

"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*

FOOD RECOMMENDATIONS: Pinot Gris is an excellent choice for almost any first course you may choose. Its bright, crisp flavors are an inviting palate cleanser, pairing well with a light soup, or lightly spiced Thai dishes featuring shrimp or pork. It is excellent with richer fish, such as salmon and halibut balanced by the acidity yet ripe flavors of the wine. Pinot Gris is versatile with pork, chicken, and even duck seared and served with greens as a lighter salad entrée. Pear, apple and melon flavors also shine with a fruit and cheese platter, especially with almonds, hazelnuts and some interesting dried fruits as part of the mix. See the Bethel Heights web site for recipes.

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2005 PINOT GRIS

Harvest dates: October 3, 11 & 22, 2005

Source: 45% Elton Vineyard, 25% Bethel Heights Vineyard,
25% Del Rio Vineyard, 5% Lewman Vineyard

Grapes at harvest (avg): Brix : 23.5, pH: 3.26

Finished wine: Alcohol 14.1 %, pH: 3.20, TA: 5.8 gr/liter

0.2 % Residual sugar

2400 Cases produced, bottled March, 2006

Suggested retail \$15

WINEMAKER NOTES: This Pinot gris comes from several vineyard sites. Bethel Heights, Elton, and Lewman are all in the Eola Hills region of the Willamette Valley. Del Rio is in the Rogue 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. It was bottled with a screwcap closure to protect its freshness.

THE 2005 VINTAGE: 2005 was the coolest vintage that we have had in Oregon in quite a while. It got off to a very early start (March budbreak), but the weather turned cool and rainy in late spring and early summer, leading to a reduced crop due to poor set. An intensely warm mid-summer followed. The fall was cool and showery at times.

Although most Oregon growers would prefer no rain at all from *veraison* until harvest, in Burgundy they say a good rainstorm in early September is a basic ingredient of a great vintage, and we have seen in recent vintages that excessive heat in the fall can be more detrimental to wine quality than rain. 2005 was a classic example of fall rains providing balance to the fruit after a warm, dry summer; it gave us wines of moderate alcohol, medium body, supple structure, and good typicity, both of variety and place, and very good balance.

TASTING NOTES: Rich aromas of asian pear, apple, 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.