

MOSS WOOD

Newsletter

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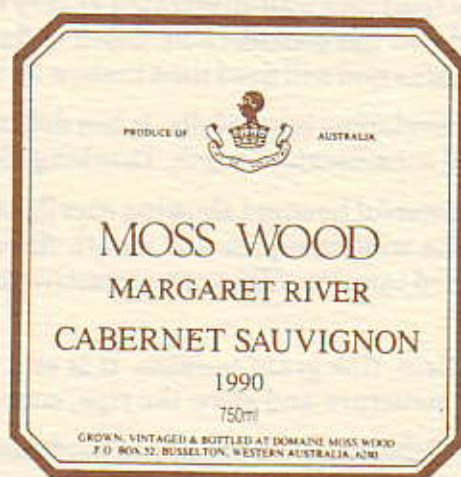
Winter 1992

1990 Moss Wood Cabernet Sauvignon

The growing season for the 1990 Cabernet was unique as the region experienced mild weather with regular rainfall during the summer. This summer rain delayed the harvest and there was some concern that the grapes would not ripen. Not only was this unfounded but the impact of the steady rainfall was beneficial to the vines and the composition of the fruit. The late harvest meant that the marri gums had stopped flowering before picking was finished and so the birds did significant damage towards the end of vintage. This was compensated for by the abundant crop which ensured the production of a slightly above average volume of wine.

The 1990 Moss Wood Cabernet includes 5% Cabernet Franc, 0.03% Merlot. Keith Mugford believes that the introduction of Cabernet Franc to the blend is not a significant change: rather it is a fine tuning of the established Moss Wood Cabernet style. The young wine seems to have added a freshness and a cherry-like character as a result of the addition of the small amount of Cabernet Franc.

The wine was made in the traditional manner of the vineyard: picked at 12 1/2° baume and fermented on skins for six days. To add another dimension to the blend, a small parcel of four vats was kept on skins for two weeks. The wine underwent its malolactic fermentation in stainless steel and was then stored in 225 litre barrels for twelve months. These were a combination of 50% of both Allier and Tronçais barriques from Les Tonnelles de Bourgogne, with 38% of the wine being stored in new oak. After this time in oak, the wine was lightly fined and filtered and bottled in November 1991.



The 1990 Cabernet has a deep, bright red colour and fragrant, lifted perfumes with hints of fresh cherries, ripe berries and smokey, tarry characters. It has fresh, lively sweet berry flavours, soft fine-grain tannins and an aftertaste which lingers. This is an elegant, multi-dimensional wine which is rich and full-flavoured, supple, round and well-balanced. Although delicious now, it will benefit from up to fifteen years cellaring.

Because of the quality of the fruit, a small amount will be released under the Special Reserve label. Keith and Clare believe that it will be hard to make a better Cabernet at Moss Wood than the 1990.

Moss Wood Cabernet Vintage Chart

- 1973** 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** Has a 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 quite firm tannins.
- 1975** 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** 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. It is an elegant wine, well-balanced and flavoursome, with a long, lingering finish. At its best now.
- 1977** 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 few years.
- 1979** Has a complex bouquet with hints of mint, chocolate, ripe berries and tobacco. 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 continues to drink beautifully.
- 1980** A great vintage for Moss Wood Cabernet. The wine has intense berry aromas with hints of charry oak and a depth of rich, blackcurrant flavour enhanced by excellent oak. It has a superb, velvety mouth-feel, good structure and a long finish.
- 1981** Is becoming more approachable, especially when served with robust meat dishes. This tightly structured wine which has rich, berry fruit and strong tannins is still closed and quite tanic. It will not be drunk with maximum enjoyment until about 1995.
- 1982** 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** Has intense, ripe, mulberry fruit and well-integrated charry oak characters on the nose and palate, is tightly structured and has considerable depth of flavour. This huge wine is still relatively closed, has big tannins and will need time to show its best. Drink from 1996 onwards.
- 1984** A soft, elegant wine that is developing beautifully. It has delicate fruit flavour, reminiscent of cherries, good structure and considerable length. Drinking close to its peak.
- 1985** 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, a tight structure and soft fine-grained tannins. Although attractive drinking now, it will improve for several years.
- 1986** A powerful, rich wine with firm, fine grain tannins. It is still quite closed and needs time to soften, fill out the excellent structure and show the ripe, concentrated berry fruit at its best.
- 1987** A very approachable young Cabernet with attractive perfumes and fragrant, rich, ripe, fruit characters. This is a classy wine which is supple yet intense, well-rounded with excellent structure and a lingering aftertaste. An outstanding vintage.
- 1988** Has an intense bouquet of ripe mulberries with hints of violets and dusty French oak. This is a fresh, supple wine with good acid, rich, concentrated berry fruit in balance with strong tannins and a pleasant finish which lingers. Needs four to five years.
- 1989** Has a perfumed bouquet featuring ripe berries, hints of leafy, minty characters and toasty oak. This is a soft, well-balanced Cabernet with rich, berry flavours and firm tannins. Although attractive drinking now, it will benefit from further cellaring.

The Special Reserve Cabernets

- 1980 (Special Reserve)** The Montgomery Trophy winner has added complexity from two years in wood. It has a voluminous nose with hints of berries, chocolate, coffee and spice, extra intensity and greater depth of flavour on the mid-palate and an excellent, long lingering finish. This is a refined wine of great character which is drinking superbly.
- 1983 (Special Reserve)** This outstanding wine has attractive spicy characters from its oak aging which has added complexity to the huge, rich, blackcurrant fruit from the vintage. It is an elegant wine which is supple and well-balanced, has finesse, excellent structure, great power and considerable length. Although attractive drinking now, it will improve as time softens its big tannins.
- 1987 (Special Reserve)** 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 stylish, elegant and well-structured, has extraordinary depth of flavour, tremendous complexity and amazing length.

The Special Reserve Cabernets

Vintage	HarvestDate	° Beaume	Yield (tonnes/ha)	Vintage Rating (out of 7)
1983	7 March	13.0	9.0	7
1984	12 March	12.3	9.0	5
1985	13 March	12.5	7.5	7
1986	14 March	12.8	5.8	6
1987	26 March	12.7	8.5	7
1988	10 March	13.0	7.1	5
1989	30 March	13.2	7.9	6
1990	2 April	12.8	8.5	7
1991	3 April	13.3	9.8	7
1992	26 March	12.8	10.0	6

The 1992 Vintage in Margaret River

This vintage came in two distinct halves, punctuated by a mild, wet three week period in mid-March during which no picking was possible. During the first phase, a warm, quick-ripening February, the Chardonnay, Pinot Noir, the first half of the Semillon, the Cabernet Franc and a small amount of Cabernet Sauvignon were taken off the vines. The second phase came at the start of April when the rest of the Semillon and the Cabernet Sauvignon were picked. Harvest was completed by mid April.

Keith's initial impression is that the Chardonnay and Pinot Noir are monster wines with massive fruit characters and enormous weight. They have big, soft, generous sweet fruit, are high in alcohol and not tannic. In a moment of weakness, Keith described them as 'loveable, cuddly wines'. The Semillon looks quite delightful: more typical of classic Moss Wood Semillon and with better depth of fruit than the 1991 wine. The Cabernet will be typical of the Moss Wood style: it has soft, berry characters, good balance, lovely texture and considerable weight, without the fresh fragrances of the 1990 and 1991 wines.

A word of praise

Wine columnist for the *West Australian*, Tony Lord, praised the current release Moss Wood Cabernet Sauvignon and suggested that it would be an ideal accompaniment to a Brittany-style leg of lamb casserole.

Of those (Cabernets) I have tasted recently, the latest vintage of Moss Wood, the 1990, is a beauty. It has a lovely, purple colour and a deep, elegantly rich fruit aroma, with sweet mulberry overtones, oak spice and dusty cabernet notes.

The flavour is packed with sweet fruit, just a shade taut at the moment and quite Bordeaux-like. Have a look at it while young, and stick a bottle or two away for the next century.

The 1991 Moss Wood Manjimup Vineyard Chardonnay

Keith and Clare Mugford are delighted to announce the release of the first Moss Wood wine not grown on the Margaret River vineyard. It is the Moss Wood Manjimup Vineyard Chardonnay made from grapes grown on land owned by Robert Danti at Manjimup, one hundred kilometres south-east of Margaret River.

The 1.2 hectare Manjimup vineyard, two-thirds of which is planted with Chardonnay and one-third with Pinot Noir, has been developed under careful supervision of Moss Wood. It is situated in the Glenoran region of the Manjimup/Pemberton wine-growing district on Grafite Road, twenty kilometres west of Manjimup near One Tree Bridge.

Viticultural problems, especially wind damage, in Margaret River which result in an irregular supply of Chardonnay grapes have been a catalyst for the development of the new vineyard in another developing region. Manjimup is an attractive prospect because it is likely to be a more consistent supplier of grapes. It is also likely to produce a significantly different style of Chardonnay from that made in Margaret River. Being further inland, it produces a different style of Chardonnay from that made in Margaret River with fine fragrant aromas and delicate, fresh flavours on the palate.

The vineyard was planted using the then quite revolutionary, but now more widely used, Te Kauwhata Two Tier (TK Two T) trellising system. The TK Two T system reduces the density of the foilage and improves canopy exposure to the sun. The vines can be managed in about one quarter of the time required by a vineyard which uses traditional trellising.

Clones of Chardonnay and Pinot Noir from Moss Wood were planted in the deep, gravelled loam soil on a superb northerly facing slope. ('Brilliant. This is God's own country' insists Keith in a fairly rare outburst.) The planting, establishment and management of the vineyard have all be very closely supervised by the Moss Wood team.

The winemaking has followed the classic Moss Wood tradition: full barrel fermentation in one hundred per cent new oak and nine months on lees. The only difference has been that this wine was not put through the malolactic fermentation. This decision was made because the wine was still seen as something of an experiment. With the 1992 Chardonnay from Manjimup, on the other hand, Keith actively pursued the malolactic fermentation as he believed that it would benefit as much from this as the Margaret River Chardonnays.

The 1991 Manjimup Chardonnay was bottled in December 1991 and is now ready for release. This is the first commercial crop from vines planted in September 1987. Although the quality is very good, the price reflects the fact that the wine comes from very young vines.

The 1991 Manjimup Chardonnay has an appealing bouquet with hints of apple, citrus and passionfruit and sophisticated wood treatment. On the palate, it is fresh and lively with crisp, vibrant fruit characters. The wine has very good balance, fine structure and an attractive, though slightly short, finish. The composition of the grapes seems to suggest that the wine has cellaring potential although it is rather too soon to be making bold predictions.