

SHADES OF GRIS

Katherine Cole
The Oregonian

Pinot gris is a genetic mutation of pinot noir, making it something like a fraternal twin to the ruby-hued darling of Oregon winemaking. So it's well suited to the growing conditions of the Willamette Valley.

But instead of Burgundy (French pinot noir country), the epicenter of pinot gris in France is Alsace, the cool northeastern region where volcanic soils and dry, sunny autumns create powerfully spicy, viscous, sometimes slightly sweet gris.

The cool and mountainous wine regions of northern Italy produce boatloads of crisp, dry, lemony pinot grigio, perfect for washing down delicate seafood dishes and herbaceous pesto. (As you've surely deduced by now, "grigio" and "gris" mean the same thing: gray. This refers to the grayish tint of the ripe grape skins.)

For us, locally grown gris should conjure the aromas and flavors of those sun-kissed fruits that reach their peak in late summer and early autumn. Instead of descriptors like "nuts," "smoke" and "candy," we find ourselves referring to pears, peaches, white flowers and a cornucopia of melons and citrus. The wines we prefer strike a balance between the lightness of an Italian pinot grigio and the richness of an Alsatian pinot gris.

LIVE Certified Sustainable Wine



The LIVE logo on our back label guarantees that our wines are independently certified to meet strict international

standards for environmentally and socially responsible winegrowing and wine-making in the Pacific Northwest.
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BETHEL HEIGHTS VINEYARD

6060 Bethel Heights Road NW
Salem, Oregon 97304 USA
Phone (503) 581-2262
www.bethelheights.com



2014 PINOT GRIS • OREGON

Harvest dates: September 16 and October 1, 2014

Fruit source: Bethel Heights Vineyard 60%,
Pheasant Hill Vineyard (Rogue Valley) 40%

Grapes at harvest: Brix 22.9, pH 3.1, TA 5.7 gr/liter

Finished wine: Alcohol 13.8 %, pH 3.18, TA 5.6 gr/liter
1.0% residual sugar

825 cases produced, bottled unfined in February, 2015

Suggested retail \$18

THE 2014 VINTAGE was simply extraordinary. To begin with, from the very beginning it was the warmest vintage on record at Bethel Heights in all our thirty-five years here. The crop size was way above average, but we decided to thin very little, leaving a larger than usual crop on the vines to slow things down, hedging against too rapid sugar accumulation and premature ripening in such a warm vintage. The soil was well charged with water from winter rain, so the vines were green and healthy until mid-September harvest, and able to ripen to full maturity the largest crop we've ever had at Bethel Heights.

VINIFICATION: The fruit was whole cluster pressed at low pressure for 3-4 hours, and the juice was transferred to a settling tank for 72 hours. Once sufficient clarity was obtained, the juice was racked to stainless steel tanks and fermented at 55° F for one month. 80% of the wine was aged in stainless steel, while the other 20% was moved into neutral 500 L barrels for three months before being blended back for bottling.

TASTING NOTES: Just off dry, with ample fruit - the marriage of cool climate Willamette Valley Pinot gris with warm climate Southern Oregon Pinot gris brings forth a rich, plump wine energized by bright vivacity - a perfectly balanced tension. Only in Oregon can such a marriage work...