

Sunset

August 2003

"Shades of Gray"
Karen MacNeil-Fife

Pinot Gris is a French grape, but it's best known for its Italian personality, as Pinot Grigio. Light and fresh, Pinot Grigio has always been loved for what it is not: it is not complex, intense, or particularly aromatic, flavorful, or long on the palate. Its plain-Jane quality makes it ideal for washing down almost everything.

But in France - the grape's homeland - Pinot Gris is made into a wine that's altogether a different kettle of fish. Here, Pinot Gris is a rich, smooth, powerful wine full of personality, with almond, vanilla, peach and earthy aromas and flavors. The French drink it with all sorts of substantial dishes, especially pork.

When it's called Pinot Gris (as it usually is in Oregon), the style is meant to be closer to the French end of the spectrum - that is, the producer is hoping to make a fairly intense, flavorful wine. Most are made without much new oak, so they don't have big, toasty, oaky flavors. Instead you'll find pure, refreshing citrusy characteristics.

Food recommendations: Pinot gris pairs well with seafoods, particularly those rich in oil, such as salmon and halibut. With the touch of residual sugar and good acidity, this Pinot gris can also stand up to spicier foods, including Thai and Indian cuisine.

BETHEL HEIGHTS VINEYARD

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2003 PINOT GRIS

Harvest dates: September 24 & October 5, 2003

Source: 15% Bethel Heights Vineyard,
34% Griffin Creek Vineyards, 31% Del Rio Vineyard,
6% Lewman Vineyard, 14% Freedom Hill Vineyard

Grapes at harvest (avg): Brix : 22.5, pH: 3.45, TA: 5.4 gr./liter

Finished wine: Alcohol 13.7 %, pH: 3.4, TA: 5.3 gr/liter

0.4% Residual sugar

2175 Cases produced, bottled February 2004

Suggested Retail \$15

The 2003 Vintage: 2003 produced a long growing season when we enjoyed the luxury of harvesting when the fruit was perfectly ripe. Spring was quite rainy, and we began with a good charge of water in the soil. Summer warmed up dramatically, with a significant number of days over 90 degrees, but cool evening temperatures preserved acidity and balance in the wines.

Winemaker notes: Our Pinot gris comes from several vineyards, including Southern Oregon sites. The North Willamette Valley gives a brightness and purity of fruit; Southern Oregon sites provide a more lush, often floral note to the final wine. The wine was fermented cold, exclusively in stainless steel, and finished almost dry without malolactic fermentation.

"Yellow plums and hints of apricots are intermingled with white flowers in the aromatic profile of Bethel Heights's 2003 Pinot Gris. Soft, satin-textured, and expressive, it displays a medium-bodied personality awash in ripe white as well as yellow fruits. A good value." (87) The Wine Advocate