

DAWN CHORUS



Chardonnay

2025 Hawke's Bay, Aotearoa New Zealand

The one-liner

Chardonnay built on fruit. No oak, wild ferment, a long time on lees, and a little stirring – picked while the dawn chorus is in full swing, with the dew still on the ground.

Where it's from

This certified organic vineyard is about 20 miles from the sea, at the foot of limestone hills that were pushed up out of the ocean. Forty-five thousand years ago a river flooded across this valley; before that, the whole area was a salt lake. The sea water is long gone. The salt isn't – shallow river silts over greywacke stone, with slightly saline sub-soils underneath. Cool climate, not much rain.

What we did

A warm season, so most of the work was in the vineyard – keeping the canopy in check and the fruit clean. Picked at just over 23 brix, in the cool of the morning to hold the acid. Wild ferment, then a long spell on yeast lees with a little stirring; with no barrel in the picture, that's where all the texture has to come from. We're after a pure, flinty Chardonnay, not an oaky one. One pass through the filter on the way to bottle, and everything we worked for stays in.

What it tastes like

Flint, pear and nectarine. Lemon and nougat underneath, proper acid, and a texture that comes from lees rather than oak. The finish is long. Good with roasted chicken.

The wink

This is what we're thinking about Chardonnay now.

The numbers

Alcohol	14.0%	Residual sugar	< 2.0 g/L
pH	3.4	Total acidity	5.99 g/L
Harvest	2025	Bottled	February 2026
Closure	Screwcap	Bottle / case	12
Production	450 cases	Organic status	Certified organic vineyard