

Some Grape Varieties in Oregon

This section highlights the most common varieties in Oregon. There are a total of 72 varieties within the state; however, I will only address 18 of these as the remaining varieties are only produced in very small volumes. First of all, I begin with the two most important grapes: Pinot Noir and Pinot Gris, thereafter they are presented in alphabetical order.

The presentation of each grape variety will include some information about the grape's background, its origin, the various styles and whether or not it is used in a blend as well as the grape's phenology and wine-tasting characteristics for Oregon red and white wines. A character summary is also provided along with a tactile sensory ratio guide that helps you identify the variety, decide on storage potential, grape typicity and how to match it with food or cheese.

Each of the grapes discussed have their own unique characteristics, which I call 'trademark characters or grape typicity.' These grape typical characteristics are an integral part of wine quality and should be present, in some form, in most varietals. However, adverse climate conditions and/or individual winemaking styles can and will affect typicity.

The aim is to show the benefits of each variety. This understanding will increase your appreciation for the grape and serve as a tool to guide you in combining

wine and food appropriately and to different social environments.

Oregon Grapes

Pinot Noir -	Red
Pinot Gris -	White
Barbera -	Red
Cabernet Franc -	Red
Cabernet Sauvignon -	Red
Chardonnay -	White
Gewürztraminer -	White
Grenache -	Red
Merlot -	Red
Muscat à Petits Grains -	White
Müller-Thurgau -	White
Pinot Blanc -	White
Riesling -	White
Sauvignon Blanc -	White
Semillon -	White
Syrah/Shiraz -	Red
Tempranillo -	Red
Viognier -	White



Pinot Noir

General characteristics:

Assumed to be one of the oldest grape varieties, Pinot Noir is one of the most challenging grapes to grow. It can produce up to 30 hectoliters per hectare and responds well to being planted in cool climate conditions on well-drained and calcareous soils.

In Oregon the most commonly planted clones are the Pommard, Wadensvil, and Dijon 113, 114, 115, 114 and 777. However, there are hundreds of Pinot Noir clones that exist in the world today. Even Pinot Blanc, Pinot Gris and Gamay are clones. I would not be surprised if both Negro Amaro (Apulia, Italy) and Tempranillo (Spain) are old clones too.

Synonyms:

Pineau, Franc Pineau, Savagnin Noir, Morillon, (France); Spätburgunder, Blauburgunder, Klevener (Germany); Pinot Nero, Pignola (Italy); Nagyburgundi (Hungary).

Areas:

The grape is at its best in Burgundy, Oregon and Alsace but has even established itself

in many other wine countries. Good wines are now being produced in Washington State, northern California and South Africa, Australia, New Zealand, Austria and Germany, not to forget Chile.

Wine Styles and Blends:

This grape variety is found both as a single estate, varietal and in blends. In the Willamette Valley great care is taken to ferment in small lots so as not to mix the terroir and style of the various lots within an estate.

In Champagne, France, it is grown to a greater extent than in the whole of Burgundy as it is one of the varieties in Champagne, where it is blended with Pinot Meunier and Chardonnay.

Grape Physiology:

Vigour: Moderate.

Phenology:

Ripens in early season, so it is a good grape for cold weather climates, where summers are relatively short. At full maturity the

average sugar content is from 23° to 24° Brix / Balling (total, dissolved compounds in grape juice and sugar concentration) and total titratable acid of 6 to 7 g/l.

Berries:

Small to medium in size with a thin skin. The berry is an off-round shape with a scarlet/ violet/ blue color.

Diseases:

Susceptible to downy mildew and weather changes. Low resistance because of its thin skin.

Sensory Characteristics:

Appearance:

In young wines, Pinot Noir has a lighter tone with an extended gradient. In 89/90-point wines it has a light to medium purple/ ruby-red hue in young wines and starts to change color already after the 2nd-3rd year. Good mature wines develop an orange brick-colored rim in about their 6th-8th year. However, in Oregon I have seen this change in as many as 12 years.



The Nose:

Pinot Noir has a wonderfully warm, spicy, red berry, strawberry, dark cherry, raspberry and floral character when young. Very good wines display, along with red berries, violets, a nuance of chocolate, vegetables and spices as they age.

Oak characters would be evident in young oak-matured wines. Nevertheless, this will diminish with time and should not be a dominating factor. The signature characteristic trait for Oregon Pinot Noir from the Willamette Valley are still the floral, red and dark cherries, strawberries and some spices.

Other old world styles can show more oxidation or animalistic characteristics. Other modern world styles show more darker fruit, are more viscous and have higher alcohol level.

The Palate:

In Oregon and northern Burgundy Pinot Noir wines show more finesse and a balanced length. They can have more tannins, although these tannins are finer

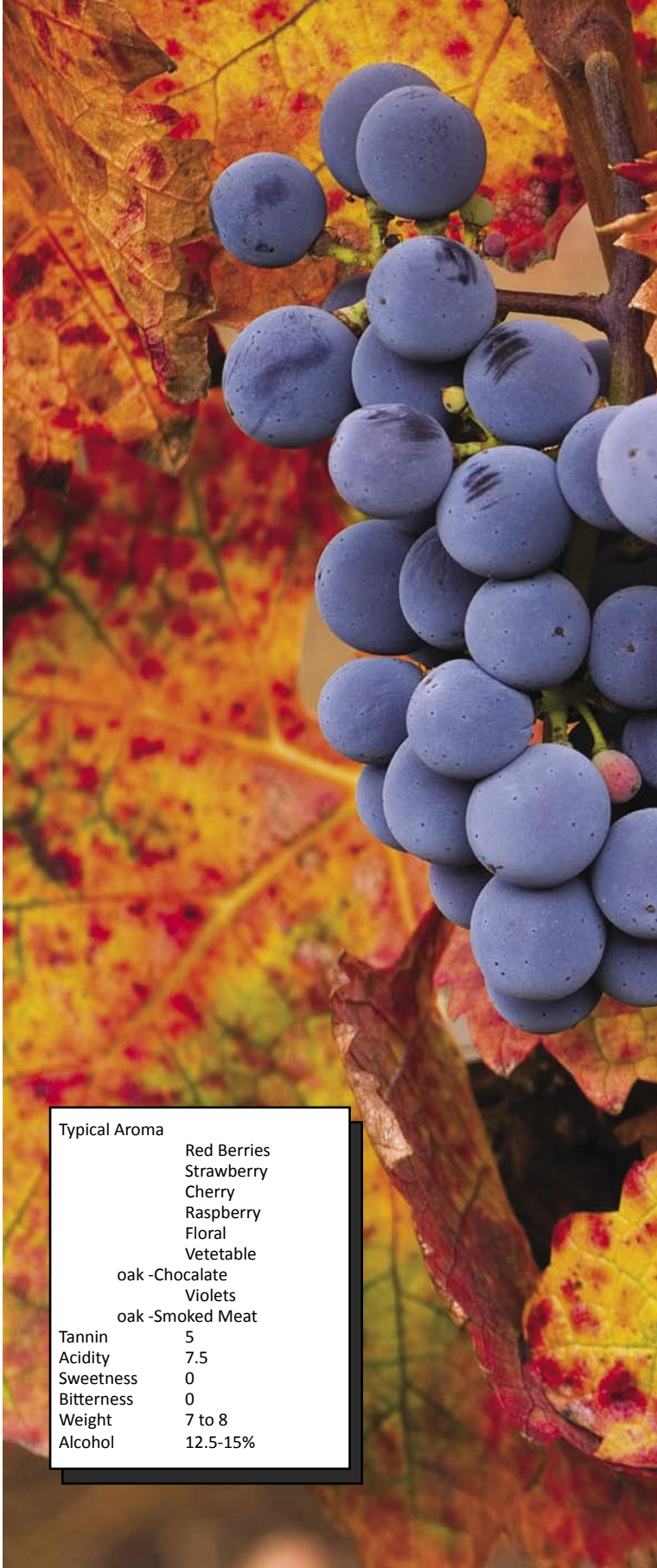
smoother in nature. Sunnier climates usually show coarser tannins “Octagon instead of round” in feel. This is due to the addition of tannin, stems, or heavy oak.

Pinot Noir can produce very delicate and elegant wines with excellent length. Alcohol levels from 12.5% to 15%.

Excellent Food Combinations:

Pinot Noir can be served well with light meats, various bird dishes (goose, duck and chicken) and textured fish dishes like salmon. It is excellent with foie gras, cheese and pâté too.

Although other wine professionals suggest wild deer and darker meats with a Pinot Noir, I tend not to prefer these, as I feel that other wine styles suit them better and that the marked acidity levels of Pinot Noir highlight more delicate dishes very well.



Typical Aroma	
	Red Berries
	Strawberry
	Cherry
	Raspberry
	Floral
	Vegetable
	oak -Chocolate
	Violets
	oak -Smoked Meat
Tannin	5
Acidity	7.5
Sweetness	0
Bitterness	0
Weight	7 to 8
Alcohol	12.5-15%

