



LITWAN WEIN

Thalheim Chalofe

Situated in Northern Switzerland, the Aargau is a land of rolling farmland with hills topped with forests. It is a quietly bustling canton of small towns and villages and an ideally bucolic place for commuters working in the surrounding cities of Basel, Zürich, and Luzern. The geology of Aargau is a fascinating study of the interaction between rocks being built and weathered. Underneath most of the canton is Jurassic limestone of the same age as found in Baden, Jura, Neuchâtel, and Burgundy. With its hills topped with trees providing a multitude of microclimates and exposures, is it any wonder that a young winemaker with a passion for unique terroir expression would set up his cellar in the Aargau?

Tom Litwan didn't start out intending to be the rising star of Pinot Noir in Switzerland, having first worked as a mason after graduating from school. A brief stay in Chablis, where he worked at a guesthouse, resulted in a friendship with Samuel Billaud. Together they spent a fair amount of time exploring Samuel's family cellar, where Tom was introduced to the greatest bottles of Grand Cru Burgundy. Next, Tom returned to Switzerland to study winemaking at the Center of Viticulture in Wädenswil, focusing on biodynamics since all his favorite growers in Burgundy had already converted to biodynamic farming. He worked with Jean-Daniel Schlaepfer of Domaine des Balisiers in Geneva alongside biodynamic consultant Pierre Masson. His embrace of biodynamics resulted in a transfer to French-speaking Switzerland to complete his studies in a place where biodynamics was not quite as controversial.

In 2006 Tom settled in the Aargau and began acquiring small parcels of vines in some of the canton's most prestigious sites. Despite his extensive background, Tom prefers to see biodynamics as one vital step in growing grapes with vitality and a pure expression of place rather than all the mystical marketing talk that so frequently surrounds this farming practice. While this altitude might not seem extreme, the proximity to the Alps and the surrounding forests make these sites some of the last sites to ripen in the Aargau. He prefers heritage clones and massale selection, harvests by hand, and fermentations are spontaneous. His wines age in well-seasoned French oak barrels undisturbed until bottling with only a tiny amount of SO₂ for stability.

Chalofe in the local Swiss-German dialect is Kalkofen in German or lime kiln in English. As the name suggests, this is a chalky site with a southern orientation and barren rocky soils ensuring ripening despite its elevation of 500 meters above sea level. Sheltered by forest above and with a magnificent view of the Aare Valley below, this was the first site where Tom Litwan acquired vines when settling in the Aargau. Considered by many to be Aargau's preeminent Grand Cru candidate, Chalofe is a ripe but brooding Pinot with soaring aromatics and a complex countenance of supple fruit and forest-floor flavors.

ORIGIN

Switzerland

APPELLATION

Aargau

SOIL

Clay-limestone, Jurassic limestone

AGE OF VINES

15-50+

ELEVATION

400 meters

VARIETIES

Pinot Noir

FARMING

DEMETER certified organic and biodynamic

FERMENTATION

Hand harvested, whole-cluster natural yeast fermentation in 228L French oak barrels

AGING

12 months in neutral 228L French oak barrels, vegan

ACCOLADES

93+ – 2022 Thalheim Chalofe – Wine Advocate

94+ – 2020 Thalheim Chalofe – Wine Advocate

95 – 2019 Thalheim Chalofe – Wine Advocate

