

## NEW PINOT GRIS WINES

By Paul Foster

When Oz Clarke told *Top Gear's* James May that Pinot Gris was the most amenable of varieties he was talking about its capacity to make a range of wines. From the fragile to the fleshy, from the steely to the sweet and in all shades of colour from light gold to bronze and pink.

Pinot Gris, still known as 'grey monk' in central Europe, is thought to have been a mutation of Pinot Noir that occurred time ago in Burgundy. Even now berries in the same bunch can be both light and dark but it's the variety's tendency to lose acidity at the point of ripeness that best explains its wines. In northern Italy, for instance, where they call both the grape and its wine Pinot Grigio, it was the locals' anxiety to avoid softness that saw the evolution of a style. Producers took to picking ASAP, to maintain the tension acidity provides, and in the process created a lean and dry wine that typically tastes of pear and almonds. In the Alsace region of north-eastern France, however, where the vineyards enjoy lots of autumn sun on the slopes at the base of the Vosges mountains, they make very different stuff. Wines that may be dry or sweet (and are sometimes botrytised) but which always weigh in with body and texture and which typically taste of ripe golden pears.

Finding the good ones isn't always easy but exciting wines are around. The **Tyrrell's Classic Release Pinot Grigio 2009** is a gem and at \$14 is exceptional value; delicately perfumed and subtly flavoured it's a celebration of the lighter style. More delicate again, and keener, is the **Devil's Corner Pinot Grigio 2010** (\$17) from Tasmania's Tamar River region; there's silver pear in its floral and elegant palate. **The Wine Society Premium Selection Pinot Gris 2010** (\$20) is an award-winning wine and was made for the Society by Tasmania's Julian Alcorso; a world away in style, it's an intense creature of brassy colour and honeyed pear flavours. And a charming Kiwi is **Drift Pinot Gris 2009** (\$15) from Marlborough; the palate is smooth and expansive, full of pear and stonefruit flavours, and acidity balances sweetness.

Catch Oz and James on **SBS**, the wines from **The Wine Society**.

### **Terre del Noce Pinot Grigio 2009**

Lovely import. Gently perfumed, modestly textured, light-to-medium-bodied. Pear, white peach and almond. From the Dolomite hills, north of Venice. \$20

### **Tower Estate Adelaide Hills Pinot Gris 2010**

Lovely local. Poise with depth and discipline. Full, without being fat. Ripe pear and quince fruit flavours plus lemony length. Mid-palate softness and texture. \$23