

PINOT GRIS – A PROBLEM OF STYLE

The latest industry statistics have just come to hand for the 2007 harvest, so I'm prompted to write the promised notes on Pinot Gris.

At a nursery level we have seen a significant rise in sales of this variety over the last 3-5 years. It came in fits and starts to begin with, but now we see continuous demand. It's no surprise that production rose with the 2007 vintage by 65% to 6050 tonnes. If Misty Valley Nursery's sales are representative of the industry, we will soon be producing 20,000 tonnes and more.

Pinot Gris may be very sought after in international markets but we have a bit of a problem with this variety which we need to sort out quickly, or we may find ourselves top grafting all of those Pinot Gris vines over to Sauvignon blanc.

The problem is style.

I'm writing this in San Francisco where I have heard the same story today that I heard in Brisbane a few weeks ago. I have been told several times by people in the international wine trade that they are confused by the New Zealand style of Pinot Gris.

"When you buy a bottle of New Zealand Sauvignon blanc, you know what to expect, but when you buy a bottle of New Zealand Pinot Gris you have no idea what you are going to get."

"You don't know if it will have residual sugar or not, you don't even seem to have consistency in labeling. The other day we tasted a New Zealand Pinot Gris labeled as Pinot Grigio and it was full of sugar."

"Don't you guys down there know the difference between Pinot Gris and Pinot Grigio?"

In our defence, Pinot Gris is being planted in many regions and we can expect to see many different styles, from teeth chatteringly dry Pinot Grigios' to medium Pinot Gris.

But we should not be allowing our marketing people to create market confusion because they think 'Grigio' sounds better than 'Gris'.

We must not pretend either to be emulating Alsace or Friuli but aim to establish our own clear styles with consistent labeling. We should be talking amongst ourselves on a regional basis about establishing benchmark styles that our customers can identify with our New Zealand appellations.

If we don't get our act sorted we will confuse the market with uncertainty, and buyers will wander back to the wines they know and trust. I believe it is time for New Zealand Winegrowers to establish a Pinot Gris forum so this variety can be used to build and consolidate the New Zealand Aromatic wine style. Nothing less is warranted for the variety that will soon be New Zealand's number 3 or 4 by production.

Varieties available for 2007

Cabernet franc
Cabernet sauvignon
Chardonnay
Gewurztraminer
Malbec
Merlot
Petit verdot
Pinot noir
Riesling
Sangiovese
Sauvignon blanc
Syrah
Uzbekistan Muscat
Viognier

What's Hot

At Misty Valley Nursery, we run a 'waiting list' system for varieties that are 'sold out', until we have final vine numbers available after grading. Demand has been so great for the following varieties that we've already started 'waiting lists', which we're happy to include you on - just phone and let us know!

Flora
Montepulciano
Pinot Gris
Pinot Noir
Riesling
Sauvignon blanc
(x 3309 / Schwarzmann)
Tannat
Viognier

Please remember that to get the right combination of variety, clone and rootstock for your vineyard, it's essential to order prior to grafting - our cut off is during August.



**MISTY
VALLEY
NURSERY**

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