

Moss



Wood

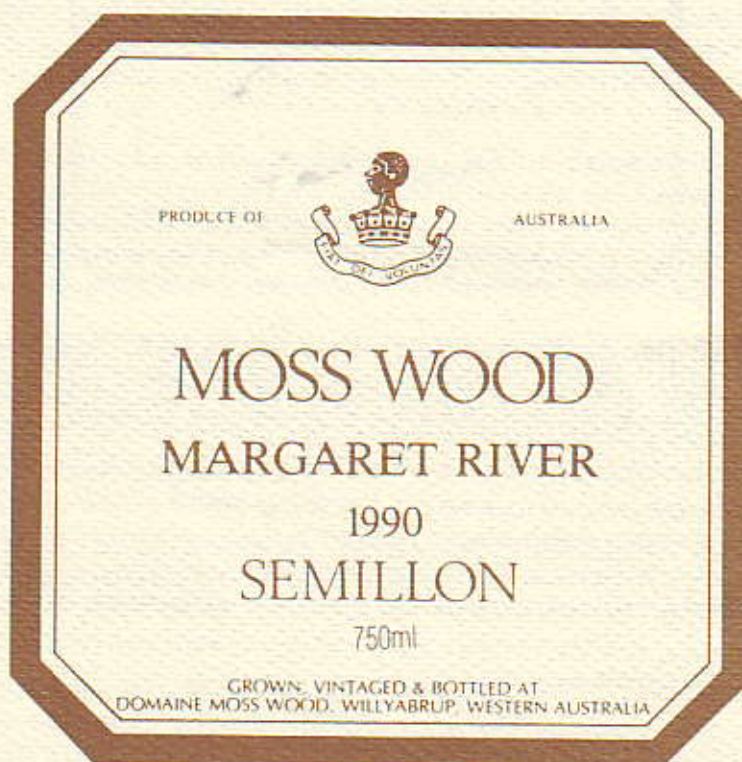
Newsletter

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The 1990 Moss Wood Semillon

The 1990 Moss Wood Semillon is typical of both the vineyard and the region. It has a relatively deep, straw colour with green tints and lovely fruit aromas with nuances of gooseberries, grapefruit and apples. The palate is fresh and crisp with lively fruit characters, good structure and weight and a long, dry finish. It is a flavoursome wine that will be attractive summer drinking when young, although it has the substance to develop into a mature wine of character and class.



No better yarn can be told about the 1990 vintage than that about the harvest of Semillon. With two-thirds of the crop picked and safely in the winery, Keith Mugford and 'Tinker' Bell stood in the sunshine of a warm March afternoon outside the winery and agreed to wait for the rest of the Semillon grapes to ripen a little more. Comforted by the knowledge that March had been dry within living memory, the two sages agreed that the prospect of rain was remote.

A torrential downpour two days later soaked the vineyard in an unbelievable 50mm. As the weather was bitterly cold, the vines were not growing and so the grapes didn't split. Furthermore, picking commenced within two days of the rain - before any rot could occur. Consequently, the impact of the deluge was minimal.

The 1988 Moss Wood Pinot Noir

The 1988 Moss Wood Pinot Noir marks a minor change in the way the wine is produced, in an attempt to obtain fresher fruit characters. The fruit aromas and flavours that a wine exhibits are a product of the ripeness at which the grapes are picked. Accordingly, Pinot Noir picked at around 12°Be will display fresh cherry aromas and delicate berry characters. The same variety will exhibit ripe plum and herbal characters at 13°Be. Grape ripeness will, of course, affect another important wine quality factor - alcohol. This contributes to fullness of body and richness on the palate.

In Europe, where grape ripeness can be legally supplemented by the addition of cane sugar to the juice (a process called chapitalisation), it is possible to vary the alcohol content of a wine, without changing the ripeness at which the grapes are picked. The relevance of this in the production of Pinot Noir is that when wines are produced in Burgundy they may have a final level of alcohol of say 13.5% by volume, but may have had an original sugar level in the juice equivalent to 12.5% by volume and sometimes even less. In other words, the wine will display the fresh fruit perfumes of early picking and yet retain full body and richness on the palate.



In Australia, because chapitalisation is not possible, a wine with 13.5% by volume alcohol will display the ripe fruit characters of plums and herbs. This has been a very favoured approach and the wines have tremendous power and generosity but may lack some of the delicate perfumes.

As a result, the decision was taken to pick the 1988 Pinot Noir in 2 stages - some early, to obtain freshness and then some later to provide richness and weight, but still going for a final alcohol of not less than 13% by volume. Both batches are made using exactly the same techniques and then they are blended together at completion of fermentation. Amusingly, this technique has been used in production of Cabernet Sauvignon and Semillon at Moss Wood for at least a decade, but it seemed to take much longer to recognise its value for Pinot Noir.

The addition of whole bunches to the crush has been traditional at Moss Wood and this year made up 55% of both early and late picked parcels. The must was given twelve days skin contact. As usual, the fermentation technique involved keeping the juice at 35 °C, with hand plunging up to six times a day and *pigeage* - plunging by foot. This latter technique involves using people in the tank breaking the cap formed by the skins over the top of the fermenting must. Plunging with the feet mixes these skins. The vivid image of *pigeage* which remains with Keith is of 'Tinker' Bell waist deep in the open vat where normal mortals would be neck high in fermenting juice.

The 1988 Pinot Noir received twelve months in cask with 15% being aged in new French oak. In retrospect, Keith believes that the wine has developed the substance and depth of fruit to benefit from a slightly higher percentage of new oak.

The 1988 Moss Wood Pinot Noir has a medium ruby colour and shows a lovely freshness of fruit on the nose with Keith seeing hints of cherries, plums, beetroot and cinnamon. It has good acid, a depth of spicy, rich, berry fruit and strong, fine-grained tannins. The wine is fresh, supple, well-balanced, full of flavour and has considerable length. Although approachable now, the wine needs three to five years to reach its peak. It can be cellared with confidence for ten to fifteen years.

Moss Wood Pinot Noir Vintage Chart

1979 The wine has developed classic Pinot Noir aromas, with hints of mushrooms and cherries on the palate. It is a balanced wine with good acid and reasonable length and is drinking beautifully now. As with the other older vintages of the Moss Wood Pinot, there will be bottle variation. With some bottles, the fruit may appear to be drying out although the acid is still good and the wine is well balanced.

1980 The wine has a deep ruby colour, an intense nose with aromas of ripe berries and charry oak. On the palate, the 1980 Pinot has soft, rich, ripe berry fruit in harmony with its soft tannins and reasonable length.

1981 This outstanding Pinot Noir has a deep crimson colour, a superb nose with aromas of strawberries and cherries and nuances of charry oak, an excellent structure and good balance, a depth of rich, ripe berry flavour and attractive oak characters. It is a complex wine which is supple, has good weight and considerable length. The 1981 Moss Wood Pinot is the benchmark for this variety in the vineyard. It continues to drink beautifully.

1982 When young, this wine was forward, soft and spicy, yet it has developed well with age. The 1982 Pinot is still rich and soft with good length but has developed aged pinot characters which Keith finds reminiscent of corn beef and mushrooms but with an underlying cherry character.

1983 This is a soft, balanced wine which is full of flavour. It has ripe, cherry fruit and dusty oak aromas on the nose, a tightly structured palate with pleasant Pinot fruit in harmony with the French oak and a finish of reasonable length. It lacks the complexity of some of the other Moss Wood Pinots.

1984 The wine has a light ruby colour, lovely strawberry-like aromas with nuances of intense charred oak. On the palate, it has strong, rich, full fruit flavours reminiscent of cherries and strawberries but with hints of fresh field mushrooms. It is quite a light, delicate wine but has intense flavours, lovely balance and good length. Still drinking well.

1985 The 1985 Moss Wood Pinot has deep ruby colour, spicy, perfumed aromas with intense, youthful, rich, round, cherry fruit on the palate and nuances of charry oak. It is a soft, well-balanced and stylish wine with a pleasing mouth-feel, considerable depth of flavour and good length. While the wine is most attractive at present, it has still some time to go before it reaches its peak. Resist the temptation to drink more than the occasional bottle to watch the progress of one of the best vintages of the Moss Wood Pinot.

1986 The 1986 Pinot has a perfumed nose showing restrained strawberry character and some complex Burgundian features reminiscent of light oak, cherries and mushrooms. On the palate, it has good acid, a pleasing softness, excellent structure, clean, flavoursome Pinot fruit, powerful though not aggressive tannins, and a long finish. This is a luscious, seductive wine of considerable complexity which still needs time for the tannins to soften, the bouquet to fill out and the depth of flavour on the mid palate to intensify. It will improve over the next ten to fifteen years.

1987 This is a soft, fresh, flavoursome wine which is attractive current drinking. It has hints of strawberries, cherries and dusty oak on the nose, a supple mouth feel and delicate, spicy flavours and soft tannins on the palate. It is a well-structured, beautifully balanced wine with an appealing depth of flavour and good length. Like the 1982 and 1984 Pinots, its softness belies its ability to age. Interestingly, it seems to have gained in complexity in the last twelve months. Save some bottles for the long term.

Vintage	Harvest Date	° Beaume	Yield (t/ha)	Vintage Rating (out of 7)
1979	17 February	12.3	6.6	3
1980	29 February	14.2	3.5	3
1981	4 March	13.1	3.8	7
1982	13 March	12.95	8.2	4
1983	19 February	12.85	6.0	5
1984	16 February	12.9	5.7	5
1985	25 February	13.3	6.4	7
1986	24 February	13.3	5.8	6
1987	24 February	12.9	5.8	6
1988	10 February	13.1	6.0	6
1989	15 March	12.9	6.5	5
1990	16 March	13.4	8.5	6

The 1987 Cabernet Sauvignon (Special Reserve)

Reserve wines are something special at Moss Wood: only three have been produced from eighteen vintages since 1973. And these three wines - the 1980, 1983 and 1987 Moss Wood Cabernet Sauvignon (Special Reserve) - were the stars of a recent vertical tasting of Moss Wood Cabernets.

In each case, the Special Reserve wines showed increased complexity, more concentration of fruit and greater depth of flavour than their counterparts from the same vintage. They were more powerful and more complete wines.

Because they believed the 1987 Cabernet to be the most attractive young cabernet sauvignon produced by the vineyard, the Mugfords decided to release a small batch as a reserve wine. At a young age, it had an intensity of fruit perfume and weight on the palate that set it apart from other vintages.



The 1987 Special Reserve was made in the same way as the 1983 wine. After the 1987 Cabernet had been blended, a batch of this wine was placed in four year old Nevers barriques where it remained from October 1987 until it was bottled in January 1990.

The wine has a deep, brick-red colour with intense berry characters, hints of violets and cedary oak on the nose. It is a powerful Cabernet which is supple, has rich, ripe, concentrated, sweet berry flavours and a firm tannin backbone. The 1987 Moss Wood Cabernet Sauvignon (Special Reserve) is a stylish, well-structured wine which has extraordinary depth of flavour and amazing length. It is attractive drinking now, needs at least five years to be near its best and will cellar for fifteen to twenty years.

Ray Jordan, writing about the recent Moss Wood Cabernet vertical tasting in the *West Australian* made the following comment about the wine:

Even more fabulous. A powerhouse of fruit and dominant oak. Nose shows wonderful cedary, minty and slightly eucalyptus aromas. Incredible concentration of flavours on the palate which remains soft and in perfect balance. Potentially THE great wine from Moss Wood.

Tristan Keith Mugford

After a relatively short labour, Clare gave birth to Tristan Keith (7lb 14oz) on Friday August 3, 1990 at the St John of God Hospital in Bunbury. Both are well and in good condition, especially after the celebration bottle of 1981 Pommery Cuvée Louise.

Visiting the Winery

Because of the relatively small volume of wine produced, there is no cellar door facility provided for the general public and visits to the winery are by appointment only. However, people on the mailing list or those interested in wine who wish to see over the winery and/or to taste the current Moss Wood releases, are welcome. Contact Keith or Clare beforehand to make arrangements if you wish to visit.