

"Shades of Gray"

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.

Karen MacNeil-Fife
Sunset, August 2003

Food recommendations: "This is not a big goopy aperitif wine," as Ted so aptly observed. It is a food wine. It pairs well with seafoods, particularly those rich in oil, such as salmon and halibut. With the touch of residual sugar and good acidity, this wine can also stand up to spicier foods, including Thai and Indian cuisine.

BETHEL HEIGHTS VINEYARD

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2004 PINOT GRIS

Harvest dates: September 24 & October 14, 2004

Source: 17% Bethel Heights Vineyard,
28% Elton Vineyard, 28% Freedom Hill Vineyard,
23% Del Rio Vineyard, 4% Lewman Vineyard

Grapes at harvest (avg): Brix : 23.5, pH: 3.30, TA: 7.2 gr/liter

Finished wine: Alcohol 14.1 %, pH: 3.4, TA: 5.3 gr/liter

0.4% Residual sugar

2166 Cases produced, Bottled March, 2005

Suggested Retail \$15

Winemaker notes: This Pinot gris comes from several vineyard sites. Bethel Heights, Elton, Freedom Hill and Lewman are all in the Willamette Valley. Del Rio is in the Umpqua Valley of Southern Oregon. The Willamette Valley provides brightness and purity of fruit; Southern Oregon fruit gives 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.

>> This is the first Bethel Heights wine to be bottled with a screwcap closure to protect its freshness.

The 2004 Vintage: Fast Start, Cool Finish. A warmer than normal late winter and early spring got the year off to a fast start. Bloom was underway in early June. A hot mid season, combined with the early start, raised concerns about a hot vintage, but cool evening temperatures preserved acidity and balance in the wines. Occasional fall storms created conditions for both great wines and disease pressure. Happily we dodged the worst of the late August storm. A warm September with normal precipitation led to a classic Oregon vintage with intense varietal expression and considerable wine intensity. (Similar to '83, '88, '89, '90.)

Tasting notes: Rich aromas of asian pear, tropical fruits, hints of orange rind. Supple entry, citrus giving way to stone fruits with a powerful core of minerality. Firm acidity provides balance and a crisp, dry finish.