Quartz Reef Pinot Noir 2010 Central Otago

26 Jan 2012 by Jancis Robinson

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From £14.99, NZ$34.99, HK$248, Aus$44.95

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Of course it is well known that Central Otago, the far south of New Zealand's South Island, is a hot spot for Pinot Noir – sometimes so hot that the wines can be just too sweet and fruity and a tad too alcoholic.

Producers such as Felton Road and Rippon are working tirelessly to ensure that each year's wines are more subtle and interesting than the last. (Had a delicious **Felton Road, Elms Vineyard Chardonnay 2009 Central Otago** the other day, part of the case I bought in aid of the Christchurch earthquake victims. It stood up well to some 2010 Pernand-Vergelesses that I was tasting at the same time.) But there is a certain sameness among many Central Otago Pinot Noirs, a sort of agreeable and very obvious candy character, often with a little overlay of the dried-herbs (some wags say marijuana) scent that characterises the region.

What I liked about **Quartz Reef Pinot Noir 2010 Central Otago** was that, despite its 14% alcohol, it is genuinely appetising and reasonably subtle with an attractive dry finish. It seemed more Burgundian to me than many Central Otago Pinots - perhaps because, as Austrian winemaker Rudi Bauer (pictured) promises on the back label, 'the wine was made the European way'. The grapes were apparently picked 14–16 April and they do show the juiciness and herbiness characteristic of Central Otago but have none of the too-obvious sweetness. I feel pretty confident that it is capable of improving over the next three or four years.

As you can read in Monty Waldin's profile of Quartz Reef, this Bendigo estate, on a terrace overlooking the lake, is biodynamic, and Burgundian influence there is strong. It also produces one of the region's few respected traditional-method fizzes. The wines used to be imported into the UK by Lay & Wheeler but initially the only UK retailer I could find was Slurp.co.uk who have been selling this for £16.99. But Majestic have contacted me to say that they list it at £18.74 but by the terms of their 'buy two Kiwi wines and save 20%' offer that runs until Monday evening, the price comes down to £14.99 a bottle.

Wine-searcher.com cannot locate any US stockists, I'm afraid, but it is sold in Hong Kong, Australia and of course New Zealand, where the cellar door price, as on the winery website, is NZ$40 – although it is possible to find it much more cheaply at the odd New Zealand wine store. The wine seems particularly expensive in Australia, incidentally.

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