

PALMINA



2008 Pinot Grigio Alisos Vineyard, Santa Barbara County

The good news and the bad news is that Pinot Grigio is now one of the most popular white wines in the world. That it is ubiquitous is an indication of the general appeal of the wines made from this versatile grape. That's the good news. It *is* versatile, but Pinot Grigio is also very sensitive to place, climate and winemaking and if there is a downside to its universal appeal, it may be that most wine lovers do not get to enjoy the nuances of a well-made Pinot Grigio grown in a vineyard and region particularly suited to its delicate nature.

The Alisos Vineyard in Santa Barbara County is one such place, and the care and attention given to the craft of Pinot Grigio by Palmina winemaker/owner Steve Clifton ensures that this vineyard-designated wine is a stellar example of what Pinot Grigio can be. The Alisos vineyard, near the town of Los Alamos, is centrally located between Santa Barbara County's Santa Maria Valley and the Santa Ynez Valley. Cool morning fogs from the nearby Pacific Ocean funnel down the west-to-east valleys, blanketing the vineyard until midday. Dry and warm desert air then spills over the San Rafael mountain range midday, dispelling the fog, warming the thin-skinned Pinot Grigio grapes and providing the hours of sunshine necessary to ripen the bluish-red clusters. At sunset, the temperature dips quite dramatically, keeping the lively acid present in each grape. These perfect conditions are married to ancient alluvial soils and coupled with meticulous farming (gardening!) by vineyard managers Wayne and Loren Collahan. A potential for greatness for Pinot Grigio.

The grapes are hand-harvested at night to retain a natural crispness and acidity and delivered to the winery in the earliest hours of the day. Whole-cluster pressed to stainless steel, fermented slowly at cold temperatures over a period of 3-4 weeks and then immediately racked off lees with no malolactic interference to showcase the grape and its sense of place. As with many arts, it takes more skill to interfere less, and therefore produce purity. The 2008 Pinot Grigio, Alisos Vineyard is a faithful expression of the grape, the vintage and the vineyard.

Crisp, vivacious and refreshing are adjectives that come to mind when enjoying a nice cold glass of Pinot Grigio. This Alisos Vineyard-designated wine also evokes words like "silky", "luxe" and "lush". A rich, light golden color foretells of the opulence of the wine, and a swirl produces a bouquet of fruit blossom and white peaches just on the perfect point of ripeness. A hint of fennel on the nose intrigues and leads to that first sip, which glides across the palate with an classy, oily quality. More white-stone fruit flavors of apricot, peach and pear are intermingled with anise notes that bring to mind 'red vine' licorice ropes and citrus zest. Unctuous and refreshing at the same time, the 2008 Pinot Grigio from Alisos Vineyard is rich, flinty, fruit-laden and elegant. Superb with food, a sunny afternoon or a group of friends.