

*Grüner Veltliner: The New White Wine Darling*

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There is something afoot in Oregon's wine country—a movement, a trend, a look toward something different. From the Willamette Valley to Southern Oregon, Grüner Veltliner is beginning to grow on vines and fill wine glasses. The results are encouraging, and dare we say, exciting.

Ben Casteel, winemaker at Bethel Heights Vineyard in the Eola-Amity Hills, has been making grüner since 2009 from vines grown at Illahe Vineyard in the Willamette Valley. So far, the marine sedimentary soils and cooler climate of the region seem to be ideally suited to the grape. "Having now worked with grüner in warm vintages (2009, 2012), a cool vintage (2010) and a cold vintage (2011), I am convinced it will thrive in our soils and climate," says Casteel.

Grüner has been considered a darling to sommeliers since the wine tends to pair effortlessly with a variety of foods (especially with notoriously difficult to pair items, such as artichokes and asparagus).

It seems Casteel would agree, saying, "I don't think there are any wrong answers with grüner. Halibut and cod have been my favorites this year, but I have had it paired with [foods from] pasta to red meat and never found it to be anything other than complimentary."

**BETHEL HEIGHTS VINEYARD**

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2012 GRÜNER VELTLINER

Alcohol 12.5%,  
No fining. No residual sugar  
146 Cases produced  
Bottled May, 2013

VINIFICATION

The grapes were whole cluster pressed and the juice settled for 3-4 days, then moved into 4 stainless steel drums, and one neutral puncheon (500 Liter barrel), and inoculated with commercial yeast. The fermentation was cool and stretched out for over a month. We inhibited malolactic fermentation to maintain acidity, and the wine is bottled with a Stelvin closure to protect its freshness.

**2012 Bethel Heights Vineyard Grüner Veltliner** | Illahe Vineyard | Willamette Valley | \$18

"Aged in a combination of steel and large used oak barrels, this grüner combines the best of both worlds with hints of fresh and lively acidity as well as rich and textured notes from its oak exposure. Spices of cinnamon blend with lemon, yellow plum, white and yellow flowers, and honey for a seemingly everlasting finish."

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