

Moss



Wood

Newsletter

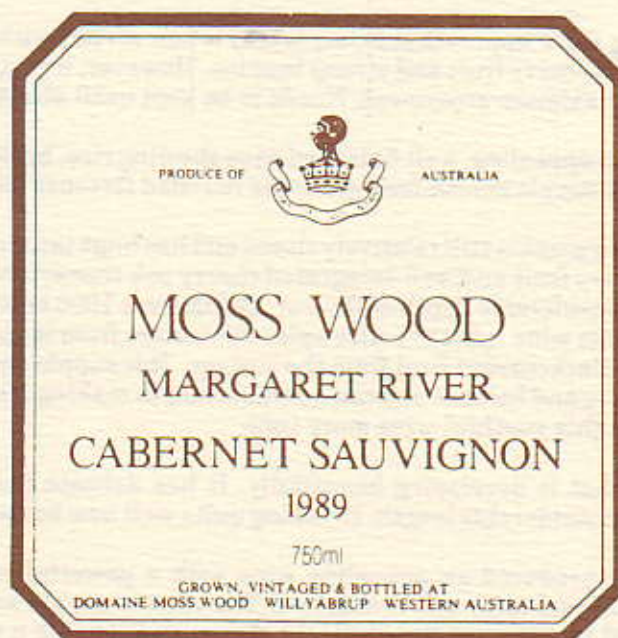
N° 14

Winter, 1991

New Release: The 1989 Moss Wood Cabernet

1989 was the first of three late vintages at Moss Wood and produced a rich, ripe Cabernet. It was a similar year to 1982 both in terms of the amount of rain which fell and the timing of the vintage. The experience of a wet harvest in 1982 enabled the Moss Wood team to be better organised in 1989 and so Keith was able to get more tannin and to produce a better structured wine. In order to get adequate extraction and colour and to bolster the structure, half (rather than the usual one-third) of the wine was given extended skin contact during fermentation. As well as this, forty percent (rather than the customary thirty percent) of the 1989 Cabernet was matured in new oak for twelve months.

As a result, the 1989 wine has the soft, round berry flavours similar to the 1982 Cabernet but has the structure to cellar well and should be kept for at least five years, although it will be attractive drinking for at least fifteen.



Keith Mugford sees the 1989 Moss Wood Cabernet Sauvignon as having a brick red hue with good density and a perfumed bouquet dominated by ripe, raspberry and mulberry aromas. There are hints of leafy, minty characters and toastiness from the charred vanillan oak on both the nose and palate with the wine displaying richness of fruit, cabernet berry flavours and sweetness from extract and alcohol. He believes that the acidity is well-balanced and the tannins are firm but not bitter.

This is a rich, generous wine which is supple, has intense flavours, and a long, lingering aftertaste. It is surprisingly attractive drinking for such a young Moss Wood Cabernet, yet it will gain complexity from age.

Moss Wood Cabernert Vintage Chart

1973 The wine appears remarkably youthful. It has a garnet colour, a subdued bouquet, soft, rich redcurrant fruit with overtones of tobacco and spices, firm tannins and a slightly astringent finish.

1974 This wine has a quite intense, perfumed bouquet with overtones of chocolate, is soft and mellow yet full-flavoured with dusty oak characters and rich, blackcurrant fruit. It has good structure and reasonable length 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, elegance, complexity and great length. Although probably at its peak, this wine will live for years.

1976 This is a big rich wine with lovely cassis aromas dominating its nose. On the palate, the wine is soft with developed, ripe fruit showing hints of chocolate, coffee and licorice, in balance with dusty oak flavours. It is an elegant, flavoursome wine with a long, lingering finish. At its best now.

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

1979 This wine has a complex bouquet with hints of mint, chocolate and tobacco behind the ripe, berry fruit. On the palate, it has soft, rich fruit in balance with the pleasant but firm tannins. The 1979 Moss Wood is flavoursome, supple, has good length and is drinking beautifully.

1980 A great vintage for Moss Wood Cabernet has produced a wine which has intense berry aromas with nuances of charry oak and a depth of rich, blackcurrant flavour, 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 still youthful but is drinking superbly.

1981 This wine is becoming more approachable, especially when served with robust meat dishes. It is tightly structured and has rich, berry fruit and strong tannins. However, it is still too tight, too closed and too tannic to be drunk with maximum enjoyment. Needs to be kept until about 1995.

1982 The 1982 Cabernet is an appealing, well-balanced wine showing ripe, herbaceous fruit with pleasant spicy oak characters. It has a supple mouth-feel, generous rounded flavours and soft tannins.

1983 Because this slumbering giant is still relatively closed and has huge tannins, it will need time to show its best. It has intense mulberry fruit and well-integrated charry oak characters on the nose and palate, is tightly structured and has considerable depth of flavour. Drink from 1996 onwards.

1983 (Special Reserve) This wine has attractive spicy characters from its oak aging which has added complexity to the huge, rich, blackcurrant fruit from the vintage. It is supple and elegant, has great power and finesse, excellent structure and balance and considerable length making it attractive drinking now, in spite of its big tannins. Give this youthful wine more time.

1984 A soft, elegant wine that is developing beautifully. It has delicate fruit flavour, reminiscent of cherries, good structure and considerable length. Drinking quite well now but will improve with cellaring.

1985 This generous vintage produced an appealing wine with a powerful bouquet showing excellent integration of rich, berry fruit and spicy oak characters. The wine is supple and mouth-filling, has good balance and soft fine-grained tannins, yet has the tight structure to enable it to live for years. Although attractive drinking now, it will improve over the next five years.

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

1987 This vintage produced a classy young Cabernet with attractive perfumes and fragrant, ripe, fruit characters. It is a very approachable wine: supple yet intense, well-rounded with excellent structure and a lingering aftertaste. An outstanding vintage.

1987 (Special Reserve) This is one of the greatest of the Moss Wood Cabernets: a powerful, complete wine which is supple, has rich, ripe, concentrated, sweet berry flavours and a firm, tannin backbone. It is elegant and well-structured, has extraordinary depth of flavour, tremendous complexity and amazing length.

1988 The wine 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. Needs five years.

Ray Jordan's Tasting Notes

1973 Some brown tinges but colour still deep garnet. Nice sweet berry on nose. Palate still sound with good acid. Still in great condition for a wine off young vines.

1974 Some brown but good red colour. Not as attractive on the nose as the '73. Palate a little thin but showing good balance. Past its best.

1975 Outstanding. Just a hint of brown on edges, lovely red hues. Palate unbelievably rich, full, round and supple. Lovely cedary tobacco aroma and superb oak and fruit integration. Unfathomable depths of complex flavours on a long-sustained finish. One of the truly great wines I have tried. If you have any in your cellar, we need to talk.

1976 Unbelievably dense colour with a touch of brown. Beautiful minty character on nose goes through to a rich opulent blackcurrant palate. Finish is long and sustained with good acid. Powerful and complex, with years ahead of it.

1977 Lighter than the '76, but still quite a dense brick-red. Soft and rounded palate showing rich oak on the nose. Some volatility on the palate which is still quite sweet. Slight raw tarry character. Impeccable balance.

1978 Released as a cheaper dry red because Bill Pannell didn't think it was up to scratch. Bad yeast marred the wine. Palate and nose suffered though I wouldn't be too disappointed if I had some in my cellar. I have seen this wine show better.

1979 Some browning on good colour. Nose shows some minty tobacco character. Palate a touch hard. Firm and tight with some volatility. Finishes well, though lacking the typical Moss Wood softness.

1980 Brilliant wine. Good colour with some browning. Nose is subtly perfumed with lovely oak and fruit. Follows through to the palate which is rich but firm showing excellent tannin. Excellent balance. Drinking well now but its best is years ahead.

1980 (reserve) Some browning. More obvious oak on the nose. Palate is still very firm but shows more concentrated intensity. Extra year has brought up the fruit but the finish is surprisingly soft with gentle tannins. Years ahead of it. A great wine.

1981 Hint of browning but colour still sound. Nose shows good oak and rich fruit. Lots of tannin and some astringency. The palate shows a liquorice tarry quality and there is some volatility. Will become quite complex. A good wine from a difficult year.

1982 Some brown. Nose shows a herbaceous character. Soft, sweet ripe fruit palate is not as full or complete as earlier vintages but it is a very easy drinking wine.

1983 Hint of brown tinges. A very tight dumb wine probably going through a classic cabernet dip before it opens out. Very firm narrow palate held tightly by the oak. Surprising length and power even now. If you have any, leave it alone until the next century. Great potential.

1983 (reserve) Deep, dense red-black colour. Nose shows huge amount of concentrated oak and powerful rich fruit. Extra year in oak has added a new dimension to this wine. Palate soft and clean with great intensity and length. For cellaring, add another five years to your '83s.

1984 More developed colour and not as dense as the '83. Softer, lighter structure but with firm tannin. Simple, sweet ripe berry aromas on nose and a soft, gentle, though slightly simple palate. The first impression would be to drink any you have now; but I wouldn't.

1985 Dense red black with hint of brown. Cedary oak on nose and palate showing perfumed quality. Clean and soft showing excellent depth of complex flavours. Excellent balance with the structure to live for years.

1986 Deep intense red-black. Powerful cigar-box nose showing excellent oak and fruit integration. Follows through to the palate which is long and rich. Shows that lovely herbaceous cabernet fruit on both nose and palate. A superb concentrated wine.

1987 Fabulous wine. Powerful rich, ripe fruit and oak on the nose showing tarry liquorice characters. Sweet cherry-like fruit under the oak with a soft and sustained palate.

1987 (reserve) 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 with remains soft and in perfect balance. Potentially THE great wine from Moss Wood.

In brief

Thanks to Ray Jordan

The tasting notes produced on page three were written to accompany an article written by Ray Jordan and published in *The West Australian* on August 7th 1990. Below is printed an extract from the article. Both are re-produced with permission from Ray.

Outstanding line-up

At one end of the table in a slightly dusty unlabelled burgundy bottle was the wine that started it all in 1973. At the other was another unlabelled burgundy bottle - representing the story so far. And at one end of the table was Bill Pannell, the man who created the story in 1969, while at the other was Keith Mugford, the man who is adding the latest chapters. In between was every cabernet made in the 18 vintages of Moss Wood - 21 wines in all and among them, without doubt, some of the greatest wines ever made at Margaret River.

The significance of the event was not lost on those of us who gathered round the table. Here was every cabernet sauvignon made from one of Australia's greatest vineyards and the two men who either singularly or in tandem had made those wines. Four hours later and still on a euphoric high I could only marvel at the consistent quality of the wines. There was not a bad or tainted wine in the lot and the only one I felt disappointed with was the 1978, which Pannell himself rejected and reclassified before release because he felt it was not up to standard. The rest represented one of the most outstanding line-ups of Australian wine ever assembled. If I were scoring them I probably would have awarded at least 12 gold medals and two wines, the 1975 and the 1978 reserve, I thought were worth at least 19 points out of 20.

In a tasting of this type there will be variations from vintage to vintage, but you still get an overall style emerging. Moss Wood wines have been stamped with softness and full, ripe sweet berry fruit flavours. In some years there is a variation but it is more a variation on a theme than a change of style.

In the early days many of those who tasted the Moss Wood cabernets said they were too soft and light to last. Keith Mugford admits he was one of those when he tasted the 1976, his first Moss Wood cabernet. 'That was in 1978 and I remember thinking that it was too soft to last,' he said. 'I think I gave it about another three years - I was wrong.' I hate to say it Keith but just how wrong you were was in evidence at the tasting. The 1976 was still in there and with a little more to give. But it was not alone. These wines from from the 70's, from still immature vines, were still staggeringly youthful and alive. Sure they had developed excellent aged characters

but they were not tired or over the hill. I suspect they will be ticking over for a few years yet. The 1975 was a classic - one of the most beautifully perfect Australian wines I have tried. The rich opulent flavours of an aged wine were in perfect harmony with lovely long and broad sweet berry fruit.

Keith Mugford admits the tasting showed a consistency of style which even he had not realised was quite so strong, but as important as that, it was becoming clear these wines had great longevity and there didn't seem to be a marked drop off in quality with the older wines. 'The later wines may hold that quality even more because of the slightly refined winemaking and the fact that the fruit is coming off older vines,' he said.

The 1991 Vintage

There have been some misunderstandings about the 1991 vintage in Margaret River. At Moss Wood, it was a very good to excellent year for the reds and an average to better than average vintage for the whites. Yields reached record levels with bird damage and heat causing insignificant damage to be of concern.

Current releases at Dear Friends

Once again, Caon Tucker hosted a luncheon to celebrate the new vintages of Moss Wood wines — this time at the fine Swan Valley restaurant, *Dear Friends*. Mike Zekulich, author of the excellent *Wines of Western Australia* (St George Books) spoke kindly about the winery and guests enjoyed current releases as well as two rarities — the only port made at Moss Wood, the 1980 Vintage Port, and a 1987 sparkling wine made in small quantities in conjunction with Evans and Tate. The Port showed attractive youthful qualities and considerable complexity.

Burgundian experiments

Nicholas Potel, son of Gerard and Françoise Potel of Domaine Pousse d'Or, has spent the 1991 vintage at Moss Wood. Nicholas has been given the opportunity to experiment with a barrel of the 1991 Pinot Noir, using a technique he learnt from Christophe Roumier of the house of Georges Roumier. Christophe, a progressive young Burgundian winemaker, is visiting Australia next month to present a seminar on Pinot Noir in Melbourne. His technique involves chilling the must to 5°C so that the skins and the juice spends three to five days macerating prior to fermentation. Keith believes that the experiment will be interesting but warns Nicholas that he is fully accountable for the results.