

J I M B A R R Y

ASSYRTIKO

AUSTRALIA'S FIRST | CLARE VALLEY

THE TIMELINE



AUGUST 2006

Peter and Sue Barry first taste Assyrtiko while holidaying on the Greek island of Santorini. Peter is impressed with the fresh, crisp, acidic qualities of the wine.



JUNE 2007

Peter contacts Max Allen to see if he is aware of any Assyrtiko vines in Australia. Max informs Peter there are none and recommends he speak to Nigel Blieschke at Valumba Nursery regarding the importation and propagation of vines.



MAY 2007

Peter and Sue taste Assyrtiko for a second time at the London Wine Fair.





SEPTEMBER 2007

Peter asks Yiannis for help in sourcing Assyrtiko cuttings. Yiannis is thrilled to be involved and happy to assist Peter by collecting cuttings.

JULY & AUGUST 2007

Peter contacts Konstantinos Lazarakis MW to ask if he knows of a winemaker or grower in Santorini that he could source cuttings from. Konstantinos suggests Yiannis Paraskevopoulos at Gaia Wines.



FEBRUARY 2008

Peter travels to Santorini with Yiannis to collect the cuttings of Assyrtiko from Yiannis Argyros at Argyros Winery.



THE TIMELINE

continued



MARCH 2010

Two Assyrtiko mother vines are released after a mandatory two years in quarantine.



28 AUGUST 2012

Australia's first Assyrtiko planting. Half a hectare of Assyrtiko is planted by Graeme (Macca) McDonough and the Barry family at Spring Farm Vineyard.

FEBRUARY 2011

*Propagation begins!
658 cuttings of Assyrtiko are propagated from the two mother vines with the help of Yalumba Nursery.*





MARCH 2014

*The first parcels of
Assyrtiko are picked with
15 litres (42 half bottles)
of wine being made from
this first vintage.*

AUGUST 2013

*Additional cuttings of
Assyrtiko are planted at
Spring Farm Vineyard.*



NOVEMBER 2016

*The Barrys launch
Australia's First
Assyrtiko in Melbourne.*



THE TIMELINE

continued



MARCH 2017

First produce picked from Spring Farm Block 19, this Assyrtiko to be released 2027.



SEPTEMBER 2018

2017 Assyrtiko was awarded the Trophy for Best Dry White other than Riesling at the Langton's 2018 Clare Valley Wine Show.

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ASSYRTIKO

in its ancient home

*“Arguably the finest Greek white grape variety...
ASSYRTIKO has the rare ability of balancing breadth
and power with high acidity and steely austerity.”*

– KONSTANTINOS LAZARAKIS MW (2005)

The connection between Assyrtiko and the Greek island of Santorini is ancient and indivisible. The vine's roots run deep in the island's soil and in its soul. The wines are taut and tensile with impressive structure and bright acidity. They express a distinctive and deep set minerality born of Santorini's volcanic soils.

With an annual rainfall of less than 300mm and winds that once carried ancient fleets still blowing strong today, Santorini presents challenging conditions for grape growers. This has led to the development of the 'kouloura' method for training vines, where each plant is worked into a basket shape in order to protect precious bunches from strong winds and the harsh sun.



While Santorini presents some viticultural challenges it also provides opportunities. The island's sandy, volcanic soils provide immunity from the threat of phylloxera, the destroyer of Europe's vineyards in the late 19th century. The hardiness of the vines, the freedom from the phylloxera threat and the unique kouloura method, means Santorini is home to some of the world's oldest vines, with some having soaked up the sun for nearly four centuries.

An Assyrtiko basket vine planted at the Spring Farm Vineyard





The 'kouloura' method



Peter Barry with a basket vine at the Spring Farm Vineyard in Clare, 2015

PETER BARRY'S

Assyrtiko journey

You know there's something special about a wine when you clearly remember exactly when, where and with who you tasted it. 28 August 2006 was a warm Monday afternoon in Santorini and I was on holiday with my wife Sue. During lunch I had tried my first glass of Assyrtiko and it made a huge impression on me. It immediately struck me as a variety that would work well back home. Its fresh, crisp, acidic qualities and low pH are perfect accompaniments to some of our contemporary Australian food.

In May the following year, I went to the London Wine Fair and made a point of tasting as many Assyrtiko wines as I could find. They just strengthened my belief that the variety had real potential in Australia. I then discovered there wasn't a single vine in the country so I started to investigate importing cuttings.



1.

Thanks to Konstantinos Lazarakis MW, I was introduced to Yiannis Paraskevopoulos from Gaia Wines, a well-known producer of Assyrtiko on Santorini, and discussions on how best to transport the variety to Australia began.

Yiannis and I travelled to Santorini together in early February 2008 to meet with Yiannis Argyros of Argyros Winery. We collected twelve dormant Assyrtiko cuttings from a single vine, establishing our very own Santorini clone. After arriving back in Australia the cuttings were placed in quarantine for a mandatory two years and in 2010, the two best cuttings were released.

In 2011, I was able to collect 32 buds from these two mother vines, which were then grafted onto 30 Riesling vines at two vineyards in the Clare Valley.

2.



3.



This initial grafting was successful and in 2014 provided us with enough fruit to produce our first 15 litres of Assyrtiko. Since their release from quarantine, the mother vines have produced a further 658 cuttings.

On 28 August 2012, six years to the day since that fateful lunch in Santorini, 658 Assyrtiko vines were planted on a south facing slope alongside our Lodge Hill Riesling.

Located on the eastern ranges of Clare, the Spring Farm Vineyard is one of the highest points in the Valley. With its ability to adapt well to different soil types, I was hopeful the Assyrtiko would prosper in our environment. A total of three hectares have now been planted at the Spring Farm Vineyard.

2. Sam, Tom and Peter with the first vintage of Assyrtiko, 2014

3. Peter picking the first harvest of Assyrtiko, 2014



In keeping with Santorini tradition, a handful of our Assyrtiko vines have been grown and pruned using the kouloura method, while the rest are grown on trellises. We have continued our propagation and planting of Assyrtiko in Clare and today have 15 hectares planted at eight vineyard locations in the Clare Valley.

Although Assyrtiko is predominantly grown in arid, windy and hot conditions, and by comparison Clare is a cooler region with a higher rainfall, I saw this as an opportunity to acknowledge climate change. We must accept the reality of a future where there is water scarcity and warmer conditions, and adapt accordingly.

1. Sue and Peter at the planting of Australia's first Assyrtiko on 28 August 2012

2. Peter collecting cuttings from Yiannis Argyros

3.



Assyrtiko is a profound transmitter of terroir, exhibiting an earthy and mineral aftertaste reminiscent of the volcanic soil of Santorini. Our soil and climate have given us an expression of Assyrtiko that shares many of the characteristics of those produced on the island, particularly that crisp, dry texture I fell in love with, but also a range of nuanced differences that I find exciting.

3. Australia's first Assyrtiko launch held at The Tea Room
(The European), Melbourne on 8 November 2016



Peter at the Spring Farm Vineyard

18 YEARS ON

“Reflecting on my 18-year Assyrtiko journey feels like watching a child grow, mature, and set off into the world. Seeing its development has been both exciting and rewarding. I’m incredibly proud to have produced the first commercial Assyrtiko outside Greece. Being a pioneer wasn’t intentional—it just happened. I saw the potential for this variety, with its Riesling-esc profile and I am thrilled with the results. It has thrived in the Clare Valley climate. I chose the cuttings, but my son Tom and his team crafted an Australian expression of Assyrtiko that truly honours the variety”.

– Peter Barry



A bunch of Assyrτικο grapes from the 2016 vintage

TESTIMONIAL

“Having tasted the 2015 twice now, I can say that the wine has evolved fantastically. The palate has changed and is more mineral; it is very salty. The palate reminds me a lot of Santorini. Looking at the numbers, the acidity, the pH and the alcohol are pretty similar to those of Santorini. Looking at how the 2015 has developed over the last year or so, I think the 2016 is very promising and I think it is going to be an amazing wine.”

– Yiannis Karakasis MW.





Tom, Olivia, Peter, Sue, Millie and Sam at Australia's first Assyrtiko launch

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