

Italian Pinot Grigio Is A Lot Better Than You Think

Nick Passmore : : 31.7.2017



Villnoess St. Magdalena at Val di Funes (Funes Valley), Alto Adige, Italy.

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There are two entirely different worlds of Pinot Grigio, and American imbibers are slowly catching on to the better one.

True, there is an awful lot of highly indifferent PG sloshing around, and its very success commercially has tainted the reputation of what is, or can be, delectable, mountainside versions.

Pinot Grigio, the good stuff, comes from the dramatic valleys in the foothills of the Italian Alps, especially Friuli and Alto-Adige, and can be stunning, and decently priced too, while on the other side of the coin oceans of weak, watery wine grown in commercial quantities on the valley floors is indifferent, at best.

Karoline, Julia & Elena Walch

Karoline Walch, who with her sister Julia and mother Elena, operate the estimable [Elena Walsh](#) winery in Alto Adige, was initially surprised at Pinot Grigio's American reputation.

"Whenever somms (especially in the US) ask me, with critical eyes, about my attitude towards PG, I am a bit surprised and I tell them, that I had to travel to find out that PG had a bad connotation somewhere else," she tells me.

"In Alto Adige certainly, PG is considered a high end grape variety and is treated accordingly in the vineyard and winemaking management. Low yields, steep vineyards with good drainage in medium altitude, warm days to develop all its primary aromas yet cool nights to retain its acidity with mineral driven soils are the key for us. Certainly, if planted in flat, hot and humid conditions with very high yields - then it is a different category that has nothing to do with what I believe a PG is. But really, this can be the case with any variety finally. But some producers unfortunately have found out that PG nowadays sells.... no matter what you put in the bottle... this is the real problem!"

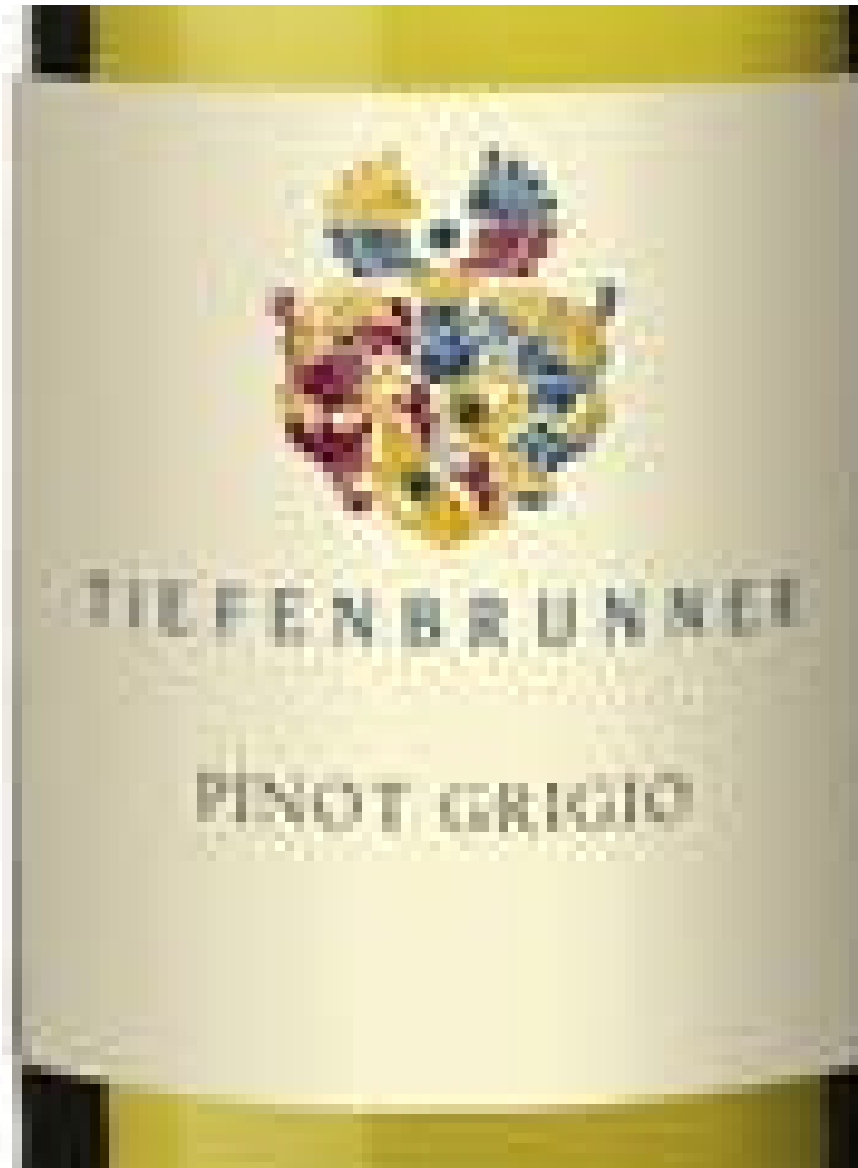
You can see this spelled out clearly in the difference in two restaurants. [The Leopard at des Artistes](#), a polished, up-scale New York Italian offers five superior Pinot Grigios. In contrast, a large, tourist-orientated eatery in Miami has one or two versions, and their somm points out that his less sophisticated customers "Order Pinot Grigio strictly by the name of the grape rather than the name of the producer, rather like Prosecco", another popular, though not necessarily highly regarded, Italian mass wine.

There is one advantage, at least to us consumers, that flows from this detrimental image of Pinot Grigio: quality, though underappreciated, Pinot Grigio comes at tremendously advantageous prices compared to trendy whites like.....oh, say, California Chardonnay.

So here are 15 of my favorites, wines to enjoy for the rest of the summer, with food and, mostly, at wonderfully reasonable prices.

[Web](#)

Tiefenbrunner Pinot Grigio 2016



Vigneti delle Dolomiti, Italy, \$17

[Web](#)

An unmistakable, and unpronounceable, German name for an Italian wine bred in the Dolomite Mountains of the north-east Italy tells you much of recent history. However, disregard the Austrian/Italian of many centuries and pay attention to the hugely appealing tropical fruit on the front palate followed by a rocky, herbal-tinged finish that tells you so much of the excellence of modern Italian, Alpine, Pinot Grigio.