



Written by
Jancis Robinson
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Alpha Estate, Hedgehog Vineyard Xinomavro 2010 Amyndeon



From €10.44, \$18.84, CA\$22.95, £14.95

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The future of Greece in Europe may be uncertain but the future looks set fair for Greek wines. See Julia's two recent tasting articles [Greeks in London](#) and [Greeks in Athens](#) on this topic. One producer that seems to have solved the enviable trick of both making consistently good wines and having them well distributed around the world is Alpha Estate, or Ktima Alpha, in the windy, sandy, high appellation of Amyndeon in northern Greece. Julia wrote this [useful profile](#) of the estate in 2008 but it has continued to expand and develop since then.

I was very impressed recently, for instance, by a sprightly, characterful dry white varietal **2013 Malagousia** under Alpha Estate's newish Axia label. I shared it with friends over a pre-theatre supper at A Wong in Victoria and they were very gratifyingly impressed. It had some of the cut of a Sauvignon Blanc but with a Greek laurel-leaf twist. (The 2008 Axia red was chosen by Julia as a previous [wine of the week](#).)

It was in another London restaurant that I came across **Alpha Estate, Hedgehog Vineyard Xinomavro 2010 Amyndeon**. Peckham Bazaar in south London was once a pub, then a deli and now serves freshly grilled and assembled rather Ottolenghi-ish middle-eastern dishes. My charred charmoulah chicken wings with butternut squash puree, kolhrabi and onion was stunning. Peckham Bazaar has one of the most extraordinary wine lists I have come across in the capital. Pre-dinner drinks include Eduardo Miroglio's Bulgarian sparkling rosé and two drinks variously called 'Liquid apple pie' and 'Siege of Constantinople'. Intriguing as these were, we stuck with the wine selection, which comes mainly from Greece but also from Bulgaria, Slovenia, Croatia, Hungary and Turkey. This fine red was £40 a bottle on the restaurant wine list.

According to the handsome back label, apparently adorned with Braille, 'Hedgehog is the name of the single vineyard block chosen by the team to designate the best expression and typical character of Xynomavro, the noblest red varietal of northern Greece. The vineyard name is hedgehog because it is an ancient nesting area for the local hedgehog species that we continue to preserve and protect.' At 690 m, the vineyard is notably high, like many of the best vineyards in this part of the world it faces north, and the soils, presumably sandy as characterises the area, are particularly well drained. After a cold soak and fermentation, the wine was aged for a year in French oak barrels 'of medium grain and white toasting'.

As Julia has pointed out, Amyndeon is very much Xinomavro's sphere of influence, in addition to the variety's traditional heartland of Naoussa further south, and you can read some of the technical background on the [winery's website](#). The wine is screwcapped, well packaged and 13.5% alcohol. It is overall particularly savoury - none of the simple sweetness that dogs many more commercial wines. I could see the hint of orange that Julia found on the nose but most impressive was its Nebbiolo-like transparency, light char (from the fruit character rather than oak), and the fact that it really builds on the finish into something impressively persistent. This is a very individual wine that shows Xinomavro's distinction well. I'd drink it any time over the next five years or so and I'm sure it will continue to gain interest.

According to [wine-searcher.com](#), it's available from a wide range of UK and US retailers as well as in Canada, Austria, Germany and France.

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