



# In Your Dreams

## TALBOTT RANCH — LOVINGLY BUILT WITH REPURPOSED WOOD AND 120-YEAR-OLD TOOLS

BY ELAINE HESSER

**I**F YOU'VE enjoyed a bottle of Talbott Estate's Diamond T chardonnay or pinot noir, then you know you've had a taste of one of the best vineyards around.

Now that vineyard, part of a 162-acre ranch complex in Carmel Valley, is up for sale. Tim Allen of Coldwell Banker has the listing (TalbottEstate.com), priced at \$14.5 million. The Diamond T Ranch has belonged to the Talbott family since 1961, when Robert Talbott Sr., who loved the mountains, decided he wanted the hilltop spot.

After he and son Robb decided to get into the wine business in the early 1980s, they planted grapes there in 1984. The 1948 John Deere tractor that Robb used to clear 25 acres of the land remains near the original home, and comes with the property.

According to Wine Spectator, E. & J. Gallo purchased Talbott's 565-acre Sleepy Hollow Vineyard, the Talbott brand and the winery in 2015. Gallo has also leased the Diamond T vineyards and is taking care of the associated

But after decades of driving over that hilltop, he was tempted by sights of "sunsets and snow on the mountains," so five years ago, he built what's now called the main house to take better advantage of the views.

The homes and surrounding buildings blend in nicely with the landscape, and construction materials came from all over. "I love to reclaim things," said Talbott.

### Barn raising

For example, the entryway to the main house is paved with stone from a road constructed in 15th-century France. According to Talbott, Jan de Luz, design maven and owner of his namesake linen shop on Dolores, bought 8 miles of the hand-cut stone thoroughfare and replaced it with a modern road in the bargain.

Weathered gray lodgepole pine boards that were part of a snow fence along Interstate 80 in Wyoming, complete with bullet holes, found its way into the paneling. The bike barn — originally built to house 35 bicycles and later 35 motorcycles that ultimately went to the Moto Talbott Museum at 4 East Carmel Valley Road — was built with timbers from a friend's 1848 dairy barn, located north of Shasta.

To complete the structure, Talbott apprenticed for two summers with a friend who is a barn builder in Maine. He taught Talbott how to use mortice-and-tenon joints — no nails required — and helped him poke around in antique shops to assemble a set of 120-year-old tools.

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**The 162-acre Talbott ranch (top), with its five-year-old main house, associated buildings and Diamond T vines, is up for sale for \$14.5 million. The dining area in the main house (center) is a tall, elegant oval, with a spoked-wheel pattern in the ceiling and floors. And when ranch owner Robb Talbott couldn't bear to part with an old VW bus after salvaging it for parts, he made it into the Hippie Fountain.**

PHOTOS/WAYNE CAPILI (CENTER) AND RON BIRD (TOP AND ABOVE)



# TALBOTT

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Talbott said the building was mostly completed in one afternoon with no electricity and a lot of help from friends — an old-fashioned barn raising.

Then there’s the recycled van. About 20 years ago, when he and his son collected Volkswagens, they salvaged a transmission from a Westfalia camper. Talbott said he couldn’t bear to part with the vehicle’s body, so he made it into what’s been dubbed the Hippie Fountain. Water pours over rocks through an open side door from the faded red VW into a small pool below. “It’s become an old friend,” commented Talbott.

## **Gracious, comfortable**

A wine cellar with two massively thick doors is about 70 percent underground, with 15-inch-thick walls providing

natural insulation for prized bottles. Even though there is no refrigeration, Talbott said it naturally remains at a constant 55 degrees. He used the cellar to do blind tastings with distributors, pitting his wines against others from France, and there are still about 75 cases in there that Talbott said he might be willing to part with for the right buyer.

The original home — the one that started as Talbott’s hand-built cabin — comprises two bedrooms and one bathroom with 2,786 square feet of living area and a large outdoor pool.

It’s gracious and comfortable, with a light, airy feel that embraces the outdoors. There are established fruit trees, including Meyer lemons, limes, oranges, tangerines and avocados, near an outdoor pizza oven, and a lovely rose garden.

The new main house was designed by local architect Craig Holdren, with glorious 360-degree views of the Santa Lucia mountains. It is traditional board-and-batten construction (“I like old things,” commented Talbott) with yellow cedar. The kitchen incorporates repurposed redwood from a home originally built on Spindrift Road in the Carmel Highlands.

There are 4,188 square feet of living space, including three bedrooms and two-and-a-half baths.

## **Gallery space**

The dining room is mostly open to the rest of the house, but surrounded by a two-story oval “silo” that Talbott said was Holdren’s idea. The ceiling is yellow cedar, and looks like a wheel — albeit an egg-shaped one — that’s mirrored in the floorboards. “It feels like being in church,” Talbott said of the space.

At the center of the house is a 23-by-19-foot gallery, but if art collections don’t tickle your fancy, it would be great for entertaining, too. The kitchen features a butcher-block-topped island with a sink, alder-wood cabinets and a six-burner, double-oven professional stove.

Windows are strategically placed to take advantage of natural light and views of the rolling, vine-covered hillside. It all feels weathered, comfortable and right at home among the 300-year-old oaks that have been twisted and gnarled by the wind. A nice glass of pinot wouldn’t hurt, either.