

NOVEMBER 23, 2019

Greek
FOOD
& WINE
2019



The National Herald

www.thenationalherald.com

Trump's Tariffs Not Peachy for Greek Fruit Producers



TNH Staff

Having struggled along with most Greeks through a 9 ½-year-long economic and austerity crisis that saw spending even for essentials such as food slow dramatically at its height, Greece's prized canned peach producers now have to deal with American tariffs as high as 25 percent.

That could cut deep into their business, they told the news agency Reuters in a feature on their plight as they, like other agricultural companies and businesses, are caught in a tug-o'-war between the United States and the European Union.

Trump's tariffs will hit goods ranging from Scotch whiskey to Italian cheeses, French wines and the mouth-watering Greek peach. Greece is the world's biggest exporter of tinned peaches with about 20 percent of its 250,000-ton annual production sent to the American market which gobbles it up.

The import levy had been 18 percent but Trump went hard after the EU as part of World Trade Organization-backed countermeasures to subsidies for the airplane manufacturer Airbus, the competitor to the U.S.' Boeing. The hikes will increase the total import duty to the United States to 43%.

"Trump would do well to behave himself and let us get to work so we can have a livelihood," said peach farmer Tasos Halkidis. "We don't want this tariff business," he told the news agency.

Much of the peaches come from the plain straddling the regions of Imathia and Pella in central Macedonia and bloom in the spring, creating a sea of peaches on the land.

Kostas Apostolou, head of the Greek Canners Association, said the dispute is threatening their livelihood and will potentially shut them out of their biggest market. "Why are they punishing us?" Apostolou told Reuters.

The increase in tariffs came into effect on Oct. 18, just as Greeks readied to ship 50 million tins to U.S. markets that includes not just supermarkets but catering companies that supply hospitals, schools, and the military, many of whom have either canceled orders or have said they will not be prepared to pay for any tariff increase, producers said.

"Suddenly there was this (trade) war... We could never imagine that this could affect our jobs here in this small area," Apostolou said, the Greek companies finding themselves with an oversupply they can't sell because of what Trump ordered.

The Greek companies have tailored their products, right down to 3-kilogram (6.61 pound) tins, specifically for the United States and they can't be sold in the EU, the rest of Europe, Asia, or Latin America where the preferred container is a kilo (2.2 pounds).

The Canners Association and other industry experts say the income that will be lost from the U.S. market is about \$50 million, small on a global scale but a big whack for one of Greece's otherwise poorest regions where unemployment is 20 percent, said the report by Lefteris Papadimas and Vassilis Triantafyllou.

Now they are anxious that the unsold goods will collapse prices and hurt them even more, stuck with canned peaches they can't unload, and devastate a district where there are millions of peach trees on some 50,000 acres housing 10,000 small farms and 10,000 workers.

"It's a shock," says Eleftherios Saitis, especially with Greek agricultural goods coming back from EU sanctions on Russia five years ago that took another bite. Trump, they said, could be the one who buries them. "With the tariffs from the United States, it will be a very big hit, it will be a catastrophe," said Halkidis.



Greek Wines Asia A Delicious Cultural Bridge

By Constantine S. Sirigos

Entrepreneurship is a variety of human creativity, as much engendered by imagination as is art and music. That is why it is not surprising that two of the three principals of Greek Wine Asia, Go Nagano and his wife Christina Travlopoulou, are distinguished classical guitarists. Along with Maria Tzanidi, who joined them after a career in banking, all three know the importance of timing – the tremendous progress made by Greek wine makers told them the time had come to acquaint Asian wine markets with the finest and most unique Greek wines.

To the company mix Tzanidi brings her passion for wines and prior knowledge of the industry and Nagano, a sake sommelier who has become a Greek wine expert, contributes his experience as an acclaimed sushi chef and restaurateur. Travlopoulou's role is more spiritual and artistic than technical, and the company's launch has been served well by her energy and intuition.

Greek Wines Asia emerged from discussions that led to an idea: Greek products have only a small presence in Japan but the right people could pave a path for Greek merchants and also strengthen cultural ties between the two countries. Nagano, as a native who fell in love with Greece was the ideal person to knock on Japan's door.

"That was the theoretical part of the plan," said Tzanidi. Travlopoulou added that

"the progress Greek winemakers have made in the technical and commercial contexts" – the three especially admire the new generation of wine makers – "have reached such a high level of quality that we cannot allow their efforts to be in vain when there are countries like Japan that have such a great appreciation and thirst for wine for places like France, Italy, Australia. Greek wine has reached a level of quality and quantity that it can satisfy this demand. We must introduce our wine to them."

Efforts begun decades ago are bearing fruit, literally and figuratively, in excellent varieties that have been developed and cultivated.

Until recently they were not well known – but Greek producers made breakthroughs in the West, and Greek Wine Asia believes that in the East interest in Greek wines can be intertwined with the fascination with Hellenic Civilization that exists in Asia, especially in Japan and China.

"We have both wines to share and stories to tell," said Travlopoulou. "We believe that once they taste our wines – we also will tell them the fascinating story of ancient and modern Greece and its four-thousand year history of wine cultivation – they will be won over. They love the videos we bring them about the individual wineries."

With frequent travels, they are now focused on both putting down roots in Japan and expanding their relationships with Greek wine makers – who are very excited about the idea – and Nagano has been meeting Japanese importers who are intrigued about opening up to a new portion of the wine world.

THE WINES

Tzanidi and Travlopoulou said they are proceeding steadily by seeking out the 'best of the best' in Greece, wine from producers who respect the Earth and the varieties it brings forth in Greece that will draw the attention of the Japanese.

Travlopoulou believes their unique backgrounds and their diligence will tell. She emphasized that "the Japanese are very selective, and they are coming to



Go Nagano and Maria Tzanidi

know they can trust us to direct them to the best wines in Greece. While they do not have the prestige of products from France and Italy, the quality is high and their characteristics desirable. They are open to it. They say 'persuade us to buy the Greek wines' and that is the challenge and opportunity for Greek Wines Asia."

THE PEOPLE

Maria, who has roots in Asia Minor, was slowly drawn to the wine industry. "I was a university student when some of the individuals and companies were taking their first steps, and I attended some wine seminars."

Attending events, taking classes with the London-based Wine and Spirit Educational Trust, and visiting many wineries, her endeavor went beyond a hobby and a passion – she also worked for a company selling wine-related accessories – but she is also motivated by a desire to make a contribution to Greece's economic growth.

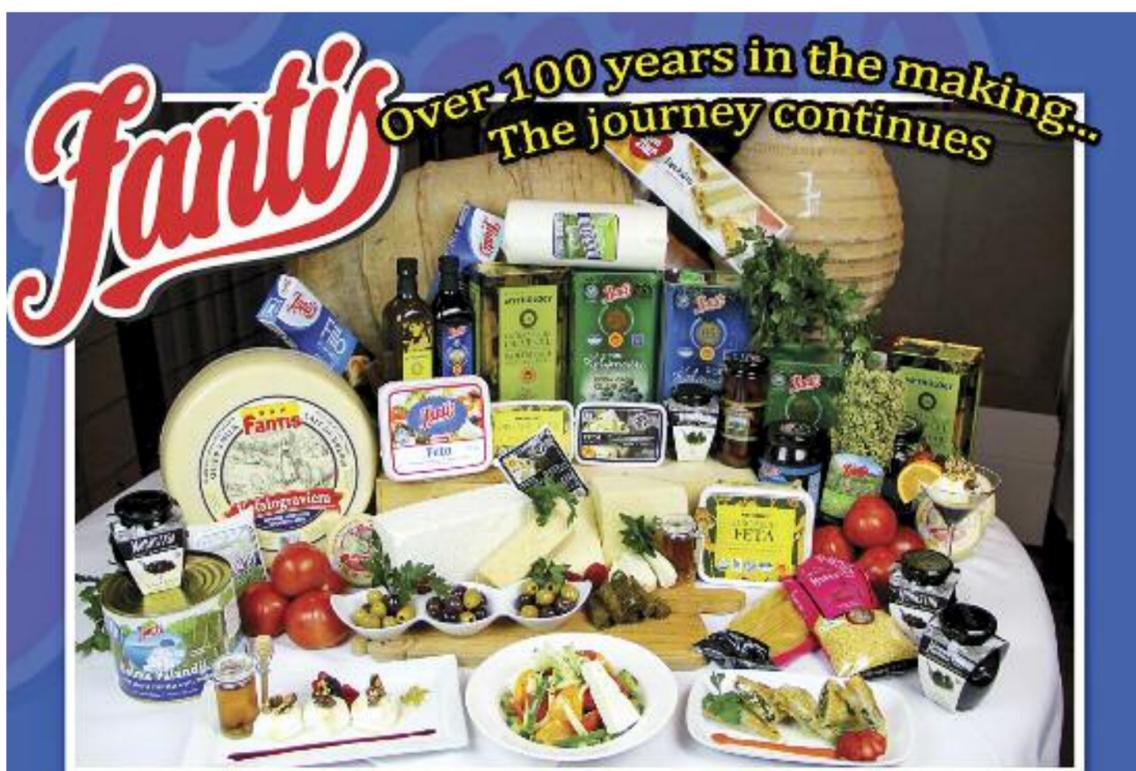
Nagano's nostalgia for his country of origin fired his devotion to bringing Japanese gastronomy to his adoptive country, Greece, principally through the success of his restaurant Gaku Sushi near Syntagma Square.

After becoming a sake sommelier, he also developed a taste for Greek wines and thought "I should also advance my knowledge of Greek wines," which he introduced on Gaku's wine list. Being a living bridge between the two countries, he then thought "why don't we bring Greek wine to Japan" – and beyond.

Nagano and Travlopoulou are living cultural bridges too. They met at the Austin Music Festival when she was in London and drew closer when both attended Julliard.

"Ah, but what also brought us together was our love of sushi and gastronomy food in general, which we explored together in Manhattan – and that continues with our Greek wines endeavor," she said. "And just as we studied and practiced and performed together, so are we now together in life" – raising their daughter too, in Athens.

Visit their company at www.greekwinesasia.com.



Fantis Foods Inc:
60 Triangle Blvd, Carlstadt, NJ 07072
Tel.: (201) 933-6200 | E-mail: info@fantisfoods.com
www.fantisfoods.com