



Brian Talley
Vintner and third generation vegetable farmer
Talley Vineyards

As third generation vegetable farmer and second generation winegrower of Talley Vineyards, Brian Talley carries on his family's heritage of land stewardship and commitment to sustainability from the region where he was born and raised. From the fields of Arroyo Grande to the esteemed ranks of the wine world, his legacy is not only etched in the estate sites of Talley Vineyards but also in the broader tapestry of the Central Coast wine industry, where his innovative leadership and commitment to quality have left an indelible mark.

Rooted in the soil, Brian's life was profoundly shaped by the principles of hard work and an inspiration to sustain his parents' and grandparents' reputations as leading farmers on the Central Coast. "I always knew I wanted to work on the family farm, and couldn't wait until I turned 12 and could start picking green beans," he recalls. "Growing up on a farm gave me an appreciation for the demands of farm labor, the pride of place and the value of community collaboration."

Beginning in the early 1980s, when Brian was a sophomore in high school, his parents began planting grapes at what is now Talley's Rincon Vineyard to diversify their crops. Aside from assisting in a few experimental homemade vintages, Brian's ultimate plan remained following his father's footsteps, and eventually taking over the farm. However, in 1986 Talley Vineyards began bottling its own commercial wines, and consulting winemaker Steve Rasmussen encouraged him to find work at Oakland-based wine shop Curds and Whey during his collegiate years at UC Berkeley. Among the myriad bottles from across the globe, Brian's passion for Pinot Noir was sparked upon tasting the 1985 Knudsen Erath Vintage Select bottling from Oregon. "Like most people at the time, I was focused on learning about bigger Cabernet-based wines which were in fashion, and discovering the delicate and ethereal qualities of Pinot Noir completely rocked my world."

This epiphany marked the beginning of his transition from vegetable farming to the art of viticulture and enology authentically rooted in his cool climate home of the Arroyo Grande Valley. Upon his return to the family fold after graduating in 1988, Brian's involvement with the developing wine venture burgeoned alongside his duties on the vegetable farm. In 1991, at the age of 25, the family appointed Brian to General Manager of Talley Vineyards. "I was blessed with amazing mentors, including my father, Jim Clendenen of Au Bon Climat and Chuck Bennett, the

original marketing director of Sonoma Cutrer." Brian became President of Talley Vineyards in 2004.

At the heart of Brian's philosophy is a reverence for the symbiotic relationship between agriculture and winemaking. His leadership at Talley Vineyards is characterized by a commitment to estate grown wines that eloquently express their San Luis Obispo Coast origins. "Our journey towards single-vineyard bottlings, native yeast fermentations, and sustainable farming practices is a testament to our dedication to working in harmony with nature," Brian explains. "Through trial and error working in the vineyards, we have learned the importance of not trying to impose our handprint and vision but work in sync with what each site and what each season provides us."

Over Brian's tenure, he has steered Talley Vineyards to become a celebrated producer of Chardonnay and Pinot Noir, lauded by critics and presented at the country's most highly regarded venues, including being served at the White House numerous times. In 2006, the 2002 Rosemary's Chardonnay won the 30th Anniversary of The Judgment of Paris when it was named Best California Chardonnay, a feat that astounded his humble family. Brian shares, "This recognition exceeded my wildest dreams."

Beyond the vineyard, Brian has emerged as a vanguard in the California wine community, co-founding the highly-popular World of Pinot Noir wine festival, establishing the Fund for Vineyard and Farm Workers with his wife Johnine, and taking a leading role in the creation of the San Luis Obispo Coast AVA. Reflecting on these efforts, he remarked, "I love bringing people together to support a cause that helps our community, whether educating people about the merits of San Luis Obispo Coast Pinot Noir or securing support for our essential farm worker community."

Today, Brian Talley finds daily inspiration in the land he continues to steward. "My career has been one of discovery and connection, deeply rooted in my family's land," he reflects. Brian lives on the edge of Talley Farms with his wife Johnine with whom he shares two daughters. Together, the family enjoys traveling, hiking, cooking and recipe development. Alongside Talley Vineyards wines, his farm to table cookbook, *Our California Table, Celebrating the Seasons with the Talley Family*, pays homage to three core pillars of his career and homelife: food, wine and family.