MOSS WOOD
Wilyabrup
MARGARET RIVER
WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Est'd 1969

RIBBON VALE 2024 CHARDONNAY

VINTAGE NOTES

The 2023–24 growing season took Clare and Keith on a journey back in time, all the way to 1994/95. That vintage is still remembered as one of Margaret River's finest, and as the season unfolded, it became clear that 2024 was shaping up in a remarkably similar way. Warm, dry conditions defined the year, making it the warmest vintage since 2007.

At Moss Wood, we have always embraced seasons like these. While lower rainfall can present challenges, our dry-farmed vines have the deep roots and resilience to withstand drier conditions, just as they did in 1995. The reward for such a season is fruit that reaches full ripeness with ease, without disease pressure or compromise in quality. Still, the 2024 season sparked plenty of discussion among the wider wine community. For experienced hands, these conditions were familiar, but for those newer to the industry—especially those who entered during the cooler, milder seasons of 2017, 2019, or 2021—this was something entirely different.

The growing season began in an almost uneventful fashion, with ideal conditions for flowering and fruit set. From late October, the vines had little in the way of rainfall, with just 10mm recorded from flowering through to harvest. This dry spell accelerated ripening, shortening the growing cycle and bringing harvest forward significantly. Chardonnay completed its journey from flowering to harvest in just 108 days, compared to the long-term average of 120 days, while Sauvignon Blanc ripened in 90 days, down from the usual 99 days.

MEDIAN HARVEST DATE
14/02/2024

HARVEST RIPENESS
13.5º Be

YIELD
4.44 t/ha

BOTTLING
15th January, 2025

RIPENING TIME FROM FLOWERING TO HARVEST
108 days

ALCOHOL
14%

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The warmth of the season was evident in the numbers. The average temperature for Chardonnay was 20.65°C, higher than the long-term average of 20.16°C, but remarkably similar to 2022 where the average temperature was 20.64°C. Sauvignon Blanc recorded an average temperature of 20.64°C, also slightly above its norm of 20.43°C and once again aligning it very closely with 2022. The vines saw extended periods in their ideal ripening range, with Chardonnay basking in 1,039 hours between 18–28°C, just above its 1,000-hour benchmark, and Elsa accumulating 911 hours. Temperatures above 33°C also played their part, with Chardonnay experiencing 80 hours and Elsa 64 hours, both well beyond the minimum required to achieve full flavour development.

With such a warm and dry season, harvest arrived earlier than usual. Ribbon Vale Chardonnay was picked on 14th February, a full 27 days ahead of the long-term average, yielding 4.44 tonnes per hectare, 5% below the norm. Sauvignon Blanc was harvested on 6th February, 21 days ahead of average, with a yield of 6.9 tonnes per hectare, 34% below average. While yields were lower, the fruit quality was exceptional, with pristine bunches and concentrated flavours.

Now in its fourth vintage, Ribbon Vale Chardonnay continues to define itself alongside Moss Wood Chardonnay as an expression of site individuality. The Ribbon Vale vineyard, with its higher altitude and cooler conditions, produces wines with bright citrus, white peach, and grapefruit nuances, while Moss Wood Chardonnay leans towards richer yellow peach, marmalade, and cashew. With identical vineyard and winemaking techniques, these stylistic differences highlight the impact of terroir.

Looking back, the 2024 vintage stands as a reminder of what Margaret River is capable of in warm, dry years. If history is any guide, it may well be remembered alongside 1995 as one of the greats.

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PRODUCTION NOTES

Both the Chardonnay and Sauvignon Blanc were hand-picked and brought to the winery, where they underwent the same winemaking process. The fruit was hand-sorted and whole-bunch pressed before the juice was clarified by flotation and inoculated with a selection of yeast strains for primary fermentation in stainless steel tanks. Fermentation temperatures were closely monitored, reaching a maximum of 20°C. As the fermentations reached the halfway mark, they were transferred to 225-litre French oak barriques for the completion of alcoholic and malolactic fermentation. The new oak component in each wine varied slightly due to our considerations around stylistic impacts, so 10% of the barrels in the Elsa were new, compared 47% in the Chardonnay being new.

Once alcoholic fermentation was complete, both wines remained in barrel for the completion of malolactic fermentation before being blended, adjusted with sulfur dioxide, and returned to barrel for maturation. They remained in oak until January 3rd, 2025, spending a total of nine months, before final blending in stainless steel. While fining trials were conducted to refine tannin balance, no adjustments were deemed necessary. Instead, both wines were fined with bentonite for protein stability, followed by cold stabilisation and sterile filtration, before being bottled on January 15th, 2025.

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TASTING NOTES

Colour and Condition: Clear and bright condition. Pale straw colour with golden hue.

Nose: Bright and lifted, displaying aromas of ripe yellow peach, preserved lemon, jasmine, and honey. These are complemented by secondary notes of shortbread biscuit, puff pastry, and a subtle hint of oak in the background.

Palate: Rich and full-bodied, with fresh acidity and well-balanced phenolics. Flavors of honeydew melon, apricot, and cashew nut are layered with generous notes of nougat, fresh bread, and crème caramel. The oak is subtle, toasty, and beautifully integrated, adding depth and length to the palate.

CELLARING

Cellaring Chardonnay requires patience, as its youthful charm makes it hard to resist. However, those who wait will be rewarded—after around 10 years, it will develop rich secondary notes of butter, caramel, and toast. Drawing from our experience with Moss Wood Chardonnay, we suggest a final cellaring time of at least 20 years for optimal complexity and depth.

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