

Are California Chardonnays Worth Aging?

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Photo by Wes Marshall

Talley Vineyards grapes come from the Arroyo Grande and Edna Valleys, close

Brian Talley of Talley Vineyards

to San Luis Obispo, California.

Despite being towards the center of the state, this is one of the cooler growing areas. That means grapes stay on the vines longer, yet even then, they still aren't all that sweet. Winemakers love that kind of vineyard because they get flavorful grapes that still have plenty of acid. What does that mean for us?

Talley's wines don't have to be old to taste good. We also tasted five delicious Chardonnays that were brand new. The important thing about these wines is that they have generous acidity and restrained fruit. In other words, they are far more reminiscent of a European wine. These wines are targeted at food and there are precious few from America's west coast that can make that claim. That's especially true in the \$16 price point of Talley's Estate Chardonnay. Its apple aromas and palate cleansing tartness made it a perfect match up with our avocado fundido (avocado, queso fresco, chorizo and handmade chipotle masa chips). Some people automatically disdain things that are popular, like Chardonnay.

One last thing. The Talley family have been farmers in the Arroyo Grande Valley since the mid-1940s. To this day, their production is still focused on vegetables. Wine is just a part of what they do. Brian Talley is an unusually thoughtful and introspective man when it comes to his family's farming concerns. Our talks ranged over water rights, biodynamic growing methods, ways he keeps his workers happy, and how well he catalogs what is becoming a library of older family wines. When ace sommelier June Rodil came over to greet us (we had lunch at Second Bar + Kitchen), Brian launched into a discussion about Burgundy wines that showed much more than a passing understanding of their subtleties. In a day when we are all interested in who is getting our hard earned money, the Talley family seems a good candidate. His wines are available at various Twin Liquors and Specs.