

Moss



Wood

Newsletter

No. 3

Spring, 1987.

New Release: The 1985 Moss Wood Pinot Noir

The 1985 vintage was picked at the usual time, in late February. After about ten percent bunch thinning, an average sized crop of pinot noir was produced. There had been only a little damage from the birds, so the fruit was in good condition and the beaume excellent.

Following successful experimentation with the previous vintage, it was decided to adopt fully the Burgundian techniques of including stalks in the fermentation process and of allowing the skins to remain in contact with the wine, on this occasion, for the relatively long time of twelve days.

Because of its huge fruit character, this spicy and voluminous wine was given fourteen months in barrel, half of it in new oak. This is a significantly higher proportion than usual because Keith Mugford believed that the wine had the fruit to handle this treatment.

The winemaker commented, "This is certainly one of the best pinot noirs and one of the best wines we've made at Moss Wood. It has the dimension and complexity to rival the 1981. The 1981 Moss Wood Pinot Noir has volumes of rich, ripe fruit. The 1985 has all other nuances you look for in the wines of Burgundy: lots of ripe, pinot noir fruit with strawberry and spicy cinammon characters. The latter is due to stalk inclusion during fermentation and the percentage of new oak used in the maturation process.

Some who saw it in its early stages thought it slightly cumbersome, some almost too big, with overtones of musty oak and ripe berry fruit. Most who have seen the wine since it has been in bottle have praised its rich flavour and its interesting complexities.

Keith Mugford believes that it is worth looking at while young for its richness and then following its development over a ten year period.



The 1985 Moss Wood Pinot Noir has a deep ruby, almost crimson colour. It has a voluminous nose with the strawberry and raspberry aromas integrated with dusty French oak. On the palate, it is soft with rich, ripe fruit of tremendous character, good acid and, at this stage, overtones of quite assertive, sappy oak. The wine is in balance, has a pleasing feel in the mouth and good weight, and might well be described as "generous". It is a well-structured wine of considerable power and style.

The Moss Wood Pinot Noirs

The first Moss Wood Pinot Noir was made in 1977. It has been produced every year since, except in 1978. The 1981 wine is regarded by many, including Australia's best wine writer, James Halliday, as one of the all-time Australian greats. Keith Mugford believes that the 1985 wine is a rival for the 1981.

The second edition of the *Decanter Magazine's Guide to Australia and New Zealand*, recently available to its subscribers, said of the Moss Wood Pinot Noir:

A wine that has technically developed over recent vintages, and now ranks as one of the best of its kind in Australia. Big, ripe, strawberries aroma, lovely berry character, and can also show a touch of blackberries. Muted wood. Soft, ripe flavour, lightly sweet but firm. Attractive, balanced almost earthy finish, that also shows some wood spice and smokey characters. Back the 1986 to last at least fifteen years.

The following are Keith Mugford's tasting notes made during the last three months and should give an indication of how the Pinot Noirs are drinking at present.

1980 Clear, deep ruby, very intense on the nose with bouquet of crushed ants and ripe berries. On the palate, the wine has soft, sappy, rich raspberry-like fruit with pleasing length.

1981 Deep red, superb pinot nose, strawberries, cherries, excellent structure and balance, depth of rich, ripe fruit flavour, good weight on the palate, a complex wine with considerable length on the palate. It is drinking beautifully, is sound as a bell, and will keep for many years to come.

1982 Light ruby colour, musty, earthy nose, strawberry-like fruit, good length.

1983 A soft, balanced wine with cherry fruit and oak on the nose, flavoursome, some length.

1984 Smokey red, closed but lovely, limey/strawberry aromas, strong rich, full fruit flavours, fresh field mushrooms, light weight but intense, lovely balance, good length.

1985 Deep ruby colour, flowery perfume, jasmine, intense, youthful, rich round fruit on the palate, spicy oak, cherries, soft and stylish, good length.

The Kensington Wine Fair

More than ten thousand people involved in the production, distribution and marketing of wine from around the globe talked, tasted and bought wines during the three days duration of the Kensington Wine Fair in London during May. More than one hundred stands filled each of the two floors of the Exhibition Building providing members of the trade with opportunities to taste some of the best wines from around the world.

The professionalism of the British wine trade was impressive and the response to the Moss Wood wines by the large number of visitors to the Peter Diplock Limited stand was most encouraging. There were a few who were confused by the luxurious style of these young Margaret River wines, and somewhat overwhelmed by the ripeness of grapes and volume of fruit flavour. It was not possible, at the Fair, to show how the wines would age, although Keith and Clare did present a number of tastings showing a range of Moss Wood wines while they were in England.

The first of these, organised for wine journalists at Nick Lander's restaurant, L'Escargot, was attended by several of the best known British wine writers including: Jancis Robinson, Oz Clarke, Joanna Simons, Robert Joseph and Charles Metcalfe. The comprehensive range of wines shown were the 1977, 1984 and 1986 Moss Wood Semillon, the 1986 Moss Wood wood-matured Semillon, the 1986 Moss Wood Chardonnay, the 1983 and 1985 Moss Wood Pinot Noir and the 1980, 1983 (Reserve), 1984 and 1985 Moss Wood Cabernet Sauvignon.

The journalists showed enthusiasm for the Moss Wood range - more especially for the older wines - and indicated that the tasting confirmed their belief in the quality of wine from the area. They also showed a great knowledge of Margaret River wines in general and tremendous interest in the influence of region, site and vintage on the style of wines being produced. As well as this, tastings were held at two excellent wine retail outlets: Liz and Michael Berry's, La Vigneronne, and Ostlers - the place to look for Australian wine in London. In each case, about fifty people attended the tasting. In addition, sixty people attended a dinner at La Bonne Franquette in Egham. This was organised by Rackham's, a quality retail chain with fourteen outlets in London and Surrey. On all these occasions, the Moss Wood wines were enthusiastically received.

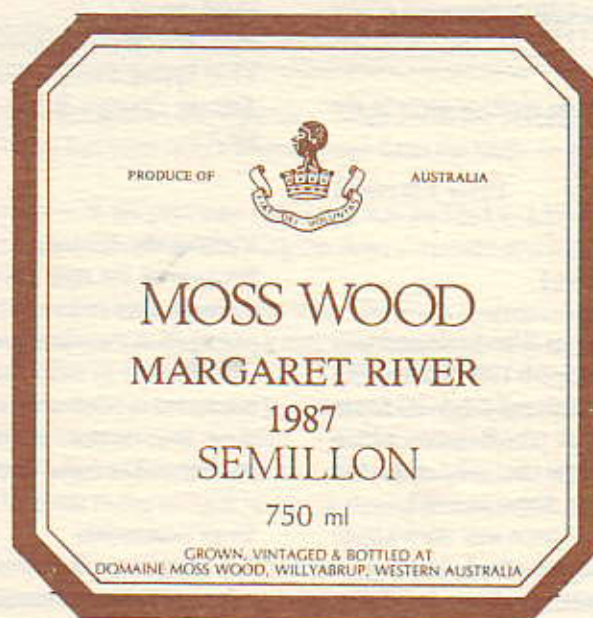
New Release: the 1987 Moss Wood Semillon

Keith Mugford believes that the 1987 vintage will be noted for its excellent fruit perfumes, with all the Moss Wood wines showing wonderful freshness and lively fruit characters. The colour of each of the wines is particularly good with more density than Moss Wood has ever produced. The growing season was dry throughout, with the rains finishing at the end of November. However, because of the good winter rainfall in 1986, the soil moisture was sufficient for the vines to carry the crop.

The semillon was picked on time in early March and the good season meant that the acids and beaumes were excellent and the resulting wine well-balanced. The dry summer was of benefit to the semillon because it can easily split after summer rains, leading to worrying problems with rot.

The 1977 Moss Wood Semillon which Keith and Clare showed to the British wine trade in May was received with great enthusiasm. This wine has developed superbly in the bottle and shows a pleasing, toasty character with no sign of tiredness. The Mugfords certainly feel that cellaring the best vintages of their semillon will repay the patient.

The 1987 is perhaps the "average" of the previous two vintages. The 1985 was a pungent, herbaceous style and the 1986 a rounder, riper, more traditional semillon in which grassiness was only a minor feature. In Keith Mugford's words the most recent wine is "the archetypical Moss Wood Semillon with all the features we look for."



The 1987 Moss Wood Semillon has an outstanding, aromatic bouquet showing a depth of herbaceous fruit and a clean, fruity nose with traces of granny smith apples and grassiness on the bouquet. On the palate, it is fresh and crisp has good weight, soft acid and a pleasing aftertaste. The wine has excellent structure, is well-balanced and has attractive fruit. It will be hard to resist over the summer months.

Dedication to Duty: the Mugfords in France

After the Kensington Wine Fair and the tastings in England, Keith and Clare spent three weeks in France gathering ideas about wine and winemaking. They were able to spend more than a week in both Bordeaux and Burgundy, as well as some time in Champagne - tasting over five hundred wines in the process. Such is the quality of their devotion to improving the quality of Moss Wood and their personal self sacrifice in serving the interests of lovers of premium Margaret River wines!?! Keith felt that the trip had been a valuable experience and that he felt humbled by the quality of the 1986 Bordeaux and the 1985 and 1986 Burgundies. "These are wines of immense quality" he said. "To have seen them was a thrill and to have gathered ideas about what we can do with Moss Wood is very exciting."

"We were lucky to go after 1986 had been such an outstanding vintage for cabernet and it was a lesson in how good cabernet can be. We spent a lot of time looking at their vineyards and talking with them about their problems. We also looked at cabernet franc and merlot in St. Emilion and discussed those two varieties at length. That was of value to us because we're eventually looking to blend both varieties in a small way with the cabernet."

"In Burgundy, we saw wines from right across the spectrum, and discussed techniques and regional characters with the producers. Once again, because 1985 and 1986 were so good, it was an object lesson in what can be done with pinot noir and chardonnay. Interestingly, we were also impressed at the way the French had taken to high tech. Their wineries now look like their Australian or Californian counterparts."

Make one mistake

The editor well remembers a Peanuts cartoon in which Lucy ordered Snoopy to hold her balloon while she engaged in some frivolity. Snoopy, of course, fell asleep and let the balloon go. The last section of the comic strip showed Snoopy silhouetted against the moonlit sky, with his tramp's bundle in its bandanna over his shoulder, muttering "Make one mistake and you spend the rest of your life paying for it!" As Niland Stuart often says, "How true! How true!"

The volume of mail pointing out the tiny error in the spelling of Clare's name on one occasion in the first newsletter has reached epidemic proportions forcing the proprietors to insist on a written explanation or disclaimer from me.

The error was due to one of the following:

- a typist's error
- an honest mistake
- a computer malfunction
- human error
- the inability of the human race to fully harness the power of the computer.

I hope that clears up the matter.

Fortunately no one has mentioned the spelling error in the second newsletter to Keith or Clare.

Peter Forrestal

The 1983 Moss Wood Cabernet Sauvignon (Reserve)

Many of you will remember that Moss Wood released two cabernet sauvignon wines from the superb 1980 vintage: the 1980 Moss Wood Cabernet Sauvignon and the 1980 Moss Wood Cabernet Sauvignon (Reserve). The Reserve, which was given an extra twelve months in oak, won the Montgomery Trophy at the Adelaide Show in 1983.

The 1983 Moss Wood Cabernet Sauvignon was such a huge wine that Bill Pannell and Keith Mugford once again decided to make a Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon by giving some of the cabernet an extended period in cask. The wine was aged in oak for twenty six months and bottled in February this year.

Clare Mugford says that the Reserve Cabernet is looking very interesting at the moment, having the power of the 1983 Cabernet Sauvignon but with more development. She believes it has benefited significantly from its time in cask.

No decision has been made about the release date although it is likely to be at least twelve months away. At present, the Mugfords believe the 1983 Moss Wood Cabernet Sauvignon (Reserve) needs more bottle age and they are not prepared to release it until it is ready. Be assured - it will be worth the wait.

A Comment on the 1985 Pinot Noir

Perth solicitor, Greg Munyard, an unabashed lover of Moss Wood wines, wrote the following assessment of the 1985 Moss Wood Pinot Noir:

The wine has deep strawberry / raspberry fruit, dusty French oak on a nose of considerable complexity and obvious Burgundian character. Enchanting.

A powerful, rich and stylish pinot of considerable weight and some stalky assertiveness at this stage.

Lovely texture. A magnificent example of Australian pinot at its very best.

From Clare and Keith

Moss Wood Wines In the United Kingdom

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

Peter Diplock Limited
William Blake House
Marshall Street
LONDON W1

Phone: (01) 734 2099

Anyone in Australia wishing to have Moss Wood wines delivered in the United Kingdom should contact the vineyard for details.

Moss Wood Wines In the United States

The agent for Moss Wood wines in America is:

Frank Stone
Exclusive Wine Imports
1100 Spring Street # 108
Atlanta, Georgia 30309
USA

Telephone (404) 875 9463

Visiting the Winery

Because of the relatively small volume of wine produced, there is no cellar door facility provided for the general public and visits to the winery are by appointment only. However, we are happy to welcome people on the mailing list or those interested in wine who wish to see over the winery and/or to taste the current Moss Wood releases. Contact us beforehand to make arrangements if you wish to visit.

Your comments

We are always interested in receiving feedback about our wines and would be especially interested in hearing about any older bottles of Moss Wood wines that you have tried recently.

Cabernet Franc and Merlot

Cabernet Franc and Merlot will be blended with the Moss Wood Cabernet Sauvignon for the first time in the 1989 vintage. At that time, they will make up only about 3% of the wine. This will rise to about 10% when the plantings of the other two varieties of the classic Bordeaux blend come into full production.