

## SHADES OF GRIS

Katherine Cole  
*The Oregonian*

Pinot gris is a genetic mutation of pinot noir, making it something like a fraternal twin to the ruby-hued darling of Oregon winemaking. So it's well suited to the growing conditions of the Willamette Valley.

But instead of Burgundy (French pinot noir country), the epicenter of pinot gris in France is Alsace, the cool northeastern region where volcanic soils and dry, sunny autumns create powerfully spicy, viscous, sometimes slightly sweet gris.

The cool and mountainous wine regions of northern Italy produce boatloads of crisp, dry, lemony pinot grigio, perfect for washing down delicate seafood dishes and herbaceous pesto. (As you've surely deduced by now, "grigio" and "gris" mean the same thing: gray. This refers to the grayish tint of the ripe grape skins.)

For us, locally grown gris should conjure the aromas and flavors of those sun-kissed fruits that reach their peak in late summer and early autumn. Instead of descriptors like "nuts," "smoke" and "candy," we find ourselves referring to pears, peaches, white flowers and a cornucopia of melons and citrus. The wines we prefer strike a balance between the lightness of an Italian pinot grigio and the richness of an Alsatian pinot gris.

**BETHEL HEIGHTS VINEYARD**  
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2015 PINOT GRIS • OREGON

Harvest dates: September 13 and 22, 2015

Fruit source: Bethel Heights Vineyard 45%,  
Pheasant Hill Vineyard (Rogue Valley) 55%

Finished wine: Alcohol 13.5 %, pH 3.24, TA 6.0 gr/liter

0.5% Residual sugar

750 cases produced,

Bottled unfiltered on February 5, 2016

**THE 2015 VINTAGE:** Our 2015 vintage was characterized by early bud-break, early bloom, plenty of sunshine and a big heat spike in early August. Often a hot summer like this will push potential alcohols, forcing an early harvest that precludes hang time. However, September broke with mercifully cool temperatures and downright chilly evenings. Sugar accumulation was arrested and instead, the vineyard was allowed to develop the integrated, intense, and focused flavors only afforded by generous hang time at low temperatures.

**VINIFICATION:** The fruit was whole cluster pressed at low pressure for 3-4 hours, and the juice was transferred to a settling tank for 72 hours. Once sufficient clarity was obtained, the juice was racked to stainless steel tanks and fermented at 55° F for one month. The new wine was aged on its fermentation lees for three months before racking and bottling.

**TASTING NOTES:** Tropical aromas of banana, lychee, and breadfruit with hints of key lime clover honey. The palate features both the supple fruit of a warm Oregon vintage paired with the nervy acidity of our Estate fruit. This young wine is inviting now, but for the patient, this wine will benefit from a few years in the bottle.