

PINOT GRIS MASTERS 2019: WHAT DID THE JUDGES THINK?

29th August, 2019 by Patrick Schmitt

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Following the judging of the Pinot Gris Masters last month, we asked our top tasters for their views on what was outstanding, disappointing and surprising.



The wines in the Pinot Gris Masters were judged over the course of one day at Balls Brothers wine bar and restaurant in Adams Court, London on 10 July by (left to right): Patrick Schmitt MW, Ennio Pucciarelli, Beverley Blanning MW, Susan Hulme MW, Patricia Stefanowicz MW, Andrea Briccarello, and Jonathan Pedley MW

After our full report on The Pinot Gris Masters – which you can read here (<https://www.thedrinksbusiness.com/2019/08/pinot-gris-masters-2019-the-medallists/>) – we bring you some further thoughts on the competition from a handful of the judges, featuring their views on what was great, but also lacking in the wines from this unique and revealing tasting.

Patricia Stefanowicz MW, judge, Global Wine Masters





Patricia Stefanowicz MW pours samples at the Pinot Gris Masters

What a pleasant surprise! While top-class Pinot Gris is always to be respected wherever it is made, it is so easy for many of us in the wine industry to ignore inexpensive Pinot Gris as a 'girlie drink' in a pub. Well, not anymore... In this judging day there was excitement at every price point. Within this broad selection of wines the best showed nice definition, juicy flavours, purity and balance.

What I liked: The inexpensive Pinot Grigio and Pinot Gris showed lovely custard or peach and passionfruit flavours and balanced acidity with accents of rose petal or orange and lemon zest adding interest. These Under £10 wines seemed best when dry or nearly dry with balanced alcohol and sufficient acidity. Easy-going, crowd-pleasing wines. There were some lovely Pinot Grigio DOC wines from the Veneto and delicious wines from a number of New World countries, New Zealand, especially. Delightful discoveries were a few Pinot Gris from Romania. And, at £10-15 there were some expressive blended wines from New and Old World regions and a few excellent examples of pure Pinot Gris from Friuli and Collio in the far northeastern reaches of Italy.

Above £15 the wines performed well, many garnering high Silver or Gold awards and even a Master or two. At the expensive end were a couple of 'non-surprises', one a New Zealand blend and the other a superb Oregon example.

The oaked white Pinot Gris were quite high-priced (£15 and upwards) and all deserving of silvers, golds and even a Master. Beautifully-judged use of creamy oak with no splinters in evidence.

The rosé Pinot Gris/Pinot Grigio, albeit not a large group nor a category I would normally look for, were actually quite nice and relatively inexpensive, under £15. The rosé Sparkling we tasted was very pretty with strawberry fruit, a rose petal overlay and very gentle fresh yeast.

What I didn't like as much: Slightly under-achieving were some wines at £15-20. Some of these wines were possibly the least interesting, although a few performed well. Many were simple, crowd-pleasing, but not necessarily at the price?

The other disappointing aspect of the tasting was the inconsistency at all the price bands and in the different regions. Very few disasters, but price didn't necessarily correspond to quality. *Caveat emptor.*

Summary: Perhaps not the thrill of the Epsom Derby, but certainly a well-run hunters' chase. The tasting gave plenty of room for thought and reversed my prejudices against inexpensive Pinot Gris.