

# Wine Made Easy: Nine Pinot Grigios Actually Worth Drinking

**B** [bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-10-02/best-pinot-grigio-cheap-bottles-from-italy-oregon-new-zealand](https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-10-02/best-pinot-grigio-cheap-bottles-from-italy-oregon-new-zealand)

Elin McCoy



Source: Vendors

[LISTEN TO ARTICLE](#)

6:25

In this article

[GRANCRU](#)

[GRAND-CRU EUR](#)

[169.2300](#)

[EUR](#)

[+0.9200+0.5466%](#)

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.)



Pinot grigio grapes in Trentino, Italy.

Photographer: REDA&CO/Universal Images Group Editorial

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.

## A New Distinction

---

Last year, in an effort to increase quality, Italy instituted a new, tightly controlled regional classification, Pinot Grigio delle Venezie, whose wines are certified by an independent commission. This wide area includes regions such as Alto Adige and Friuli (northwest and northeast of Venice, respectively) where some of the best wines come from vineyards on the slopes.



Workers participate in the grape harvest of the Pinot Gris Grand Cru Rangen on Sept. 27, 2017, in Vieux-Thann, eastern France.

Photographer: PATRICK HERTZOG/AFP

Alsace pinot gris has never been as fashionable as pinot grigio, but it has a great quality-to-price ratio. In fact, all the wines from the region have been underrated for years. It didn't help that in the 1990s some producers there started making riper, sweeter, almost syrupy wines that didn't go well with food. Some have solved the problem by putting a dry-to-sweet scale on the back label so you know what to expect. For others, the less expensive wines have always

been bone dry.

The biggest news is that plantings of the grape are rising fast. It rules the white wine landscape in Oregon and is way less expensive than chardonnay (and much better with pad thai). It's affordable because the grapes are easy to grow and harvested early, so the wines are ready to sell sooner, and they're usually not aged in pricey new oak barrels. In Australia, experimental producers have begun planting the grape in cooler regions and experimenting with wildly unique styles.

And on a visit to New Zealand earlier this year, maybe I shouldn't have been surprised to discover a pinot gris craze there, too. From 2002 to 2016, plantings have exploded, from 232 hectares to 2,440.

Expect more top examples to hit the shelves in the future. For now, here are nine top pinot grigio/pinot gris wines that will surprise you.

## Italy

---



Source: Vendors

### 2017 Kris Pinot Grigio delle Venezie IGT (\$14)

This easygoing wine helped put pinot grigio on the map in the U.S. and remains one of Italy's great white values. I've seen it for as little as \$10 a bottle. It still delivers bright, zesty freshness and aromas of citrus, pears, and almonds even though more than 3 million bottles are

produced annually.

### **2017 Venica Jesera Pinot Grigio Collio (\$23)**

Bright and fresh, this wine has intensely perfumed aromas of ripe golden apples and lemons, and a bigger, richer character than most Italian pinot grigios.

### **2016 Alois Lageder Pinot Grigio Porer (\$25)**

This well-known organic and biodynamic producer in the Dolomite Mountains of Italy's Alto Adige makes several pinot grigios at different price levels. This one is serious and complex, loaded with citrus and melon flavors and savory minerality.

### **2017 Elena Walch Castel Ringberg Pinot Grigio (\$25)**

This single-vineyard wine is a sophisticated step up from the noted winery's fresh, easy lower-priced bottling. It boasts citrus and green apple aromas, ripe baked-apple flavors, and surprising complexity and personality.

## **Oregon**

---



### **2017 Ponzi Pinot Gris (\$19)**

This crisp white from an Oregon pioneer in the Willamette Valley consistently overperforms for the price. Its style is midway between Alsace and Italy, with juicy, refreshing pear, citrus, and mineral flavors that slip down easy and the hints of fennel and attractive slight bitterness you

find in examples from Alsace.

### **2015 Bethel Heights Pinot Gris (\$24)**

Another Oregon pioneer, noted for stellar pinot noirs, makes this refreshing white from 25-year-old vines and purchased grapes. It's very dry, with great acidity, but also richly textured and has the flavor of baked pears.

## **New Zealand**

---



Source: Vendors

### **2017 Jules Taylor Pinot Gris (\$17)**

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.

### **2016 Greywacke Pinot Gris (\$25)**

Winemaker Kevin Judd gave the world Cloudy Bay sauvignon blanc and helped change our idea of New Zealand wine. This winery in the Marlborough region is his personal venture, named after New Zealand's bedrock. His pinot gris is opulent and fleshy, with succulent melon and pear flavors and great minerality.



Source: Hugel

## 2015 Hugel Pinot Gris Classic (\$22)

This is the entry-level pinot gris from one of Alsace's most esteemed family producers, known better for its superb rieslings and gewurztraminers. Like all Hugel wines, this one is pure, very dry, full of character, and super food-friendly. (For more depth and minerality, go for the more expensive new Estate label.)

[Have a confidential tip for our reporters?](#)

[GET IN TOUCH](#)

Before it's here, it's on the Bloomberg Terminal.

[LEARN MORE](#)