

*World's Best
pinot gris & pinot grigio*

Though the spelling is different and the bottles are usually in different sections of the wine store, Pinot Gris and Pinot Grigio are the same grape. Translate either one and the result is "gray Pinot," which makes perfect sense: the skins of this grape have a hue ranging from gray-blue to coppery orange, and the grape itself is a mutation of Pinot noir.

Pinot gris from Alsace, France, tends to be full-bodied and unctuous, full of spice notes and peach and apricot flavors; Northern Italian Pinot Grigios are bright, light and zippy, with white peach or nectarine flavors and tingly acidity. New World versions are essentially divided into these two styles, and the wines tend to be labeled Gris or Grigio accordingly.

Oregon is primarily known as a Pinot noir producing region, but the quality of its Pinot Gris wines is equally impressive.

The bottling from Bethel Heights is characteristic: peachy, spicy and rich, but also perfectly balanced.

Ray Isle
Food & Wine, April 2007

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 in the mix.

BETHEL HEIGHTS VINEYARD

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2006 PINOT GRIS

Harvest dates: October 4 – Oct. 7, 2006

Source: 50% Elton Vineyard, 20% Bethel Heights Vineyard,
25% Del Rio Vineyard, 5% Lewman Vineyard

Grapes at harvest (average): Brix : 23.0, pH: 3.34

Finished wine: Alcohol 13.87%, pH: 3.45, TA: 5.6 gr/liter

0.5 % Residual sugar

2974 Cases produced, bottled March 2007

Suggested retail \$16

THE 2006 VINTAGE: As a general rule a large crop usually means a bit less concentration in the wines, but 2006 was an exception. Mother Nature provided the extra heat and light necessary to ripen a larger crop, and there was plenty of moisture in the soil at the beginning of the season to carry it through. 2006 reminds us of 2003, another exceptionally warm vintage. The difference in 2006 was that all the heat came in early to mid-summer (five days over 100° between May and July). Since the heat came before color change, rather than at the end of the season, the grapes actually ripened in relatively cool conditions and therefore have more expressive fruit and more freshness than one might expect from a hot vintage. There was no rain to threaten the integrity of the fruit before the harvest.

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 without malolactic fermentation. It was bottled with a screwcap closure to protect its freshness.

TASTING NOTES: Rich aromas of peach, apple, tropical fruits, hints of orange zest. On the palate citrus gives way to stone fruits, and firm acidity provides balance and a crisp, dry finish.