

# Aeolus, Zeus, Poseidon, and Ouzo

Day 4 in Greece is not as I had envisioned it. I had imagined waking up on the island of Poros to sunshine, not wind, rain and cloudy skies. I imagined at least getting my feet wet in the gorgeous clear waters of the Saronic Gulf island, but *Aeolus*, *Zeus*, and *Poseidon*, Greek gods of weather had masterminded something else—a trip to an Ouzeri to drink Ouzo. We finished our tea on the balcony overlooking Askeli Bay. Despite the unforgiving weather, the views of the bay and surrounding mountains were outstanding. Especially today since several yachts were lining up for a regatta.



I put on the lightweight down coat I had purchased the previous day in Athens since I hadn't [properly prepped for travel](#). What a lifesaver considering the cold weather. My oh my, what

activity could save us in these chilly temperatures? How about viewing the parade to mark the Greek national holiday—a celebration of the beginning of World War II? Still trying to figure that out!

The walk into Poros (a Greek island only a 45-minute ferry ride from Athens) is mainly downhill. The curves can be a bit daunting as the occasional car or motor bike drivers hug the road causing us walking-folk slight anxiety as we approached them head on. I felt safer as the seemingly orphaned dogs walked along our side running and barking after the drivers.



Dog in Galatas waiting for  
Greek mezedes

After 15 minutes we reached the center of Poros to view the festivities—classic pomp and circumstance between the city officials and military representatives, ending with the parade of school children marching down the dockside street to cheers from proud parents, locals, and visitors. It's simple and uncomplicated, just like Poros.

The best view of the parade was from the Porto Café, directly across where the ferries land. It's the perfect place to chill watching life slowly pass by as you wait for a cup of coffee or a glass of Greek wine while. We're not ready for Greek wine just yet, we're off to an Ouzeri.

In Greece, locals drink Ouzo with their *mezedes* (Greek

appetizers) at an Ouzeri or taverna and boy do they drink a lot of it thanks to a heavenly activity. Around the 14th century monks living in a monastery on Mount Athos started distilling Ouzo. The national drink increasing became more popular and in 2006 the Greek government gained exclusive rights to the name. Therefore, if it's not made in Greece, it can't be called Ouzo.



Drinking Ouzo in a  
Greek Ouzerui

As the sound of the ferry boat intensified, so did the stench of its diesel fumes. The boat wobbles to the dock and the captain graciously held out his calloused hands to help the passengers onto stable land.

As the boat continuously rocked back and forth, so did my nerves. Poros to Galatas is just a five-minute ferry ride but the thought of a small fishing boat taking me across waters to the Ouzeri, made me a bit squeamish. You see, I'm not an alcohol drinker, but the thought of visiting an Ouzeri sounded intriguing.

Before boarding, I looked disappointingly up at the dramatic grey skies and the ferry boat driver says "Tomorrow the sun will shine." I answer, "Today I will drink Ouzo." He replies, "Then today the sun will shine."



View of Poros, Greece

On this national holiday, Galatas' waterfront restaurants and cafes were pretty dead, but we continued to walk through town until we reached the Ouzeri. I figured we were close because the seemingly uninhabited town became alive with laughter, hooting, and hollering. Could those sounds be due to a Greek soccer match playing on television? Perhaps the emotions from Ouzo consumption were coming out of the local town folk? It was in fact both.

We placed our order and in no time a small bottle of clear liquid arrives along with a bowl of ice cubes, glasses, and water. I felt cheated receiving a tiny bottle, but became alarmed as the neighbor table of eight adults consumed one tiny bottle amongst them. Oh no, I think we're in for trouble.

Could there be a science to drinking Ouzo aside from taking your time and consuming lots of mezedes? Well yes, because when mixing Ouzo with water it turns opaque and whitish. That's because the anise oil dissolves and becomes invisible when mixed with a conventional alcohol content, but as soon as the alcohol content is reduced, the essential oils transform into white crystals, which you can't see through. Bet you didn't learn that in science class.



## Ouzo and Greek mezedes

Seated amongst the locals, we slowly sipped Greece's national drink which is made from a precise combination of pressed grapes and herbs and berries including aniseed, licorice, mint, wintergreen, fennel and hazelnut. Ouzo tastes medicinal and familiar. I think my mom gave me cough medicine that tasted like Ouzo. Wait, maybe it was Ouzo!

As the milky-colored drink tantalized our taste buds, so did the array of mezedes we ordered. Yummy anchovy fritters (*Gavrokeftedes*), pickled octopus (*Htapodi xidato*), fried squid (*Kalamaria tiganita*), oregano fries, and my all-time favorite fried cheese (*Saganaki*) surrounded our tiny bottle of Ouzo.

With a 45% alcohol content Ouzo is powerful but not as powerful as the views of [Poros](#) from Galatas. Your eyes are drawn to the towering historic clock, the colorful blend of neo-classical homes, tavernas, and yachts. As my eyes drifted and the skies brightened, I think saw Aeolus, Zeus, and Poseidon or was the Ouzo speaking to me?

Today I drank Ouzo, and indeed the sun did shine.