges so that it will sit flat on top of the Panini – regardless of the bread used - rather than squeezing the filling out of the side or sealing it tight, as some models do. It also has ridged rather than flat plates which give that characteristic hatched appearance.

We tested the Krups model 6330 Mk 1, which is made from quality stainless steel with plates measuring 240mm x 295mm; this large cooking area can accommodate two Paninis simultaneously, or one pitta bread or one *halloumi pitta*. The handle is fully heat insulated ensuring it's safe to touch with bare hands no matter how long it's been on; it heats up extremely quickly and a thermostat light lets you know that it's up to temperature.



You can also use it to cook meat, fish and vegetables, but it is not easy to drain away the fat. However, lightly oiled courgette slices done with the press were excellent and fit into the spare space left by the Panini. The non-stick plates make it fairly easy to clean afterwards with a damp toothbrush and kitchen paper; not quite as simple as toastie machines where you dismantle the plates entirely, but then you'd not get the clever Krups fold-away/store-upright facility which makes it very practical.

The user's manual is short but it tells you everything you need to know. The appliance uses a whopping 1500 watts but the results are excellent; Baker's Pride 7-seeds bread makes wizard sandwiches, but pitta pockets/halloumi pitta are good to hold substantial fillings and feed two.

Retail price is €98 (incl. VAT) from leading stores or distributors Zartarco.

Next week, I shall give some super Panini recipes.