

THE WINE GUY

Oregon winemakers excel in producing pinot gris, noir

It's taken 40 years, but Oregon has assumed a place among the world's great wine regions. High ratings of Oregon's wines have become commonplace, and Fortune magazine recently listed the Willamette Valley as a "new Napa," both for the quality of the wine and the burgeoning tourist industry.



RICH MAURO
Gazette wine columnist

Ever since David Lett of Eyrie Vineyards first planted pinot noir and pinot gris in the Willamette Valley in 1966, the area's vintners have been refining production and improving quality. So today, not only is the Willamette Valley known worldwide for its pinot noir, Oregon producers also are well-positioned to take advantage of the recent surge in consumer interest in pinot gris/pinot grigio.

Although there are many good wines — particularly chardonnay, riesling and pinot blanc — it is pinot noir and pinot gris (it's never labeled "pinot grigio" in Oregon) that define the state's wine industry. Oregon vintners also are becoming known for sustainable agriculture, as seen in the mounting number of growers and wineries participating in

farming grapes and making wine. Peterson-Nedry has become one of the leaders in promoting quality improvement and is moving toward organic methods. Both wines are closed with screw caps.

● 2004 Pinot Noir "3 Vineyard" (\$27)

● 2005 Pinot Gris (\$18)

King Estate. Founded in 1991, King Estate has grown into one of Oregon's largest wineries and most popular wine tourist attractions. The King family also has been among the pioneers of organic farming in the state. From the Signature Collection:

● 2004 Pinot Noir Oregon (\$26)

● 2005 Pinot Gris Oregon (\$18)

● 2004 Pinot Gris "Vin Glace" Oregon (dessert wine, \$18/375 ml)

Montmore Estate. Established in 1982 in the foothills of the Coastal Range 30 miles west of Portland, owner Rudy Marchesi is committed to sustainable and biodynamic farming.

● 2002 Pinot Noir Graham's Block 7 (\$32)

● 2005 Pinot Gris (\$14)

Ponzi Vineyards. Dick and Nancy Ponzi founded their win-

ery in 1970 and have been leaders in growing the Oregon wine industry ever since, including the movement for responsible stewardship of the land.

● 2004 Pinot Noir (\$35)

● 2005 Pinot Gris (screw cap, \$17)

● 2005 Pinot Blanc (screw cap, \$17)

Rex Hill. Paul Hart and Jan Jacobsen founded Rex Hill in 1982 after Paul, a great fan of Burgundy, discovered the fine quality that Oregon was capable of with chardonnay and pinot noir.

● 2005 Pinot Noir Oregon (\$19)

● 2005 Pinot Gris Oregon (\$15)

RoxyAnn Winery. Founded in 2002 on a site in the Rogue Valley that had been an orchard since 1897, this new winery and vineyard uses sustainable land-management practices.

● 2005 Pinot Gris Oregon (\$16)

Sokol Blosser. Bill Blosser and Susan Sokol Blosser are additional pioneers of Oregon

wine, having planted their first vines in 1971. They also have been leaders in the sustainable-agriculture movement and use a variety of stewardship practices.

● 2003 Pinot Noir Dundee Hills (\$31)

Stoller Vineyards. The Stoller family has farmed this property since 1943. Fifty years later, Bill and Cathy Stoller began converting the property to vineyards. The new winery is LEED certified.

● 2004 Pinot Noir Dundee Hills (\$36)

Van Duzer Vineyards. Former California vintners, Carl and Marilyn Thoma own and sustainably farm this 17-year-old property at the mouth of the Van Duzer corridor, an east-west valley that funnels cooling Pacific breezes over the vineyards.

● 2004 Pinot Noir Estate (\$29)

● 2004 Pinot Noir Dijon Blocks (\$39)

● 2004 Pinot Noir Flagpole Block (\$39)

● 2005 Pinot Gris (\$16)

Will McKenzie. WILL

which also is the name of a sedimentary soil throughout the estate yards, was founded in French-born Bernard and his wife Romni. The other winery committed to sustainable viticulture.

● 2004 Pinot Noir (\$19)

● 2004 Pinot Gris (\$19)

● 2004 Pinot Blanc (\$19)

Willamette Valley

Founded by Jim B

1983, Willamette Val

yards has become on

gon's largest and mo

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another winery em

sustainable practices.

● 2004 Pinot Noir (\$20)

● 2005 Pinot Gris (\$17)

Reach Rich Mauro at 6

write to him at The Ga

Box 1779, Colorado Spr