

Moss



Wood

Newsletter

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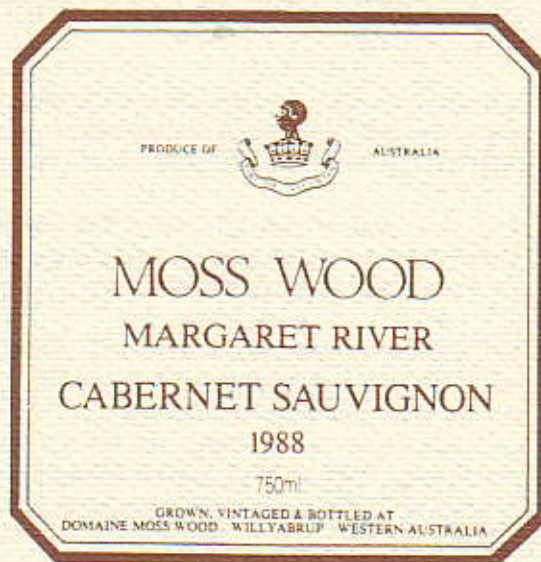
Winter, 1990

New Release: The 1988 Moss Wood Cabernet

A topsy turvy growing season, (described on page 4) similar to that experienced at Moss Wood in 1984/5, not surprisingly, produced a wine which is similar to the 1985 Cabernet - although it has more tannin and acid and hence more spine than the '85.

The Cabernet yield was reduced to about two-thirds of the normal crop because the much needed spring rain of 1987 led to an indifferent flowering which reduced the size of the bunches. The quality, however, was very good - at least up to the standard of the 1985 wine.

The 1988 is different from other vintages in at least two ways: all the wines have interesting fragrances and the Cabernet has a pleasant tarry quality.



Thirty five percent of the wine was given twelve months in new oak and this has integrated well in the finished wine giving it a pleasing degree of complexity. It also has a distinctive character which English wine merchant, Simon Taylor-Gill, described as 'roasted' and Keith sees as reminiscent of 'coffee beans'. This attractive, tarry characteristic is a product of the particular vintage.

The 1988 Moss Wood Cabernet Sauvignon has intense, ripe, mulberry aromas on the nose with nuances of violets and dusty French oak. It is a fresh, supple wine with good acid, rich, concentrated berry fruit in balance with strong tannins and a pleasant finish which lingers. While this is a flavoursome young Cabernet because of its softness and forward palate, it does need about five years for its powerful tannins to soften and for the wine to develop greater complexity. The 1988 Cabernet has the structure and the fruit to benefit from cellaring for ten to fifteen years.

Vintage Chart for Moss Wood Cabernets

1973 The best bottles of this first vintage of Moss Wood Cabernet continue to show sound fruit in good condition. As with the other older vintages, there may be significant bottle variation.

1974 This is a lovely, mellow wine with dusty oak characters and rich, blackcurrant fruit. It has softened, shows good balance but still has quite firm tannins.

1975 The 1975 Cabernet is one of the best wines made at Moss Wood. It has rich, ripe, concentrated fruit, a soft, velvety mouth feel, good balance, significant complexity and a finish that lingers. Although probably at its peak, this wine will live for years.

1976 This is a big rich wine with lovely cassis fruit dominating its nose. On the palate, the wine is soft with developed, ripe fruit and dusty oak flavours in good balance. While probably at its best now, the 1976 Cabernet shows no sign of tiring. Drink over the next few years.

1977 The 1977 wine which has an intense bouquet reminiscent of blackberries with nuances of cherry oak. Its palate has rich, ripe fruit in balance with dusty oak characters. This is a supple Cabernet with considerable power and reasonable length. Enjoy it over the next three to five years.

1979 This wine shows rich, berry fruit in balance with French oak on both the nose and the palate. It is flavoursome, supple, complex and has good length. The 1979 Moss Wood has developed into a fine example of Margaret River Cabernet Sauvignon, drinking at its best.

1980 One of the best vintages of the Moss Wood Cabernet. The wine has lovely berry aromas with nuances of cherry oak and a depth of rich, blackcurrant flavour which is enhanced by excellent oak handling. It has a superb, velvety mouth-feel, good structure and a long finish.

1980 (Special Reserve) This Montgomery Trophy winner has added complexity as a result of being aged in oak for two years. It has extra intensity, greater depth of flavour on the mid-palate and an excellent long lingering finish. The wine is drinking superbly.

1981 This wine is more approachable than it was a year ago, especially when served with game and robust meat dishes. It is tightly structured and has rich, berry fruit and strong tannins. At present, it is still a little too closed and too tannic to be considered near its best. Needs five more years.

1982 One of the best balanced of all the Moss Wood Cabernets, the 1982 is a rich wine showing ripe, herbaceous fruit, typical of the region, with pleasant cherry oak characters. Its supple mouthfeel and generous, rounded flavours make it very appealing current drinking.

1983 This huge wine will need about five more years to show its best, although it is drinking well enough to tempt all but the most disciplined. It has intense mulberry fruit and cherry oak aromas on the nose and palate, is tightly structured and has considerable depth of flavour.

1983 (Special Reserve) This wine has spicy, smoky characters from the long aging in oak which added complexity to the huge fruit from the vintage. Its soft acid, mouth-filling flavour and rich, round structure make it attractive drinking now, in spite of its big tannins. However, it is still a little closed, will be even more pleasing between 1994 and 2001.

1984 A very fine, elegant wine that is developing beautifully. It has delicate fruit flavour, reminiscent of cherries, good structure and considerable length. Although it should be drinking quite well in a year or so, it is likely to be at its best in seven to ten years time.

1985 This generous vintage produced an appealing wine with a powerful bouquet, rich, berry fruit flavours and a tight structure. Although it is attractive drinking now, it will not be at its best for about five years and will keep for many years after that.

1986 The 1986 Cabernet is a big rich wine with huge tannins that needs years to soften, fill out its excellent structure and show its ripe, berry fruit at its best.

1987 This vintage produced an outstanding young Cabernet with attractive perfumes and rich, ripe fruit. It is supple, well-rounded and has excellent structure and good length. One of the great Moss Wood wines so leave for at least five years.

Additives

In many places since as long ago as Biblical times, wine has been considered safer to drink than the local water. It is essentially a very stable beverage which is difficult to damage through oxidation. This is because wine is acidic in nature and it also contains tannins and alcohol which are preservatives in themselves. Wine remains sound with a minimum of interference from its makers.

Only two additives are used at Moss Wood and these are referred to on our labels as 220 (sulphur dioxide) and 310 (sodium erythorbate).

Sulphur dioxide

For centuries, sulphur dioxide and its various other forms have been used to preserve beverages. It has both a germicidal and anti-oxidation role and is both safe and effective to use. Improvements in viticulture in the past ten years have led to a reduction in the levels of sulphur dioxide used - to between 50 and 150 grams per litre of the total solution. In some cases, it is possible to use no SO₂.

Two things ensure that wine makers are judicious in their use of sulphur dioxide. Firstly, people who suffer from asthma react badly to it and so extreme caution needs to be exercised around the winery. At Moss Wood, this caution is even more necessary as both the winemaker and the vineyard manager react to it. Secondly, all people can smell and taste SO₂ in the wine - even at very low levels. Consequently, unless its use is very carefully monitored, the preservative will detract from the final quality of the wine.

Sodium Erythorbate

This additive is an anti-oxidant - a form of vitamin c. It is an oxygen scavenger which reacts with the oxygen which has been taken up by a wine during a transaction such as racking. Sodium erythorbate, which must be used in the presence of sulphur dioxide, prevents oxygen reacting with the wine itself and is most helpful with white wines because it enables them to retain their freshness.

Additives improve quality

Some consumers may wonder if it is necessary to use additives at all. Most winemakers take this attitude and are always looking for ways to reduce or exclude them. However, our present understanding is that the overall quality of wine is improved by their continued use.

The 1990 Harvest

The 1990 vintage was the most remarkable yet experienced by vignerons at Margaret River. The summer was exceptionally mild with no more than one or two really hot days. There was consistent rain throughout winter, spring and summer so much so that three days without rain was considered a drought. Soil moisture was good and the infant bunches flowered exceptionally well. The consistent rain also meant that there was no splitting of the grapes. Amazingly, the rain was unaccompanied by strong winds or hail so that there was no damage at all to the vines. The rain also led to a massive flowering of the marri blossoms which attracted the attention of the local bird life and there was no bird damage to the crop.

The ideal conditions were disrupted by heavy rain mid vintage with about 50 millimetres falling while 25% of the semillon crop remained unharvested. Fortunately, the cool weather prevented the grapes from reacting to the rain by swelling and splitting. Moreover, the beaume didn't drop so the moisture was not absorbed by the berries.

This was a low Ph year for all varieties and early indications are that the wines will have good colour, excellent structure and be well balanced - all in all, a vintage to delight the vigneron and the consumer.

In Brief

New winemaker for Moss Wood

Eloise Mugford is expecting a brother or a sister around about August 11th. Talk around the Mugford dinner table suggests that the new arrival will be pressganged into work around the winery at an early age and a glorious career in the industry is forecast by the soon-to-be-proud parents.

Western Australian wines in Sydney

Keith and Clare attended their first Western Australian Fine Wine Show last August and were so delighted with the public response that they were determined to see Moss Wood involved again this year.

Moss Wood will be one of twenty nine Western Australian producers to participate in the 1990 Fine Wine Show organised by the Wine Industry Association at the Wentworth Sheraton on Wednesday 22 and Thursday 23 August.

The imminent arrival of the newest Mugford will prevent Clare and Keith from attending but vineyard manager, Ian 'Tinker' Bell has nobly agreed to undergo the arduous journey to Sydney to represent Moss Wood. He will be presenting the 1988 Moss Wood Cabernet Sauvignon, the 1988 Moss Wood Pinot Noir and the 1990 Moss Wood Semillon.

The show is open from 10.30 am till 12 noon, from 12 until 3 pm and 5 until 8.30 pm on Wednesday 22 August and from 12 until 3 pm and 4.30 till 7.30 pm on Thursday 23 August. Keith and Clare were overwhelmed in the evenings last year, so anyone who is planning to attend should consider visiting during the daytime sessions.

Veuve Mentelle ?

Congratulations to David Hohnen and all at Cape Mentelle on - joining forces with the Champagne producer, Veuve Clicquot Ponsardin. After an extensive, two year look at overseas wineries which might be successfully marketed alongside their top quality champagne, Veuve Clicquot settled on the Margaret River producer, Cape Mentelle.

This is a tribute to the outstanding work of all involved and a recognition of the quality of the wines coming from the Margaret River area.

1987 Moss Wood Cabernet (Special Reserve)

This outstanding wine - the 1987 Cabernet with two years in oak is likely to be released before the end of the year. It is every bit as good as the two previous Special Reserves from Moss Wood - 1980 and 1983.

The 1987/8 Growing Season

Margaret River experienced a range of unseasonal weather from winter 1986 until the harvest of 1988 ensuring that the life of a vigneron continues to be anything but dull. The heavy rainfalls experienced in the winter of 1986 continued until October. This was adequate to ensure a successful harvest which was fortunate because little rain fell between October and March.

There was indeed only limited rainfall throughout the winter of 1987 and, by August, there was concern among the winemaking community of Margaret River. The Saturday of the all-important (?) VFL Grand Final - in September for the uninitiated - saw the beginning of an unseasonally wet spring with regular rainfalls until January. The cool, mild summer was interrupted on January 16th by a hail storm which caused some damage to the crops. Thereafter the temperature warmed up and within two weeks the ripening process was in line with normal expectations.

The Chardonnay and Pinot Noir were harvested, then the weather went cold again and arrested the ripening of the Cabernet Sauvignon. One hot day in March was all it took reverse this trend and the Cabernet was picked by a relieved vigneron.

This topsy turvy growing season was similar to that experienced at Moss Wood in 1984/5 and produced a wine which is similar to the 1985 Cabernet although it has more tannin and acid and hence more spine than the '85.

Developments at Manjimup

There is an exciting new vineyard area being opened up at Manjimup and Pemberton - 100 kilometres south-east of Margaret River in the extraordinary scenic land of the big karri trees. This has long been a very successful farming area with beef, vegetables and orchards thriving in the good soils and excellent rainfall.

While Margaret River's maritime climate resembles that of Bordeaux, Manjimup's inland climate has similarities with that of Burgundy. Its colder conditions should ensure longer dormancy for the grapes and greater consistency for Pinot and Chardonnay.

Moss Wood have assisted the development of local farmer, Robert Danti's three acre experimental vineyard with a view to negotiating a long term contract - if, as expected, the quality is sufficient to warrant production under a Moss Wood label. 1990 saw the first, minute harvest from the vineyard of some Chardonnay and Pinot.