

Informationen zur Umwelt und für Naturreisende auf Kreta:
Information about the Environment and for travellers in Crete:**Cretan raki (tsikoudia)****Visit of a traditional distillery (kasani) in Agios Mironas**

Wine grape distillation has a long tradition in Crete. In addition to three industrially operated large distilleries; which together make approximately 150 hectolitres Raki a year, there are much more numerous of the traditional small distilleries (**kasani**). How many traditional **kasani** are in overall at Crete, and what amounts of Raki is burned by them in the year, is not known - and is also not "accounted". Estimates assume 700 **kasani**; their production together is adopted with approx. 100 hectolitres per year.

The basics of Raki burning are quickly described. First, grapes are hacked and mashed. Packaged in containers (earlier in wooden barrels, today in plastic barrels), it comes then to the fermentation, there sugar transforms into alcohol. The mash then is heated in a condensing boiler and the alcohol evaporates at 78 ° C. The steam is piped to a cooler and condensed, i.e. he liquefied again - and yet the Raki is ready! As far the basic process but as everywhere, the quality results in detail. The mastery of the craft, maturity and sugar content of grapes and much more are crucial criteria for a good Raki. Depending on quality a **kasani** gains from 150 kg grapes between 20 and 30 litre Raki. A good yield is between 20 - 25%. *Sultanas* considered as best sort (they have no pit) and a red grape called *latiko*. The art of Raki burning at old tradition is especially graphically to be seen in **kasani** AGAPI & ANTONIUS in *Agios Mironas*. In addition to the tasting of "fresh burned Raki" you can also feast on many other products from their own cultivation (fruit, vegetables, honey) and also enjoy the Cretan grilled cuisine.

Agios Mironas can be reached coming from Iraklion driving towards south at the highway towards *Agia Vavara / Agia Deka*. Following the first right branch, drive right again at the fork (in the road), towards *Agios Mirinas (Pirgou/Asites)*. The way to the destination from Iraklion is approx 10.5 miles. On the way back you can take, behind *Agios Mironas*, the left branch in north direction via *Stavrakia*, which leads through the vineyards of the region. The **kasani** of AGAPI & ANTONIUS is reached from the main road of the village (not the through road / ring road) and is located on the south-east edge of the town.



Picture left is showing the Raki-distillery "at a glance", with its fire pit, burning boiler, cooler and collecting vessel. The right picture is showing AGAPI with her supplemental offerings: honey, pickled raisins und olive oil from own cultivation and own production.

Pictures: U. Kluge (2004)



Picture left shows the patio of the tavern of AGAPI & ANTONIUS at the south-east edge of the village of Agios Mironas (see background). From here you have a good and beautiful view on the eastern Hill area of the vineyards (fig. right). In the foreground of the image the wood supply for the beaoning of the burning boiler.

Pictures: U. Kluge (2004)



Raki is still part of the Cretan folk medicine. The many recipes and tips for using the wine mark distillery to treated and cured little ailments and great affliction (externally and internally applied) are innumerable; one thing is common for all of them: Raki serves the convalescence and the healthiness - *Jámmas!* (Cheers!).

The picture shows “Raki with honey” mixed. It is designed to help cold (hot drunk), which is documented with the additional label "no doctor". For many Cretans the principle takes effect: “A life with Raki – you are and stay well!”

Picture: H. Eikamp (2004)

By vines, the Cretans harvest still another speciality: Raisins. The production of raisins and sultanas does not have a long tradition in Crete. Only after 1920 it was brought from Greek refugees from Asia Minor to the island.



The pictures are showing (from left to right): grapevines with *latiko* graves. Rack with graves for the raisins production, which are also flat spread, dry in the sun come to full maturity.

Pictures: H. Eikamp (2004)