



Felton Road

Feted as one of New Zealand's best producers and justifiably so, in my opinion, for time and time again Felton Road's wines triumph against all-comers. Located in Bannockburn, Central Otago, its vineyards nestle on a gentle north-facing slope between 200m and 335m and overshadowed by 2,000m mountains, their micro-climate benefits from low humidity, wide diurnal temperature variation and high sunshine hours. Although not yet certified, winemaker Blair Walter told me that they apply biodynamics to all the vineyards and benefit from a three-tier, gravity-flow winery and use wild yeasts as standard. I tasted their current portfolio at the winery with many turning up in blind tastings, as well as a comprehensive Block 3 vertical that will appear separately. The Pinots usually include some whole bunches depending upon the vintage, fermented in small open-top vessels and matured in oak of which around 30% is new. They mature for between 12 and 18 months and are bottled without fining or filtering. "Calvert" is a joint-venture with the fruit shared by Pyramid Valley Estate and Craggy Range.

2006 Felton Road Pinot Noir

Wine Advocate Issue #176 Apr 2008	Neal Martin	92	Drink -	\$27-\$50
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The ensuing 2006 Pinot Noir cropped up in a blind tasting and shone brilliantly, somewhat closed at first with a certain earthiness and then violets, the palate imbued with grainy tannins, pure brambly fruit and superb delineation on the refined finish.

2006 Felton Road Calvert

Wine Advocate Issue #176 Apr 2008	Neal Martin	90	Drink -	\$54
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Felton produced 650 cases of the 2006 Calvert Pinot Noir, the nose reluctant at first but unfurls to reveal wild strawberry, cherry and rose petals laced with a hint of mocha. The palate is firm and quite sinewy (a la Craggy) with fresh, red-berried fruit and a touch of thyme on the finish.

2006 Felton Road Cornish Point

Wine Advocate Issue #176 Apr 2008	Neal Martin	91	Drink -	
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The 2006 Cornish Point Vineyard Pinot Noir is more muted on the nose which is imbued with a dusty, slightly savory quality with a touch of plum jam, the palate silky smooth upon entry with its grainy tannins becoming more apparent towards a sensuous finish with notes of wild strawberry and raspberry. It is very focused and harmonious, a joy to drink. New Zealand wine does not get much better than the coveted Block 3 and Block 5 Pinot Noirs although opinion seems to be split as to which is better.

2006 Felton Road Pinot Noir Block Three

Wine Advocate Issue #176 Apr 2008	Neal Martin	95	Drink -	\$65-\$65
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The 2006 Block 3 Pinot Noir vanquished all opposition at a comprehensive blind comparison of Central Otago Pinot Noirs with its bewitching nose of red cherry, raspberry, lavender and honey, the palate is blessed with a natural sense of balance and elegant building towards a crescendo of vibrant red-berried fruits on the finish that has great delineation and poise. A bottle should be delivered on every doorstep in the Cote d'Or!

2006 Felton Road Block 5 Pinot Noir

Wine Advocate Issue #176 Apr 2008	Neal Martin	95	Drink -	\$69-\$70
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The outstanding 2006 Block 5 Pinot Noir has a captivating nose of baked red cherries, plum, mocha and violets with stunning definition, the feminine palate just beautifully balanced with tart red-berried fruits, raspberry leaf, boysenberry, leather and chestnut. It just builds and builds in the mouth and maintains its freshness and poise.

2005 Felton Road Pinot Noir

Wine Advocate Issue #176 Apr 2008	Neal Martin	90	Drink -	\$38-\$62
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The excellent 2005 Pinot Noir has a dense mulberry-tinged nose with a touch of sea salt, maraschino cherry, loganberry & wild hedgerow – quite an imposing bouquet leading to a vibrant palate that is bursting full of bright cherry-flavored fruit leading towards a more savory finish.

2005 Felton Road Pinot Noir Block Three

Wine Advocate Issue #176 Apr 2008	Neal Martin	93	Drink -	\$63
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Meanwhile the 2005 Block 3 Pinot Noir is more introverted and brooding on the nose with black plum, black cherries, a little wet sand and cooked meats developing upon acquaintance. More masculine and tannic than the Block 5, this has a foursquare boysenberry, roasted chestnut tinged finish but give this time and you will be rewarded (as evidenced by the older vintage sampled.)

2006 Felton Road Chardonnay

Wine Advocate Issue #176 Apr 2008	Neal Martin	88	Drink -	\$27-\$30
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The 2006 Chardonnay has an understated nose of apple laced with passion fruit with good definition. The palate is full-bodied and buttery in texture with perhaps just a little too much new oak?

2006 Felton Road Block 6

Wine Advocate Issue #176 Apr 2008	Neal Martin	92	Drink -	\$49
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The 2006 Block 6 Chardonnay is much better, spending 18 months in barrel although it had to be reluctantly filtered as it stubbornly refused to clear naturally. Deep in color, this has a delectable smoky nose with a touch of limestone, the palate beautifully balanced with well-integrated vanilla-tinged new oak that is never so rude as to dominate proceedings, with coconut and almond intertwined on the finish. Just 270 cases produced.

2007 Felton Road Dry Riesling

Wine Advocate Issue #176 Apr 2008	Neal Martin	92	Drink 2008 - 2013	\$24-\$25
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All the Rieslings are whole-bunch pressed and the 2007 Dry Riesling was my favorite of the three with an intense nose of orange-blossom, passion fruit and guava, a little spritzy upon entry with superb weight and concentration on the palate, grapefruit and passion fruit lingering on the aftertaste. You would never guess this has just 3.5 grams per liter residual sugar & it should drink over 2-5 years.

2007 Felton Road Riesling

Wine Advocate Issue #176 Apr 2008	Neal Martin	89	Drink -	\$28
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The 2007 Riesling does not have the aromatic “tension” of the Dry cuvee, a little viscous on the palate with a touch of barrel sugar on the Spatlese-esque finish.

2007 Felton Road Block 1

Wine Advocate Issue #176 Apr 2008	Neal Martin	91	Drink -	
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The 2007 Block 1 Riesling is better with a complex nose of granite and pear, augmented by white flowers and a touch of lanolin, the palate beautifully balanced with pear drops, orange-blossom and apricot on the long finish that never becomes cloying. Again, this has good ageing potential, up to 6-7 years.