

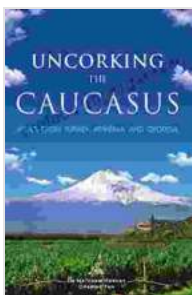
# Wines From Turkey, Armenia, and Georgia: Unveiling the Treasures of Ancient Wine Regions

## Embark on a Viticultural Odyssey: Exploring the Wines of Turkey, Armenia, and Georgia

Nestled at the crossroads of Europe and Asia, the ancient lands of Turkey, Armenia, and Georgia boast a rich tapestry of winemaking traditions that date back millennia. Each region offers a unique blend of indigenous grape varieties, distinct terroirs, and captivating cultural influences, resulting in an array of wines that tantalize the palate and ignite the imagination.

### Turkey: Cradle of Wine Civilization

Turkey, hailed as the cradle of wine civilization, boasts a viticultural legacy that spans over 10,000 years. The country is home to a diverse range of indigenous grapes, with Öküzgözü, Kalecik Karası, and Narince ranking among the most acclaimed.



### Uncorking the Caucasus: Wines from Turkey, Armenia, and Georgia by Dr Matthew Horkey

★★★★☆ 4.4 out of 5

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**Öküzgözü**, meaning "bull's eye," is a robust red grape that produces wines with intense aromas of dark fruits, spices, and a hint of pepper. Its powerful tannins and full-bodied structure demand bold dishes such as grilled meats and hearty stews.

**Kalecik Karası**, originating from the Central Anatolian region, yields elegant red wines known for their vibrant ruby color and delicate notes of red berries, violets, and a subtle minerality. These wines pair well with grilled fish, pasta dishes, and cheese platters.

**Narince**, a white grape variety cultivated primarily in the Cappadocia region, produces crisp and refreshing wines with flavors of citrus, white flowers, and a touch of salinity. Its acidity makes it an excellent accompaniment to seafood, salads, and light pasta dishes.

### **Armenia: Home to Noah's Ark and Ancient Vines**

Armenia, the biblical birthplace of Noah's Ark, has a long-standing winemaking tradition that dates back to the Urartian civilization in the 9th century B.C. Today, the country continues to cultivate indigenous grapes such as Areni, Voskehat, and Karmrahut.

**Areni**, a red grape native to the Vayots Dzor region, is revered for its deep, dark color and intensely flavorful wines. Aged in oak barrels, Areni wines develop rich aromas of blackberries, plums, and spices, with a velvety texture and an extended finish.

**Voskehat**, meaning "golden berry," is a white grape variety that produces wines with a pale golden color and delicate flavors of apricot, peach, and acacia flowers. Its refreshing acidity and subtle sweetness make it a versatile companion to salads, grilled vegetables, and fish dishes.

**Karmrahyut**, a robust red grape, yields wines with vibrant ruby-red hues and complex aromas of ripe red fruits, dried herbs, and a hint of black pepper. These full-bodied wines demand hearty dishes such as grilled meats, lamb chops, and spicy stews.

### **Georgia: Birthplace of Qvevri Winemaking**

Georgia, nestled in the foothills of the Caucasus Mountains, is believed to be the birthplace of qvevri winemaking, an ancient tradition that involves fermenting and aging wines in large, egg-shaped clay vessels buried underground.

**Saperavi**, Georgia's most famous red grape, is known for its deep crimson color and intensely flavorful wines. Qvevri-fermented Saperavi wines exhibit complex aromas of black cherries, plums, and spices, with a firm structure and a long aging potential.

**Rkatsiteli**, a versatile white grape variety, produces a wide range of wines depending on the winemaking techniques employed. Qvevri-fermented Rkatsiteli wines develop rich aromas of ripe apples, citrus fruits, and a touch of beeswax, with a balanced acidity and a supple texture.

**Kisi**, a rare white grape variety cultivated in the Kakheti region, yields wines with a distinctive amber color and complex flavors of dried apricots,

honey, and nuts. Aged in qvevri, Kisi wines acquire a unique texture and a long, lingering finish.

## **Wine Tasting Notes and Food Pairings**

### **Turkish Wines**

\* **Öküzgözü:** Full-bodied, robust, with flavors of dark fruits, spices, and pepper; pair with grilled meats, hearty stews \* **Kalecik Karası:** Elegant, medium-bodied, with flavors of red berries, violets, and minerality; pair with grilled fish, pasta dishes, cheese platters \* **Narince:** Crisp, refreshing, with flavors of citrus, white flowers, and salinity; pair with seafood, salads, light pasta dishes

### **Armenian Wines**

\* **Areni:** Deep, dark-colored, with flavors of blackberries, plums, and spices; pair with grilled meats, lamb chops, spicy stews \* **Voskehat:** Pale golden, with flavors of apricot, peach, and acacia flowers; pair with salads, grilled vegetables, fish dishes \* **Karmrahyut:** Vibrant ruby-red, with flavors of ripe red fruits, dried herbs, and black pepper; pair with grilled meats, lamb chops, spicy stews

### **Georgian Wines**

\* **Saperavi:** Deep crimson, with flavors of black cherries, plums, and spices; pair with grilled meats, stews, hard cheeses \* **Rkatsiteli:** Pale golden, with flavors of ripe apples, citrus fruits, and beeswax; pair with seafood, chicken dishes, grilled vegetables \* **Kisi:** Amber-colored, with

flavors of dried apricots, honey, and nuts; pair with desserts, aged cheeses, nuts

## **Wine History and Culture**

The winemaking traditions of Turkey, Armenia, and Georgia are deeply rooted in history and culture. Archaeological evidence suggests that wine has been produced in these regions since the Neolithic period. Over centuries, these countries have witnessed the rise and fall of empires, the spread of religions, and the exchange of cultural influences that have shaped their viniculture.

In Turkey, winemaking flourished during the Ottoman Empire, with the production of sweet and fortified wines. However, during the 20th century, the industry faced challenges due to economic and political factors. In recent years, Turkey has experienced a wine renaissance, with a growing number of wineries producing high-quality wines.

Armenia's winemaking heritage is intertwined with the Christian faith. The country adopted Christianity in the early 4th century, and wine played a central role in religious rituals and celebrations. Throughout its history, Armenia has faced numerous challenges, including invasions and foreign rule. Despite these obstacles, the Armenian people have preserved their winemaking traditions. Today, Armenia is experiencing a resurgence of interest in its ancient wine culture.

Georgia boasts the unique distinction of being the birthplace of qvevri winemaking. Qvevri, large clay vessels buried underground, have been used to ferment and age wine for centuries. This ancient method imparts a distinctive character to Georgian wines, with their complex aromas, rich

textures, and extended aging potential. Qvevri winemaking has been recognized by UNESCO as an Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

## **Wine Tourism: A Journey into History and Flavor**

The ancient wine regions of Turkey, Armenia, and Georgia offer an array of opportunities for wine tourism. Visitors can immerse themselves in the captivating history of these regions, explore the vineyards, meet the winemakers, and sample the exquisite wines firsthand.

### **Wine Tours:**

\* Embark on a guided tour through the rolling hills of Cappadocia, Turkey, discovering the ancient art of qvevri winemaking. \* Explore the picturesque valleys of Vayots Dzor, Armenia, where the indigenous Areni grape flourishes amidst breathtaking landscapes. \* Journey to the Kakheti region of Georgia, renowned for its qvevri wine tradition and its stunning Caucasus Mountain scenery.

### **Wine Tastings:**

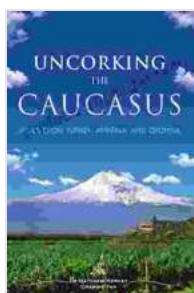
\* Attend a wine tasting at a local winery in Cappadocia, savoring the diverse flavors of Turkish wines against the backdrop of ancient rock formations. \* Indulge in a traditional Armenian wine tasting in Yerevan, the vibrant capital city, where you can experience the distinctive character of Areni, Voskehat, and Karmrahyut wines. \* Participate in a qvevri wine tasting in Telavi, Georgia, immersing yourself in the ancient winemaking traditions of the Caucasus region.

### **Culinary Delights:**

\* Pair your wine tasting experiences with delicious local cuisine. Enjoy a traditional Turkish meal in a cozy restaurant in Istanbul, sampling regional specialties such as kebabs and meze. \* Savor the flavors of Armenian cuisine in Yerevan, indulging in dishes such as khorovats (grilled meats),dolma (stuffed grape leaves),and lavash (flatbread). \* Experience the culinary delights of Georgia in Tbilisi, the vibrant capital city, where you can feast on khinkali (dumplings),khachapuri (cheese bread),and mtsvadi (grilled meats).

## : A Legacy of Wine, Culture, and Discovery

The wines of Turkey, Armenia, and Georgia represent a testament to the rich cultural heritage, diverse terroirs, and ancient winemaking traditions of these ancient lands. From the robust Ök



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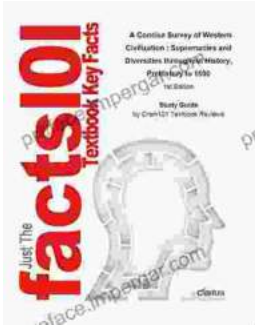
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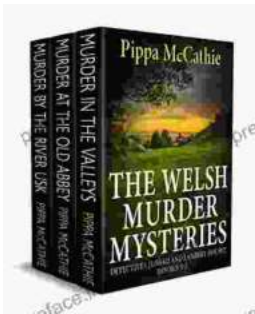
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