



# MOSS WOOD

## Newsletter

№ 27

Winter, 1995

### The 1993 Moss Wood Cabernet Sauvignon

The 1993 vintage followed a mild, dry summer in which temperatures remained consistently low. It was the sort of season which had vignerons concerned that if autumn rains occurred the vines might not ripen. Fortunately, the feared wet spell did not eventuate and picking of the fully ripened grapes began later than usual. The fruit condition was excellent with above average acidity, good beaume, average alcohol levels and no evidence of disease or bird damage.

The wines reflect the cool nature of the summer having a stamp of elegance and finesse. They show lifted, perfumed fruit aromas and a fresh and crisp palate structure. There were early worries that the palate might be uncharacteristically tough for the Moss Wood vineyard but the ripeness of the grapes and the good alcohol levels meant that such concerns were unfounded.

The 1993 Cabernet was made according to normal procedure at Moss Wood. The wine spent seven days on skins during which time it was hand plunged. After that, it was placed in stainless steel tanks to undergo the malolactic fermentation. Then the wine spent twelve months in oak (fifty per cent of which was new) before the final blend (including all pressings) was made in stainless steel. Fining trials were then conducted to see if any fining was needed. In 1993, Keith was keen to slightly reduce the impact of the tannins because of the wine's finer style and so egg whites were used for fining for the first time since 1983. On that occasion, the opposite situation existed and Moss Wood needed to counteract the impact of the massively, ripe tannic vintage.



The 1993 Moss Wood Cabernet has a bright red colour, redcurrant, black cherry, and scented oak aromas with hints of chocolate while the palate is lively with vibrant, redcurrant flavours and an underlying earthiness. The wine is supple, has medium depth, fresh acidity and fine grain tannins. Although quite closed, it is surprisingly attractive young and has the structure, acidity and tannins to be long lived.

Keith believes that although the wine lacks the glorious opulence of the rich, fruity 1976 or 1985 cabernets, it will develop richness with cellaring. He sees the 1993 as similar in style to vintages such as 1987, 1979, 1984 and 1981: although clearly less tannic than the 1981 and richer and more complex than the 1987. However, he believes that it will prove to be regarded as better than those fine vintages.



## Moss Wood Cabernet Sauvignon Vintage Chart

- 1973 Still holding up with hints of eucalypt, mint, berry and charry oak on the nose, and soft, gentle, delicate cherry flavours with overtones of tobacco and spices and some tarriness.
- 1974 Has a complex bouquet with overtones of berries, chocolate, leather and cedar. A simple wine, soft and mellow with firm tannins and some tarriness on the finish. As with all of the older wines, bottle variation is a problem.
- 1975 One of the great Moss Woods as the best bottles still suggest: complex, powerful flavours and a velvety texture. Otherwise, it's a multi-dimensional red which has lost its primary fruit and taken on earthy, cigar box and tobacco characters with hints of tarriness.
- 1976 A big, rich wine with perfumed spicy, redcurrant and plum aromas and some spicy, tarry characters. On the palate, there are some ripe berry characters but secondary characters dominate: chocolate, coffee, cedar and licorice. This gentle mellow red has soft tannins with smoky, cedary overtones lingering on the finish.
- 1977 Has an intense bouquet of blackberries with hints of leafiness and tarriness. Its palate is soft, round and generous with lingering berry and spicy, cedary oak flavours albeit with quite firm tannins on the finish. This is a supple yet complex cabernet with considerable power and reasonable length which is drinking beautifully.
- 1979 Has a scented bouquet with hints of redcurrants, cherries and leafy tobacco. On the palate, it has soft, rich fruit with a touch of herbaceousness and delicate mint characters. Still showing the lifted acid and soft tannins that will allow it to age further.
- 1980 This complex wine from a great vintage has intense ripe, redcurrant aromas with hints of cedary oak, and a depth of rich, blackcurrant flavour with overtones of camphor, cigar box and scented oak. It has a superb, velvety mouth-feel, a multi-layered structure and a long, fine finish.
- 1980 (Special Reserve) 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 appears in a class above the earlier wines from the vineyard because of the liveliness of its fruit. A monumental red which shows the essence of Moss Wood.
- 1981 This tightly structured wine with a big, tannin backbone is becoming more approachable, showing rich, redcurrant fruit, earthy characters and some complex tarriness in the background. Still needs time to be at its best.
- 1982 An appealing, well-balanced wine showing ripe, herbaceous fruit with pleasant camphor and spicy oak characters. It has a supple mouth-feel, generous rounded flavours and soft tannins. Possibly the first wine to be fully mature.
- 1983 Although tightly structured this huge wine is beginning to open out and show its class. Has intense, ripe redcurrant and spicy oak characters on the nose while the palate is ripe, round and strong—rich berry and chocolate fruit with cedary oak and a touch of tarriness on the finish. Very impressive.
- 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. Unexpectedly good, a truly exciting prospect which is still developing.
- 1984 Although the tannins and acid have softened, the wine is still youthful. It has a scented nose of cherries, tobacco and charry oak, a delicate palate with good cherry flavour and cigar box overtones. The wine has good weight, balance, length and pleasing complexity.
- 1985 An appealing wine which shows excellent integration of rich, ripe, spicy berry fruit and hints of chocolate, leather, camphor and charry oak characters. This powerful wine is supple, round and beautifully textured, has good weight, excellent balance, a tight structure and soft fine-grained tannins. Although attractive drinking now, it is still developing.
- 1986 A powerful, rich wine with huge tannins that is, at last, showing some signs of bottle age. It has rich, redcurrant and earthy characters with hints of cigar box, camphor and tobacco against a tarry background. While the palate shows developing flavours, it is still a very closed wine with tight structure, firm acid and tannin.



## Moss Wood Cabernet Sauvignon Vintage Chart

- 1987 A classy youthful cabernet with a lifted bouquet showing hints of eucalypt, peppermint, violets and mulberries against a backdrop of cedary, smoky oak. It appears to be going through a closed stage at present and needs decanting and a few hours breathing before it is drunk. We'd advise continued cellaring for two or three years when the wine's intensity, richness and concentration, excellent weight and structure will reward your patience.
- 1988 There are now signs that the tannic monster is beginning to soften and be ready to drink. Ripe mulberries with hints of violets and scented, cedary oak, generous rich, ripe, berry fruit flavours and a pleasant finish of moderate length.
- 1989 Quite closed but with underlying ripe berries and hints of violets and tobacco. On the palate, the wine has good weight, is well-balanced, soft and round and quite long. Given time it should open out to reveal a pleasing complexity.
- 1990 Deep, bright, brick red colour, very complex, perfumed nose with ripe berries, spices, violets and tobacco while the palate shows rich, concentrated berry fruit, is round, full flavoured and quite powerful. The wine has good weight and texture, balanced acidity and strong tannins which do not dominate. Excellent potential but still needs time.
- 1991 Shows ripe berry characters which are well integrated with charry oak on the nose and palate. It is a supple, round and generous wine with impressive richness and concentration and a tight structure which will enable it to improve for several years and to keep for much longer.
- 1992 Has lifted, redcurrant and spicy oak characters with a hint of cinnamon, long rich, mulberry flavours, some earthiness and well-integrated, soft tannins. While it can be enjoyed for its fresh fruitiness now, it needs eight to ten years to be at its best.

## A touch of Moss Wood History

The Moss Wood property was one of the first settled in the district. An American ship's carpenter named Henry Adams jumped ship from a whaler at the nearby port of Quindalup in 1858 and fled to Ellensbrook. He married Mary a year later and they had ten children. In 1865, the Adams family moved to Sussex location 90, site of the Moss Wood winery and proposed site of the School Fees Block. Henry named it 'Maryland' after the state from which he came. In 1871, the family abandoned Sussex location 90 and moved to Quindalup where Henry worked in the timber mill for the Yelvertons until his death in 1875.

One of Henry and Mary Adams's children, Elizabeth (called Tilly), married an Irish immigrant, James Kinsella, in 1885. They remained at Quindalup until 1898 when the Yelvertons closed the mill. In that year, the Kinsellas moved back to Sussex location 90 and re-established the property.

In that same year, James Kinsella started working for the Davies family at Karridale riding down from Willyabrup by horse on Sunday afternoon and returning to his family on the following Saturday afternoon. He did this until 1907 when he developed cancer from which he died two years later at the age of 49.

Tilly stayed on at Sussex location 90 until 1924 when she moved to Busselton to run a guest house.

Her son, James, took over the farm but sold it in 1930 and moved closer to Margaret River when the Depression made it difficult for him to keep up payments on the property.

A cyclone in 1920 had taken part of the farm house's roof and so six pine trees were planted as a wind break. Four of those trees remain and are now over twenty metres high. Unfortunately, they will have to be felled to make way for the School Fees Block: two of these, however, were in severe decline with white ants.

## Corked

The Mugfords have had some interesting correspondence on matter of corks since the item in the last newsletter. While not wanting to deride the good efforts of those who supply corks, Keith asserts that the facts remain that corks leak and corks taint wine. He doesn't feel that it is too much to expect that a solution to this aggravating problem be found.

## Number 4

The quiet Mugford household looks forward to welcoming baby number four in mid July. Eloise (7), Tristan (4) and Hugh (1) expect the family to be quite complete after the new arrival.



## In Defence of Moss Wood Cabernet

Keith and Clare have been somewhat blown away by the success of the 1991 Moss Wood Cabernet Sauvignon Special Reserve: pleased, of course, but concerned lest there be a perception that the hype surrounding the Special Reserve detract from the Cabernet's position as Moss Wood's leading wine.

Keith makes the point that it is the Moss Wood Cabernet on which the vineyard's reputation has been founded both domestically and internationally. He sees the Special Reserve as something of a wine maker's folly whereas the Cabernet is a purer expression of vineyard's potential.

While accepting that the small volume of the Special Reserve produced and the exceptional quality of the 1991 vintage, something that is more apparent now than when the 1991 Cabernet was released, have contributed to the demand for the Special Reserve, Keith asserts that the 1993 Moss Wood Cabernet is a very good example of Australian cabernet sauvignon. Perhaps a fair analogy can be made to the difference between vintage Krug and Krug Rosé or Dom Perignon and Dom Perignon Rosé which is due to the scarcity of the rosé wines rather than their inherent better quality. Certainly both champagne house regard their vintage wines as more central to their image than the more expensive rosés.

Keith and Clare have agonised with the thought of redirecting their entire cabernet production to making the significantly more expensive Special Reserve. Such a program would reposition the wine in the market place placing it out of reach of many who currently love the wine. Certainly, it would become impossibly expensive in restaurants. Such a move would also necessitate the winery surviving for at least a year without its major cash flow item. In the final analysis, as impressive as the Special Reserve wines can be (and the 1980 is astounding at present), Keith believes the Moss Wood Cabernets best express the terroir of the vineyard and are the wines on which he wishes to continue to rely for the Moss Wood reputation.

The next three vintages offer a great deal for lovers of Margaret River reds and especially Moss Wood. Although 1993 was a better year for whites than reds in the region, producing wines that were fine and perfumed, the 1993 Moss Wood Cabernet has lovely balance, excellent structure and impressive finesse. The 1994 harvest has resulted in outstanding reds (perhaps the best ever) which are rich and robust with good structure, weight and concentration of flavour. Although it's still very early days, Keith believes that the 1995 vintage will produce reds which are a cross between the two previous years: with the richness of the 1994s and the finesse of 1993. As we said, there's plenty to look forward to.

## 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+