

TALISMAN

Scott Rich

"I was raised by an American Indian mother who instilled in me a profound respect for nature and land. That relationship has influenced my approach to winemaking more than anything else and is the primary driver behind our winemaking philosophy.

In winemaking, nothing is more important than the vineyard and I spend a lot of time in vineyards every year. Making great wine is akin to making great food – the final product can never be better than the raw ingredients with which you start, so our goal is to make sure that everything in each of our vineyards is as perfect as possible by the time harvest comes around. Getting everything perfect in the vineyard makes it much easier for us in the winery. Ironically, that entails doing as little as possible in the winery and that requires that you start with grapes that are as close to perfection as we can get them.

Vineyards

Every one of our vineyards has some special characteristic that makes it stand out from others in the vicinity. Sometimes it's the soil, other times it's the microclimate or exceptional management.

At an absolute minimum, every vineyard with which we work is farmed sustainably, more often organically. We are big fans of minimal water usage and no-till agriculture. We work with small, family-owned vineyards; many of our vineyard partners actually live in their vineyards which encourages an extra level of personal care and attention.

We, and our vineyard partners, have been advocates and practitioners of regenerative agriculture since we started Talisman. With only a couple of exceptions, all of our vineyards have permanent cover crops, usually consisting of native flora. One of the first things we think about when assessing any vineyard is soil health because it ultimately dictates vine health and fruit quality. We have a couple of vineyards that are exceptions to the no-till rule, but only because these particular vineyards are so stressed due to very shallow soils underlain with hardpan that the competition for water from the cover crop creates too much stress for the vines to reliably bear fruit. Cover crops are allowed to grow in these vineyards, but they are disced and allowed to compost naturally after flowering.

The most important decision we make each year is when to pick each vineyard, or in some cases, which part of a vineyard. This decision is made by walking the vineyard and tasting grapes. What we're looking for is perfect flavors, perfect tannins, soft velvety skins lacking astringency, brown mature seeds, and lignified stems and shoots. We don't pick based on numbers that my palate can't integrate – we basically pick on flavor and physiological maturity.

Winemaking

Our winemaking is simple and straightforward. We strive to do as little as possible without being dogmatic in the process. We do not add any yeast or malolactic bacteria. We depend on nature to take care of that and our native wild yeasts do not disappoint us. The same holds true for the wild malolactic bacteria responsible for converting malic acid to tartaric acid, which softens our wines and enhances mouthfeel.

During fermentation, we manage extraction by punching down by hand several times each day. Most of our fermentations include 25-30% whole clusters, but we frequently make wine using a method known as *Methodo Ancienne*, which utilizes 100% whole clusters and is how wine was traditionally made in Burgundy prior to the advent of de-stemmers. When we employ *Methodo Ancienne*, we begin the fermentation by *pigeage*, the tradition of treading the grapes with our feet. Post-fermentation, we seal the fermenters for an extended maceration in order to capture all of the Pinot Noir goodness possible.

I don't recall the last time that we felt it necessary to fine one of our wines and we filter only on an as-needed basis. Because we don't fine or use any animal products, our wines are vegan.

We hold all of our bottled wines for a minimum of one year before release to benefit our customers. This practice evolved because we make our wines to age gracefully and they are so much more emotive with a bit of bottle aging. I also got tired of going to nice restaurants only to discover that my wine options were often limited to wines whose full potential was cut short because they were infants.

That is our winemaking in a nutshell – we try to do as little as possible to provide you with spectacular wines."