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THE CHRONICLE'S WINE SELECTIONS Oregon Pinot Gris

Lynne Char Bennett
Friday, October 13, 2006

Domestic Pinot Gris and Pinot Grigio are becoming more appreciated. Originally the product of Alsace, France, where it's still sometimes called Tokay, this grape is one of the best-known mutations of Pinot Noir.

Oregon Pinot Gris expresses the varietal's moderately full body and aromas and flavors of pear, apple, citrus and tropical fruit. There's refreshing, balancing acidity, which is easier to obtain from Oregon's cool climate.

The 2005 vintage seems to be richer than the 2004 vintage, which supports pairing with heavier, fuller textured dishes with some richness, though Oregon Pinot Gris is lovely on its own.

TWO AND A HALF STARS 2005 Erath Oregon Pinot Gris (\$14) Ripe pear, tropical fruit, citrus and a suggestion of apricot greet the nose. There's tart, spiced citrus on the medium-bodied palate, which ends with a rather rich, voluptuous mouthfeel for a satisfying finish.

TWO AND A HALF STARS 2005 Foris Rogue Valley Pinot Gris (\$14) Though this wine's nose has pear, peach and unripe pineapple, the aromas are a touch more subtle than its rich, mouth-filling flavors. There's a suggestion of alcoholic heat beneath the spicy fruit flavors and clean acidity.

TWO STARS 2005 Kings Ridge Oregon Pinot Gris (\$13) A floral, pear and peach nose with a bit of tutti-frutti leads to fairly good weight on the palate, which has sweet, uncomplicated, ripe pear flavors. While this is a clean, balanced wine, it finishes with a touch of sweetness.

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Oregon Pinot Gris

[Chronicle Wine Selection: Oregon Pinot Gris](#)

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THREE AND A HALF STARS 2005 Lachini Vineyards Oregon Pinot Gris (\$18) Rich, well-ripened and almost unctuous, this glass-stoppered wine has loads of lovely white peach, just-ripened pear, hints of mineral and stone, and is balanced with a long finish. Its fine texture and structure is better than is usually found in Pinot Gris.

TWO STARS 2005 Ponzi Vineyards Willamette Valley Pinot Gris (\$17) Honeysuckle, peach and slight unripe pineapple open on the full nose. The palate is quite fine with honey-tinged pink grapefruit, green grape and citrus peel flavors. There's also sweet pink grapefruit on the tart finish.

TWO STARS 2005 Torii Mor Oregon Pinot Gris (\$16) Aromas of unripe pineapple, peach and wet stones transition to peach and ripe, buttery pear flavors and a full, rich mouthfeel. On the finish, there's a touch of the bitter almond and bitter peach pit that some Oregon Pinot Gris shows.

THREE STARS 2005 Torii Mor Reserve Willamette Valley Pinot Gris (\$21) Reasonably well-defined and light on its feet, this wine has a streak of stony spice running through the barely ripe nectarine, pear, apple and citrus. Some layering and complexity combine with crisp acidity on the lengthy finish. Available only through the winery.

TWO STARS 2005 WillaKenzie Estate Willamette Valley Pinot Gris (\$18) A very ripe nose of pear, peach and golden apple has a suggestion of alcoholic heat. But this wine's peach and tropical fruit palate has some richness and jazzy balancing acidity with a hint of fruity sweetness on the round finish.

TWO AND A HALF STARS 2005 Willamette Valley Vineyards Oregon Pinot Gris (\$16) A slightly floral nose with peach, apricot and apple leads to crisp, citrusy flavors. This is a clean, medium-bodied wine with good weight and viscosity that's lively on the palate with almost spritziness. There's balance here, and just a touch of heat on the finish.

RATING KEY: FOUR STARS...Extraordinary, THREE STARS...Excellent, TWO STARS...Good

Page F - 6

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