

Panel tasting results: North Italian Pinot Grigio bursting with character

None of the standard supermarket-shelf fare here, in a wide-ranging tasting that reveals the diversity of styles and underlying quality and elegance of this often miscast grape.

By [Melania Battiston](#)



Melania Battiston, Andrea Briccarello and Bruno Besa tasted 61 wines with 3 Outstanding and 25 Highly recommended.

North Italian Pinot Grigio: Panel tasting scores

61 wines tasted

Exceptional 0

Outstanding 3

Highly recommended 25

Recommended 30

Commended 3

Entry criteria: producers and UK agents were invited to submit their Pinot Grigio wines, from any vintage, from a northern Italian region: Aosta, Emilia Romagna, Friuli Venezia Giulia, Liguria, Lombardy, Trentino-Alto Adige, Piedmont or Veneto.

Quality and diversity



Monte Tondo in Delle Venezie, Veneto

(Image credit: Monte Tondo)

Tasting 61 [Pinot Grigios](#) might sound like a dream to some, or a slow-burning endurance test to others. I'll admit I approached it with cautious optimism.

And sure enough, somewhere between glass number 15 and 40, I was reminded why this grape deserves far more credit than it often gets.

Having spent time in [Friuli Venezia Giulia](#), in Italy's northeast, I've seen first-hand what Pinot Grigio can achieve when it's taken seriously – and how frustrating it is that so much of the good stuff rarely travels beyond Italian borders.

The denomination is evolving rapidly, not just in volume but in quality and demand.

Three key regions in northern Italy were represented in this tasting, each with distinct traits that genuinely help consumers navigate the category, whether browsing a wine list or standing indecisively in a supermarket aisle.

Friuli Venezia Giulia, in particular, refused to be boxed in. As Bruno Besa neatly put it: 'There isn't a common denominator here.' Quite right.

'There is a style for everyone'



Tommaso Gallo, Vie di Romans

(Image credit: Vie di Romans)

The range moved from bright, youthful examples to bottle-aged wines and traditional yet adventurous, copper-hued [ramato](#) styles – a result of the natural greyish-pink pigments in the grape's skins, which will colour the wine if extended maceration is allowed.

Represented in four of the top six wines, ramato stole the show: textured and characterful, they're proof that Pinot Grigio has a backbone and personality.

Yet across all styles, elegance was the unifying thread in the Friuli Venezia Giulia region.

[Veneto](#), meanwhile, reminded us why Pinot Grigio conquered the market in the first place. The quality-to-price ratio remains unbeatable. These wines were defined by freshness, energy and accessibility – less contemplative perhaps, but joyfully drinkable.

[Alto Adige](#) (Südtirol) felt shaped by its alpine climate, delivering precision and consistency: zesty acidity, citrus clarity and subtle texture, thanks in part to the grapes' thicker skins and the cooler nights.

As Andrea Briccarello concluded: 'There is a style for everyone.'

After 61 glasses, I can agree and confirm that Pinot Grigio's greatest strength is versatility without pomposity.

What to eat with north Italian Pinot Grigio, by Fiona Beckett



(Image credit: Didebashvili.GEO/Shutterstock)

As this tasting revealed, Pinot Grigio can be far more elegant and complex than it's given credit for, but that doesn't necessarily take you in a different direction food-wise.

Starting with Italian food, the crisper, fresher styles – and most of these wines were drinkable now – would be superb with an antipasti selection featuring fried dishes such as arancini and fritto misto, and with pasta dishes based on seafood or with creamy sauces.

In fact, the extra weight of these premium examples helps cut through a rich pasta dish such as carbonara or a crab-stuffed raviolo.

Pinot Grigio's versatility works equally well with other European cuisines, especially seafood dishes from France, Greece and Spain. Any meal you can accompany with an [Albariño](#) or [Assyrtiko](#), you could enjoy with a north Italian Pinot Grigio.

As for the ramato skin-contact style, think more in terms of habitual partners for orange wine: ingredients such as lamb and aubergine, mezze such as hummus and other Middle Eastern dips, game such as pheasant or wild boar, and hard sheep's cheeses.

The judges



Melania Battiston is wine director at Michelin one-star Cornus in London. Hailing from Lombardy, Italy, she's a CMS Advanced Sommelier and runs Mel CnC, her consultancy for hospitality and brands



Andrea Briccarello is the UK Brand Ambassador for Bisol. He was previously the Galvin's restaurants wine buyer and before that group sommelier and wine buyer for Corrigan's Mayfair, Bentley's Oyster Bar & Grill, and Lindsay House, and has also worked at Michelin-starred Umu.

In 2009 he was named Sommelier of the Year by Taste of London, and he was the winner of the Wines of Roussillon Dessert Trophy in 2010.



Bruno Besa is founder and managing director of specialist wine importer Astrum Wine Cellars. A DWWA judge, he is originally from Friuli in northeast Italy, and was formerly a sommelier at the Dorchester Collection in London

Livio Felluga, Pinot Grigio, Friuli Colli Orientali, Friuli Venezia Giulia, Italy 2024



92

Pink grapefruit, redcurrant and yellow fruit over crushed stone and nutty lees notes. Elegant and concentrated, with white stone fruit, dried herbs and a salty, vibrant finish.

[See full details](#)