



PinotFile

The First Wine Newsletter Exclusively Devoted to Pinotphiles

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Pinot Noir
Tastes Like Itself

Talisman: Pinots from the Edge

Scott Rich is a winemaker who loves to work on the edge. He is a “terroirist” who purposely seeks out unique vineyard sites where farming Pinot Noir presents formidable challenges. He feels that these sites provide the most interesting wines that convey distinctive and singular terroirs. Scott says, “I like to express terroir for that is the beauty of Pinot Noir, and that is what comes through in the more extreme vineyards.” For example, he has labored at Steve MacRostie’s Wildcat Mountain Vineyard, the highest vineyard in Carneros, where the wind blows unmercifully in all directions at the same time. His mantra fits his appearance, for when you meet friendly Scott Rich, he strikes you as a rugged mountain man.

Scott has an impressive winemaking resume. He attended graduate school in the enology program at University of California at Davis and worked as a research enologist for both RH Phillips and Robert Mondavi. He crafted the wines at Etude with Tony Soter from 1995 to 2000, consulted with numerous wineries including Mount St. John and Carneros Creek, worked harvests in Chile, and made the wines as well as overseeing the construction of a new winery at Moraga Vineyards in Bel Air, Southern California. His desire for true artistic expression led him, along with his wife Marta (who is also the National Sales Manager for Calera Wine Company), to found Talisman Cellars in 1992.



Talisman is a word for a charm and the Talisman logo on the label is a stylized medicine wheel, a representation of the *paho*, a Native American charm that has been imbued with the power to protect one from harm. The name and logo was given to Scott by his Native American mother and is a tribute to her. The *paho* has the circle of life and the four directions show our place in the universe. The rays around the edge represent the sun, which gives the energy for life on earth and allows wine grapes to ripen.

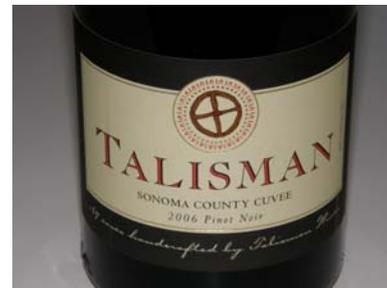


At Etude, Scott had to craft Pinot Noirs that were ready to drink upon release, for over 75% of the production went to restaurants. With Talisman wines he can create Pinot Noirs that have age ability. He says, "I make my wines to age, even if no one gives them a chance." The secondary characteristics of Pinot Noir that develop with aging are the most interesting for him. In a past feature in the *PinotFile* on Talisman Pinot Noirs (Volume 5, Issue 34), I sampled wines back to 1997 and they had aged beautifully. His current releases are from the 2006 vintage, at a time when many producers are already releasing their 2008 vintage wines.

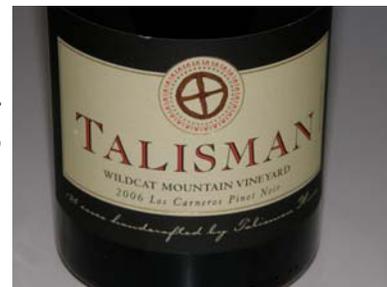
Scott is now at the pinnacle of his craft. He has refined his style to consistently produce classic Pinot Noir that is exquisite, pure and balanced. You won't find any jelly jar blockbusters. It is a tribute to Scott's winemaking practices that he is able to bring out the distinctive features of each wine's terroir. As you read through the reviews below, you will find a remarkable consistency of quality combined with a distinctiveness that reflects each wine's site of origin. I suggest buying a few bottles of your favorites, rest them in your cellar, and follow their progress over the next 10 to 15 years. It could be a revelation.



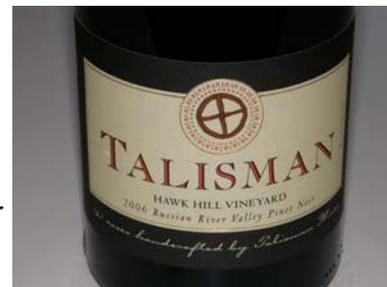
2006 Talisman Sonoma County Cuvee Pinot Noir 14.1% alc., 167 cases, \$26, released July 2009. A blend of barrel lots from several of the vineyards that make up vineyard-designate wines. *Loamy cherry and strawberry aromas and flavors with overtones of oak, baking spice, cola and green beans. Precocious and highly approachable now, the moderately rich core of fruit is elegant in form, silky in texture, and stylistically typical of a Russian River Valley Pinot Noir. A wine to buy by the case for daily drinking. Very good.*



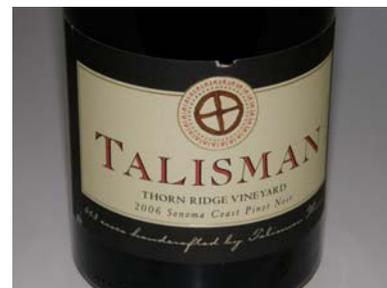
2006 Talisman Wildcat Mountain Vineyard Los Carneros Pinot Noir 14.1% alc., 120 cases, \$45, released April 2009. Highest in elevation of any vineyard in Carneros and directly exposed to cool air from San Pablo Bay. The soil is red pebbly clay loam derived from decomposed volcanic rock. Dijon clones 115, 667 and 777. *Unusual aromatic profile of strawberries, raspberries, beets, and green veggies. Luscious berry melange that is very satisfying, set off by supple ripe tannins, leading to a sweet raspberry kiss accenting the full-flavored finish. Like the name of the vineyard, this wine is a little untamed and feral and not your usual respectable Pinot Noir. Even better the next day from an opened and re-corked bottle. Very good.*



2006 Talisman Hawk Hill Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.1% alc., 141 cases, \$46, released September 2009. This vineyard is east of Freestone on Gold Ridge's southern slope. It's namesake soils are perfect for Pinot Noir. This is a very cool and foggy site. Clones 115 and Pommard 4. *Welcoming aromas of berry compote, spice, sandalwood and subtle oak. Rich flavors of black cherries and raspberries with underpinnings of cola and savory herbs. A harmonious wine that finishes with a welcoming snap of acidity. Its fruit-driven sole shows off the bright fruit so typical of the Russian River Valley. Still drinking beautifully the next day from an opened and re-corked bottle. Very good.*



2006 Talisman Thorn Ridge Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.1% alc., 503 cases, \$50, released September 2009. This vineyard is located in a foggy, windy site at the edge of the Petaluma Gap. Clones are 115, Pommard and Swan. *Scents of fresh berry pie, winter herbs, pencil lead and oak. Very tasty black cherry and berry core with a touch of herbs, juniper berry, and oak. An earthy wine with mineral nuances that is light on its feet and changes constantly in the glass. Impeccable balance predicts longevity. This wine projects a special pedigree.*



2006 Talisman Red Dog Vineyard Sonoma Mountain Pinot Noir 14.1% alc., 502 cases, \$46, released September 2009. This vineyard is located above Bennett Valley at 1200 feet on the northwestern side of Sonoma Mountain where it is impacted by cold Pacific Ocean air. Clones are 115, 777 and Pommard. *Appealing nose of black cherry, blackberry and plum, forest floor, herbs and toasted oak. The flavors echo the aromas. Hefty tannins and bright acidity with a smooth mouthfeel. Raw, grippy and still very tight. Picked up richness and interest the next day from a previously opened re-corked bottle. Definitely a cellar candidate. Very good.*



2006 Talisman Adastra Vineyard Los Carneros Pinot Noir 14.1% alc., 321 cases, \$50, release date February 2010. Chris Thorpe and his son-in-law Edwin Richards farm is vineyard which is organically certified. Clones are 113, 2A, Pommard and Swan. *If you pull the cork early next year, decant or give this wine plenty of time in the glass. Black fruited and very fragrant with toasty herbal oak that has not yet integrated. This wine makes you sit and take notice. Fruit-driven and hedonistic with the most persistence finish of any of the wines in the lineup. Smoothly textured with flamboyant tannins now. The next day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle the tannins had smoothed out, and there was a jolt of plum fruit with a pleasing mocha presence on the nose. Don't even think about drinking this wine for several years. This may prove to be the best wine in the lineup in five years.*



Talisman wines are crafted at a gathering of small wineries known as the Eighth Street Wineries at 21481 Eighth Street East, Sonoma, California (eightstreetwineries@me.com). An Open House is scheduled for Saturday, February 27, 2010, with participating wineries besides Talisman to include Tin Barn Vineyards, Parmelee-Hill, Ty Caton, Anaba Wines, Three Sticks, MacRostie, and Enkidu. The Talisman wines are sold online at www.talismanwine.com and through a mailing list. Tasting by appointment (707-258-5722).