

Moss



Wood

Newsletter

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New release: 1991 Wood Matured Semillon

As is usual at Moss Wood, some of the 1991 Semillon was held back for special release with the benefit of wood-maturation. Of the wine selected for this release, sixty-one percent was placed in new Tronçais barriques for three months. After barrel aging, this was returned to stainless steel tanks where it was blended with the remainder of the Semillon.

The 1991 Semillon is a more delicate wine than previous vintages and so Keith has emphasised its finesse by aging a smaller amount than usual in new oak (sixty-one percent rather than sixty-six percent). In doing this, he has ensured that the fruit character of the wine is complemented, rather than dominated by oak.

There are two ways in which the 1991 Moss Wood Semillon is different from earlier vintages of this wine. Firstly, the long, mild growing season produced a crop of excellent quality even though the quantity produced was ten percent above average. Secondly, in a departure from earlier practice, some solids were retained in juice prior to fermentation to enhance the character of the wine on the nose and to encourage an attractive mouth feel. The 1991 Semillon received four weeks lees contact after fermentation to give it greater complexity.



The 1991 Moss Wood wood matured Semillon shows a complex array of aromas with hints of figs and grapefruit against a soft background of charred oak. There are also earthy overtones from the inclusion of solids during fermentation.

The wine is crisp and fresh with a good acid structure and some tannins on the finish. It has lifted citrus flavours, is supple and round with a long, lingering after-taste which features delicate charred oak characters. This is a rich, full-bodied wine of great finesse which has the potential to develop with medium to long term cellaring.

Moss Wood 1991 Chardonnay

The 1991 Chardonnay is a landmark wine for Moss Wood: it is the second vintage harvested on the Scott Henry trellising system and the first wine to be grown entirely under the influence of the new trellises. The vines performed particularly well carrying a higher than usual crop of very pleasing quality. This has confirmed Keith's initial positive reaction to the impact of the Scott Henry trellising on yield and grape quality.

The 1991 vintage took place a week later than usual as the growing season was very mild with only a few very hot days in February disrupting the slow, even growth of the grapes. As a result, the Moss Wood whites are elegant wines with fresh acid, attractive fruit and the structure to ensure a long cellaring life.

The wine-making followed the typical pattern at Moss Wood: the grapes were picked, crushed, drained and pressed, with the free-run juice and all pressings being analysed immediately. After being allowed to settle for two days, the clear juice was then racked to another stainless steel tank where it was seeded with a pure, yeast culture for fermentation.

The first half of this process took place in stainless steel after which the wine was transferred to new French (225 litres) barriques for the fermentation to conclude. Barrel fermentation of one hundred percent of the wine took place in medium toasted Tronçais and Allier oak. The Chardonnay spent nine months in barrels on its lees without being stirred. A significant proportion underwent a full malolactic fermentation during this time. The wine was then pumped, fined, filtered and bottled.



The 1991 Chardonnay is consistent with the style developed in the past few vintages at Moss Wood. It has attractive fruit aromas with hints of melon, peach and lemon, nuances of soft, spicy oak and, in Keith's view, some butterscotch and bacon overtones from the malolactic fermentation.

This is a fresh, crisp wine, quite delicate at present, but with a good acid structure, delicious peach and melon flavours on the mid-palate and spicy butterscotch and vanillin oak characters on the finish. The 1991 Moss Wood Chardonnay has a soft, pleasant mouthfeel, a fullness of flavour and significant length. It is an elegant wine that is both stylish and complex.

Although seductively approachable in its youth, this Chardonnay will reward those who are able to resist the temptation and leave some bottles for ten years or more.

Tinker's Travels

I recently conducted an interview to determine the benefit to Moss Wood of the Vineyard Manager, Ian 'Tinker' Bell's two months sojourn at the Domaine de la Pousse d'Or in Volnay. With an eye to a possible return trip in 1996, the normally taciturn Tinker Bell waxed lyrical about the revolution that would occur at Moss Wood as a result of his experiences in Burgundy. He was only prepared to speak off the record about the singing, drinking, eating and joke telling at the end of vintage *fêtes*, the wonderful French hospitality and the 1919 Beaune which he had the opportunity to taste.

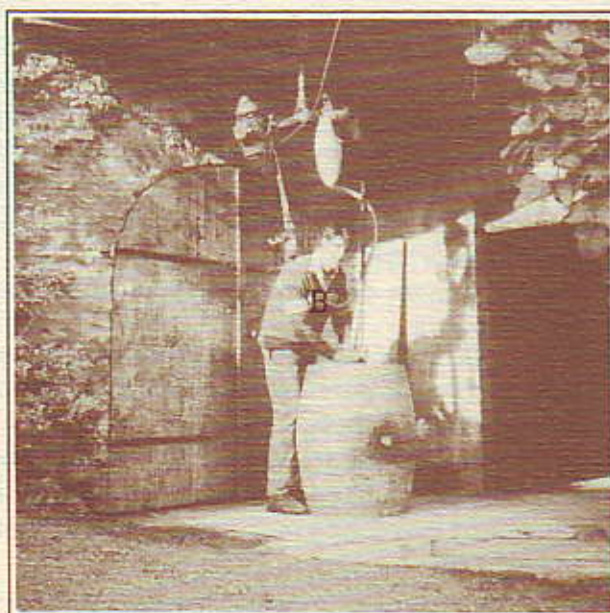
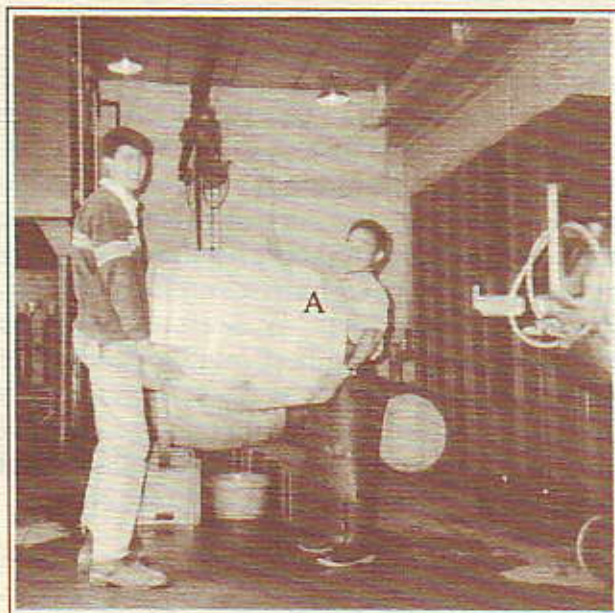
As a viticulturist, Ian was particularly interested in comparing the Scott Henry system to the new trellising which the Burgundians had introduced. Another interesting trend was the reduction in the number of chemicals and the use of mechanical cultivation to control weeds in the vineyard. He was also interested in the French system of aerating the juice during fermentation.

'Tinker' Bell commented on the abundance of labour available during vintage and the tremendous atmosphere which existed among the workers. His experience at Pousse d'Or included work in the winery, work in the vineyard chopping out old and diseased vines, pruning vines (which he claimed were all too close to the ground) and hand sorting grapes to remove those infected by the rain during vintage.

Like many before him, Ian concluded that we can use similar techniques to the French but cannot make Burgundies. Consequently, we need to develop a different style of wine using the Pinot Noir grape. He's hoping to experiment with some of the techniques that he saw on the odd barrel at Moss Wood during this vintage.

Expecting that Keith would be reading this article, 'Tinker' Bell explained that he had very little spare time while he was in France. He did, however, manage to visit Michel Juillot in Mercurey, Michel Lafarge in Volnay and Christophe Roumier in Chambolle Musigny. As well as this, he was present when a group of French vigneronns looked at a range of Australian wines from the 1987 and 1988 vintages. (Who says that French winemakers are inward looking.) Ian also had the opportunity to spend a week in Bordeaux where he visited Margaux, Mouton Rothschild, Petrus and Soutard: a pretty good introduction to the region most would agree.

Keith and Clare had been uncertain of the value of the trip until an anonymous card arrived for 'Tinker' Bell towards the end of the second week in February. Happy Valentine's Day, Tinker. *[Ed.]*



Are captions necessary apart to say that the real worker is called Daniel?!

Moss Wood Chardonnay Vintage Chart

Vintage	Harvest Date	° Beaume	pH	Yield Vintage (tonnes/ha)	Rating (out of 7)
1983	18 February	12.6	3.28	8.7	4
1984	29 February	13.1	3.41	7.73	5
1985	22 February	12.5	3.24	8.44	5
1986	26 February	12.9	3.34	9.1	5
1987	24 February	12.9	3.29	10.13	6
1988	12 February	12.5	3.35	11.2	5
1989	20 February	12.9	3.41	7.82	6
1990	6 March	12.9	3.24	6.85	7
1991	25 March	12.8	3.48	6.36	6

1992 Vintage

The 1992 vintage in Margaret River and at Moss Wood should produce wines of very good to excellent quality following a mild spring with plenty of good rainfall and a warmer summer. The vines at Moss Wood are in good shape and the foilage is healthy. The yield for Cabernet Sauvignon, Pinot Noir and Semillon is average. Chardonnay is down on 1991 but slightly above average, reflecting the benefit of the new trellising. The indicators of quality are promising: the acidity and colour are good and the flavour of the grapes is up to expectation. Vintage commenced on February 27.

A pleasing compliment

In an article in *the Sunday Correspondent*, British wine writer, Andrew Barr, praises barrel-fermented Chardonnays from Australian boutique wineries. He claims that Chardonnays produced by Moss Wood, Petaluma, Mountadam, Pipers Brook and Coldstream Hills fulfill three criteria:

- They are more elegant than most Australian Chardonnays.
- They have more fruit than most white burgundies.
- They can be compared with good Meursaults or Chassagne-Montrachets.

That's good to hear, especially when one considers the price differential between Australian Chardonnays and their Burgundian counterparts.

The Australian Winemaker's Forum

Keith Mugford has recently joined Tony Smith of Plantagenet as one of the two Western Australian representatives on the Australian Winemakers Forum. This group has a significant role in informing decisions made by the Australian Winemakers Federation. The Forum has been particularly important in giving voice to the needs of small winemakers who felt that their concerns had been overlooked by industry bodies which were dominated by the largest industry groups.

Rockpool: great food, wonderful wine

Neil Perry's outstanding restaurant, Rockpool, situated in the heart of the Rocks area of Sydney was honoured last year by Australian Gourmet/Traveller as New South Wales's best. It is a brilliant restaurant in every way; the decor is striking, the service is excellent, the wine list is both reasonably priced and extensive and the food is imaginative and flavoursome. Rockpool specialises in seafood and has available some of the best quality produce in the country. Perry's dishes dazzle with innovative flavour combinations. Try them at your next opportunity - with a 1991 Moss Wood Semillon or a 1989 Moss Wood Pinot Noir.