



# MOSS WOOD

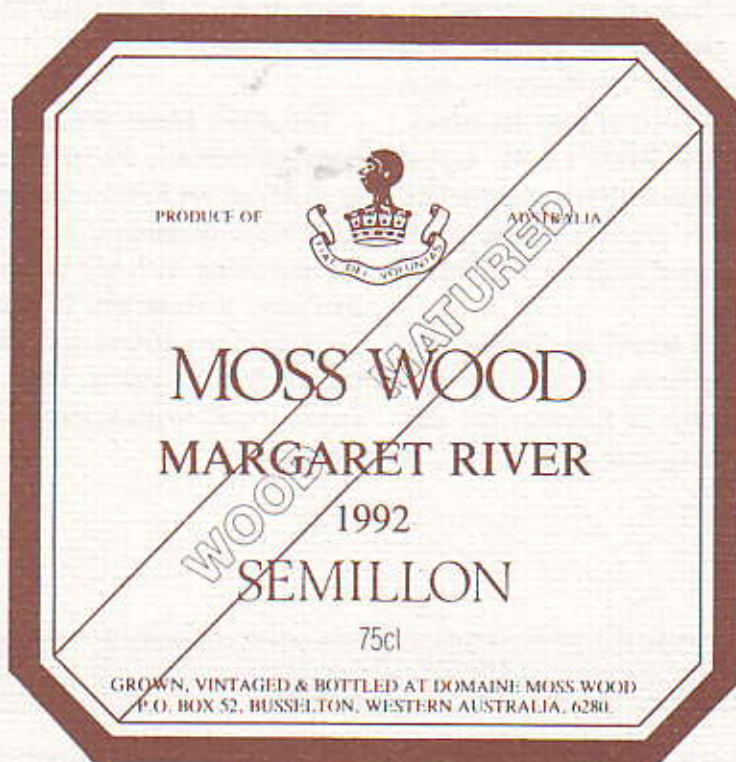
## Newsletter

Nº 19

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### The Moss Wood 1992 Wood Matured Semillon

As has become traditional at Moss Wood, the Semillon is picked in three stages: green, ripe and extra ripe because of the different characters that this gives the wine. After fermentation, a portion of the Semillon was given wood aging for release under this label. As usual, half of this was placed in new oak. Because of its fullness and weight and to give the wine greater complexity, it was aged in oak for five and a half months rather than the more usual three or four months.



On the nose, the 1992 Moss Wood Wood Matured Semillon has ripe honeyed characters with touches of figs, apples, grapefruit and spicy oak. The palate has lifted, herbaceous fruit, is lively and crisp with good acidity and a lightly tannic finish. It is well-balanced, mouth-filling and has a long, dry finish.

This wine can be drunk early for its freshness and persistent flavours or cellared for at least ten years to highlight the rich, toasty, developed, honeyed character of aged Semillon.

## Margaret River Semillon

An article by Jeremy Oliver published in the *Age* last year provides some interesting insights into the Semillons produced in the Margaret River region. Oliver comments,

Something very different happens to semillon in the south-west corner of Western Australia. Something so different that it creates a wine that stands alone, destined to be known alongside Coonawarra cabernet sauvignon, Clare riesling and north-eastern Victorian muscat as a rare, freakish combination of variety and region.

Hunter Valley semillon will never be challenged for the honeyed, chalky, toasty complexity it curiously develops with time in the bottle. It is a definitively idiosyncratic Australian wine. Barossa Valley semillon, while perhaps lacking the finesse, also abounds with richness and character once time has been allowed to play its tricks. But what Margaret River's soil, aspect and climate does to semillon is quite unlike that of these two regions, those most commonly associated with the variety.

Most Australian semillons require time in oak, bottle or both, to develop real punch and intensity of flavour, but this breed breaks the mould. For a start, it

generates mouth-filling melon/honey-like fruit intensity while very young, with a characteristically greenish and herbaceous lift. Sometimes it can even border on the vegetative pungency of New Zealand sauvignon blanc ...

But there are two distinct extremes of south-western WA semillons. Some wineries direct their energies towards the nurturing of white burgundian-like, wood-matured styles, others towards fresher, earlier-drinking dry wines ... the role models for each of the two extremes are made by Moss Wood and Cape Mentelle respectively.

The 1991 Moss Wood wood-matured semillon is clearly the epitome of the wood-aged Margaret River semillon. Greenish, with hints of melon, it's a big, chewy, smokey wine with big oak but high-wire balance - a class act. It cost \$20 and is drinking like a charm now, but will easily handle 8 - 10 years, after which time, anyone still with some will possess a treasure.

## 1993 Vintage

The 1993 vintage appears to continue the good to excellent harvests of recent years in Margaret River. The summer has been dry but has brought no excessively hot weather. Consequently, the vines have not suffered from heat stress even though there has been no significant rainfall since December.

The yields at Moss Wood are consistent with the vineyard's average. We have been particularly fortunate this year as Moss Wood was on the perimeter of the severe hail storm last November and did not suffer anywhere near as badly as some vineyards which lost half of their potential yield.

The harvest has been progressing speedily with the grapes showing a pleasing ripeness, good acidity and pH. At this stage, Keith believes that the harvest is similar to the 1980 and 1979 with the wines likely to show lifted characters, good balance and ripe, generous flavours without being too tannic. The Pinot Noir looks particularly exciting.

## The 1992 Moss Wood Chardonnay

The 1992 vintage produced white wines at Moss Wood which were full-bodied and richly flavoured, a contrast to the relatively fine wines of the previous vintage. The long, slow, ripening conditions that the district experienced in spring and early summer are not necessarily a guarantee of a great vintage. However, a series of beautiful summer days with the temperature in the high twenties during February provided ideal ripening conditions. The grapes which had been about two weeks behind schedule ripened so quickly that harvest was right on time. There were no external problems, such as rain and bird damage, so that by vintage, the fruit was in excellent condition although at 13.7° a bit higher in alcohol than usual. Yields for the Chardonnay were slightly down but the quality was good.

The wine was made by the traditional method used at Moss Wood. It commenced fermentation in stainless steel and completed it in one hundred per cent new French barriques. It underwent a full malolactic fermentation on lees and spent a further nine months in oak before being fined, filtered and bottled.



The 1992 Moss Wood Chardonnay is rich and full-flavoured yet has a subtlety and finesse which belies its relative ripeness. It is fresh, clean and lively with peach characters and hints of fig and quince, marmalade (from the lees aging) and butterscotch (from the malolactic fermentation). The wine has good weight, a depth of rich, sweet fruit, crisp acidity and a long, dry finish.

Although the 1992 Chardonnay has a generosity of flavour that gives it immediate appeal, it will develop greater complexity and concentration with up to ten years cellaring. At present, it will benefit from breathing and may take some time to open up in the glass.

## Moss Wood Chardonnay Vintage Chart

Vintage	Harvest Date	° Beaume	pH	Yield (tonnes/ha)	Vintage 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	27 February	13.5	3.35	7.3	6+

## Seven Deadly Sins

One wonders whether the ABC mini-series *Seven Deadly Sins* will do for Moss Wood Cabernet what James Bond did for Bollinger RD (and later, Taittinger 'Comtes de Champagne'). While we're not sure that the name of the mini-series is promoting exactly the image that Moss Wood would have chosen, many devotees of the wine will be delighted to see the 1990 Moss Wood Cabernet chosen for the hearty dinner to celebrate the fifteenth wedding anniversary in the episode entitled 'Lust'.

We're not sure if the Cabernet was there because of an enlightened script-writer or an imaginative director, but the plug for Moss Wood was most welcome.

## Moss Wood for dinner

A regular visitor to the Melbourne Regent wanted to organise a great dinner party with the best of food and wine to impress his guests. So he asked the Regent's concierge, John Elmas, to send him two crates of wine. The case of 1990 Croser and 1990 Moss Wood Cabernet Sauvignon were duly dispatched by air freight to Pasadena, California for the important occasion. It's pleasing to realise that the day of the grand gesture has not vanished. And equally good to see that when only the best will do, it's Moss Wood that the cognoscenti call for.

## Re-corking

Re-corking old bottles is a service that the first growth chateau of Bordeaux have provided for their customers for many years. Moss Wood is pleased to offer the same first class service.

With the vineyard approaching its twenty first vintage, we are seeing how long the corks from early wines are lasting. As a result, we realise that it is possible that the corks in Moss Wood wines more than ten years old may not be in perfect condition. As a service to those who love to cellar their Moss Woods, Keith is happy to top up any bottles and replace the cork where there has been a deterioration of the old cork.

There will be, of course, no charge for this service.

## The Vineyard

The vineyard is situated on a gentle, north-east facing slope, where the soils vary from sandy loam to a gravelly, red-brown loam, over a clay subsoil. It is unirrigated and is wide spaced with 3.0 metres between rows and 1.8 metres between vines.

The following varieties are planted:

Cabernet Sauvignon	3.70 hectares
Semillon	1.35 hectares
Pinot Noir	1.45 hectares
Chardonnay	1.29 hectares
Cabernet Franc	0.26 hectares
Merlot	0.03 hectares
Petit Verdot	<u>0.26 hectares</u>
<b>Total:</b>	<b>8.34 hectares</b>

## Visiting the Winery

Because of the relatively small volume of wine produced, no cellar door facility is provided for the general public and visits to the winery are by appointment only.

However, Keith and Clare Mugford are happy to welcome anyone interested in wine who wishes to see over the winery and/or to taste the current Moss Wood releases. Please contact them beforehand to make arrangements if you wish to visit.

## Mailing List

The Moss Wood Newsletter is produced three times each year to coincide with the release of the Chardonnay and wood-matured Semillon; the Cabernet Sauvignon; and the Pinot Noir and the Semillon. To receive the newsletter and mail order form, contact Keith and Clare Mugford, at the address below.

In the United Kingdom, Moss Wood wines and the Moss Wood Newsletter are available from:

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