



**T**he sun is out later, but the air is still crisp. After a long day of work I had the opportunity to join Marta Rich of Talisman Winery for one of the best wine dinners I have ever been to.

If you are not familiar with Jockey Hollow Bar and Kitchen in Morristown, New Jersey, make yourself aware. Some will say I am biased because I used to work there and I have many friends that work there, but I will tell you they are a top tier restaurant that really pushes the boundaries. Owner Chris Cannon sources nothing but the best for his restaurant.

I almost always start my night there with a cocktail. In my opinion, it is the best cocktail bar in the state. Mixologists James Gelmi and Cody Blihar have rounded out a program that will make any libation enthusiast's mouth water. After a double espresso to get my heart rate up, James threw a freestyle cocktail at me. Honestly, I have no idea what was in it, but it was delicious. Some times I don't need to know what I am drinking.

After meeting Marta, I knew right away that we were going to get along great. Her passion for wine is driven by sourcing specific plots within vineyards and exploiting their ability to produce terroir driven wines. One of the first things she mentioned to us as a group is how similar the process of making the wines are from bottle to bottle. This allows you to really distinguish the different sites from each glass of wine. Pinot Noirs are so delicate that every little detail from ground to glass makes a difference. It is why it really takes raw talent and ambition to create great Pinot.



Razor Clams Casino

After a glass of Pinot Noir Blanc (Yes, still white Pinot Noir) and some Razor clams, we were poured the first Pinot Noir from Talisman. The 2013 Red Dog Vineyard (413 cases produced)

First thing comes to mind, why is their current release so far behind everyone

something I appreciate from great winemakers. I have been tasting a ton of 2015 and 2016 Pinot Noirs that all are no where near close to ready. It is a breathe of fresh air when you can buy a current vintage wine and actually is ready to drink. The 2013 Red Dog had a ton of fruit up front but the long lingering finish had notes of leather, clay, and tobacco. Balanced to perfection. The menu curated by Chris Cannon was obviously driven with Burgundian flavors, which is exactly what you want to eat with this style of wine.

The second wine was the 2013 Wild Cat Mountain Pinot Noir. Only 164 cases produced and was my favorite wine. As a syrah nut, I love earth in my wine. There was plenty of vibrancy, but the underlying smokiness and meatiness of the wine is what drew me in. I drank half my glass and left the rest on the table so I could taste it at the end of the dinner. It was the only wine that I literally couldn't keep my mind off of.



2012 Adastra paired with Dayboat Scallops, Morels, Fava Beans and Black Garlic Polenta

had all the elegance and flavor of a Burgundy but had slight spice, which reminded me almost like a zinfandel. Not sure if that would offend Marta, but to me it was it's unique factor and why I actually asked for more.

Third wine was the 2012 Adastra Vineyard (416 Cases produced) On the nose, delicate rose pedals, candied cherries and currants. When tasting it though, there was a unique spice that was present unlike any of the other wines. One patron of the dinner couldn't wrap his mind around it. The wine



2012 Gunsalus Vineyard Pinot Noir paired with Wagyu Flatiron Steak Potato Pave and Roasted Shallots

By the end of the night we were drinking 8 year old New Jersey Pinot Noir (Which I won't get into) and Oregon Chardonnay. Talking about wine, life, and some old stories from some of us that have known each other for some time. It felt like a dinner party at someones home, except with exceptional food and wine. I think that is what Chris is going for with his wine dinners, and he is pretty damn good at it.

Last wine tasted was the 2012 Gunsalus Vineyard Pinot Noir (267 cases produced) This was the last Talisman wine of the night. Bold, rich, and full for a Pinot. There was a lot going on in this wine. While Pinot Noir wouldn't be my first choice to go with Wagyu Flat Iron Steak, this wine paired perfectly.

Marta and her husband are all in when it comes to their wines, and you can taste the passion in every bottle. These are the kinds of wines that you buy for \$60 and they drink as good if not better than \$200+ from Burgundy. While some will be on our shelves, there will be plenty in my wine storage.