



MOSS WOOD

Wilyabrup
MARGARET RIVER
WESTERN AUSTRALIA

MOSS WOOD 2017 CHARDONNAY



TASTING NOTES

Colour and condition:

Medium to deep straw hue, with green tints and in bright condition.

Nose:

Very generous Chardonnay stone fruit-like aromas of peaches and nectarines, combined with the typical Moss Wood complexities of orange marmalade, honey, caramel and roast almonds. The near 50% new barrels have given a lightly toasty background.

Palate:

Here the wine replays the combinations of the nose, with stone fruits, oranges and caramels combining to give a rich but lively feel. This length and depth of flavour is underpinned by crisp acidity and a well-hidden but firm tannin, ensuring the right sort of structure for good cellaring.

VINTAGE NOTES

For people who know Moss Wood well, some may recall the very good 1990 vintage, one of the very few which was outstanding for all varieties but also good across all regions in Australia. There were great wines made right around the country. Our experience tells us if we wait long enough, we're bound to see a similar vintage in the future and it turns out 2017 is the one, at least for Moss Wood. It's amusing how closely 1990 and 2017 align, although, of course, they're not exactly the same.

The growing season was excellent, if somewhat cool. Rainfall in calendar year 2016 was 25% above average, at 1,248mm and so there was plenty of moisture in the soil of our unirrigated vineyards. In a divergence from 1990, with the Spring rain came some inclement conditions through October and November. At times, we had windy and cold weather and even some small hail. As a result, the Chardonnay yield of 6.15 tonnes per hectare was down by around 10% and notably lower than 1990's 7.44 tonnes per hectare. Most of the lower yield was the product of fewer bunches, not surprising given the conditions, which at 29 bunches per vine, was down by 20%. The vines did their best to recover some of this because the weight was up ever so slightly to 99 grams per bunch, compared with the average of 95. We had a run of slightly warmer, dry days at the end of November that provided better flowering conditions.

Generally mild temperatures and occasional rain remained the theme of the vintage from then on. After flowering, the vineyard received a further 43mm of rain up until the Chardonnay harvest, none of which did any harm because the vines were accustomed to it and our fungicide program controlled any disease. A fascinating coincidence was not only did the rain events occur on essentially the same dates as 1990 but also the same amounts fell. There's very little we can read into this other than to say it was very amusing to watch it unfold.

More importantly, the average temperature for the season was quite mild. For comparison's sake, the 18.7°C of 2017 was notably cooler than the more typical 20.1°C of 2016. Naturally enough, all the phenological stages were late. Median flowering date was 19th November compared with the average of 5th and median harvest date was 21st March compared with 1st March. The time elapsed between flowering and harvest of 121 days is 8 days longer than the average of 113. Despite things being mild, the vines enjoyed 1124 hours in their preferred temperature range of 18-28°C, so the fruit achieved full sugar and flavour ripeness. Harvest Baume was spot on the average of 13.1°. For the record, the hottest day of the Summer was 37°C on 4th January and in total, the vines received 34 hours above 33°C, enough serious heat to make sure there were no green characters.

Median Harvest Date

21/03/2017

Bottled

09/08/2018

Median Harvest Ripeness

13.1° Be

Yield

6.15t/ha

Alcohol

13.5%

Ripening Time from Flowering to Harvest

121 days

Growing Season Ave Temperature

18.7°C



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PRODUCTION NOTES

Everything came together on 21st March when this sound fruit was hand picked and delivered to the winery, where it was sorted then wholebunch pressed. After settling in stainless steel, the clear juice was racked and seeded for fermentation. These days we use multiple yeasts, acknowledging the complexity they bring to the wine, without the inherent quality risks of off odours and stuck fermentations associated with using wild yeasts.

As a brief explanation as to the impact on the Moss Wood Chardonnay style, the yeasts essentially bring two components to a wine. On the nose, the nearsubliminal complex aromas, usually described as earthy, akin to mushroom and truffle, occasionally presenting as more obvious sulphide-derived compounds. We prefer former, of course. On the palate, they enhance a wine's mouthfeel by producing more glycerol, although this effect can really only be noticed when the alcohol is below 12%.

Once primary fermentation was underway, the juice was racked to 228 litre French oak barrels, of which 48% were new and this was followed by a full malolactic fermentation. At this point, all the barrels were combined and the blended wine was returned to oak, where it stayed for a total of 16 months.

At the end of July 2018, the wine was racked and blended in stainless steel in preparation for bottling. Fining trials were carried out and after tasting it was decided to fine only with bentonite for protein stability. The wine was then sterile filtered and bottled on 10th August, 2018.

CELLARING NOTES

As we at Moss Wood have tasted this wine over its time in the cellar, there has been a strong consensus that this is the best Chardonnay we've made. The combination of fruit depth, complexity and structure is one we wish we could get every year. This means it has the sort of youthful fruit and generosity that will very likely encourage consumers to plug it down while young. However, it has the spine to develop well and age for the long term and we recommend keeping it for at least 10 years to see some development but 20 years for full maturity.

