

WHITEHAVEN

SINGLE VINEYARD “FOSSIL BLOCK”

RIVERSIDE CHARDONNAY 2024



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WINES OF MARLBOROUGH
NEW ZEALAND

Whitehaven's single vineyard range of wines speak to the importance of terroir in creating unique, premium quality wines, and allow us to showcase outstanding, smaller parcels of fruit identified by our winemakers each vintage. Reflecting the exclusive nature of these wines, each bottle is individually numbered. 'Fossil Block' is the name of the vineyard block where fruit for this wine is sourced – named for the ancient Awatere river fossils found at the site. We have used a lightweight bottle to lessen this wine's impact on the environment.

Colour / Appearance: Pale-straw yellow.

Aroma / Bouquet: The wine possesses a unique aromatic profile, reflecting where it is grown – the essence of *terroir*. Lifted and refined, with floral characteristics, white stone fruit and subtle crystalline, flinty and earthy undertones.

Palate: Concentrated yet delicate, a thread of mineral salinity, reminiscent of river stones, runs through the palate. The distinct mineral structure supports complex stone fruit and citrus flavours. Vibrant acidity carries the wine to a long, flinty finish.

Food Match: The wine's vibrant acidity and mineral backbone pair seamlessly with fresh seafood such as oysters, seared scallops or simply grilled fish. The textural depth of the palate would also compliment roasted chicken dishes, creamy risotto, or soft-ripened cheeses.

Cellaring: Enjoy now for its freshness and purity, or cellar for 5-7 years to reveal richer, more complex flavours and a silky texture.

Alcohol: 13.5%

Residual Sugar: Dry

Acidity: 5.8g/L

pH: 3.25

Climate:

Unlike the previous two years, the growing season leading into the 2024 vintage began after a dry winter, with the soil water balance in deficit. Fewer inflorescences generally and then a protracted flowering window in November and December, resulted in poor fruit set and fewer berries per bunch than the average in most areas. Dry conditions persisted for the duration of the growing season, minimising disease threats and resulting in clean fruit at harvest. A spell of warm weather through late December and January, in combination with the lighter crop, resulted in a rapid physiological advancement against the long-term average. Fortunately, the headwaters of the Wairau and Awatere river systems received enough rain to keep irrigation schemes open through the season and into harvest, at which point a return to cool, crisp days became the norm.

Winemaking:

The fruit was hand-harvested in the cool of the morning and whole-cluster pressed, with the free run juice carefully separated from the heavier pressings. After a brief settling of less than 10 hours, the juice was racked with all light solids retained, to contribute palate weight and texture. Fermentation began in stainless steel tank with cultured yeast, before being transferred midway to seasoned 500L French oak puncheons. No new oak was used, ensuring the wine's restrained character and mineral thread. The wine underwent malolactic fermentation and matured for 11 months in oak on lees, followed by a further 4 months in tank. Bottled with no fining or filtering to preserve integrity.

Grape growing:

The Fossil Block Chardonnay comes from a small 0.23-hectare parcel of Chardonnay (clone 95) planted nearly 20 years ago beside the Awatere River at Whitehaven's Tussocks vineyard. The site's fluvial soils are rich with oceanic fossil material, inspiring the wine's name and contributing a refined mineral character to the palate. Pruned to two canes and naturally low yielding, the block has become a favourite for consistently producing fruit which is distinct and compelling.

Harvest date: 17th March 2024



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