

**SAVE TIME
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Eight surprising facts about Pinot Grigio

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Following this year's Global Pinot Grigio Masters, we count down eight surprising facts about this popular grape, from its suitability for barrel-fermented wines to the best places to grow the variety.



Having tasted a large number of Pinot Grigios from a range of sources, made in a variety of ways, below are eight things I learnt about the variety and the wine being made from it today.

Meanwhile, [click here](#) for the results in full from the Global Pinot Grigio Masters 2021, and [click here](#) for my top 10 Pinot Grigios of 2021, and finally, [click here](#) to find out everything you need to know about Pinot Grigio.

1. SPARKLING PERFORMANCE

Pinot Grigio can make first-rate sparkling wine in a range of styles, from overtly fruity Prosecco-alternatives to something more serious, with the chalky, bright appeal one might find in a youthful Champagne – after all, Pinot Grigio is one of the seven authorised grapes of that region.

2. PINK APPEAL

Pink Pinot Grigio can have enormous appeal, with dry zesty Italian examples providing a good-value substitute for increasingly expensive Provençal rosés. Good pink Pinot Grigios tend to pack plenty of peach and pear fruit flavours, with crisp-apple-like acidity – so don't assume they'll be sweet and flabby.

3. VENETIAN VALUE

The base standard of Pinot Grigio being made today is good, judging by this year's entries, with a consistent level of clean, bright, apple-flavoured whites coming from the Pinot Grigio DOC delle Venezie zone in particular. Stick to this and there's little danger of dilute drops, or, worse, varnish-like aromatics.

4. CALIFORNIA CREAMIN

Beyond the fine value on offer from Italy's Veneto – and parts of Eastern Europe too – California is a relatively new source of reliably good Pinot Grigio, albeit in a slightly richer, creamier, more textural style, with riper, peachier fruit, and a touch of residual sugar. Barefoot is leading the market here, accounting for the vast majority of Californian Pinot Grigio sold outside the US.

5. OAK'S OKAY

Although one doesn't normally associate barrel-ageing with Pinot Grigio, a touch of oak can complement the ripe pear fruit flavours of this grape, giving a creamy, gently nutty complexity to the wines, and in terms of texture, a touch more richness. Good examples of this were seen this year from both Italy and New Zealand.

6. FAULTLESS FLIGHTS

Unusually for a tasting of this size, we had no faulty wines, suggesting that the handling of Pinot Grigio in the cellar is scrupulous. Not only did we see no rejects because of TCA, but there were no oxidised samples, nor wines with unpleasant reductive aromas – from raw onion to rotten eggs. And such faults would have been easy to detect in wines made with a grape with the delicate aromatics of Pinot Grigio.

7. KIWI CHARACTER

The amount of Pinot Grigio from New Zealand has been on the increase in quantity and quality, with the country carving out a reputation for good-value gently textural styles of the grape. Although such wines feature pear and pineapple flavours, there's also something distinctly Kiwi about these Pinot Grigios, which tend to have a mild herbaceous note, often like lemongrass, as though the country's Sauvignon Blancs have somehow infiltrated the Pinots being made in the same winery.

8. ALSACE STARS

Occupying the pinnacle of the Pinot Grigio pyramid is Alsace, as brilliantly shown this year by the wines from the biodynamic Domaine Zind-Humbrecht. With low-yielding clones, old vines, and a long growing season, this part of the world is able to produce richly-textured wines with flavours of beeswax, orange blossom, kumquat and pear, along with a chalky finish to refresh – giving a dry sensation, despite the presence of a few grams of residual sugar.

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