

A recipe for success

Globally, the wine industry is in decline but, here, Felton Road is swimming against the tide. BY MICHAEL COOPER

It's tough times in the wine industry, with consumption declining around the world, including in New Zealand (see "Last orders", the *Listener*, February 22). But Blair Walter, winemaker at Felton Road since the first vintage in 1997, points out there are wineries whose "careful attention to producing distinctive and high-quality wines over many years, with widespread global distribution and considerable recognition, enables them to swim against the general downturn ..."

Estate-grown at Bannockburn, in Central Otago, Felton Road's wines are selling as strongly as ever, says Walter. What are the keys to this success? Felton Road's wines are all grown, made and bottled on the estate, and since 2007 have been fully certified as organic and biodynamic.

Since achieving its target size of 12,000 cases of wine a year in 2006, production has been kept at the same level. Today, the wines are available in more than 40 countries, and Felton Road is active in those markets, attending events and meeting wine lovers. Walter reports its trade partners and private customers have remained "very loyal and enthusiastic".

Felton Road Bannockburn Central Otago Chardonnay 2023 ★★★★★

Light yellow/green with a hint of straw, this barrel-fermented wine is fragrant and weighty. It has concentrated, vibrant, peachy, citrusy flavours, balanced acidity and a very harmonious, dry, long finish. Gentle biscuity notes add complexity. Not a "showy"

Wine of the week

Felton Road Bannockburn Central Otago Pinot Noir 2023 ★★★★★

Looking for the perfect introduction to Felton Road? The winery's "standard" pinot noir is a distinguished red, blended from its four vineyards in the district and matured for more than a year in French oak casks. Highly fragrant, mouthfilling and savoury, it has concentrated, ripe cherry, plum and spice flavours, oak complexity, and a finely structured, long finish. It is arguably the best vintage yet. (13.5% alc/vol) \$67-\$70

wine, but highly satisfying, it should be at its best 2027+. (14% alc/vol) \$52

Felton Road Bannockburn Central Otago Riesling 2024 ★★★★★

Grown in The Elms Vineyard, this beautiful wine is full of energy. Bright lemon/green, with a sense of lightness, it has rich, peachy flavours, moderate sweetness and a crisp, very harmonious finish. It's already delicious. (10% alc/vol) \$41

Felton Road Block 3 Central Otago Pinot Noir 2023 ★★★★★

This lovely red is among this country's most compelling pinot noirs. Deep, bright ruby, it is invitingly perfumed, with rich cherry and plum flavours, hints of spices and dark chocolate, and notable ripeness, roundness, complexity and harmony. Already delicious, it should flourish for a decade. (13.5% alc/vol) \$120-\$140 ■

For more
Wine columns
from the
Listener, go to
listener.co.nz