

Stephen Tanzer's International Wine Cellar

By Josh Raynolds, Oct/Nov 2011

The long, cool 2010 growing season helped to produce fruit that Brian Talley said perfectly suited his family estate's wine philosophy. He called it "a Talley vintage" in the sense that it was possible to make concentrated wines with depth of flavor but also balance and tension, the style he favors. As for 2009, a moderate growing season was followed by a hot, late summer and an early September heat spike that pushed ripening up quickly but not excessively. "The fruit was clean and there was a good amount of it, which is nice because we got set back a lot with 2010's short crop, like everybody." The Talley wines age remarkably well, by the way, as I've learned from drinking wines from my own cellar. I was also able to taste a fairly extensive vertical of chardonnays and pinots recently that went back to the 1980s and it further confirmed these wines' ability not only to endure, but to evolve and improve with age.

2010 Talley Vineyards Chardonnay Bishop's Peak Central Coast—89 Points

(\$15) Pale yellow. Fresh pear and herbs on the nose, with a floral nuance gaining strength with air. Vibrant, focused orchard fruit flavors are given a firm edge by notes of talc and lemon pith and gain spiciness with air. The floral note carries through to the clean, nervy, persistent finish. This delivers serious bang for the buck.

2009 Talley Vineyards Chardonnay Edna Valley—90 Points

(\$24) Green-tinged gold. Musky aromas of mango, pear skin and dried flowers, with a brighter topnote of lemon zest. Juicy and precise, but with good heft to its tropical fruit and bitter citrus flavors. Finishes bright and long, with excellent clarity and lingering spiciness.

2009 Talley Vineyards Chardonnay Arroyo Grande Valley—91 Points

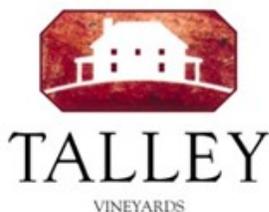
(\$26) Bright yellow. Aromas of quince, yellow plum and fresh fig. The palate offers an array of orchard and pit fruit flavors lifted by a zesty note of bitter lemon zest. A spicy quality gains strength with air and carries through the taut, linear finish. This energetic wine has the depth to work with rich foods and the cut to accompany lighter fare.

2009 Talley Vineyards Chardonnay Oliver's Vineyard Edna Valley—92 Points

(\$32) Bright gold. Pungent, intensely perfumed aromas of honeydew, nectarine and orange pith, with suave floral and spice notes and a hint of white pepper. Lush and sappy on entry, then more nervy in the mid-palate, with excellent focus to its citrus and pit fruit nectar flavors. The floral quality comes back strongly on the finish, which hangs on with excellent tenacity.

2009 Talley Vineyards Chardonnay Rincon Vineyard Arroyo Grande Valley—93 Points

(\$42) Green-tinged gold. An explosively perfumed nose delivers an array of citrus and orchard fruits and flowers, along with notes of ginger and nutmeg. Juicy, penetrating and strikingly pure, with excellent focus to its Meyer lemon, pear and honeysuckle flavors. The floral note clings on the finish, which is sappy, chewy and very long.



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2009 Talley Vineyards Chardonnay Rosemary's Vineyard Arroyo Grande Valley—93 Points

(\$46) Bright yellow-gold. Intensely perfumed nose displays an array of fresh and dried orchard fruits, orange and white flowers. A bracing mineral tone adds bite to the sappy orchard fruit and peach pit flavors. Gains a fleshy quality on the back, finishing with tangy orange zest and spice qualities.

2010 Talley Vineyards Pinot Noir Bishop's Peak San Luis Obispo County—89 Points

(\$20) Vivid red. Fresh red berries and spices on the fragrant nose. Juicy and precise, with good depth to its strawberry and raspberry flavors. Shows very good intensity on the finish, which is tight, linear and nicely persistent.

2009 Talley Vineyards Pinot Noir Edna Valley—90 Points

(\$32) Deep red. Pungent, spice-accented aromas of fresh red fruits, violet and blood orange. Juicy, precise and lively, offering taut redcurrant and bitter cherry flavors and a touch of candied rose. Finishes with firm grip and very good persistence, leaving notes of candied flowers and spices behind.

2009 Talley Vineyards Pinot Noir Arroyo Grande Valley—91 Points

(\$36) Deep, bright red. Suave, perfumed aromas of raspberry, cinnamon and fresh flowers. Sappy and intense on the palate, offering sweet red fruit and rose pastille flavors lifted by tangy acidity. Finishes bright and precise, with the floral note echoing with real authority.

2009 Talley Vineyards Pinot Noir Stone Corral Vineyard Edna Valley—91(+?)

(\$50) Saturated red. Deeper and darker in character than the foregoing wines, displaying scents and flavors of black raspberry, bitter cherry and violet. Then brighter on the back end, finishing with sweet red and dark berry qualities and intense spiciness. This should be really interesting with a few more years of bottle age. Knowing how well Talley's pinots age, I wouldn't hesitate to put this wine away for another ten years.

2009 Talley Vineyards Pinot Noir Rincon Vineyard Arroyo Grande Valley—93 Points

(\$58) Full, bright red. Pungent red berries and blood orange on the intensely perfumed nose, with a suave floral quality adding vivacity. Sappy raspberry and bitter cherry flavors become spicier with air, displaying excellent clarity and depth. Maintains focus and energy through an extremely long, juicy finish. This wine refuses to let go of the palate.

2009 Talley Vineyards Pinot Noir Rosemary's Vineyard Arroyo Grande Valley—93+ Points

(\$70) Vibrant ruby-red. A heady bouquet evokes red berry and floral qualities, along with suave incense and herb nuances. Deep, focused and pure, with outstanding power to its raspberry, cherry and candied rose flavors. Becomes spicier and smokier with air and closes with superb focus and lingering floral-ity. Impeccably balanced pinot with the depth and structure to reward long-term cellaring.
