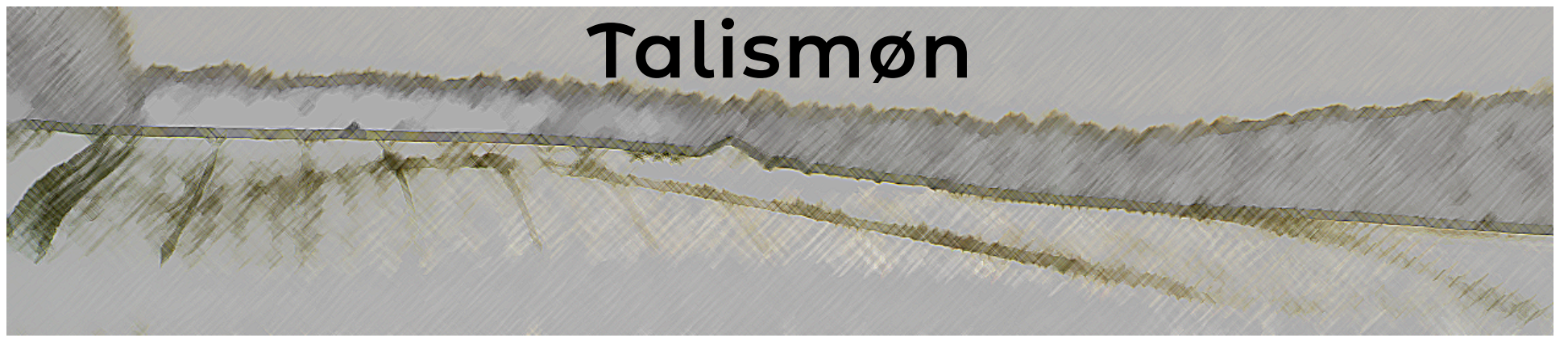


Talismøn



Talismøn[#] is a vineyard and the sparkling wine which comes from it. The vineyard, planted over several years, is a field blend of grape varieties, harvested together. The wine is a multi-vintage blend, with the reserve wines for the blend kept in a solera-like blending system. Talismøn is a brut sparkling wine, aged en tirage for 3 or more years, and finished with a dosage of 6-8 grams per liter sugar, at the lower end of the brut range of sweetness.

At the heart of the Talismøn vineyard are own-rooted vines of pinot noir clones and pinot gris. One winter early in the 1980's, I contacted Myron Redford, of Amity Vineyards, near the town of Amity, Oregon, seeking clones of pinot noir that were being grown in Oregon, to try them here in our vineyard in Leelanau. [I had met Myron when I visited the vineyards and wineries of Oregon in 1976 - Amity Vineyard was only 5 years old at the time.*] Myron collected pruning wood from his vineyard and some neighboring vineyards to send, and suggested that a variety called pinot gris might be interesting for me to grow, and so sent along some of those bud sticks as well.

I buried the bud sticks in the garden until spring, then planted them in nursery rows. They rooted and grew for a year, and then were planted out on the south-facing hillside across the valley from the winery/tasting room. That hillside is the south end of a glacial moraine, with great sun exposure. Moraines are the north-south ridges left behind by the melting glacier, and make for great places to grow grapes.

Surrounding those pinot noir and pinot gris vines, I planted an orchard of peaches. Those peach trees occupied areas that are lying exposed to the north and west, folds in the hillside left by old erosion gullies. After a couple of years, we had a very hard winter which damaged the peaches, so they were removed and in 1986 vignoles vines were planted in their place. The vignoles, being quite winter hardy, have been successful in those areas more exposed to cold winter winds.

This resulted in a vineyard with vignoles vines in full rows along the western edge, then several rows that had vignoles vines on the north and south ends of the rows [on slopes facing north], with the pinot noir and pinot gris in the middle of the rows [on a south facing slope]. That same year I got a selection of pinot noir and chardonnay clones from a clonal trial being conducted by several universities around the country. The pinot noir clones were planted south of the winery/tasting room [and included pinot blanc and pinot auxerrois]. The chardonnay clones were planted on land sloping to the south and west, on the east side of the Talismøn vineyard, adding to it.

In 1992 we had a harvest from the Talismøn vineyard that was large enough to keep separate from the other grapes elsewhere in our vineyards. That wine was kept in barrel until the harvest of 1993, when it was added to the fermenting juice from the Talismøn vineyard that year and the whole fermented. From that blend, I kept back 1/3 in a puncheon, to use the next year to blend with the 1994 harvest juice and re-ferment. This pattern continues. Keeping 1/3 or so of the blend, bottling for a sparkling wine fermentation 2/3 or so of the wine. The reserve was intended to be 1/3, in some years has been as little as 1/4, never as large as 1/2. The first release of Talismøn was from the wine that incorporated the 1994 harvest. [The sparkling wine that included only the 1992 and 1993 harvests was served for the wedding of Lois and myself in 1998.]

We have continued to harvest the Talismøn vineyard, and blend in the reserve wines during the fermentation of that year's juice, every year since, with the exception of 2015. That year a hail storm in August destroyed the entire crop in all of our vineyards. So the reserve wine held after the 2014 harvest was kept until the 2016 harvest.

The containers used to hold the reserve solera have varied over the years, from 55 gallon stainless steel, 205 liter oak champagne barrels, 500 liter oak puncheons, 300 gallon plastic transport tanks. Some of this varied reserve holding is due to total crop size varying, as the vineyard was added onto, some to changes in what I thought best [oak, stainless, plastic] and sometimes what was available. My early plan to have three 500 liter puncheons, keeping one full of reserve, and fermenting in all three at harvest, fairly quickly was outgrown and proved impractical.

Yields from the vineyard have changed, as has the vineyard itself. In some years, I have declared that the pinot noir/blanc/auxerrois clones south of the winery/tasting room should be harvested along with the original Talismøn. In some years I have kept the four full rows of vignoles on the west side of the Talismøn out of that harvest, adding those grapes to the Cremant harvest. And within the past decade, we have added rows to the east of the chardonnay [more west and south sloping land], planted to pinot noir and riesling, which may be declared as part of Talismøn.

The plan to make a single vineyard, multi-vintage wine was born of a desire to produce a sparkling wine that came from a single place, was somewhat consistent from year to year, evolving over time as the vineyard grew. Blending during fermentation was originally done to reduce heat buildup when fermenting in puncheons, and the refreshing nature of the fermentation on the reserve solera was a happy bonus. We continue to add the reserves during fermentation, refreshing both the flavor and bouquet of the reserve solera. The result of this blending system is that there are still a few molecules of the 1992 harvest wine in the blend, 28 years later; and each bottle tells the story of Talismøn from 1992 to the present. Talismøn contains the history of the vineyard, and speaks not only of that year's harvest of that place, but of the life of that place on our planet.

Talismøn is a quintessential terroir wine. Terroir is a winery term often used and nearly as often mis-used. A simple, literal translation from the French becomes 'dirt' or 'soil', which is only a small part of what is meant by terroir in wine-speak. Terroir is so much more than soil; while soil is certainly alive, terroir includes much more than the life of the soil. The terroir that is expressed through the smell and taste of the wine is, to my mind, everything to do with the place the wine comes from: the soil, the micro-flora and fauna, the vines, the weather, the workers tending the wines, etc etc.

To me, Talismøn speaks of the vines growing on that hillside on the Leelanau Peninsula, of the soil there and all the life therein, of the rain and snow that fall, the sunlight and the wind, the pruning shears and the hands that hold them, of the harvester workers, the grape press, of the yeast that consumes the grape sugars and transforms that juice to wine, and of those who clean the tanks, those who fill the bottles, of another yeast which consumes the sugars added to produce the bubbles that make Talismøn sparkle, all of that, and much more is in the speech of the wine called Talismøn, the story we take in with each sip.

Paul Lukacs, in his 2005 book, *The Great Wines of America*, included Talismøn as one of the forty wines profiled. As he said in his introduction, 'every wine in the book is representative, tasting of itself and of more than itself.' Talismøn was in very good company there, and I was chuffed. [Apparently, I still am].

[#] Why are the vineyard and wine named Talismøn? The name references the word talisman [defined by *The Macquarie Dictionary* as 'anything of almost magical power'], without being exactly the word. Think of Uluru, also called Ayers Rock, in Australia - a sacred place, a talisman for the Pitjantjatjara, the aboriginal people there. Talisman Winery in Glen Ellen, CA, would, I believe, object to our use of the word talisman itself. Yet I do want to convey the magic of this place and the wine that is born here. Thus, Talismøn.

* Myron was then living in a small trailer at the vineyard. We both had bushy beards and hit it off. The only other time I ever saw Myron was, oddly, nearly 30 years later at a wine tasting hosted by our Ambassador to France at his residence in Paris. Both of our beards were trimmed. While the tasting was fun, and we did have some hotelier interest in our products, it did not result in our finding a French importer interested in selling our sparkling wines in France. I was not surprised.