



MOSS WOOD

Newsletter

N° 24

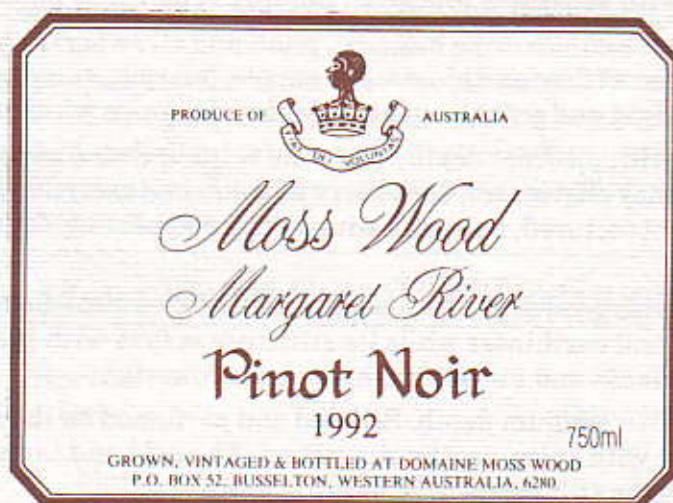
Spring, 1994

1992 Moss Wood Pinot Noir

The 1992 Pinot Noir is something of a surprise packet at Moss Wood, especially after two fine vintages in 1990 and 1991. The wine is a huge, gutsy, alcoholic red that will drink well young but can be cellared with confidence.

It was made using thirty per cent uncrushed bunches according to techniques developed and refined at Moss Wood over many years. Pre fermentation, the must was cooled and pumped over for half an hour once a day, delaying the onset of fermentation by forty eight hours. This maceration enhances the fruit flavour and colour without extracting the more aggressive tannins. It is an extension of a Burgundian technique introduced by Nicholas Pôtel of Domaine de la Pousse d'Or when he worked at Moss Wood in 1991.

During fermentation, the must was hand plunged at least five times a day until dryness. At that stage, the ancient technique of *pigeage* was employed. The winemakers were immersed in the fermenters stirring the wine and stamping the whole bunches so that more sugar was released and the fermentation picked up once again. In this way, the fermentation process was lengthened and the wine remained in contact with the skins for about fourteen days. This enhances colour and tannins yet avoids any harshness or bitterness. The wine was pressed two days after the fermentation stopped the second time.



The wine went through a malolactic fermentation in stainless steel and was then transferred to barrels where it stayed for twelve months. As usual, about a third of the barrels were new with half of these coming from Allier and half from Tronçais. The wine was fined, filtered and bottled in November 1993.

The 1992 Moss Wood Pinot Noir is riper than usual without showing any signs of hotness or portiness. It is a complex, rich red which has intense, spicy, red berry, cherry characters with hints of cinnamon and earthiness, impressive depth, good weight and fine, ripe tannins.

Moss Wood Pinot Noir Vintage Chart

There have only been minimal changes in the older pinots that we've seen since the vertical tasting at the winery in June, 1993. Keith recommends that the 1977, 1979 and 1980 be drunk now.

- 1977** Deep ruby colour with a touch of tawny. An interesting, mature wine with some spicy, gamey characters. Quite developed and past its best but still pleasant.
- 1979** Developed medium ruby colour. Simple, berry fruit, light oak perfumes, lacking complexity and length. Past its best.
- 1980** Distinctly tawny, ruby colour. Ripe, plummy, gamey, mushroomy characters and a warm, alcoholic background. The palate is rich and soft with dark, berry flavours. Getting beyond its best.
- 1981** At its best, this outstanding pinot has a deep ruby colour, a superb nose which is full and multi-faceted with aromas of plums, leather, meat, game and charry oak. The palate is similarly complex with a broad range of flavours: plums, game, mushrooms and spicy oak. It is supple, concentrated, rich with excellent weight and considerable length. Of the six bottles Keith has seen recently, two were sensational, two were good and two showed signs that the wine was tiring and becoming a little harsh on the finish.
- 1982** The acid and tannins have fully softened and the spicy, cherry and charry oak characters make this a pinot which is aging gracefully.
- 1983** This is quite developed with hints of berries, camphor and leather on the nose while the palate has soft and round with developed berry characters and a touch of cedar. Showing signs of fading.
- 1984** Light ruby colour with some tawny edges, a developed nose with cherries, gaminess and spicy oak. The palate is lively with rich, ripe fruit and some earthiness. It has good weight, is full and round, still has fresh acid and firm tannins and is drinking well..
- 1985** The 1985 Moss Wood Pinot has a deep ruby colour with some development at the edges. It has intense aromas of plums and strawberries with hints of leather and game, ripe, spicy fruit on the palate and coconut oak on the finish. It is supple with rich, concentrated flavours, great depth and length with attractive fine grain tannins. A delicious pinot, drinking beautifully.
- 1986** This interesting and complex wine has ripe, plum and strawberry characters with hints of leather, game and forest floor earthiness. It is supple, has rich, round, generous flavours, good depth, excellent weight and great length and acid and tannins which are beginning to soften.
- 1987** Deep, ruby colour with medium depth. The wine is quite closed at present, with restrained strawberry and gamey characters, dark berry flavours and assertive acid and tannins on the palate. It is a well-structured, balanced wine with an appealing depth of flavour and good length.
- 1988** Deep, ruby colour with good depth. The wine has attractive strawberry and plum characters and hints of game and earthiness while its structure is firm with good acid and tannin and dark berries, earthiness and attractive charry oak. Powerful.
- 1989** Deep ruby colour with medium depth. Scented and perfumed on the nose, this is a big, ripe, rich, alcoholic wine with spicy, earthy characters. The acid and tannins are still quite assertive and the wine still needs time to settle down.
- 1990** The wine shows intense, perfumed aromas of ripe berries with hints of game, mushrooms and leather while the palate has rich, concentrated dark cherries, a firm structure and good acid and powerful tannins. It has character and flavour and needs time to shows its elegance and class.
- 1991** This is one of the best Pinots produced at Moss Wood. It has a fragrant, lifted nose with ripe strawberry and cherry characters with hints of leather, game and charry oak while the palate has attractive sweet berry fruit with a touch of sappiness. This is a clean, fresh, flavoursome wine which is supple, well-balanced and complex and has a pleasing texture, as well as good depth and length.

1994 Moss Wood Semillon

The 1994 vintage is the second consecutive year in which Moss Wood has not produced a wood matured semillon. While the reason for the not making the wooded wine in 1993 was the shortage of fruit caused by November storms, Keith has decided to use all of the semillon this year to make an unwooded wine because he believes that there is currently a consumer preference for fresher, fruitier styles. The excesses of wooded chardonnays and a move towards more cafe eating have increased interest in the traditional Australian unwooded semillon.

Keith believes that the oak influence has overridden seasonal variations in the wood matured semillon and he believes that there is consumer interest in such vintage variation. Consequently, he and Clare have decided to concentrate on product-

ion of the unwooded semillon which they believe to be the traditional Australian style, which developed first in the Hunter Valley. If there is a massive backlash from consumers, they will be happy to re-assess the position.

The 1994 Semillon was produced by the usual method followed at Moss Wood. The grapes were crushed, drained and pressed and all pressings were included immediately in the juice. This was chilled, settled for forty eight hours, then racked,

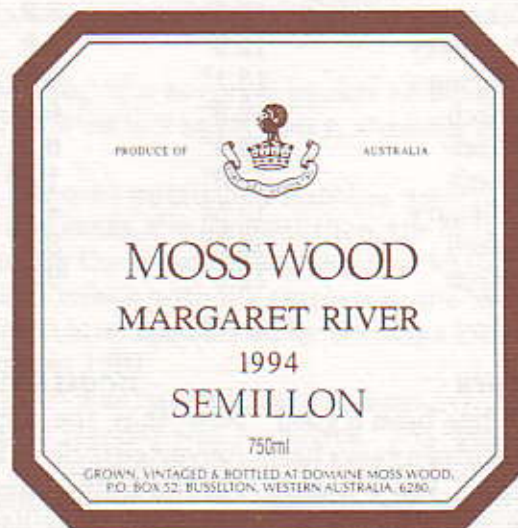
seeded with a pure yeast culture and fermented at 18° C to dryness. At that stage, it is treated with sulphur dioxide and left on lees for two months with weekly stirring under carbon dioxide. The wine is then fined, filtered and bottled.

The 1994 Moss Wood Semillon is similar in style to the 1993, is riper and rounder but is less fragrant and less delicate than that wine. On the nose, the 1994 Semillon has perfumed, ripe fig and quince characters, is lightly herbaceous showing more grapefruit than gooseberries and lifted citrus flavours on the mid-palate with soft, ripe tannins on the finish.

The wine is a little out of the ordinary for the Moss Wood Semillon coming from one of the ripest vintages ever. In style, it is similar to the great 1983 which is

perhaps riper and rounder, all figs and honey, while the 1994 Semillon is more delicate and fragrant with grassy, citrus characters.

The current vintage is a medium weight, full bodied white that has good depth of flavour and lively, persistent flavours. It is one of the best ever cellaring prospects and will improve over the next decade or more with careful storage. We recommend the wine with enthusiasm.



Moss Wood Semillon Ratings

Vintage	Harvest Date	Beaume	Yield (tonnes/ha)	Vintage Rating (out of 10)
1983	5 March	12.3°	13.6	9
1984	5 March	12.2°	12.4	7
1985	28 February	12.0°	10.0	9
1986	28 February	12.4°	9.1	7
1987	9 March	12.0°	13.5	8
1988	18 February	12.1°	9.6	7
1989	15 March	12.3°	12.5	7
1990	21 March	12.4°	13.0	8
1991	26 March	11.9°	19.0	6
1992	3 March	12.5°	13.9	8
1993	5 March	12.7°	9.0	10
1994	10 March	12.9°	11.0	9

Moss Wood Pinot Noir Ratings

Vintage	Harvest Date	Beaume (tonnes/ha)	Yield	Vintage Rating (out of 10)
1979	17 February	12.3°	6.6	4
1980	29 February	14.2°	3.5	4
1981	4 March	13.1°	3.8	10
1982	13 March	12.95°	8.2	5
1983	19 February	12.85°	6.0	6
1984	16 February	12.9°	5.7	7
1985	25 February	13.3°	6.4	10
1986	24 February	13.3°	5.8	10
1987	24 February	12.9°	5.8	8
1988	10 February	13.1°	6.0	8
1989	15 March	12.9°	6.5	6
1990	16 March	13.4°	8.5	9
1991	10 March	13.3°	10.0	9
1992	28 February	13.5°	8.8	8
1993	3 March	13.3°	8.2	8
1994	1 March	13.5°	9.8	8+

Pressing matters

The Howard Rota Press which has been a good and faithful servant for the past fifteen years has given way to that BMW of presses, the Willmes WUP 3000, a speedier membrane press with two and a half times more capacity. Keith says the labour and time savings during vintage will take pressure off the workforce and make it more efficient. This does go a bit against the grain because traditionally we've enjoyed a bit of pain in our winemaking. As they say, "every good vintage needs a little sweat".

As well as this, he believes that the gentler action of the Willmes will produce better quality juice with the possibility of higher yields at the settling stage because of a reduced percentage of solids in the juice.

Moss Wood staff

Sue Henderson has taken over the office job of Elizabeth Lechte who has stepped down to nurture the new born and therefore latest member of her family, Benjamin. Sue joins Aileen Dickhart at the centre of the Moss Wood customer relations empire.

Old bottles

Keith and Clare Mugford always welcome feedback about old bottles of Moss Wood that mail order customers have tried.

Scott Henry trellising

Now that the semillon vines have been converted to Scott Henry trellising, between two thirds and three quarters of the vineyard has been retrellised. As one block of the cabernet has been changed over, only two cabernet blocks remain. One of those blocks will be completely converted but Keith is uncertain about changing the old block (the original planting of cabernet) to Scott Henry. He is happy with the present yield and the character of the fruit from that block and is not convinced that a changeover will result in the significant improvements that have been seen in other parts of the vineyard.

That corker of a problem

The problem with cork taint is that no matter what precaution you take, it's virtually impossible to detect faulty corks before bottling. Like so many other vigneron, Keith pays top dollar to get the best possible corks but is fed up with problems such as leaking and tainting that result from poor quality corks. He believes that it's absurd that the wine industry has been unable to solve this problem as we head towards the twenty first century. Consequently, he is seriously looking at the possibility of trialling artificial closures such as the cellular cork.