

WINE OF THE WEEK

An Ancient Grape with a Tantalizing Future

Exploring the Zorah 2016 Rind Karasì, and 6,100 years of history

review by [Tara Q. Thomas](#)



The earthenware karas used to ferment Zorah's Karasì.

Recently, John Szabo, MS, visited Areni-1, a cave in a Copper Age village of Vayots Dzor, in southeastern Armenia. Within it, researchers had found shards of *karas*, clay vessels used to ferment grape juice, with grape residue that DNA analysis linked to arenì, a variety that grows wild throughout the region. “The cultivar is so old it has no known ancestors,” he [wrote in our June issue](#). Zorik Gharibian, who runs Zorah winery, described it to him as an “orphan grape”; Szabo calls it “the world’s most ancient wine grape and one of its most potentially exciting future ones.”



Armenia's Areni-1

cave.

After tasting the latest vintage of Karasi, Gharibian's areni, I'd have to agree. He's been working with areni since 2006, when he hooked up with the Italian oenologist Alberto Antonini and viticulturist Stefano Bartolomei. They culled cuttings from the abandoned vineyards of a nearby 13th-century monastery to plant 37 acres of vines in Yeghegnadzor, on a barren, stone-filled landscape at 4,593 feet in altitude. At ten years old, those own-rooted vines produced a gorgeous red in 2016: Fermented spontaneously in the traditional

Armenian earthenware karas and aged in unlined concrete vats, the wine feels cool, firm and juicy, with an acidity that gives it a sheer texture despite the depth of its dark-plum fruit. There's no doubt that the 6,100-year-old history of this grape variety, and its sudden emergence on the world wine scene, adds appeal to this wine, but even leaving the history aside, it's bewitching. Its weight and umami meatiness would make it terrific at a summer barbecue, especially if it's lamb cooked on a rotisserie, and potatoes baked in the coals. Just save a few bottles in the cellar, too: I kept returning to it over the course of a week, finding it impressively fresh and vibrant as it continued to evolve.

94

Zorah 2016 Rind Karasi



Price: 30,95 euro

Where to Buy: Start2taste Belgium www.start2taste.be