

How Felton Road Chardonnay is crafting a Central Otago style

If you are making Chablis you will probably have several generations of the family to consult and 1000s of different expressions to try, across different terroirs, altitudes and in different vintages. For Felton Road's Blair Walter, making Chardonnay in Central Otago has no such history. Unfairly overlooked, because of Otago's excellence in making Pinot Noir, the region is slowly developing its own distinctive style, argues [Anne Krebiehl MW](#).

Felton Road Bannockburn Chardonnay, 2017

Fleshy fruit and the earthy richness of a high-solid ferment are apparent but also an edge of something green and fresh. Hints of flint and smoke are softened by lactic roundness. The palate shows burgeoning stone fruit as well as great precision and freshness. This spent 13 months in barrel of which just 4% was new oak, the rest are barrels of up to 18 years of age. In fact, 70% of the barrels are older than five years.

Felton Road Chardonnay Block 2, 2017

From 25-year-old vines, again that earthy richness but also intense stone fruit, confit lemon and something heady and fresh – it exists somewhere between bergamot and rhubarb. The palate has the inherent richness of Central Otago, a streak of warmth cooled by pristine freshness. Walter notes that the fulsome fruit expression is also down to the Mendoza clone. Its 17 months in barrel give it texture but no toasty notes at all.

Felton Road Chardonnay Block 6, 2017

Just like Block 2 this is on Lochar Gravels, but this is a steeper site. Walter says its windiness makes for smaller berries and a little more subdued fruit expression. This is a sleek number with wonderful intensity and drive. Its acidity feels as sharp as a steely knife blade flashing under blue skies in Central Otago's blazing sunlight. Not for the fainthearted but for lovers of energy and zest.