

FOOD & WINE

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LIVE
THE
DINER!**



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WHAT TO DRINK NOW

Pinot's Lighter Side

Pinot Grigio, Pinot Blanc, and white Pinot Noir are perfect for spring.

By Ray Isle

PINOT NOIR IS RED, RIGHT? Well, yes. And no. Which is to say, it doesn't have to be. Like almost all red grapes, the flesh of a Pinot Noir grape is pale green, which means that if you crush the grapes and drain the juice off the skins before it takes on any color, you will have a white wine. The Champenois, of course, have known about this for centuries—of the three primary grapes for Champagne, two of them (Pinot Noir and Pinot Meunier) are red. Drink a glass of Veuve Clicquot Brut Yellow Label, for instance, and you're drinking a wine made from 70% red grapes (50% Pinot Noir and 20% Pinot Meunier). What's more recent, though, is a growing trend of people making still white wines

from Pinot Noir in California, Oregon, and beyond. Do they taste like Pinot? Well, yes. And no. But the best of them are excellent.

And the word *Pinot* itself doesn't just apply to red grapes. Pinot Noir, the head of the Pinot family, mutates easily. Over the long history of wine, it has produced several paler descendants, among them Pinot Gris (more commonly known by its Italian name, Pinot Grigio) and Pinot Blanc. Appropriate to the name, the skins of Pinot Gris are grayish-pink; *gris* means "gray." Those of Pinot Blanc are green-gold, as with most white wine grapes. Both of them, as well as Pinot Noir when made into a white wine, are ideal for springtime drinking: sprightly, crisp, and fresh.

photography by JENNIFER CAUSEY



WHITE PINOT NOIR

2022 WILLAMETTE VALLEY VINEYARDS WHITE PINOT NOIR (\$30)

This Oregon interpretation of white Pinot Noir has a pale straw hue and comes from a sustainably farmed winery founded in 1983. It has a soft texture and plenty of tangerine and creamy melon flavors; the excellent 2022 vintage shows its considerable strengths here.

2023 EMERITUS VINEYARDS HALLBERG BLANC (\$45)

Owner Brice Cutrer Jones made his reputation with Chardonnay (Sonoma-Cutrer) but left that behind to focus on Pinot Noir with Emeritus. So, technically, this is the only white wine he makes. It's rich but crisp, with luscious red apple, melon, and lemon curd notes.

2023 SCHUG CARNEROS WHITE PINOT NOIR (\$46)

The cool Carneros climate adds a light hint of dried herbs to this balanced white's flavors of quince and white peach. Winemaker Walter Schug founded his eponymous winery in 1980 specifically to concentrate on Pinot Noir; he died in 2015, but his family has continued his legacy.

2022 DOMAINE CARNEROS PINOT CLAIR ESTATE VINEYARD WHITE PINOT NOIR (\$49)

Domaine Carneros is known for its excellent sparkling wines, and if anyone knows how to get white juice from red grapes, it's sparkling-wine makers. A hint of red fruit shows amid the pear and yuzu citrus flavors in this full-bodied, silky wine.

FOOD STYLING: EMILY NABORS HALL; PROP STYLING: CLAIRE SPOLLEN

PINOT GRIS AND PINOT GRIGIO

Pinot Gris (or Grigio, if Italian) is grown around the world these days, but the most significant sources are northern Italy, France's Alsace region, and Oregon. Much of it, especially in Italy, goes into relatively anonymous, mass-produced bottles, but when grown well and made with care, Pinot Gris can be as impressively complex as it is refreshing.

**2023 ALOIS LAGEDER
TERRA ALPINA PINOT
GRIGIO (\$17)**

The Lageder family is one of Alto Adige's benchmark producers. This entry-level Pinot Grigio is a bargain, its mellow citrus flavors accented by hints of elderflower and fresh herbs.

**2023 TIEFENBRUNNER
PINOT GRIGIO (\$17)**

Vigneti delle Dolomiti, the appellation for this zippy, nectarine-scented white, is a catchall for grapes from Alto Adige, Trentino, and the northern part of the Veneto—basically, the foothills of the Dolomites.

**2023 SANTA
MARGHERITA ALTO
ADIGE PINOT GRIGIO
(\$25)**

Wine pros like to dismiss Santa Margherita because it's so widely available, but this is a charming Pinot Grigio; its light lemon-oil scent leads into light citrus and yellow plum flavors.

**2023 MARCO FELLUGA
MONGRIS COLLIO
PINOT GRIGIO (\$21)**

Marco Felluga died last year at 96, after decades of helping bring attention to the wines of his home region. This white is refreshing, with zesty acidity and savory, herbal accents.

**2022 ANTIQUUM FARM
DAISY PINOT GRIS
(\$30)**

An alluring scent of honeysuckle and chamomile leads into full-bodied, rich golden apple and pear notes in this terrific Willamette Valley Pinot Gris from proprietor Stephen Hagen.

**2022 PONZI
VINEYARDS
WILLAMETTE VALLEY
PINOT GRIS (\$25)**

Ponzi has been making top-notch wines since 1970 (and is now owned by Groupe Bollinger). This tingly white suggests quince and Meyer lemons, with a subtle hint of anise.

**2022 LIVIO FELLUGA
PINOT GRIGIO (\$35)**

Livio Felluga was a legend in Friuli, and today, his children carry on his work at the same remarkable quality as always. This white has a succulent texture, with green apple, white peach, and bay leaf flavors.

**2020 LIS NERIS GRIS
PINOT GRIGIO (\$40)**

This Pinot Grigio from Friuli has the kind of concentration and layers of flavor you might expect from white Burgundy. Its lush texture and deep red-apple and pear flavors take on creamy, nutty notes on the long finish.



PINOT BLANC AND PINOT BIANCO

Pinot Blanc (or in Italy, Pinot Bianco) tends to be medium-bodied, with moderate acidity and flavors that suggest orchard fruits (nectarines, pears). It's far less popular than its widely grown cousin, Pinot Gris (aka Pinot Grigio; see opposite page). But if you try these wines, you may well wonder why that's the case.

**2023 DOMAINE
CHRISTOPHE
MITTNACHT TERRES
D'ÉTOILES PINOT
BLANC (\$18)**

There's terrific concentration of flavor in this Alsace blend of Pinot Blanc and Pinot Auxerrois, yet the wine remains fresh and lively—a kind of magic trick of balance.

**2023 KETTMEIR
PINOT BIANCO
WEISSBURGUNDER
(\$25)**

Kettmeir, founded in 1919, relies on a group of 60 or so local growers for its grapes. This impressive Pinot Bianco is crisp and focused, with notes of springtime flowers and white peaches.

**2022 FAMILLE HUGEL
CUVÉE LES AMOURS
PINOT BLANC (\$20)**

This Alsace Pinot Blanc, with its creamy, rich texture, distinct hints of honeysuckle, and lusciously ripe pear character, is full-bodied enough for something like a roast chicken—or a classic Alsatian tarte flambée.

**2022 DOMAINE
ZIND-HUMBRECHT
TURCKHEIM PINOT
BLANC (\$32)**

Alsace's Olivier Humbrecht is a brilliant farmer and winemaker, which shows in this spicy, savory, hard-to-put-down white. It's rich with ripe pear and peach flavors, accented with a faint hint of smoke.

**2023 J. HOFSTÄTTER
WEISSBURGUNDER
(\$20)**

Hofstätter's top wines are among the best whites of northern Italy, and even their more affordable cuvées are formidably good. Case in point, this fragrant white, with its juicy orchard fruit and tangerine flavors.

**2023 DUTTON-
GOLDFIELD DUTTON
RANCH-SHOP BLOCK
PINOT BLANC (\$33)**

There's not much Pinot Blanc in California, but it does exist. This apricot-scented white comes from vines in a cool section of Sonoma County and offers an intriguing California spin on the variety.

**2023 HEIDI
SCHRÖCK & SÖHNE
WEISSBURGUNDER
(\$23)**

In Germany and Austria, Pinot Blanc is known as Weissburgunder, and Heidi Schrock makes a stellar version. It lifts off with ripe orchard fruit and sweet citrus notes, ending on a lightly salty, mineral note.