



# MOSS WOOD

Newsletter

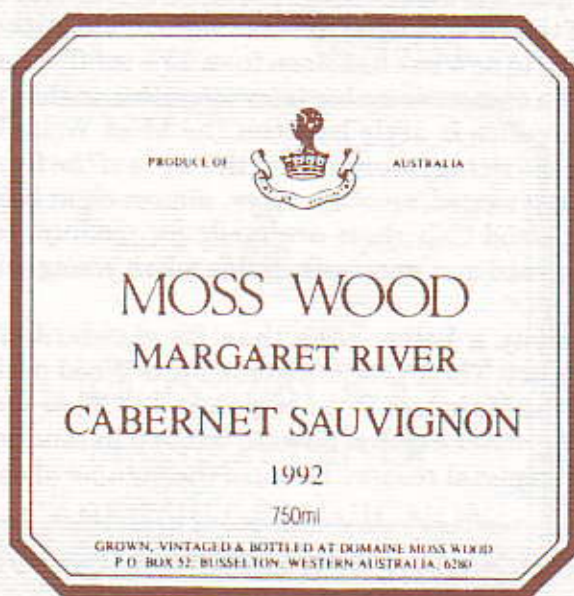
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Winter, 1994

## The 1992 Moss Wood Cabernet Sauvignon

The 1992 vintage for cabernet sauvignon at Moss Wood was unusual in that it was a harvest in two halves. Picking of the Cabernet Franc began on March 12 and was followed by heavy downpours for a week during which 75 millimetres of rain fell. After this, there was a break for a week and then the first of the Cabernet Sauvignon was picked. Further rain halted the harvesting and there was another week's break before picking could commence once again.

Fear that the Cabernet would suffer proved groundless and, in spite of the unusually heavy rainfall during vintage, the vines had no problems achieving full ripeness. Keith's patience was rewarded and this wine has the richness of structure that consumers have come to expect from Moss Wood Cabernets.



The 1992 Moss Wood Cabernet Sauvignon has lifted, redcurrant and spicy oak characters with a hint of cinnamon, long rich, mulberry flavours, some earthiness and well-integrated, soft tannins. The wine has a lively mouthfeel, complexity, fresh acidity and some smokey oak on the finish. As with most young Cabernets from the vineyard, there is sufficient fruit for the wine to be enjoyed before five years of age, although it will be at its best after ten years cellaring.

Although not as round, generous or intense as the outstanding 1990 and 1991 vintages, it is soft, has good length, some complexity and attractive, mulberry flavours on the palate. Keith likes the wine and believes that it will get better with age and will rate more highly than it does now, as has happened with the 1984 and 1989 Cabernets. Incidentally, he sees it as more intense and concentrated than either of those two wines. As well as this, Keith believes that Moss Wood has benefitted from the experience of difficult years such as 1989 and 1982 and is now better equipped to pick riper grapes in vintages like those. Most importantly, the vineyard is showing the value of twenty year old vines.



## Vintage ratings: Cabernet Sauvignon

Vintage	Harvest Date	°Beaume	Yield (tonnes/ha)	Vintage Rating (out of 10)
1983	7 March	13.0	9.0	9
1984	12 March	12.3	9.0	8+
1985	13 March	12.5	7.5	9
1986	14 March	12.8	5.8	9
1987	26 March	12.7	8.5	9
1988	10 March	13.0	7.1	7
1989	30 March	13.2	7.9	7+
1990	2 April	12.8	8.5	10
1991	3 April	13.3	9.8	10
1992	26 March	12.8	10.0	8+
1993	22 March	13.2	8.5	9
1994	25 March	12.8	8.89	8+

## The philosophy of the Special Reserve wines

When the 1980 vintage produced such an outstanding cabernet, it was decided to release a small batch as a special reserve. The results were so encouraging, even without the bonus of a Montgomery Trophy, that it was decided to repeat the experiment in outstanding vintages at Moss Wood.

Thirty three percent of the 1980 Cabernet was matured in new oak barrels. The finished wine was blended in stainless steel and the standard release bottled immediately afterwards. A decision was made to age a small amount in wood for twenty four instead of the usual twelve months. The best available three year old barriques were chosen to give the wine barrel development rather than oak treatment. Only six barrels of the 1980 Special Reserve were made. Although the percentage of the Moss Wood Cabernets now aged in new oak has risen from 33% to 50%, the Special Reserves are still made in the same way with the emphasis on barrel maturation rather than oak treatment.

There is a significant divergence in style between the Moss Wood Cabernet and the Special Reserve with some preferring the richer, rounder, fruitier style of the former and others the sterner structure and more complex, developed, smokey, tarry, almost cigar box characters of the reserve wine. Although all the Moss Wood Cabernets are made for medium to long term cellaring, the reserve wines are even more closed and unapproachable when young and are very much made for the long haul.

The reserve is not necessarily a better wine than its standard sibling: merely a different expression of the winemaker's art. Their position in the Moss Wood portfolio remains to highlight special years for Cabernet in the Margaret River region and at Moss Wood: vintages in which the wines have extra intensity and greater depth of flavour. Of the outstanding vintages since 1980, only the 1985 was not released as a special reserve because the volume of cabernet was inadequate.

## Moss Wood Cabernet Sauvignon Special Reserve Vintage Chart

**1980 (Special Reserve)** The Montgomery Trophy winner has added complexity from two years in wood. It has extra intensity, greater depth of flavour on the mid-palate and an excellent, long lingering finish. This rich, powerful wine is drinking superbly and should continue to develop.

**1983 (Special Reserve)** Has attractive spicy characters from its oak aging which has added complexity to the remarkable, lifted blackcurrant fruit. It is an elegant wine which is supple and well-balanced, has finesse, excellent structure, great power and considerable length. Still years ahead of it.

**1987 (Special Reserve)** One of the greatest of the Moss Wood wines: a powerful, complete Cabernet which is supple, round and mouthfilling and shows attractive mulberry, mint and leafy fruit characters with a second layer of earthiness, tarry oak and tobacco. It is stylish, elegant and well-structured, has extraordinary depth of flavour and great length.

**1991 (Special Reserve)** Deep crimson colour, an intense nose with ripe mulberries and redcurrants and hints of earthiness and cedary oak. The palate has long, complex flavours with excellent integration of fruit and oak. Potentially the best ever.



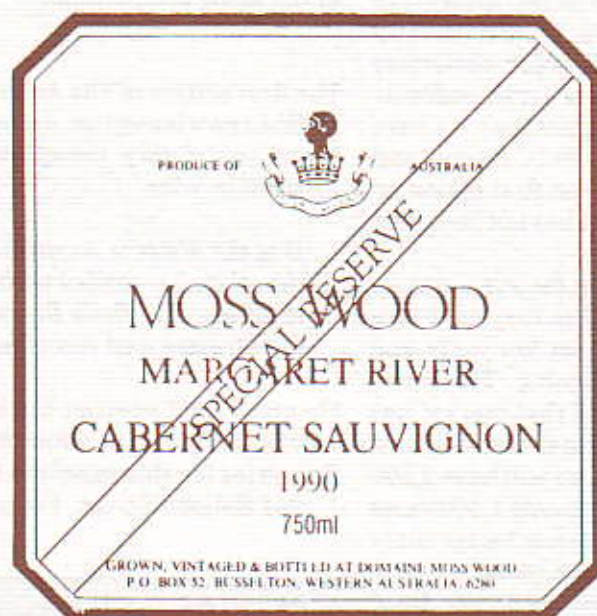
## The 1990 Moss Wood Cabernet Sauvignon Special Reserve

The 1990 vintage was one of the best in the history of the Margaret River region and produced a harvest that could provide the benchmark for the future. From the beginning of the growing season, the vintage was one of great promise. The mild weather with regular rainfall during the summer months produced perfect viticultural conditions. The summer rain did delay the harvest and, initially, there was some concern that the grapes would not ripen. In fact, the impact of this steady rainfall was beneficial to the vines and to the composition of the fruit and the grapes did achieve full ripeness.

The late harvest did, however, mean that the marri gums had stopped flowering before picking was finished and 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 Sauvignon Reserve includes 5% of Cabernet Franc and less than 1% of Merlot. Keith Mugford believes that the introduction of Cabernet Franc to the blend for the first time is a fine tuning of, rather than a substantial change to, the established Moss Wood Cabernet style.

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 1992.



The 1990 Moss Wood Cabernet Sauvignon Special Reserve shows redcurrant characters with hints of mulberry and cedary oak as well as development from cask aging which provides some smokey, tarry qualities. Rather than exhibiting the fresh, fruitiness of Margaret River Cabernet such as the standard wine displays, this reserve highlights the complexities of its oak handling. On the palate, it is supple, round and full flavoured, rich and concentrated with impressive depth and a long, smokey finish. Its structure is firm with good acidity and obvious but fine tannins.

This is a wine which has tremendous cellaring potential and we recommend it be kept at least ten years before drinking. However, it has some interesting flavours and the balance is such that it can be enjoyed as a young wine, even if it is infanticide. If you do drink it over the next few years, it needs to be decanted and swirled in the glass to release its hiding charms.



## The 1994 vintage at Moss Wood

Some excellent wines should be produced from the 1994 vintage at Moss Wood. Despite the drought, summer was quite mild and the vines remained in good condition and the grapes achieved good levels of ripeness. The whites are ripe, fleshy wines that are similar to those from the previous vintage and, though not quite as ripe, perfumed or powerful, are still luscious.

The reds are bright, deep red, show ripeness and therefore good richness. The 1994 Pinot Noir is similar to the 1992 but looks to be more perfumed than that wine, and is denser, more concentrated and more complete than the 1993. On the other hand, the 1994 Cabernet is a blockbuster with rich, redcurrant characters and appears a cross between the outstanding 1991 and 1993 wines. It appears to have the ripe chocolate and tannins of 1983 and the velvety texture and mulberry character of 1991.

The weather remained dry throughout the vintage but the vines suffered no moisture stress as is evidenced by the high levels of alcohol in the wines. Keith was concerned during January because it would only have needed a heatwave for the vineyard to experience serious problems. That didn't occur and the mature vines stood up to the dry weather superbly. The conditions were similar to 1984 when the growth of the vines slowed down because of the lack of moisture. This wasn't a problem in 1994 as the vines were better established.

## Snippets

The strength of Australia's export of wines and the string of excellent vintages has put pressure on the supply of top quality Australia red wines in this country. We, at Moss Wood, have a continued strong commitment to the local market and more than seventy per cent of our wines are sold here. We particularly appreciate the loyalty of our mail order customers many of whom have supported us over a tremendously long period of time. To indicate our priorities, we have only produced 150 magnums of the 1992 Cabernet and mail order customers have been given first option on these. The Special Reserve Cabernet has not been sent overseas in spite of many requests.

That said, we do seek recognition for our wines on overseas markets and are pleased that they have now been available in Britain for the past ten years and that the market there is strengthening. The Swiss have been customers since 1985 and that market has now recovered from the recession. With the introduction of Petit Verdot to the blend in 1995, we will have 2,500 cases of Cabernet to sell as opposed to only 1,500 cases in the late seventies. The more diverse market certainly makes marketing a premium product easier.

However, our first priority remains to our loyal mail order customers and to the domestic market.

The respected British wine magazine, *Decanter*, has given the 1992 Moss Wood Cabernet Sauvignon a high four star recommendation in their new releases. Comments include 'Fresh, young, colour, elegant, spicy earthy nose. Great potential with an elegant balanced palate. Clever use of oak with lovely cab finish.' and 'Deep purple in colour with big aroma on the nose. Tannic in the mouth but packed with fruit. This is a very easy-drinking style of wine.'

The 1992 Moss Wood Cabernet Sauvignon has been awarded a gold medal at the 1994 International Wine Challenge conducted by the British magazine, *Wine*. The 1993 Moss Wood Chardonnay won a silver medal in the same competition.

The first edition of *The Australian Wine Handbook* by Melbourne wine writer, Jeremy Oliver, says that Moss Wood justifiably occupies an exalted status in Australian wine.

*It is the Western Australian winery against which the others are judged with few peers anywhere wine is grown. The Rolls Royce Cabernet Sauvignon is unobtrusive and restrained...*

He gives the Cabernet his highest rating, placing it among the finest 14 wines in the country.

Enquiries for this excellent book:

261 Salmon Street, Fisherman's Bend Vic 3207

## Moss Wood Magnum 1992 Cabernet

The response last year was overwhelming and we have decided to repeat the exercise and have expanded the quantity to 150 bottles to go some way in fulfilling the demand. The 1500ml bottles of this wine will be wax sealed, individually packed and numbered.

Orders, however, for this release will be restricted to one magnum bottle per customer to those on our mailing list. Availability of boxes is proving difficult and those who order magnums can expect a delay of about two weeks.