

Bloomberg

October 2, 2018

Wine Made Easy: Nine Pinot Grigios Actually Worth Drinking

The grape may be having an identity crisis, but that just means you can have fun with it.

Elin McCoy

Here's a sad truth. Most pinot grigio is so watery, bland, and just plain dull that wine snobs scorn it and sommeliers at top restaurants won't list it. Asking for "just a glass of pinot grigio" has almost become an admission that you don't pay attention to what you swallow.

But of course you do.

So forget all those tired clichés and have a rethink about why the grape had such mass appeal in the first place. Delicious, food-friendly examples can be had for \$25 and less, and they're not hard to find.

So what do you need to know? First, cool northern Italy produces scores of crisp, refreshing, citrusy, light whites proudly labeled pinot grigio that are ideal as aperitifs and with all kinds of food.

In Alsace, in northeastern France, the same grape is called pinot gris, and the flavors are slightly different. The wines are honeysuckle-scented, powerful, spicy, lushly textured, and sometimes sweet. (By the way, grigio and gris both mean "gray," after the pinkish gray sheen of the grape's skin when ripe.)

Winemakers in the New World—Oregon, New Zealand, Australia, California—tend to label their examples with the name that fits the style and flavor profile they're aiming for, but often their styles lie somewhere between the Italian and Alsace paradigms.

You could say the grape suffers from an identity crisis.

Italian pinot grigio burst on the U.S. scene in the early 1980s, after a young importer brought in the Santa Margherita brand and made it into one of the country's best-known wines. Eventually its popularity inspired a flood of indifferent Italian plonk from low-altitude areas, which scared off discerning drinkers. Later, some fans were further seduced away by prosecco and rosé...



2017 Jules Taylor Pinot Gris

Taylor's stellar wines were a discovery on my trip to New Zealand this year. She calls this one "a snazzy little people pleaser," and I definitely agree. Pale and elegant, it's also lush and spicy, with floral aromas and juicy stone fruit flavors of nectarine.