



**MOSS WOOD**  
MARGARET RIVER  
WESTERN AUSTRALIA

# W I N T E R N E W S

ISSUE 63 JULY 2007

## Moss Wood 2004 Cabernet Sauvignon

The growing season leading up to the 2004 vintage was a very encouraging one with good rainfall following excellent flowering conditions.

This meant that bunch weights and therefore yields were good. There were no disease issues and the weather had been mild up to the beginning of vintage. All the early varieties were due for harvest on or slightly behind the average starting date. When it was getting close to the cabernet harvest, Keith and the team did a routine sample on Thursday 18th March and concluded that the grapes were nearly ripe but probably needed between 7 and 14 days more. The learned viticulturists knew there was a warm weekend coming, but considered that since it was mid-March, it wouldn't get too hot, probably not much hotter than 30°C.

Keith headed to Perth confident that Ian, Matt and Josh had all options covered and that he could go to Adelaide for a Moss Wood function, happy the vineyard was fine for at least the next week. Next day he

was sweltering in the Qantas Club lounge because the air conditioning wasn't working. No Qantas jokes please! Perth was having such a hot day, the air conditioning demand exceeded the power utility's capacity to generate electricity and so there were power cuts across the metropolitan area. The Moss Wood weather station record revealed that Friday and Saturday were a pleasant 33°C and 34°C respectively. However, Sunday and Monday were scorchers – 39°C and 40°C! Sampling continued over the weekend and the results confirmed that the 7 to 10 days ripening had taken place in 4 days instead! So picking commenced with a vengeance and all the fruit was off the vines in two days.

The fruit for the Moss Wood 2004 Cabernet was hand picked, destemmed into open tanks, hand plunged four times a day until dryness, after which it was plunged twice a day and monitored for tannin extraction. The temperature in the fermenters was monitored so that it did not exceed 30°C. Once the team felt that the wine had achieved its best tannin balance, it was pressed and racked into barrel for malolactic

fermentation. Typically, Moss Wood Cabernet is left on skins for ten to 14 days post fermentation: the 2004 averaged 14 days. In the first year, the batches were kept separate for barrel trials and monitored. After a year, all batches were combined and then racked back into barrel as a "Final Blend". At the end of the second year, fining trials were conducted and the decision made not to fine. The wine was then filtered and bottled on 7th May 2006.

Keith loves the wine's bright youthful, deep brick red colour, attractive primary fruit, violets, toasty oak, leather, chocolate and mulberry and feels it sings with generous primary fruit. On the palate, the generous dark fruit flavours and full body make it almost plump and round, but underneath is a firm but well-integrated tannin structure and toasty, smoky oak in the background. It has good length and finishes with some violet notes. It will be delicious for the next few years, possibly closed at five to seven years of age although it should start to open at about ten, and be at its best at 15 years and beyond.



How does it compare with its recent siblings? Amongst the winery crew, the 2001 is the current benchmark and maybe the '04 doesn't quite reach it. And hard core wine lovers might even prefer the concentration and slumbering intensity of 2003. However, the 2004 has delicious, up-front generosity with complexity, not dissimilar to the 1994 and perhaps may be described as a more complete version of the 2000 (the ultimate user-friendly, gluggable vintage) but more mysterious. An indication of its appeal may be seen when, in an unguarded moment, Keith was heard to mutter "It's ripe, soft and yummy" and in his more pensive moments he pauses to wonder just how great it would have been if Mother Nature had allowed the grapes to sit on the vines for those few extra days of slow ripening. (Wow!) ■

# Vertical Tasting of Moss Wood Cabernet Sauvignon

Here are some notes by Keith Mugford and Peter Forrestal (wine writer) on the vertical tasting of Moss Wood Cabernet Sauvignon (1985 - 2006) held on 13th November, 2006. Two bottles of each vintage were opened.

What purpose does the tasting serve? We are interested in trying to gain insight into what the future may hold for the wine styles at Moss Wood.

Whether or not people agree or disagree with the conclusions of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, it is interesting for us to examine the different scenarios.

We acknowledge that climate science is not our area of expertise and we have only limited computer power to assess something on this scale. Nevertheless, we may gain some insights that benefit our grandchildren.

If the ripening time of wine grapes can be used as a proxy for temperature, it is interesting to note that over 35 vintages at Moss Wood, the vines have yet to give clear signals that anything is changing. It may be that any change thus far is too small and too slow to be clear, which is not out of the question, given the very long term nature of climate change. On the other hand, when examining the scores and comments in these tastings, it is quite clear that if the vines' performance as seen through vintage quality is any guide, climate changes all the time, resulting in quite significant differences between the vintages.

## 1985

Beautifully aged – cedar/tar bottle bouquet, good dark fruit notes, mature tannins well balanced. **KM**

Fragrant, leafy, cigar box and tobacco, opulent, concentrated, smooth texture, fine tannins still with a bit of a kick. In good shape. **PF**

## 1986

Complex bottle bouquet – redcurrant combined with leather and earth, firm tannins still. **KM**

Superb. Still quite closed, juicy and with surprising fruit sweetness yet with heaps of tannin. Dense, deep, opulent and balanced. **PF**

## 1987

Relatively immature for a near-twenty year old wine. Red and dark fruits, touch leaf, youthful palate, needs to soften. **KM**

Leafy yet with attractive fruit sweetness, delightful smooth as silk texture. **PF**

## 1988

Redcurrant fruit notes with some tarry bottle bouquet – mid-range development. Tannins still firm on palate. **KM**

Quite closed but with great velvety texture. Substantial tannins dominate the wine but it's still the best bottle I've seen of this in quite some time. **PF**

## 1989

Complex, earthy nose, developed and lacking fruit depth. Palate lacks weight. **KM**

I was less polite than Keith: stinky, tarry, not in good shape. **PF**

## 1990

Beautifully developed – retains good fruit with bottle characters on both nose and palate. Tannins are starting to soften. **KM**

Complex, earthy, tarry, cigar box, tobacco leaf, secondary characters are beginning to dominate. **PF**

## 1991

Similar to the 1990 but with more fruit intensity on the nose. Very pleasing. **KM**

Mellow, rich and concentrated with some earthy complexity. There's some sweet fruit hiding there. **PF**

## Ratings: Moss Wood Cabernet Sauvignon

VINTAGE	HARVEST DATE	° BEAUME	YIELD (TONNES /HA)	VINTAGE RATING (OUT OF 10)
2007	9 March	13.7	7.29	9
2006	22 April	13.0	6.82	9
2005	19 March	13.5	7.82	10
2004	25 March	14.2	9.11	9
2003	20 March	13.7	7.47	9
2002	20 March	13.5	10.1	8
2001	19 March	13.5	9.5	10
2000	28 March	13.9	10.3	9
1999	31 March	13.7	9.22	8
1998	30 March	13.6	10.0	8
1997	19 March	13.4	7.0	7
1996	14 March	13.6	10.0	10
1995	14 March	13.8	9.75	10
1994	25 March	13.3	8.89	9
1993	22 March	13.0	8.5	7
1992	26 March	12.4	10.0	8
1991	3 April	13.3	9.8	9
1990	2 April	12.8	8.5	9
1989	30 March	13.1	7.9	5
1988	10 March	13.0	7.1	7
1987	26 March	12.7	8.5	8
1986	14 March	12.8	5.8	7
1985	13 March	12.5	7.5	9
1984	12 March	12.3	9.0	6
1983	7 March	13.0	9.0	9

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### 1992

Youthful nose, with bright dark fruit. Surprisingly undeveloped. Palate has good dark fruit but tannins are still firm. **KM**

Leafy, minty, juicy with attractive silky smooth texture. Less mellow than the 1990 or 1991. Some grip from the tannins. **PF**

### 1993

Fine cedary fruit aromas, with limited bottle bouquet – youthful. Palate still youthful, with high acid. **KM**

On the nose, there are no signs of the herbal characters that I usually associate with this vintage – so it's pretty smart. Squishy, reasonably rich and ripe, even deep. **PF**

### 1994

Developing complexity – red and dark fruits with smoke and tar. Generous palate. **KM**

Coal black colour, wonderfully opulent, good depth, superb velvety texture, drinking beautifully. The tannins are still there but they are matched by the weight and depth of the fruit. Some herbal notes to finish. **PF**

### 1995

Youthful dark fruits, some leather notes. Palate has youthful dark fruits and balanced tannins. **KM**

Hint of leaf and mint but blackcurrant and dark cherries dominate. Vibrant, elegant, almost fine. Seamless integration of fruit and oak, impeccably balanced. **PF**

### 1996

A young version on 1991 – mostly youthful dark fruits,

combined with leather and tar. Long palate. **KM**

Floral, opulent, dense, wonderfully sweet, blackcurrant and mulberry flavours. Complex, balanced, elegant. **PF**

### 1997

Nose restrained dark fruits, with leaf and eucalypt. Palate has firm tannins. Very undeveloped. **KM**

Smoky, black pepper notes. Still smooth texture, bright sweet dark fruit flavours, juicy. Significant tannins but more manageable than previously. **PF**

### 1998

Complex nose of ripe, youthful dark fruits and leather. Youthful firm palate. Underrated vintage so it's good to have made a wine of this quality in such a difficult vintage. **KM**

Floral, fruity, sweet redcurrant and cassis flavours, rich concentrated and elegant. Tannins in balance: lovely wine. **PF**

### 1999

Restrained, complex nose, with wild yeast earthiness. Palate has bright fruit flavours but tannins are still youthful. **KM**

Complex, seamless cabernet with blackcurrant, dark plum and mulberry flavours, vibrant and powerful. Impressive. **PF**

### 2000

Good red fruit and cherry oak notes on the nose. Long supple palate – ripe fruit and soft tannins. **KM**

A surprise packet for the vintage and still my favourite young Moss Wood cabernet of them all: mulberry, blueberry and blackcurrant flavours,

seamless integration of fruit and oak, velvety texture, gentle tannins. Drinking beautifully. **PF**

### 2001

Full cabernet sauvignon display. Red and dark fruits, cherry oak, leather tar on nose. Palate is awesome – intense red and dark fruits, excellent tannins, ripe and long. **KM**

Lifted fragrances, sweet dark berry fruits, succulent, satiny texture, additional dimension of complexity, fine, impeccably balanced, power with elegance. **PF**

### 2002

Quite complex nose of red fruits, leaf and cedar. Palate has lively red fruits and fresh acidity and cherry oak on finish. Very youthful. **KM**

Supple, viscous, smooth velvety texture, fruit and oak well-integrated, substantial tannins are well-integrated and therefore beautifully balanced. **PF**

### 2003

Slumbering giant. Dark fruits, cherry oak, leather. Concentrated and very youthful palate. **KM**

Cherry oak dominates at this

stage. Some spiciness on nose and palate, smooth, almost silky texture, huge power and drive, in balance but tannins are monstrous. Needs time. **PF**

### 2004

Like 2003 but prettier – dark fruits with violets, aniseed and coffee. Palate has rich youthful fruit but still closed. **KM**

Drinking beautifully. Some minty characters with powerful dense dark berry fruits, blackcurrant, good ripeness, luxuriant texture, beautiful balance, fine ripe tannins. **PF**

### 2005

Very complete if still undeveloped. Vibrant red and dark fruits, violets, cherry oak. Great early balance on the palate. **KM**

Youthful, elemental dark berry flavours. Shows huge promise. Too soon to score. **PF**

### 2006

Lifted and pretty. Fragrances of mulberry, raspberry, cedar and cherry oak. Lifted dark and red fruits on the palate, great texture and balance. **KM**

Surprise packet given the difficult vintage. Promises to be very good. **PF** ■

## Text message from Moss Wood...

We are concerned that people get so many emails these days and because of spam filters our Newsletters appear on your email as just a few lines of text, which can often be overlooked in the sea of e-mail traffic. Our preferred method of sending the Newsletter is good old snail mail so that you can have a hard copy to ponder over at your leisure. For those who would like speedy notification that the Newsletter is ready to read on the website, we wondered if you might like to receive a short text SMS to your mobile? Please let us know if you are interested in this option and we will be pleased to oblige. Contact [mosswood@mosswood.com.au](mailto:mosswood@mosswood.com.au) or our office on 9755 6266.

# Bulletin Board

## Alice's new diversified role

Angie Bussell is now on maternity leave and Alice Duzevich has taken up her role. Alice, who had previously been helping in the winery during vintage and then briefly as Assistant Winemaker, was keen to take up the challenge at the Ribbon Vale warehouse. She is now in charge of organising labelling, dispatch and visitor hosting. In addition, as a trained winemaker, she will maintain contact with the vineyard and winery. ■

## Customer Feedback

During the last few weeks Kristiina has been sorting through our old newsletters and reloading them onto our web site. They make informative and amusing reading. Clare and Keith have been overcome by a wave of nostalgia because each one had to be scanned and checked and this provided an opportunity to re-read our comments from the past and reminisce about old times. Amongst other things, we were reminded that the Mugfords' sent out their first letter in 1984, to a mailing list of just over 200 people and Keith signed each one individually. This continued

for 2 years until we can only assume he was too overcome with writer's cramp to let it continue!

Back then, customers ordered our wine via hand-written letters. Whilst this may seem a thing of the past, we did however enjoy customers' initiative to let us know their thoughts and comments on our wines. Of course, these days we use an order form to make purchasing easier and letter writing is something that few people do. We don't expect snail mail but the feedback is still very welcome. We encourage customers to contact us when they have tried any Moss Wood wines and pass on their comments, both good and bad. Contact us at [mosswood@mosswood.com.au](mailto:mosswood@mosswood.com.au) or fax us on 9755 6303. ■

## New Newsletter Design

If you saw the Chardonnay newsletter you would hopefully have noticed that it showed a much cleaner and better designed layout. This can be attributed to the magical work of Felicity McDonald, designer extraordinaire! We hope you like her work as much as we do and enjoy the new clarity she brought to that newsletter, as well as the current

newsletter and further issues to follow. ■

## New Label Design

To some it might have come as a surprise, when they received their Moss Wood 2006 Chardonnay, to see a new label staring back at them. We have been working with clever designer, Peter McDonald, who with his wife Felicity has a company called PUBLIC Creative. Over the past few months he has come up with some improvements to our Moss Wood labels. If all the different vintages of Moss Wood are lined up, it is easy to see that Clare and Keith have made regular changes to the labels, often in response to a regulatory requirement but also just to "tidy things up". The brief to Peter was to retain the classic design of the Moss Wood label but update it with more modern, clean lines. It was also important to improve the labels' legibility.

An additional step was to differentiate the original Moss Wood wines – those made from the Moss Wood Vineyard itself. The origin of the wines has always been noted at the bottom of the label with the statement "Grown, vintaged and bottled at Moss Wood". We have now chosen to put "Moss Wood

Vineyard" clearly in the middle of the label so there can be no doubt as to where the wine has come from.

We were initially apprehensive about the loss of the borders but after staring long and hard at the label, Keith for half an hour and Clare for a whole hour, an epiphany was experienced by both. We hope you agree.

Peter has also done some fine tuning on the labels for all the Ribbon Vale Vineyard wines, making them much tidier and easier to read.

Similar changes will also be made to the "Amy's" label, so all of our wines will eventually wear new livery, including a new printed capsule. Moss Wood Cabernet Sauvignon will be the last to change with the release of the 2005 vintage next July. ■



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